



The Fund for Workforce Equity

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

RELEASED – MAY 31, 2022

SUBMISSIONS DUE – JULY 31, 2022

SUBMIT ALL INQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS TO FWE@WORKFORCE-MATTERS.ORG

The Fund for Workforce Equity is a project of



The Fund for Workforce Equity: Centering Workers of Color in Workforce Policy and Program Design and Implementation

About this Initiative

Workforce Matters is launching the Fund for Workforce Equity, a new pooled fund that aims to center workers of color in the design and implementation of workforce policies and programs. The impetus to launch this fund comes from Workforce Matters' [Racial Equity Framework for Workforce Development Funders](#),¹ which recommends that funders take steps to center workers and learners of color in developing, supporting, and evaluating workforce initiatives, including by:

- Using asset-based, race-explicit, and systemic frames and language to describe workers, learners, and job candidates of color that acknowledge systemic causes of disparity,
- Investing in centering worker power and agency as a part of workforce development, and
- Authentically including, respecting, valuing, and applying the perspectives of workers, learners, and job candidates of color in understanding, measuring, empowering, and deepening the impact of investments in workforce development.

Since the framework was released in 2021, Workforce Matters has worked with our members to launch the Fund for Workforce Equity in order to devote resources to implementing this recommendation.

The Fund for Workforce Equity

In its inaugural grantmaking round, the Fund will provide flexible resources and support to workforce development organizations seeking to pilot, adopt, and learn from new strategies as well as innovate on or extend existing strategies that:

- Authentically respect, value, honor, and compensate workers, learners, and job candidates for the skills and perspectives that they bring to designing and implementing workforce programs and policies; and
- Invest in creating spaces for People of Color² to exercise their power and agency in developing and implementing workforce programs and policies.

In addition, the Fund for Workforce Equity will support the following strategies:

- **A Learning Community** for grantees to share promising practices and lessons learned.
- **Technical Assistance** that provides grantees access to expertise and resources on human-centered design and other best practices for elevating worker and learner voice.
- **Evaluation and Learning** efforts that share lessons from the initiative with grantees and the broader workforce field, and that support funders in disseminating and investing in promising practices among their grantees.

Workforce Matters and Fund for Workforce Equity contributors are committed to ensuring that work to center workers and learners of color does not end with this initial effort. They will continue to make supporting these efforts and the lessons we learn through this initiative a priority going forward.

¹ For more detail on these recommendations, please see pages 10-14 of the [Racial Equity Framework for Workforce Development Funders](#).

² See "Terms and Definitions" on pages 7-9 of the [Racial Equity Framework for Workforce Development Funders](#)

Available Funding

The Fund for Workforce Equity anticipates that up to \$1,000,000 will be awarded to support organizations in implementing initiatives that center workers and learners of color in workforce policy and program design and implementation. The total number and dollar amount of awards will depend on contributions to the Fund and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee. Applicants may request grants of up to \$70,000. It is anticipated that typical awards will range from \$50,000-\$70,000.

Not all projects will be funded. However, with applicant permission, Workforce Matters will share submitted proposals and/or proposal summaries with members of its network to help generate greater interest in and visibility of proposed projects.

Acceptable Uses of Funding

These funds are to be used by applicants to develop and implement strategies that enable workforce organizations to increase authentic engagement with workers and learners of color and to respect and value their input by incorporating into the design and implementation of workforce programs and policies.

Applicants may utilize funding flexibly to launch new efforts and/or innovate or expand on existing efforts to center workers and learners of color. Applicants should be able to demonstrate that this funding will not supplant existing funding for this work and will be used to strengthen and expand the organization's work to center workers and learners of color.

A non-exhaustive list of acceptable uses includes:

- Stipends or honoraria for workers and learners
- Support for services such as child care, translation/interpretation, or meals that enable workers and learners to participate in program design and implementation
- Support for new or expanded partnerships between workforce training organizations and organizations that focus on building worker power and agency
- Support for the implementation of ideas/feedback provided by workers and learners
- Staff and/or consultant and/or worker and learner time for:
 - the development and implementation of worker and learner feedback mechanisms
 - the development and implementation of worker and learner-centered evaluation methods
 - the development and implementation of worker and learner-centered outcome metrics
 - the development and implementation of worker and learner advisory and leadership councils, fellowships, or similar efforts to invest in worker and learner leadership
 - the development and implementation of methods that increase the civic engagement of worker and learners
 - the implementation of ideas or feedback provided by workers and learners

These funds may not be used to support general organizational racial equity training³, which applicants must demonstrate they have already invested in. Funds may not be used to advocate for any specific legislation or political candidate.

