

The Fund for Workforce Equity

INTERIM EVALUATION REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Workforce Matters is a national network of grantmakers that works to strengthen workforce development philanthropy and advance equitable access to quality education and employment for young people and adults. In 2022, Workforce Matters established the Fund for Workforce Equity (the Fund), a pooled funding initiative aimed to center workers of color in workforce policy and program design and implementation. The Fund's goals are to support workforce organizations in developing, testing, strengthening, and/or extending strategies to engage workers and learners of color and to support learning among funders and workforce organizations to expand the use of effective strategies to center and amplify the voices of workers and learners of color.

A total of fifteen workforce organizations from across the country were selected for the first round of the initiative, with fund grant awards ranging from \$60,000 to \$75,000 for the one-year grant cycle. In December 2022, Workforce Matters contracted with [Social Policy Research Associates \(SPR\)](#), a research and evaluation firm, to conduct a 12-month evaluation of the Fund for Workforce Equity's inaugural grantmaking initiative. The evaluation addresses three core areas of inquiry: (1) assessing grantees' activities in the Fund, (2) understanding outcomes of grantees' work, and (3) surfacing learnings from the Fund. Below, we summarize early learnings related to pilot implementation and centering workers and learners in program design and implementation.

KEY FINDINGS

Grantee Definitions and Approaches to Operationalizing Workforce Equity

Most grantees did not have a written or named definition of workforce equity. However, grantees did share core concepts related to their understanding of term, such as:

- ❖ Promoting community access to resources that enable more workers and learners to participate in education, employment, and career advancement.
- ❖ Acknowledging that institutionalized racism and white supremacist values shape many aspects of the workforce development system.
- ❖ Centering the perspectives of workers and learners to inform the design and implementation of programs and services.
- ❖ Positioning workers and learners as leaders and advocates for change is central to equity.

Grantee Project Activities

In implementing projects, grantees are using their funds in ways that meet their planned grantee activities. Common project activities include:

- ❖ Building on existing work or advancing previously identified equity needs.
- ❖ Conducting data collection to get a better sense of community needs.
- ❖ Developing and cultivating worker and learner leadership skills.
- ❖ Building advisory boards and other vehicles for participant input and feedback.

Factors Facilitating and Challenging Project Implementation

Grantees noted several positive factors related to grant implementation.

- ❖ Leveraged funding has helped support their efforts to engage workers and learners.
- ❖ Partnerships have played a key role in helping grantees launch or expand their project activities.
- ❖ Transparent and open communication with partners has been instrumental in keeping the projects moving along.
- ❖ Workers and learners have been eager and excited to share their perspectives.

Reflecting the complex nature of equity work, grantees faced some challenges in getting their projects off the ground. We detail two common project implementation challenges below.

- ❖ Half of grantees have experienced staffing challenges related to hiring and onboarding, turnover, and leadership changes.
- ❖ Grantees found that participants find it difficult to engage in additional grantee activities due to competing responsibilities.

Grantee Perceptions of Fund Support Activities

In addition to grants, the Fund provides grantee organizations access to a Learning Community and TA support, as well as expertise, resources, and individual coaching on human-centered design, and other best practices for elevating work and learner voice. Grantee staff who participated in these activities reported that, overall, they found both the Learning Community and individual coaching sessions valuable because it provided them with the opportunity to learn from their peers in real-time, provided a space for self-reflection for their own journey as leaders in this work and helped advance the implementation of their projects through individualized resources.

Assessing Engagement of Workers and Learners

Grantees employ several strategies and approaches to center workers and learners in their grant projects. To better understand these efforts, we positioned grantees within a five-level model of participation in organizational decision-making that ranges from low to high engagement. Grantees' project activities fell across this spectrum, with approximately a fourth of grantees current project activities involving more than one engagement component.

- ❖ Most grantees are utilizing engagement strategies that fall within the lower to middlemost levels of the engagement spectrum. For example, nine grantees described activities in the level, "Involve," where they have ensured that the concerns and perspectives of workers and learners are considered or incorporated in the decision-making process.
- ❖ Only one grantee shared activity in the "Collaborate" level of the engagement spectrum, where workers and learners partner together in every aspect of decision making.
- ❖ While grantees did not describe activities in the highest level of the engagement spectrum, the "Empower" level, more than a third of grantees intend to have their project engage in this level.

Learnings Related to Engaging Workers and Learners

Understanding worker and learner experiences, support needs, and priorities is integral for centering their voices in project implementation. Over half of grantees shared that their organizations have developed a more in-depth understanding on several topics from conversations, listening sessions, and focus groups with workers and learners. These topics included:

- ❖ Challenges and barriers workers face in their day-to-day lives, for example, employers who are not responsive to their needs nor to workplace health and safety issues, and how workers navigate those challenges.

- ❖ Supports workers and learners need to participate in programming and to find and retain employment, such as childcare, transportation assistance, mental health resources, and other wraparound supports.
- ❖ Job characteristics that workers value and that shape their sense of belonging in a workplace, including benefits and wages, supportive employers, and feeling valued and appreciated.
- ❖ Best practices for conducting outreach and sharing resources with others in the community who are not yet involved in grantee programming, for example, using outreach strategies that have been effective in other areas of grantees' work.

Learnings Related to Advancing Organizational Work

Grantees are themselves employers and are reflecting on their internal organizational dynamics through this work. Some of the ways grantees are incorporating learnings within their organizations include:

- ❖ Thinking through what it means to be a supportive employer for working families.
- ❖ Identifying areas of organizational improvement and making changes that will benefit participants and staff.
- ❖ Continuing to create a safe workplace where staff, especially women, feel empowered to advocate for themselves.
- ❖ Implementing hiring, retention, and promotion practices informed by staff and workers and making improvements in these areas alongside other employers.

Learnings Related to the Field and Grantee Communities

Sharing learnings and findings with both participants and policymakers is key for advancing equitable workforce policies and practices. At least half of grantees plan to share their project findings within their communities and spheres of influence. Grantees and participants are connected to local, state, and national policy and advocacy organizations, coalitions and collaboratives, and other stakeholder groups. These networks provide grantees with multiple avenues to share best practices lessons learned. Some of the ways grantees plan to share findings include online seminar or conference presentations, papers and reports, and newsletters.

CONCLUSION

This evaluation provides a valuable opportunity to understand how the Fund for Workforce Equity is supporting learning among funders and workforce organizations to expand the use of effective strategies to center and amplify the voices of workers and learners of color. Though the findings detailed here are preliminary, they highlight potential areas of success, challenge, and opportunity as projects move into the second half of their grant cycles. Grantees have access to a pool of workers and learners who are eager to co-design programming and have leveraged funding and partnerships to help implement their projects. While they contend with staffing and capacity challenges, many continue to adapt their projects to make participation accessible. Now that they have a lay of the land, grantees' charge is to involve workers and learners more closely in workforce program design and implementation.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Workforce Matters is a national network of grantmakers that works to strengthen workforce development philanthropy and advance equitable access to quality education and employment for young people and adults. In 2021, it published [A Racial Equity Framework for Workforce Development Funders](#), a framework for funders to engage in learning, advocacy and change with partners in the workforce field, including other funders, providers, employers, policymakers, and workers, learners, and job candidates. The framework emphasizes centering worker voice and agency. Following the release of this guide, in 2022, Workforce Matters established the Fund for Workforce Equity (the Fund), a pooled funding initiative aimed to center workers of color in workforce policy and program design and implementation.

The Fund's goals are to support workforce organizations in developing, testing, strengthening, and/or extending strategies to engage workers and learners of color and to support learning among funders and workforce organizations to expand the use of effective strategies to center and amplify the voices of workers and learners of color. To advance these goals, the Fund invested in four strategies: 1) grantmaking, 2) a learning community, 3) technical assistance and expertise, and 4) evaluation and learning activities. **Exhibit 1** describes these strategies in more detail.

Exhibit 1. Fund for Workforce Equity Investments

Grants. Flexible grants of \$60,000 to \$75,000 per year to workforce organizations so they can pilot and learn from different ways of authentically engaging and centering workers and learners of color in program and policy design and implementation.

Learning Community. A learning community to enable organizations can learn from each other and disseminate methods and lessons learned.

Technical Assistance/Expertise. Access to expertise and resources for Fund grantees on human-centered design and other best practices for elevating worker and learner voice.

Evaluation and Learning. An evaluation of the Fund focused on sharing learning with funders so they can further disseminate and invest in promising practices among their own individual grantees.

ABOUT THE EVALUATION

In December 2022, Workforce Matters contracted with [Social Policy Research Associates \(SPR\)](#), a research and evaluation firm, to conduct a 12-month evaluation of the Fund for Workforce Equity's inaugural grantmaking initiative. The evaluation addresses three core areas of inquiry: (1) assessing grantees' activities in the Fund, (2) understanding outcomes of grantees' work, and (3) surfacing learnings from the Fund. SPR is employing a developmental approach, which allows the evaluation team to be able to support the testing and refinement of the project by sharing data via rapid cycle learning. Many of the strategies described in this report are still being tested and refined.