³ i.e. General/introductory training on racial equity terms, definitions, concepts and application, including skills and knowledge that prepare individuals and organizations to address structural racism and advance racial equity. Typically, this training includes key concepts such as racial equity and structural racism; support for talking about race within an organization and/or with constituents; practices and tools for counteracting racial bias; and opportunities for applying concepts and strategies that advance racial equity.

Applicant Qualifications and Priorities

- Must provide workforce development programming or advocacy, including but not limited to:
 - Education and training programs that help individuals acquire and retain good jobs⁴
 - Efforts that help workers to increase their income and/or advance their careers
 - Internships, apprenticeships, and/or learn-and-earn experiences
 - Career coaching/counseling
 - Providing or coordinating work supports such as transportation or child care services
 - Organizing or advocacy efforts related to any of the above
- Must have already invested in organizational racial equity training⁵
- Must be U.S.-based
- For organizations that provide direct services to individuals: Must serve a majority of workers and/or learners of color⁶
- Must be classified as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization or be fiscally sponsored by an organization that is classified as a 501(c)(3) organization or be a federally recognized or state-recognized tribal government

Priority Places, Populations, and Learning Interests

Contributors to the Fund for Workforce Equity have selected several priority places, populations, and topics that they are particularly interested in learning more about and will, subsequently, give special consideration to as part of the selection process.

While there are no geographic requirements other than being U.S.-based, there is targeted funding available for organizations providing services to workers and learners in the following geographies and target populations, in accordance with the interests and requirements of its supporters:

- California
- Cleveland-Cuyahoga County, OH
- Southeast Michigan (Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw, St. Clair, Livingston, Monroe counties)
- Northwest US (Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Washington, Oregon)
- Post-secondary institutions in New York City serving young adults ages 14-30
- Western New York (Erie, Cattaraugus, Niagara, Orleans, Monroe, Wyoming, Chautauqua, Genesee, Allegany counties)
- Rural communities⁷

⁴ For more on the characteristics of good jobs, please see [Not Just a Job: New Evidence on the Quality of Work in the United States](#) (Gallup, 2019). The report outlines ten key characteristics of job quality, as ranked by workers themselves: 1) level of pay; 2) stable and predictable pay; 3) stable and hours; 4) control over hours and/or location; 5) job security; 6) employee benefits; 7) career advancement opportunities; 8) enjoying your day-to-day work; 9) having a sense of purpose and dignity in your work; 10) having the power to change things about your job that you're not satisfied with.

⁵ See footnote 3, above.

⁶ We use the term People of Color or workers and learners of color to refer to those who have been disadvantaged by systemic racism in workforce policies, practices, and programs. They may include citizens or immigrants who are Black, Indigenous, Latinx/Hispanic, Asian American or Pacific Islander, and other People of Color.

⁷ For the purposes of this RFP, we are adopting the [USDA Economic Research Service guidelines](#) for "rural communities" or nonmetropolitan areas defined on the basis of counties. Nonmetro counties include some combination of open

In addition, we are particularly interested in partnering with and learning from programs that:

- Offer digital skills and/or IT training;
- Serve immigrants and/or refugees;
- Serve opportunity youth/young adults⁸; and/or
- Serve populations disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Grantee Selection Process

Grantees will be selected based on the criteria outlined below by a selection committee comprised of volunteers on the Fund's Advisory Committee.

Proposal Review Criteria

Applicants are asked to adhere to the instructions set forth in this RFP and format their proposals according to the guidelines provided in Appendix A: Application Package Requirements.

All proposals will be reviewed and assessed by members of the selection committee based on following criteria:

- Prior organizational experience with and commitment to work on Racial Equity and Inclusion (REI)
- Demonstrated commitment to centering worker and learner voice
- Demonstrated commitment to learning and taking action on feedback
- Provision of stipends, honoraria or other compensation for worker and learners for the purpose of obtaining input and feedback to inform program or policy design and implementation
- Alignment between funds requested and the proposed scope of work
- Potential impact of the proposed project
- Capacity to manage the grant⁹
- Need for resources
- Alignment with Fund for Workforce Equity priority populations or learning interests (see above)

Terms and Conditions

- Incomplete applications will not be considered.
- The Fund will not pay any costs incurred in responding to the RFP.
- Receipt of one or more responses to the RFP does not commit the Fund to the award of a grant. The Fund reserves the right to accept or decline any or all proposals received, to negotiate the final terms of any grants, or to cancel the RFP in whole or in part.
- The submission of a proposal does not transfer to the Fund for Workforce Equity or Workforce Matters any ownership or proprietary rights to the content or ideas contained therein. The proposer will retain all intellectual property rights.

countryside, rural towns (places with fewer than 2,500 people), and urban areas with populations ranging from 2,500 to 49,999 that are not part of larger labor market areas (metropolitan areas).