The evaluation's data collection activities include reviews of grantee application and progress report documents, interviews with grantees and Fund staff, and conversations with workers and learners of color affiliated with Fund grantees. Its learning questions are focused on highlighting key challenges with, and identifying specific examples of, activities and outcomes of Fund grantees while providing information around the effects of the funding model and its associated activities.

Early in the evaluation, SPR worked with the Fund's Advisory Committee to develop a theory of change (TOC) (**Appendix B**) to articulate a pathway towards the Fund's vision to improve workforce programs and their outcomes, primarily for people of color, and help advance equity in the workforce development system. The TOC includes core assumptions, context, and constraints; inputs; strategies and activities; outputs; and anticipated immediate-, intermediate-, and long-term outcomes/systems-level impacts. While the TOC may evolve over time as new findings emerge, it provides a guide to how the Fund's investments are expected to lead to improved workforce programs and services for workers, learners, and job candidates of color.

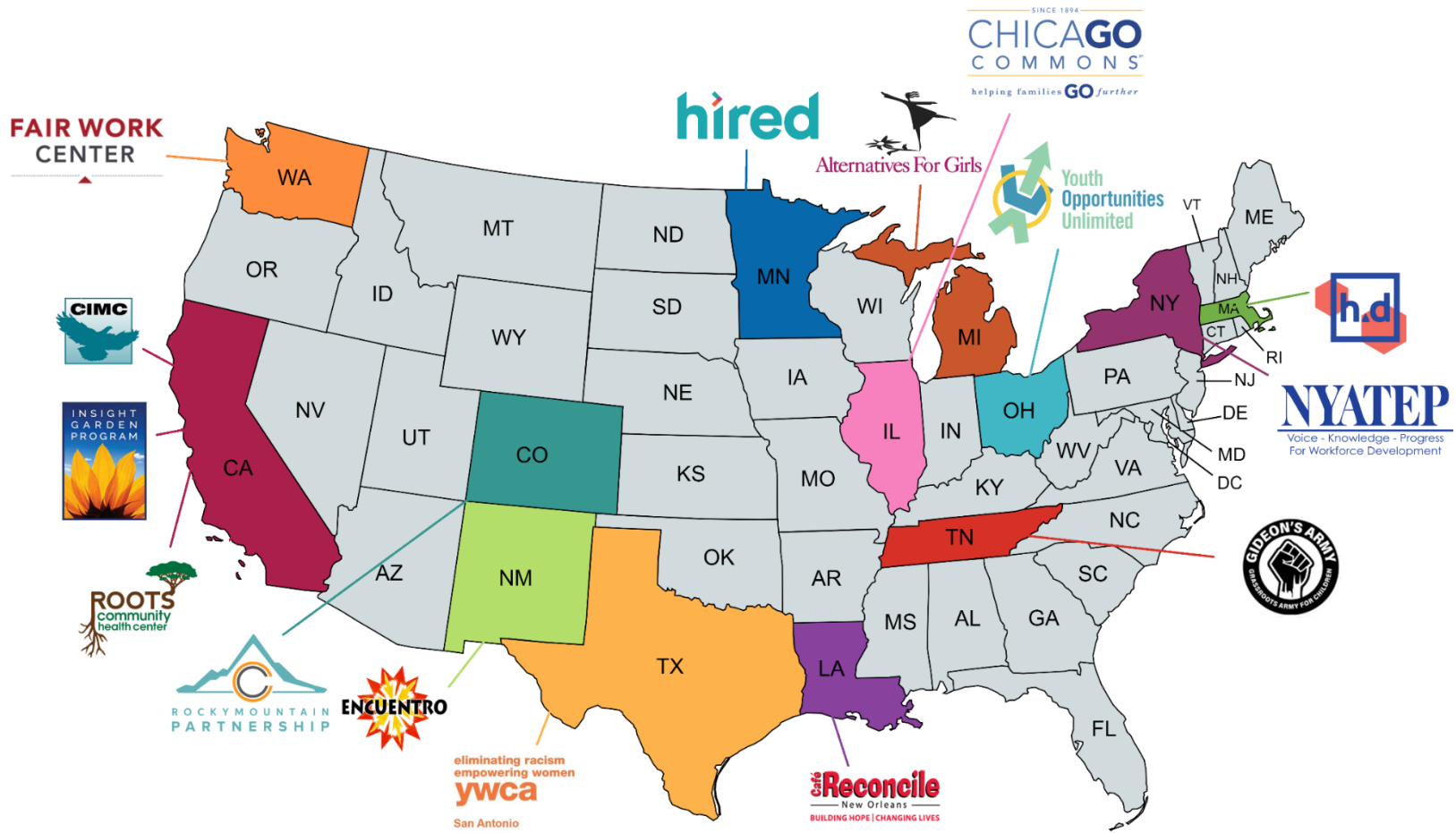
More information about the evaluation questions can be found in **Appendix A**.

ABOUT GRANTEE ORGANIZATIONS

A total of 15 workforce organizations from across the country were selected for the first round of the initiative. Fund grant awards ranged from \$60,000 to \$75,000 for the one-year grant cycle. The 15 Fund grantees are comprised of a wide variety of community-based organizations based in 13 states. **Exhibit 2** on the following page shows where grantee organizations are located. Organizations address a variety of focus areas including education, workforce development, housing, homelessness, immigration, food security, mental health/healthcare, safety/security, and transportation. Services range from emergency services, counseling and psychotherapy, primary health care, social-emotional learning and academic support, restorative justice programming, worker education and organizing, occupational skills training, free legal services to underserved populations, and access to shelter and affordable housing.

Appendix C provides a short description of each grantee, including its mission and vision, the workforce programs and services it offers, key partnerships, and experience centering worker and learner voice. Grantees overwhelmingly serve communities of color who have historically and systemically faced barriers to education and employment. Between 50 and 100 percent of the people grantees serve are Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), with a handful of grantees' missions focused on serving specific populations (including Latine immigrants and Native American populations). Additionally, grantees who focus on specific social or economic challenges, such as poverty or violence reduction, also find themselves predominantly serving BIPOC communities. **Appendix D** provides a summary of the populations and percent BIPOC individuals that each grantee serves, their focus areas (as described above), and brief examples of how grantees center worker and learners of color in their organizations.

Exhibit 2. Where Grantees are Based



ABOUT THIS REPORT

This Interim Evaluation Report highlights key learnings and outcomes that have emerged halfway through the Fund’s implementation. It is informed by data collection activities carried out from February through May 2023, which included a comprehensive analysis of grantee applications from all 15 Fund grantees and interviews with 26 individuals across 14 of those grantees via video conference.¹ Data from these sources were synthesized and are presented within the remaining chapters of this report. Chapter Two presents grantees’ perspectives on and how they initially planned to center workers and learners of color in their grant-funded projects, while Chapter Three focuses on grantees’ experiences in implementing their projects and their plans for future work. Chapter Four looks at how grantees engaged workers and learners in project design and implementation, and Chapter Five summarizes emerging learnings to support the Fund’s ongoing grantmaking efforts. Finally, Chapter Six provides final thoughts on grantees’ work to date and offers additional lines of inquiry for the next half of the grant year.

¹ We were unable to reach one grantee in time to conduct an interview to collect data for this report.

CHAPTER 2: GRANTEE PERSPECTIVES AND PLANS

The Fund for Workforce Equity “aims to center workers of color in the design and implementation of workforce policies and programs”² and drew encouragement from its Racial Equity Framework³ to provide flexible resources to workforce development organizations looking to expand their work in this space. To understand what drives grantee strategies and activities to center workers and learners of color the evaluation sought to first establish how grantees define and operationalize workforce equity. This chapter presents how, at the outset of their grants, grantees interpreted workforce equity, and the strategies and approaches grantees planned to implement using Fund grants.

GRANTEE DEFINITIONS AND APPROACHES TO OPERATIONALIZING WORKFORCE EQUITY

Most grantees did not have a written or named definition of workforce equity. However, grantees did share core concepts related to their understanding of term, which varied from promoting access to resources to changing systems that disproportionately impact historically marginalized communities.

Approximately half of grantees shared that one key component of equity involves promoting community access to resources that enable more workers and learners to participate in education, employment, and career advancement. Grantees noted that workforce opportunities, including education, employment, and career advancement, are not typically created to ensure communities of color to thrive and succeed. Given this, grantees posit that disproportionately impacted communities require resources and supports that uniquely serve workers and learners of color if they are to level the systemic playing field within the workforce system.

“We want to look at opportunities that...could level the playing field for our communities to participate in and take advantage of funding that might be available.”