⁸ Opportunity youth are young people who are between the ages of 16 to 24 years old and are disconnected from school and work. This developmental time period, also referred to as emerging adulthood, has great potential for individual growth through exploring independence and life opportunities. (Source: www.youth.gov)

⁹We are open to working with organizations that are emerging and that may not have had the resources to develop traditionally-desired systems, and in the proposal review, we will be putting more weight on the design of the work and the vision and commitment of the leadership team.

Key Dates and Submission Procedures

May 31	RFP launches
June 16, 3 pm ET	Informational webinar for applicants
May 31-July 15	Q&A period; Q&A will be posted on www.workforce-equity.org
July 31	Application Packages Due to Workforce Matters
August 1-September 30	Proposal Review & Grantee Selection
October 15	Grantees Announced
November 1	Grant Period Begins

Please submit one electronic copy of all materials in PDF format to:

FWE@workforce-matters.org

The Fund for Workforce Equity is generously supported by the following organizations (as of 5/31/22):

American Institutes for Research (AIR)
 Ascendium Education Group
 The Annie E. Casey Foundation
 Cognizant Foundation
 Cuyahoga County Workforce Funders Group
 Deaconess Foundation
 Fund for Our Economic Future
 Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
 The James Irvine Foundation
 W.K. Kellogg Foundation
 WES Mariam Assefa Fund
 McGregor Fund
 Northwest Area Foundation
 Siemens Foundation
 Strada Education Network
 Solon E. Summerfield Foundation
 Walmart.org
 The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation
 Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation
 Workforce Matters Supporting Members

The Fund for Workforce Equity’s Advisory Committee Members are:

Heidi Alcock, McGregor Fund	Lauren N. King, W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Cathy Belk, Deaconess Foundation	Loh-Sze Leung, Workforce Matters
Crystal Bridgeman, Siemens Foundation	LaShana Lewis, L.M. Lewis Consulting
Allison Gerber, The Annie E. Casey Foundation	Clair Minson, Sandra Grace LLC
Miguel Cabray, JPMorgan Chase	Michael Morris, Strada Education Network
Amanda Cage, National Fund for Workforce Solutions	Talia Nagar, Tipping Point Community
Alex Camardelle, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies	Sarah Oldmixon, Workforce Matters
Elizabeth Cheung, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation	Jennifer Racho, Northwest Area Foundation
Patti Constantakis, Walmart.org	Ian Record, Ian Record Consulting
Lauren Crain, WES Mariam Assefa Fund	Vanessa Rivera, Solon E. Summerfield Foundation
Kimberly Dumont, AIR	Luis Sandoval, Building Skills Partnership
Susan Dundon, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation	Kim Tabari, USC Equity Research Institute
Todd Greene, WorkRise and Urban Institute	Emily Timm, Workers Defense Project
Tuquan Harrison, The James Irvine Foundation	Kristen Titus, Cognizant Foundation
Marci Hunn, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation	Kirstin Yeado, Ascendium Education Group

Appendix A: Application Package Requirements

Application Checklist

	Cover Page (see attached for template)
	Narrative Proposal of up to 3,000 words
	Project Budget and Budget Narrative, including any other sources of support
	Organizational Budget for current fiscal year
	Organizational Demographic Profile (see attached for template)
	Professional bios for staff members/consultants who have a lead role in the implementation of the proposed project*
	Written race, equity, and inclusion (REI) statements or commitments*
	Audited or unaudited financial statements*
	IRS Tax Exempt Status Letter*

*Denotes item is optional and should only be submitted if applicable.