“We want everybody...to have access to the necessary resources for success for them... We want equity for everybody in [terms of resources and] what works for them.”

Approximately half of grantees shared that workforce equity includes acknowledging that many aspects of the workforce development system have been shaped by institutionalized racism and white supremacist values. Grantees observed that an important means of increasing workforce equity is to try to change the system and its values. For instance, staff at one organization shared that part of advancing equity is recognizing that job networks are “built on white affluence,” and working towards equity means changing companies’ internal practices to better engage and retain BIPOC workers. One way they do this is by requiring that corporate partners go through their racial equity training to break down institutional barriers and keep employer partners accountable.

² The Fund for Workforce Equity: Request for Proposals. 2022. https://www.workforce-equity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Fund-for-Workforce-Equity-RFP_Final_7.14.22.pdf

³ Leung, L-S. (2021). *A Racial Equity Framework for Workforce Development Funders*. Workforce Matters. <https://workforce-matters.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Workforce-Matters-Report-2021-Final.pdf>

Staff from another organization shared that they work with several organizations (including employers) that highly value traditional educational pathways, such as degrees from prestigious educational institutions like Ivy League universities. At the same time, these organizations undervalue alternative and “less prestigious” educational pathways, like degrees or credentials from public schools, including community colleges (which are predominantly utilized by workers and learners of color), even though these pathways also provide the necessary skills to succeed in the workplace. In this context, workforce equity means dismantling these types of biases and stereotypes that act as barriers for BIPOC communities.

“Everything we do is centered towards disrupting and transforming systems so that they are built by the folks who they are impacting...Making social mobility is our end goal, and we know that in order to do that we have to disrupt and transform the systems that have created and continue to perpetuate the inequities that we see.”

Approximately two-thirds of grantees asserted that workforce equity means centering the perspectives of workers and learners to inform the design and implementation of programs and services. Grantees further shared that they are working towards or currently engaging workers and learners in decision-making and design, and by including workers and learners of color their programming and services resonate and promote success in the lives of the very same communities.

“In an ideal world, folks who are experiencing the challenges should be the folks with the authority and leading.”

A third of grantees shared that positioning workers and learners as leaders and advocates for change is central to equity. A final component of many grantees’ definitions of workforce equity is increasing the number of workers and learners of color in positions of authority and decision-making in both workforce provider and employer organizations. Grantee staff have previously observed that promoting community members to a place where they are authority figures in spaces that have historically excluded them has helped them feel more empowered. One grantee noted that this practice could be healing for workers and learners of color as it allows them to be self-advocates and guide the change they want to see. Grantees also see the diversification of leadership positions as a related effort.

“[C]entering workers...[means] having workers lead things and having workers speak and give testimony, and preparing them to lead the charge.”

INITIAL GRANTEE PROJECT PLANS

Below we share grantees' initial plans and intentions for engaging workers and learners of color in their grant-funded projects. These planned categories of activities provide a basis by which to understand what ensued in the early stages of grantees project implementation.

Planned Grant Activities

Grantees intended to apply their grant awards in five broad categories of activities, with the largest centering on staff and consultant time on projects, project implementation costs, and participant stipends. **Exhibit 3** provides an overview of planned activities, based on a document review of grantee plans. Grantees used multiple strategies within these categories to implement their projects and engage workers and learners of color, which we describe in the following chapter.

Exhibit 3. Overview of Planned Grant Activities

GRANT ACTIVITIES	DESCRIPTION	# OF GRANTEES
Hiring staff and/or consultant and/or worker and learner time	Program staff, consultant, and participant time for developing program design and implementation.	14
Implementation of worker and learner ideas/feedback	Development of evaluation methods, feedback methods, and advisory and leadership councils.	13
Stipends or honoraria for workers and learners to participate in activities	Monetary compensation for participating in key project design and implementation activities.	13
Supportive services that enable workers and learners to participate in activities	Providing childcare, transportation, and emergency funds.	5
New or expanded partnerships	Collaboration with workforce training and other organizations that build worker power and agency.	1

Unsurprisingly, many planned activities aligned with how grantees defined and operationalized workforce equity. In order to increase resources in their communities, grantees planned to pay workers and learners for their time, as well as provide supportive services to encourage participation. To promote the perspectives of workers and learners of color in design and implementation of programs and services, as well as to support their position as leaders and advocates, grantees planned to ask learners and workers to consult on their projects. Grantees also planned to expand partnerships with other organizations and funders to address and change system issues. The following chapter examines project implementation and the extent to which grantee programs progressed as intended.

CHAPTER 3: GRANT IMPLEMENTATION

In this chapter, we describe grantees' project activities and experiences implementing their Fund projects. The evaluation team documented grantee progress, noting where programs operated as planned, factors that facilitated or challenged implementation, and perspectives on fund support activities.

GRANTEE PROJECT ACTIVITIES

As noted earlier, many grantees planned to engage workers and learners by gathering their feedback and input, which grantees are doing by increasing their data collection efforts or building existing work to gather worker data. Grantees also planned to implement worker and learner feedback which aligned with implementation activities around building advisory boards. Below we share information on common project activities.

Approximately two-thirds of grantees are building on existing work or advancing previously identified equity needs. For example, one grantee is using their Fund grant to build on earlier work with an ethnographer, who interviewed young adults on workforce programming, to capture stronger data that can better inform job quality for young adults. Similarly, another grantee is using its Fund grant to expand census data collection work that has been in development for years. A third grantee, through a previous private grant, gathered the voices of women experiencing poverty in various workforce programs, highlighting wage gaps for early childhood development professionals. Their grant with the Fund will amplify this work to build out a wage equity campaign. A fourth grantee is recruiting recently-employed BIPOC workers, who have completed a medical manufacturing training, to capture input on how to better retain and engage BIPOC employees.

A third of grantees are conducting data collection to get a better sense of community needs. Some grantees are designing and administering surveys, including thinking through survey engagement, outreach, and the process for collecting and reviewing data. Others are gathering data qualitatively through focus groups and listening sessions to develop a more nuanced understanding of issues and opportunities in their communities.

A third of grantees are developing and cultivating worker and learner leadership skills. Grantees posit that building worker and learner leadership skills is a means for personal growth and organizational capacity building. One grantee shared that they specifically “want to build voice and build power.” Training topics across grantee projects include strengthening equity-focused leadership competencies, building worker power, organizing and advocacy skills, introducing research and evaluation techniques, amongst others. Another grantee noted that they are focusing on collective capacity building so that worker leaders can be involved in recruiting other participants and shaping the training, outreach, and enforcement priorities for their cohort.

A few grantees are building advisory boards and other vehicles for participant input and feedback. One grantee noted that the development of a community coalition will play a key role in supporting workers and learners of color. They anticipate spending a large amount of time focusing on developing this coalition so that it can provide insight and co-develop solutions related to internal company practices, such as hiring, retention, and promoting talent. Another grantee shared that building close relationships

with participants is a key grant activity and they are investing in multiple ways to do that, including hosting cultural events, worker focus groups, and listening sessions. Through these processes, grantees hope to cultivate community leadership and trust.

Factors Facilitating Project Implementation

Grantees observed a number of positive factors related to grant implementation. These included leveraged funding and partnerships, good communication with project partners, and highly engaged participants.

Leveraged funding has helped support grantees in their efforts to engage workers and learners. Half of grantees have used supplementary funding to further develop grant activities. Grantees have hired staff to support workforce equity strategies, paid stipends to involve more participants in program design and implementation, offered services that complement their Fund projects, and ensured the sustainability of their projects beyond the current grant. For example, one grantee is utilizing investments from partner agencies and employers to help deepen their engagement with the community.

“Most of our projects run about a quarter of a million dollars because there's just so much staff time involved. Also, the expertise and the way that we're able to convene these folks and ensure that community is compensated is just so innovative and unique.”

Partnerships have played a key role in helping grantees launch or expand their project activities. Through grantees' standing relationships with other organizations, about a third have piloted new or innovative approaches to center worker voice, scaled or expanded advocacy efforts, or reached new program participants. For example, staff and participants at one grantee organization had been involved in ongoing policy advocacy work at the local, state, and national levels.

“Right now we have also partnership that we've been building, and they've been helpful to escalate this advocacy work at the national level.”

Transparent and open communication with partners has been instrumental in keeping the project moving along. Grantees who continue to regularly meet with their project and partner teams have been able to navigate implementation challenges and capture real-time feedback on project direction. For example, one grantee expressed that timely communication with partners was important for developing trust and ensuring everyone was on board, especially when launching a new project.

“[L]aunching a project like this, just keeping lines of communication flowing between everybody really makes a big difference. So I think we've found that rhythm.”

Workers and learners have been eager and excited to share their perspectives. About a third of grantees observed that participants have been enthusiastic about providing feedback on a variety of topics, including supports needed to continue in their career and education pathways and the barriers and challenges they face in their day-to-day lives. One grantee whose project involves worker listening sessions found that workers were more interested in participating in the sessions than initially anticipated. In fact, the number of interested workers exceeded the number that had initially signed up to participate.

"[Workers] have just been coming out of the woodwork, so we're getting a lot of really solid feedback...there is overwhelming interest in [the worker listening sessions]."

Factors Challenging Project Implementation

Reflecting the complex nature of equity work, grantees faced some challenges in getting their projects off the ground. We detail two common project implementation challenges below.

Grantees are encountering administrative and organizational challenges. Half of grantees have experienced staffing challenges related to hiring and onboarding, turnover, and leadership changes. A third of grantees also described challenges working with multiple stakeholders, including coordinating multiple schedules and considering multiple perspectives while ensuring that everyone felt heard. Staff at one organization shared that they shifted their project timeline due to logistical hurdles in getting access to their employer partners' facilities for worker focus groups.

Workers and learners have limited capacity to participate in grant-funded projects. About a third of grantees noted that because most of their participants balance multiple responsibilities, including school and work, caretaking, and involvement in other components of grantee programming, such as advisory committees, it is challenging for them to participate in additional grantee activities. Other barriers include challenges with transportation to grantee activities and finding childcare during those activities.

Overcoming Implementation Challenges

Approximately half of grantees are refining or expanding mechanisms of their project and/or expanding the scope of what they originally anticipated. Grantees discussed the evolution and development of their project as a natural process that occurs during the beginning of implementation, and for many of these grantees this means refining logistical steps and mechanisms or investing in areas that they under-anticipated focusing on in their initial project outline.

Given worker and learner capacity challenges, grantees worked to better engage participants and make participation in project activities more accessible. About one-third of grantees adjusted their projects to better engage workers and learners using strategies to make project participation accessible. For example, one grantee hoping to recruit teachers of color to an after school advisory council pivoted to meeting with teachers during their lunch hour when it was more convenient for the teachers. Another grantee had planned to host a series of socioemotional training courses for youth early in the year and realized that it would be better to offer the training at the end of the summer, just before youth start school. Other grantee strategies include using Zoom to minimize the need for travel, offering multiple opportunities for participation in worker listening sessions, and providing childcare and meals during meeting times. Additionally, a few grantees specifically noted the importance of providing stipends and compensating workers and learners for their time.

"[I]n all of our work we[are] just trying to make sure that we are approaching this where people aren't doing things they're not compensated for and ...finding it useful to them."

Grantees are scaling or expanding the scope of their initial project. About one-third of grantees hope to involve more participants in project activities, extend the length of their project, or incorporate their project into other existing organizational efforts. For example, one grantee's community coalition model was originally designed to work within one of the organization's focus areas, specifically its hiring,

retention, and employee advancement focus area. However, the grantee is now expanding the model to inform its work as a whole after recognizing that all its focus areas would be improved through increased support from a community coalition that has voice to inform decision-making.

Grantee Perceptions of Fund Support Activities

In addition to grants, the Fund provides grantee organizations access to a Learning Community⁴ and TA support, as well as expertise, resources, and individual coaching on human-centered design, and other best practices for elevating work and learner voice. Grantee staff who participated in these activities reported that, overall, they found both the Learning Community and individual coaching sessions valuable. Grantees gave several reasons for why they found this support from the Fund helpful.

Grantees appreciated the Learning Community because it provided them with the opportunity to learn from their peers in real-time. Multiple grantees stated that they liked Learning Community sessions where they could share their experiences with centering worker and learner voice as well as hear from other grantees about their own experience. This was especially true for grantees who were the first in their communities to carry out this type of work. Grantees also reported they were eager to network and connect with each other and were excited by the prospect of learning from and leveraging one another's work.

I find it really fruitful just hearing from other people's processes and where we could grow. I get very excited when there are organizations that are community organizing organizations because other than offering some positions to our parents we haven't done such a great job of building them into leaders. And so I'm like, 'Oh, that could be another way to grow it in the future.'"

"We found [Learning Community sessions] helpful to get that pulse on what else is happening and what other challenges grantees are experiencing. Sometimes when you're in an innovative space like this, where you're trying to reimagine what it means to do workforce equity work, there's not a whole lot that you can turn to in your own region or community to model off of. Sometimes, even if you have a national network, like our partnership does, nobody has really cracked the nut on this kind of work. It's really great to be in a space with other folks doing that learning and experiencing that learning in real time as well.

Grantees also liked that the Learning Community provided a space for self-reflection. Two grantees highlighted a session on power and privilege as being especially influential for their own journeys as leaders in this work. These sessions allowed them to pause and reflect on their positionality and how that impacts their work and their communities.

⁴ Learning Community sessions are confidential spaces where grantees can discuss growth and challenges related to their work and receive and offer peer support. Sandra Grace, LLC, a Change Management firm specializing in mental health counseling, strategic advising and planning, and professional development training leads the Learning Community and provides other TA supports.

“I was just sharing with [my colleague] how exciting that session [on power and privilege] was. I think these sessions really help [me] begin to create the structure and create the bones of [future] programming. It'll allow me to keep certain things in mind, mainly the population that I'm serving and how I can better serve them.”

“The framing of [the session] was really interesting and also incredibly intentional about centering the interpersonal aspect of who we are as leaders before getting into structural inequity, which is where I wanted to jump, but it was so useful. Afterwards, I was thinking about it and I was like, ‘That was such a good reference point for people to know to reflect before we even get into the external or what our participants are facing: how do we understand our source of power and our power with and our power over in that context?’”

Grantees also shared that **one-on-one coaching, individualized resources, and thought partnership has helped advance the implementation of their projects.** Grantees met with a coach for support on issues specific to their grants, such as managing conflict resolution and getting feedback on project materials. According to grantees, these meetings have helped them move forward with project activities.

“Our first coaching session was really informative and very helpful to just brainstorm with [our coach]... One of the things that has surfaced that we've been having to address as a community is the issue with conflict resolution. We are probing [our coach] in terms of her expertise and will see in the next coaching session how we can build on that...That's one piece that I think I can say in terms of program implementation that has affected programming in some way.”

“The one-on-one sessions with [our coach] have been so helpful in constructing the curriculum, presenting topics [to participants], and looking at things from a lens that we may not have seen before and through the eyes of individuals taking the course...I feel like we're a little bit more ahead than maybe we thought we were going to be.”

PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

While it is too early to consider project scopes beyond the grant period, the majority of grantees have articulated intentions to sustain and/or expand their projects next year and beyond. For example:

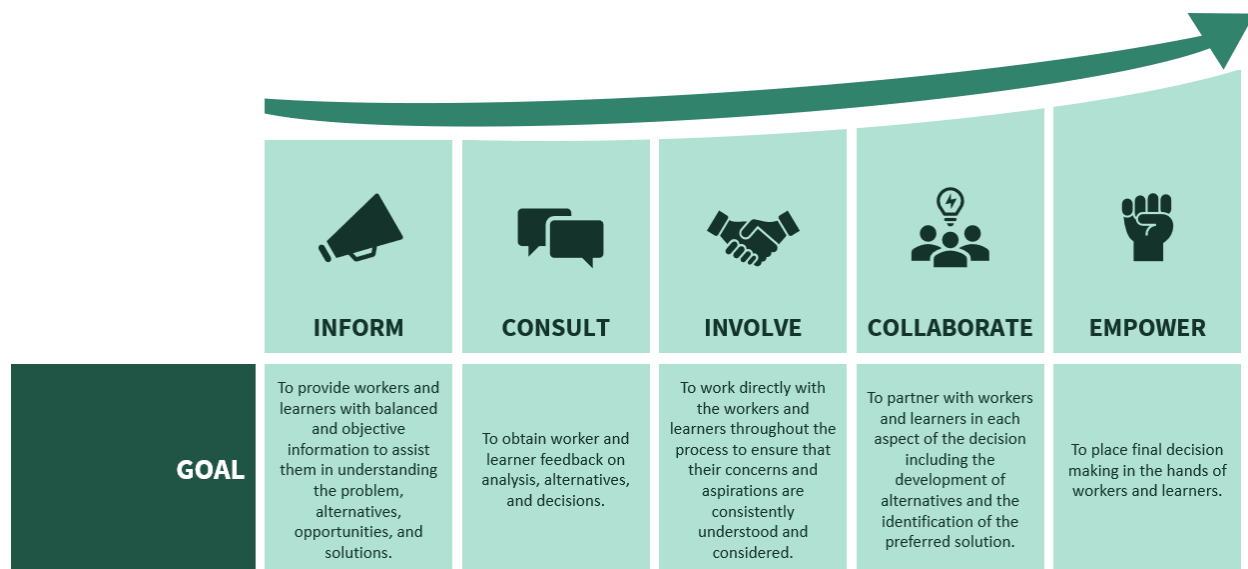
- ❖ As noted above, grantees have leveraged additional funding for their work and are applying for funding to continue or scale their projects. They also note that workforce equity is of growing importance to foundations and that there has been an increase in the number of philanthropies looking to fund programs in this area.
- ❖ Some grantees will have opportunities to reapply for grants with existing external funders at larger levels and others are securing diverse sources of funding, including employers and other workforce partners.
- ❖ Several grantees anticipate sustaining their project by making it a formal part of their organization's work or by incorporating it within an existing program.