1. Organizational Information

Applicant Name:	
Fiscal Sponsor (if applicable):	
Address:	
Website:	
Executive Director/President/CEO Name:	
Executive Director/President/CEO Phone:	
Executive Director/President/CEO Email:	
Primary Contact Person Name & Title:	
Primary Contact Person Phone:	
Primary Contact Person Email:	
Federal Tax-Exempt ID Number (if applicable):	
Amount Requested:	

2. Brief description of funding request (1-2 sentences)

3. Does your proposal target any of the Fund for Workforce Equity’s priority service areas, populations, or interests? (Check all that apply)

Check all that apply			
California		New York City Post Secondary Institution serving young adults ages 14-30	
Cleveland/Cuyahoga County (OH)		Rural communities ¹⁰	
Southeast Michigan (Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw, St. Clair, Livingston, Monroe counties)		Offer digital skills and/or IT training	
Northwest US (MN, IA, ND, MT, ID, WA, OR)		Serve immigrants and/or refugees	
Western NY (Erie, Cattaraugus, Niagara, Orleans, Monroe, Wyoming, Chautauqua, Genesee, Allegany counties)		Serve opportunity youth/young adults	

4. Do you permit Workforce Matters to share your proposal summary and contact information with interested funders in its network? Select one: **Accept **Decline****

¹⁰ For the purposes of this RFP, we are adopting the [USDA Economic Research Service guidelines](#) for “rural communities” or nonmetropolitan areas defined on the basis of counties. Nonmetro counties include some combination of open countryside, rural towns (places with fewer than 2,500 people), and urban areas with populations ranging from 2,500 to 49,999 that are not part of larger labor market areas (metropolitan areas).

5. If awarded a grant from the Fund for Workforce Equity, do you consent to participating in the learning community and evaluation and to having your funded project documented and shared with the field? Select one: **Accept** **Decline**

6. By my signature below, I attest to our organization’s commitment to the goals of the Fund for Workforce Equity and to my support for this proposed project.

Signature

Date

Name & Title

Narrative Proposal (Please limit to 3,000 words, or approximately 6 pages)

Organization Description

- 1) Please provide a brief overview of your organization's mission and relevant workforce development programs and services.
- 2) Please provide an overview of who your organization serves (demographic info – race/ethnicity, age, citizenship/immigration status, geography, etc).
- 3) For organizations that provide direct services to individuals: Approximately what percentage of your organization's clientele/participants are People of Color?

Organizational Readiness to Engage in Racial Equity and Inclusion

- 1) Please briefly describe the racial equity and inclusion (REI) work that your organization has undertaken to date.¹¹
- 2) What changes has your organization made as a result of this work?

Experience Centering Worker and Learner Voice

- 1) If you **have experience** centering worker and learner voice in your work:
 - a. Please provide an overview of your organization's current efforts to center worker and learner voices, particularly workers and learners of color.
 - b. Please describe a recent example of how your organization worked to center worker and learner voice in designing and/or implementing workforce programs or policy.
 - i. What was your approach?
 - ii. What did you change about your program or policy recommendations as a result, if anything?
 - iii. What did you learn about the process of centering and engaging workers and learners? What challenges did you face, and what will you do differently next time, if anything?
- 2) If you **do not have prior experience** centering worker and learner voice in your work:
 - a. Please discuss your motivation and opportunity for engaging in this work at this time
 - b. Please discuss how your organization has sought or used feedback (from any source) in the past and what you learned from those efforts.

Proposed Project

- 1) Please describe the work you would like to support with this grant funding.
 - a. Is this a new project, or does it build on existing work?
 - b. How will you center workers and learners of color in designing and/or implementing workforce programs or policies?
 - c. Please describe the workers and learners you will engage in the project?
 - d. What is the proposed project timeline?

- 2) Anticipated Impact
 - a. What do you hope to learn?

¹¹ This includes work that your organization has done to understand key concepts related to race and racism and the historical context of race and racism and how they show up in institutional and systemic policies, practices, and structures. It also includes work that your organization has done to identify, interrogate, and change policies, practices, systems, and structures such that they contribute to eliminating racial inequities and advance equity.

- b. What will be different for your organization and/or for workers and learners as a result of the proposed work?
 - c. How do you anticipate the work will be sustained or integrated after the grant term?
- 3) The Fund for Workforce Equity will support technical assistance offerings from grantees. Please select your top three areas of interest for technical assistance and learning:
- a. Human-centered design
 - b. Journey mapping
 - c. Gathering and applying feedback from workers and learners
 - d. Community organizing
 - e. Power building and power sharing
 - f. Establishing worker/learner councils and advisory bodies
 - g. Sustainability of grant-supported efforts
 - h. Other – please specify

Budget and Budget Narrative (not included in the word/page limit)

- 1) Please submit a line-item project budget. You may use your own template. Please be sure to list all relevant categories for which you are requesting support, including staff, contractors/consultants, participant honoraria/stipends/other compensation, other direct costs, and any indirect costs for which funding is requested. [Sample budgets can be found on Candid's website.](#)
- 2) Please submit a brief budget narrative.
- 3) Please include the amount and sources of any additional funding for this work.
- 4) Please submit an organizational budget for your current fiscal year.