CHAPTER 4: ASSESSING ENGAGEMENT OF WORKERS AND LEARNERS

As we have described in preceding chapters, grantees employ several strategies and approaches to center workers and learners of color in their grant projects. To better understand these efforts, we situate these strategies within the Engagement Spectrum (Exhibit 4), a helpful model that identifies five levels of participation in organizational decision-making that range from low to high engagement.⁵

At the “Inform” level, organizations provide workers and learners with relevant information to help them understand a particular problem and its solutions. In the “Consult” level organizations obtain and consider input from workers and learners as they make decisions about programming and services. In the third level, organizations “Involve” workers and learners in the decision-making process to establish shared understanding of choices and actions and to ensure their concerns and perspectives are reflected in the final decision(s). At the “Collaborate” level of the engagement spectrum, workers and learners help explore different aspects of a problem, identify alternative solutions, and define the decision-making process itself, though organizations are still the ultimate decision-makers. These levels are not mutually exclusive, and activities within each level can occur concurrently.

Exhibit 4. Engagement Spectrum (Adapted from the IAPP Spectrum of Public Participation)



The following section juxtaposes grantee activities in relation to the spectrum to understand what level of involvement grantees engage workers and learners in for their fund project. It should be noted that this following section only refers to the current project activities, and not levels of engagement that grantees involve in their overall organization and work. Though this engagement spectrum shows progressive levels of civic participation and decision-making processes, it in no way insinuates that grantees will be engaging in all levels to achieve their project objectives.

⁵ This framework was first developed by the International Association for Public Participation as the *Spectrum of Public Participation* in the early 2000s.

Exhibit 5. Overview of Grantee Project Engagement Levels

ENGAGEMENT LEVEL	# OF GRANTEES
Inform	2
Consult	5
Involve	9
Collaborate	1
Empower	0

Table note: There is inconclusive activity detail for two grantees, and as such they are not included in this table.

Grantees' project activities fell across this spectrum, with approximately a fourth of grantees current project activities involving more than one engagement component. **Exhibit 5** provides an overview of how many grantee projects activities fall within each of the engagement levels.

- ❖ **Two grantees described project activities that fall within the “Inform” level of providing workers and learners of color with relevant information.** One grantee shared that they are currently providing the community with information on legal rights, and have held multiple cultural events, stating that the purpose of this is to “[have] more people know the space.”
- ❖ **Five grantees described activities in the “Consult” level, and attaining feedback from worker and learners as they progress with program implementation and decision-making.** One grantee described engaging in data collection, and engaging alumni in an annual survey. Another grantee shared that they are inviting folks [workers and learners of color] to work with their major employer for retention and overall ensuring the workspace of this employer is deliberate in hiring and retaining workers and learners of color.
- ❖ **Nine grantees described activities in the level, “Involve,” where they have included workers and learners in the decision-making process to ensure their concerns and perspectives are incorporated.** Most of the grantees described the creation of advisory committees, coalitions, cohorts, and councils to review and advise. One grantee shared that the first quarter of the year they worked on bringing together an alumni council, and recently held their first meeting with them. Another grantee shared that their activities have included creating and meeting with an advisory council “to hear from them, [and learn] what are some of the other needs that [they] have.”
- ❖ **One grantee shared activity in the “Collaborate” level of the engagement spectrum, where workers and learners partner together in every aspect of decision making.** This grantee shared objectives on collaboration between development, community, and marketing, stating that they are “working to engage alumni in meaningful ways”. With this objective, they introduced program alumni to potential funders and employers with the goal of developing this collaboration.

While grantees did not describe activities in the highest level of the engagement spectrum, the “Empower” level, more than a third of grantees intend to have their project engage in this level. Future evaluation efforts will focus on eliciting more feedback on what grantees and workers and learners see as an optimal level of engagement given their capacity, funding, and community's interest.

CHAPTER 5: EMERGING LEARNINGS FROM THE FUND

In this chapter, we offer initial learnings gleaned from grantees about what it takes to implement these types of projects.

LEARNINGS RELATED TO ENGAGING WORKERS AND LEARNERS

Understanding worker and learner experiences, support needs, and priorities is integral for centering their voices in project implementation. Over half of grantees shared that their organizations have developed a more in-depth understanding of a number of topics from conversations, listening sessions, and focus groups with workers and learners. These topics included:

- ❖ Challenges and barriers workers face in their day-to-day lives and how they navigate those challenges. For example, employers who are not responsive to their needs nor to workplace health and safety issues.
- ❖ Supports workers and learners need to participate in programming and to find and retain employment, such as childcare, transportation assistance, mental health resources, and other wraparound supports.
- ❖ Job characteristics that workers value and that shape their sense of belonging in a workplace, such as benefits and wages, supportive employers, and feeling valued and appreciated.
- ❖ Best practices for conducting outreach and sharing resources with others in the community who are not yet involved in grantee programming, for example in person outreach, participant involvement in outreach efforts, and using outreach strategies that have been effective in other areas of grantees' work.

LEARNINGS RELATED TO ADVANCING ORGANIZATIONAL WORK

Grantee organizations consider themselves employers and find it important to reflect on their internal organizational dynamics. About a quarter of grantees expressed that they are thinking about their role as employers themselves as they implement their projects. One grantee noted, "looking inward can be painful, but we have to do it." Some of the ways grantees are incorporating learnings within their organizations include:

- ❖ Thinking through what it means to be a supportive employer for working families, such as providing equitable supports for employees with children.
- ❖ Identifying areas of organizational improvement, for example using project learnings to guide diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts, and make changes that will benefit participants and staff.
- ❖ Continuing to create a safe workplace where staff, especially women, feel empowered to advocate for themselves, for example by pursuing initiatives around wage equity and hiring external consultants to train staff around career ladders and wages.
- ❖ Implementing hiring, retention, and promotion practices informed by staff and workers, for example by engaging in conversations with internal teams and making improvements in these areas alongside other employers.

“We’ve even heard from our own internal HR team, which is part of the effort because, for us, it’s important to walk the walk... We’ve actually implemented a lot of what we’ve supported employers through this cohort to implement...It’s completely transformed the way that we think about hiring, retention, and promotion internally.”

LEARNINGS RELATED TO THE FIELD AND GRANTEE COMMUNITIES

Sharing learnings and findings with both participants and policymakers is key for advancing equitable workforce policies and practices. At least half of grantees plan to share their project findings within their communities and spheres of influence. Grantees and participants are connected to local, state, and national policy and advocacy organizations, coalitions and collaboratives, and other stakeholder groups. These networks provide grantees with multiple avenues to share best practices lessons learned. Some of the ways grantees plan to share findings include webinar or conference presentations, papers and reports, and newsletters.

“We really want to impact decision makers—funders, policy makers—as they’re making decisions about program funding and just strategies, to say, ‘Hey, look, listen to these young people...let’s actually listen to them as we’re designing strategies.’”

One grantee plans to publicly share a report with workers who contributed to the program and shared their experiences, and with the broader field in hopes of bringing others into the work.

“Once we have the report, that’s a resource for bringing it back to the workers who participated... We want to make sure that we go back to both the participants and share it [the report] out publicly since it touched on a lot of the issues around workplace problems...we want to be able to uplift that, to raise up the issues that workers shared, and also to see if we can use that to bring some more people in.”

CHAPTER 6: FINAL THOUGHTS

This evaluation provides a valuable opportunity to understand how the Fund for Workforce Equity is supporting learning among funders and workforce organizations to expand the use of effective strategies to center and amplify the voices of workers and learners of color. Though the findings detailed here are preliminary, they highlight potential areas of success, challenge, and opportunity as projects move into the second half of their grant cycles. Grantees have access to a pool of workers and learners who are eager to co-design programming and have leveraged funding and partnerships to help implement their projects. While they contend with staffing and capacity challenges, many continue to adapt their projects to make participation accessible. Now that they have a lay of the land, grantees' charge is to involve workers and learners more closely in workforce program design and implementation.