Other Attachments (not included in the word/page limit)

- 1) ***Required*** A **demographic profile** of your organization's board, leadership, and staff (see attached)
- 2) ***If applicable*** Brief **professional bios** for any staff members or consultants/contractors who may have a lead role in the implementation of the proposed project or for whom funding is requested.
- 3) ***If applicable*** Any written **race, equity, and inclusion (REI) statements** or commitments that the organization has adopted.
- 4) ***If applicable/available*** Financial Documents and Tax Status. We recognize that all organizations may not have the following. Please submit these documents if available or applicable:
 - a. **Audited Financial Statements** for the most recent fiscal year, if available. If an audited financial statement is not available, applicants may submit unaudited financial statements or a financial statement review.
 - b. **IRS letter** confirming your status as a tax-exempt non-profit organization. *Note: If your organization uses a fiscal sponsor, please provide a letter of support from the fiscal sponsor and the organization's tax exemption letter.*



Workforce Composition Survey

Adapted with permission from the Annie E. Casey Foundation

Workforce Matters is a national network of grantmakers that draws on expert and practitioner knowledge and works together to strengthen workforce development philanthropy such that it empowers workers, learners, and job seekers to realize their full potential; dismantles inequities based on race, gender, ability, and other individual characteristics; and advances equitable education and employment outcomes for youth and adults.

As we launch our first collaborative funding initiative, the Fund for Workforce Equity, Workforce Matters is committed to intentionally incorporating diverse cultural experiences, perspectives and ideologies, with a particular focus on centering the voices and lived experiences of workers and learners of color.

Therefore, we are asking applicants and potential consultants to the Fund to complete the following Workforce Composition Survey.

The race, ethnicity and gender categories used in the survey follow those that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission requires employers to use for reporting purposes. Workforce Matters recognizes these categories may not be inclusive or consistent with how people identify themselves; however, they are the only uniform way in which employers collect and report data. Workforce Matters will continue to review and consider modifying or expanding these categories in the future. If your organization uses additional categories when collecting workforce data, you may include this information as an attachment at the end of the survey.

Complete the survey for your organization as a whole, counting each person only once based on the individual's primary role.

University systems, state agencies and large institutions should provide information only for the school or department that is applying for a contract or grant from Workforce Matters.

In a fiscal sponsor/agent relationship, the data should represent the ultimate beneficiary of a grant or contract from Workforce Matters.

Organizations may attach additional data on race, ethnicity and gender in their workforce if they collect data in categories beyond the ones presented.

For questions or assistance, email fwe@workforce-matters.org

Organization

DBA/AKA (if applicable)

Department (if applicable)

CEO/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

	Male	Female	Non-Binary
White			
Black or African American			
Asian			
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander			
Hispanic or Latino			
American Indian or Alaska Native			
Balance (or Other)			
Total			

BOARD MEMBERS/TRUSTEES

	Male	Female	Non-Binary
White			
Black or African American			
Asian			
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander			
Hispanic or Latino			
American Indian or Alaska Native			
Balance (or Other)			
Total			

SENIOR MANAGEMENT LEVEL STAFF

	Male	Female	Non-Binary
White			
Black or African American			
Asian			
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander			
Hispanic or Latino			
American Indian or Alaska Native			
Balance (or Other)			
Total			

PROGRAMMATIC/PROFESSIONAL STAFF

	Male	Female	Non-Binary
White			
Black or African American			
Asian			
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander			
Hispanic or Latino			
American Indian or Alaska Native			
Balance (or Other)			
Total			

ADMINISTRATIVE/CLERICAL/SUPPORT STAFF

	Male	Female	Non-Binary
White			
Black or African American			
Asian			
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander			
Hispanic or Latino			
American Indian or Alaska Native			
Balance (or Other)			
Total			

Approximately what percentage of your staff has been hired from the community you serve?

Please describe any efforts your organization makes to hire from the community you serve.