Over the next six months, SPR will continue to document these efforts through additional data collection activities. These include conducting a second round of grantee interviews to learn about the outcomes of grant projects, interviews with Fund Advisory Committee members to gather funder perspectives on philanthropy in workforce development, and focus groups with workers and learners to lift their experiences in workforce program design and implementation. Further, the evaluation team will explore or deepen other lines of inquiry, such as:

- ❖ Eliciting more feedback on what grantees and workers and learners see as an optimal level of engagement given their capacity, funding, and community's interest.
- ❖ Relatedly, offering recommendations for how grantees could move along the worker and learner engagement continuum.
- ❖ Determining how participants are continuing to engage in workforce policy and program design and implementation based on their involvement in grantee projects.
- ❖ Identifying how grantees are applying what they learn to advance, progress, or shift organizational policies and procedures in their respective organizations.
- ❖ Identifying how funders are applying what they learn to advance, progress, or shift funding and engagement strategies in their respective organizations.

The Fund for Workforce Equity initiative also raises critical questions about the role of philanthropy in workforce development programs and policies, how funders can have a significant impact on the field while supporting the capacity of grassroots organizations working in local contexts, and how organizations with varying levels of readiness to engage in equity work can meaningfully engage workers and learners in their communities. The evaluation team's subsequent analysis and Final Evaluation Report hope to lift learnings that can help answer these questions. We look forward to deepening our engagement in this work with our partners in the Fund for Workforce Equity.

APPENDIX A: EVALUATION QUESTIONS

We see the evaluation as having three core areas of inquiry: (1) Assessing Grantee Activities, (2) Understanding Outcomes of Grantees' Work, and (3) Surfacing Learnings from the Fund. Within each inquiry area are detailed learning and evaluation questions. Many of these are taken fully or in part from the Request for Proposals (RFP). Others have been added by SPR and reflect key analytical frameworks we have used in our past work.

Assessing Grantee Activities

1. How were grant funds used? How did these funds help grantees advance workforce equity in their organizations?
 - a. How do grantees define or understand "workforce equity?" How do participants define or understand "workforce equity?"
2. In what ways did organizations center workers of color in workforce policy, program design, and implementation?
 - a. What were grantees' strategies or approaches to center workers of color in workforce policy, program design, and/or implementation?
 - b. How did grantees develop their strategies or approaches? What helped or informed these strategies or approaches?
 - c. How did grantees utilize Fund resources (technical assistance, individual coaching, and the learning community) to implement their projects?
 - d. What other tools or resources did grantees utilize to implement their projects (e.g., leveraged funding, existing tools or practices, partnerships)?
3. Are grantees planning to sustain or expand their projects?
 - a. What will it take to expand the adaptation and use of strategies to center and amplify the voices of workers and learners?
 - b. To what extent did Fund resources contribute to grantees' broader goals to center workers of color in workforce policy and program design and implementation?
 - c. What other ways are grantees advancing workforce equity within their organizations and/or in the larger field?

Understanding Outcomes of Grantees' Work

4. What resulted from grantees' strategies or approaches to center workers of color? What were the successes? What were the learning opportunities?
 - a. To what extent did grantees successfully implement their projects and meet their anticipated objectives?
 - b. What were the barriers and facilitators of project implementation and outcomes?
 - c. How are grantees integrating and sustaining equity-based practices?
5. What are the lessons learned from the grantee, participant, and funder perspectives?
 - d. What and how are grantees learning about increasing learner/worker engagement and creating more equitable workforce outcomes especially for workers and learners of color?
 - e. What and how are participants learning and/or benefiting from being engaged in grantee projects?

- f. What and how are funders learning about increasing learner/worker engagement and creating more equitable workforce outcomes especially for workers and learners of color?

Surfacing Learnings from the Fund

6. To what extent are mindset shifts or narrative change evident as a result of grantee projects?
 - a. How are grantees advancing, progressing, or shifting organizational policies and procedures based on these learnings?
 - b. How are participants continuing to engage in workforce policy and program design and implementation based on their involvement in grantee projects?
 - c. How are funders advancing, progressing, or shifting funding and engagement strategies based on these learnings?
7. What are applicable lessons for the field as other partners work to center and amplify the voices of workers and learners?
 - a. What pre-conditions are necessary for organizations to undertake this work? How does organizational context facilitate or inhibit progress?
 - b. What tools, resources, and supports do grantees need to find, support, and engage proximate leaders who are workers and learners of color?
 - c. What tools, resources, and supports do workers and learners of color need to engage in this work?
 - d. What strategies can philanthropy use to support field partners interested in undertaking this work? Are there ways funders can be better partners to grantees?
 - e. What implications for the workforce system are emerging from this work?

APPENDIX B: THEORY OF CHANGE

The Fund's Theory of Change (TOC) is intended to articulate a pathway towards its vision to improve workforce programs and their outcomes, primarily for people of color, and help advance workforce equity. It includes core assumptions, context, and constraints; inputs; strategies and activities; outputs; and anticipated immediate-, intermediate-, and long-term outcomes/systems-level impacts. While the TOC will evolve over time as new findings emerge, it offers a means for the Fund to hold itself accountable to its intentions. The TOC draws upon the Fund's earlier conversations and strategic documents, and more recent grantee application materials.

ASSUMPTIONS AND CONSTRAINTS

The necessary conditions for change.

- People of color are disproportionately employed in lower-wage jobs and could benefit from workforce training opportunities and other supports designed to increase their earning power.
- Although there are many workforce programs that serve large numbers of people of color with the aim of providing them with workforce training, most of those programs do not involve their participants, including those of color, in designing their programs.
- Many programs and services better meet the needs of their constituents of color when they engage them in providing input into program and service design and implementation.
- Funders and their institutions hold unique power to disrupt systemic racism and create a more equitable workforce development field.
- The purpose of the Fund is to offer capacity building support and \$60,000 to \$75,000 in grant funding for one year to grantees working to include, respect, value, and honor the perspectives of workers, learners, and job candidates of color in their workforce programs and policies.
- Grantees might be limited in the implementation of their projects by organizational constraints (e.g., leadership, funding, and staffing changes, experience with centering BIPOC workers and learners in workforce initiatives), and social, political, and economic constraints (e.g., economic recession, public health crises, local workforce and labor policies). As a result, grantees may require flexibility in how they use their grant funds.
- Current constraints on how public funding can be used, performance requirements, and other factors may impede or disincentivize the field to change.

INPUTS

What the Fund uses—resources required for the initiative.

- Workforce Matters network
- Fund Advisory Committee
- \$1,000,000 pooled fund
- Consulting support (facilitation, learning, evaluation, and TA)

ACTIVITIES / STRATEGIES

What the Fund does.

- Provides grants to organizations to test/pilot/expand strategies that center workers of color in designing and implementing workforce programs and policies.
- Provides TA support, including individual coaching, to grantee organizations that addresses specific capacity building needs.
- Facilitates a learning community to help organizations share learning.
- Funds an evaluation to capture implementation, output, and early outcome findings from the funded grants.
- Communicates lessons learned from the initiative with grantees, funders, and the field; and connecting grantees with other funder networks.

OUTPUTS

What the Fund produces—tangible products as a result of the activities.

- Products of grants
 - # and types of individuals reached
 - # and types of advisory teams created
 - # and \$ of stipends or honoraria given
 - # and types of supportive services provided
 - # of types of new or expanded partnerships
 - # of other funding sources leveraged
 - # and types of implementation of new ideas/feedback provided by workers and learners
 - # of staff, consultant, or worker and learner hours for the development and implementation of projects
 - Assessment of funder support from the grantee perspective
 - Assessment of grantee activities and implementation from the participant perspective
- Products of TA support
 - # of sessions for gathering and utilizing client feedback, human-centered design and journey mapping, advisory and/or leadership councils, and community or worker organizing
 - # of one-on-one meetings with grantees
 - Assessment of TA provided from the grantee perspective
- Products of learning community and fund advisory committee
 - # of learning community sessions
 - # of funder advisory committee meetings
 - Assessment of learning community supports from the grantee perspective
 - Assessment of funder engagement from the grantee perspective
- Products of communication and evaluation
 - Participant advisory committee
 - Presentations on emerging findings
 - Interim report and final report

OUTCOMES

What the Fund achieves—behavioral changes resulting from outputs.

Shorter-term outcomes: Lessons from worker and learner of color-centered/led initiatives shape and direct the Fund and grantee-led work, and increase support for workers and learners of color.

- For the Fund and the field
 - Funders and the field recognize the grantee-level and systems-level facilitators and barriers to implementing projects that are worker and learner of color-centered/led.
 - Funders and the field test/pilot strategies to fund and support organizations engaging workers and learners of color in program design and implementation.
 - Funders and the field develop nuanced expectations of grantee activities and outcomes given the time and level of support provided.

- For grantees and participants
 - Grantees recognize the grantee-level and systems-level facilitators and barriers to implementing projects that are worker and learner of color-centered/led.
 - Grantees can articulate what it means to “center” workers and learners of color in programming.
 - Participants’ perspectives are included, respected, valued, and honored, and their input leads to changes or adaptations in grantee workforce programs and policies that better support worker and learner journeys.
 - Grantees create sustainability plans for projects they expect to continue after the end of the grant, including leveraging or securing funding from other sources and demonstrating efforts to continue to center workers and learners of color after grants end.
 - Grantees develop new or expand existing partnerships and engage in peer-to-peer learning around best practices to center worker and learner of color voice.

Longer-term outcomes / systems-level impacts: the Fund’s efforts to support worker and learner of color-centered/led initiatives spur increased funding, engagement of, and scaling of similar efforts.

- More organizations explicitly take steps to engage, listen to, respond to workers and learners of color and design programs that respond to their needs, and continued deepening of efforts from organizations that are farther along on this journey.
- More funding is available to support organizations in centering workers and learners of color, particularly in designing and implementing programs and policies, and there is more deference to and flexibility in grantees’ use of federal and state dollars to implement solutions based on worker and learner engagement.
- Programs, funders, policymakers, and other stakeholders better understand effective ways to seek the input, participation, and leadership of workers and learners of color in designing and implementing workforce programs and policies and invest in these methods.
- Ability of workforce programs to meet needs of workers and learners of color improves, and overall system outcomes improve.

APPENDIX C: GRANTEE DESCRIPTIONS



Alternatives For Girls, Detroit, MI

Alternatives For Girls (AFG) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to help girls and young women avoid violence and teen pregnancy, by helping them access supports, resources and opportunities to make positive choices and be safe. AFG primarily serves at-risk young women and girls of color, including those that are experiencing homelessness, human trafficking, and domestic violence. Their workforce development services provide multiple pathways for at-risk women for social and economic mobility which include integrated career exploration and planning, training and placement services. In the course of its work, AFGs has developed various partnerships with local employers and training providers. AFG has prior experience incorporating the voices of youth and young adults within other agency programs, and ensure two board seats are reserved for AFG participants or community members with lived experience, and have Youth, Parent and Community Councils that provide feedback on AFG Prevention program services.



California Indian Manpower Consortium, Sacramento and San Diego County, CA

California Indian Manpower Consortium (CIMC) is a non-profit consortium of 104 reservations and rancherias in California, which is owned and operated by Native Americans and advocates for the educational and economic advancement of the first Americans', including Native American, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian individuals who are low-income, unemployed or underemployed. CIMC's workforce development services include employment, training, education, nutritional assistance, housing assistance, childcare, eldercare, follow-up services, and other supportive services that ensure career success while also reserving the cultural integrity of its participants.



Chicago Commons Association, Chicago, IL

Chicago Commons is a neighborhood focused non-profit organization that supports and empowers under-resourced individuals, families, and communities in overcoming poverty and systemic barriers. Chicago Commons utilizes a multi-generational approach to its available services, which primarily focus on childhood education, family -centered adult education, and senior services and care. Their Family Hub programs includes a range of supportive services and educational opportunities, including workshops, individual coaching, strengthening families' economic mobility, financial security, and health/well-being. Their Family Hub workforce development program includes employment coaching and pathways for parents, as well as cohorts of parents in college classes. The majority of their participants are low-income working families who fall below the federal poverty line, and 95% of parents are African American women or Latinas. Chicago Commons has previously centered workers and learner voices in programming and decision making. For example, they have various programs that integrate participants and parents in their development, operation, planning and programming, including the Family Hub programs, and Pathways for Parents program.



Encuentro, Albuquerque, NM

Encuentro comprises Latine immigrants in Central New Mexico who have come together to support and engage New Mexico residents for social inclusion and economic mobility by providing educational and career development and opportunities and addressing the barriers. The organizations goals are two-fold, and include addressing workforce skill-building needs crucial for employment and social inclusion within the immigrant community, particularly language, literacy, and technology, and in turn supporting individuals in applying those skills and tools for leadership and civic engagement. Encuentro primarily serves English-language learning Latine immigrant adults, most identify as women, and a majority do not have a high school diploma and lack digital literacy skills. Adult education is the primary focus, and includes multiple classes, such as ESL, computer literacy, and those for citizenship. Encuentro's uniquely centers worker and learner voice within the development of programs and ongoing activities, because its staff and board is made up of constituents.



Fair Work Center, Seattle and Yakima Valley, WA

Fair Work Center is an organization with a grassroots worker base, focused on raising and upholding labor standards and building worker power, while fighting for economic and racial justice. Fair Work Center engages in education and learning about the rights of workers and developing tools for exercising those rights, organizes and advocates for changes in the workplace, including industry practices, laws, and work values, and uses legal services and the law to build the movement and hold employers accountable. In Yakima, all of Fair Work Center's participants are Spanish speaking, monolingual, and Latino communities, additionally their participants for trainings in Yakima are all people of color, and the majority are woman. In centering workers and learner voices, Fair Work Center has multiple committees focused on new rights that brings in workers to help with the policy campaign, including developing priorities and strategizing.



Gideon's Army Grassroots Army for Children, Nashville, TN

Gideon's Army is a community-based grassroots workforce development organization made up of black individuals that have been impacted by mass incarceration, the school to prison pipeline and youth violence. They are violence prevention organization focused on eliminating the root cause of the prison pipeline by guiding youth to success through community self-empowerment and leadership based off of restorative healing. They use restorative justice programs to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline, and their programs address school pushout, youth violence, policing, and juvenile justice.

Their workforce program is called Gideon's Army University, and it is run like a school by quarters where they focus on just training and education, alternatives to violence, dialectical, behavioral, and skill building. Gideon's Army's workforce development model has two components, the first is hiring people from their community for their internal staff workforce program, the second is that their workforce development program is designed to accommodate the broader community and is part of their Economic Justice Initiative. Gideon's Army serves youth and young adults in North Nashville community between the ages 14 and 25, who are high risk for participating in violence or being directly impacted by violence. The majority of these youth are Black/African American.



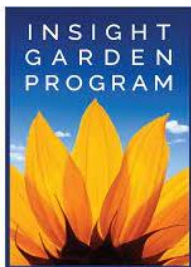
Hack.Diversity, *Boston, MA and New York, NY*

Hack.Diversity is a nonprofit focused on transforming the economy and breaking down barriers as it relates to Black and Latine professionals in the technology industry. Their program focus is on upskilling both ends of the talent and employer hiring and retention and bridging the gap between employers and Black and Latine in the field. In doing this, their program partners with employers and companies on their culture and readiness to recruit, retain and accept leaders of color while focusing on technical talent and ensuring a diverse team, and for fellows provides technical project skill-building, career skill-building, industry social capital building to generate competitive salaries for their fellows within the tech industry for their future success and ability to generate wealth. Hack.Diversity's primarily serves their fellows, who predominantly self-identify as Black and/or Latine, the majority are also immigrants or first-generation American. Hack/Diversity's recent work in centering worker and learner voices is captured in their regular feedback from Fellows and program Alumni at regular intervals.



Hired, *Minneapolis, MN*

Hired's work centers on advancing economic opportunity and justice, and career advancement for individuals deeply affected by historic and systemic inequities. This includes engaging individuals who face barriers to career advancement as a result of limited work or educational experience, justice system involvement, unstable living conditions, and other situational barriers to employment. The core services include individualized support and planning, life and career-focused coaching, and career training. Hired serves a majority of individuals that identify as BIPOC and identify as having an annual income below the federal poverty level. With regards to centering worker and learner voices, Hired has incorporated family experience and suggested changes in the MFIP (MN Family Investment Program) pilot program, and they are engaging participant feedback in the design and development of the Economic Stability Indicator (ESI) tool.



Insight Garden Program (IGP), *Berkeley, CA*

Insight Garden Program (IGP), a grassroots non-profit led by people who were previously incarcerated and most impacted by incarceration, provides a "re-connection through nature" restorative rehabilitation approach for transforming the lives of incarcerated individuals. IGP's in-prison programming and reentry support provides an "inner" and "outer" gardening approach and curriculum that includes vocational gardening, and landscape training so that incarcerated individuals can successfully reintegrate into community and the broader world and transform their lives and end the cycle of incarceration. IGP operates inside nine prisons across the state of California, working with individuals who have been in prison for a very long time, which are disproportionately people of color. IGP centers worker and learner voices by having participants lead engage and provide feedback. Participants will co-facilitate the curriculum, and they even host focus groups and invite reflections from participants.



New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals (NYATEP), *Albany, NY*

New York Association of Training & Employment Professionals (NYATEP), is New York's premier workforce development association representing over 250 organizations, including workforce development boards, community college systems, economic developers, career and technical education providers, labor unions, literacy associations, transportation associations, among others. NYATEP advocates on behalf of the workforce development community for equitable systems change and promote economic mobility, provides training to

create opportunities for advancement, and promotes improvement of the state’s systems and local practice in providing workforce services. NYATEP serves over one million New Yorkers, who are predominantly Black, Indigenous, and BIPOC individuals. In centering worker and learner voices, NYATEP believes participants should inform public policy, and they have previously utilized young adults in informing the needs for youth workforce services.



Café Reconcile (RNO), *New Orleans, LA*

Reconcile New Orleans (RNO) is a nonprofit that addresses disconnected and out-of-school youth and communities living in poverty, and encourages personal growth, provides workforce development, training, promotes entrepreneurship, and reconnects them to opportunities in order to help transform their lives and build strong communities. Services provided include access to mental health, counseling, support services, training, and occupational skills training. Their Workforce Development Program is a 4-tiered customized learning structure, which includes foundational life skills training, occupational skills training at Café Reconcile, career exploration opportunities in line with meaningful career pathways, and job opportunities with RNO’s employer partners or certification through community college pathways. RNO services opportunity youth in New Orleans between ages 16 and 24 who may be disconnected from school and the workforce, and those impacted by the legal system. Nearly 100% of participants are people of color. In Centering worker and learner voices, RNO’s strategic plan captures youth voice through ongoing survey collection, and program feedback.



Rocky Mountain Partnership (RMP), *Thornton, CO*

Rocky Mountain Partnership (RMP) is a coalition of cross-sector community members and community partners focused on improving the economic and social mobility by breaking down silos, removing obstacles, and supporting resources and policy change so that all community members in Adams County, the City of Aurora, and the City and County of Broomfield can earn skills and credentials, access to top job, advance in their career so they and their families can thrive. As such, the coalition works to transform systems to empower community members by focusing on four priority areas, which include: improving hiring and retention practices, increasing the number of pathways to top jobs, removing housing barriers, and addressing the opioid crisis. Over half of the community RMP serves identify as people of color. In centering worker and learner voices, RMP has three pillars to community engagement, which include qualitative data from community members to inform actions and decision, the co-development of solutions with those impacted by systems and/or those with lived experience, and retaining leadership and decision-making power and positions for community members most impacted by systems and/or lived experience.



Roots Community Health Center, *Oakland, CA*

Roots Community Health Center is a multiservice healthcare agency that addresses systemic inequities and poverty by combatting the historically neglected health needs of the African American/Black communities in East Oakland. In doing so, their services and programs address community needs via community engagement and transition services, workforce enterprise and training, health and wellness services, and community advocacy and capacity building. The majority of their participants identify as Black/African descent. In Centering worker and learner voices, Roots prioritizes hiring individuals with situationally diverse lived experience so that employees have deep relationships in the neighborhoods being served and they engage personnel in feedback allowing staff to debrief and decompress.

**Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Y.O.U.), *Cleveland, OH***

Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Y.O.U.) is a nonprofit workforce development collaborative organization that serves under-resourced teens and young adults prepare for the workforce and become economically self-sufficient. Y.O.U.'s workforce development services focus on supporting teens and young adults through career development, HS graduation and Post-HS success, career exploration internships, youth employment, and young adult job placement and credential training. Resources include a young adult resource center that provides employment and career-planning assistance, support, and case management services. The teens and young adults served in Cuyahoga County are predominantly Black/African American, and the majority are eligible for TANF or WIOA funding. In Centering worker and learner voice, Y.O.U. through participant surveys to ensure feedback is collected to provide program growth, and collects satisfaction data from constituents.

**Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA San Antonio), *San Antonio, TX***

Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) is a national multicultural women's organization dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity so women and girls can thrive. YWCA's focus areas include racial justice and civil rights, increasing economic advancement for women and girls of color, improving health and safety of women and girls of color, providing safety and security for women (including domestic and sexual violence services), and serving kids through childcare services and programming. Their Economic Empowerment and Workforce Readiness Programs include financial literacy classes, RESET (Re-engagement for Self-Sufficiency, Empowerment and Transformation) which serves disconnected young women, assistance to banking, legal and financial resources, and a Ready to Work workforce development program. YWCA serves the most vulnerable in Bexar County, which is primarily those low-income individuals and people of color. In centering worker and learner voice, YWCA listens to the needs of participants through interviews and case management, which they use to continuously improve services and to receive information about barriers they face.

APPENDIX D: GRANTEE OVERVIEW

Grantee	Population(s) Served	% People of Color	Location	Focus/Service Area(s)	Examples of Experience Centering Workers & Learners
Alternatives For Girls	Young women and women of color experiencing homelessness, human trafficking, and domestic violence	100% (74% Black, 24% Hispanic, 2% Asian)	Detroit, MI	Emergency services, educational programming, outreach and education services, housing, workforce development	Two board seats reserved for people with lived experience; Youth, Parent, and Community Councils to provide program input; Peer Educator/Leader model provides opportunities for paid work experience within agency; gathering participant feedback
Café Reconcile (RNO)	Young adults and opportunity youth	97%	New Orleans, LA	Mental health counseling, support services, training, occupational skills training	Ongoing participant survey collection with feedback presented to staff and board; prioritizing lived experience in decision making
California Indian Manpower Association	Low income, unemployed or underemployed individuals of Native American, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian descent	100%	Sacramento and San Diego County, CA	Employment services, training services, follow up services and other supportive wrap-around services	Programming uses a worker and learner centered approach; gathering feedback from participants through surveys
Chicago Commons Association	Low-income working families, primarily women	100% (70% Latina and 30% African American)	Chicago, IL	Early childhood education, family-centered adult education, and senior services	Parent committee; assessments to learn about participant needs and strengths; using a participatory action approach that engages participants in design, implementation, and governance of programming

Grantee	Population(s) Served	% People of Color	Location	Focus/Service Area(s)	Examples of Experience Centering Workers & Learners
Encuentro	Latine immigrants	100%	Albuquerque, NM	Education and career services, opportunities for leadership and civic engagement	Culture of shared power and leadership; constituents are part of staff and board
Fair Work Center	Gig workers, restaurant workers, nannies, agricultural warehouse workers	100% in Yakima	Seattle and Yakima Valley, WA	Advocacy and labor standards enforcement, worker education and organizing	Worker rights campaigns and industry committees developed with participants
Gideon's Grassroots Army for Children	Youth and young adults	100%, primarily Black	Nashville, TN	Restorative justice programming	Incorporating lived experiences and voices of organization leadership and staff across all levels of the organization
Hack.Diversity	Black and Latinx professionals in tech	0% of Fellows identify as white or Caucasian	Boston, MA and New York, NY	Tech fellowship, career coaching, internship opportunities	Centering fellows' needs and perspectives; using fellows' feedback to inform programming
Hired	People and families living in economic poverty facing barriers to employment, opportunity youth, low-income unemployed and underemployed individuals	68%	Minneapolis, MN	Individualized holistic support, career coaching, job readiness, career pathway training	Programming is responsive to evolving needs of job seekers and their families

Grantee	Population(s) Served	% People of Color	Location	Focus/Service Area(s)	Examples of Experience Centering Workers & Learners
Insight Garden Program (IGP)	Justice-involved individuals	79%	Berkeley, CA	Holistic reentry supports and services, policy and advocacy	Participants are trained to be curriculum co-facilitators and focus group hosts; participants provide input on program development; feedback collected through surveys; program graduates serve as staff and board members
New York Association of Training and Education Professionals (NYATEP)	BIOPC communities	Predominantly BIPOC	Albany, NY	Statewide workforce development association	In the process of developing learning communities that incorporate participant voice
Rocky Mountain Partnership (RMP)	Individuals within RMP's geographic scope in Colorado	51%	Thornton, CO	Training and credentialing, employer engagement around hiring, retention, and promotion, housing services, addressing opioid crisis	Approach to community engagement and decision-making is centered around: 1) Community Voice and Perspective; 2) Qualitative data gathered from community members informing action and decisions; 3) Co-Development of Solutions
Roots Community Health Center	Individuals impacted by systemic inequities and poverty	86%	Oakland, CA	Health and wellness, workforce and training, community advocacy and capacity building	Hiring staff with diverse lived experiences reflective of the communities served; continually gathering and responding to staff feedback

Grantee	Population(s) Served	% People of Color	Location	Focus/Service Area(s)	Examples of Experience Centering Workers & Learners
Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Y.O.U.)	Young adults in under-resourced communities	83% Black/African American, 5% Bi/Multi-racial, 1% Asian, 8% Hispanic/Latinx	Cleveland, OH	Workforce development services	Youth participation in roundtable business discussions and workforce system youth council meetings to inform programming and employer engagement strategies
Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA San Antonio)	Low-income communities	95%	San Antonio, TX	Employment and job skills training, early childhood education and youth development	Gathering data around challenges and barriers participants face through interviews and case management sessions; commitment to improving career trajectories for childcare staff