

William Penn Foundation

Request for Proposals

**Reducing Barriers to
Accessing and
Completing
Workforce Training
in Philadelphia**

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US Dept. of Energy

Introduction

The William Penn Foundation (WPF) has a long history of investing in efforts to improve the quality of life of residents of Philadelphia. However, the quality of life of many city residents is negatively impacted by persistent high rates of poverty and the significant income divide between White and Black and Brown households. To help contribute to efforts to reduce poverty in Philadelphia and support more economic mobility for more Philadelphians, the Foundation is launching new grantmaking in workforce development. While likely to evolve over time, the program's initial focus is on supporting efforts to reduce barriers that prevent individuals from accessing and completing **existing** workforce training programs that help them secure higher-paying, family sustaining jobs. A full description of the Workforce Training and Supports program, its goal, and its objectives can be found on the Foundation's website. This specific Request for Proposals (RFP) was created to help organizations to advance the following objective:

By 2035, 10,000 individuals with high barriers to employment will complete workforce training and transition to employment and 85% will still be employed after 12 months.

This objective was developed in consultation with many stakeholders and practitioners in the city.

The Foundation recognizes that there are many ways that organizations and communities can contribute to advancing this objective. With that understanding, there are few limitations on the project designs or applicants' approach to addressing this issue. For example, proposals may focus on direct service, policy or system change, outreach and education, or other ways to advance the objective. Proposals may have a small geographic focus or may seek to make change on a citywide scale.

Regardless of the approach, all applicants should describe a compelling explanation for how their proposed work will advance the objective above. This RFP seeks project proposals that will advance this objective and make tangible improvements in the quality of life for residents of Philadelphia. The specific criteria that will be used to assess all proposals can be found on pages 6-7 of this document.

Why is the Foundation using a Request for Proposals to advance this objective?

The Foundation has chosen to advance this objective using a Request for Proposals for several reasons. First, we believe that stakeholders across the region have a great deal of expertise and experience that can be supported to make progress on a workforce objective that we heard was important to communities in our region. We want to hear about the impactful projects that are underway or could get underway and need funding. Second, we want to be as transparent as possible about the opportunity for non-profit organizations in the region to secure funding for work to advance this objective. Third, we heard from applicants and grantees in the past that our grant application process was overly burdensome, had unpredictable timelines, and did not provide sufficient information about the funding availability or the criteria used in selecting grantees. Fourth, we heard that applicants wanted an opportunity to show Foundation staff their work, not just tell them about it. The RFP process, including site visits as described below, is part of our effort to address all of this important feedback and to align with the Foundation's grantmaking values (as detailed on our website).

This RFP seeks project proposals that will advance the objective of helping more city residents complete workforce training and secure and retain higher paying jobs that promote economic mobility for themselves and their families.

Background

Workforce development practitioners and service providers point to a range of barriers that often prevent individuals from accessing and completing training programs that could lead to higher-paying jobs and economic mobility for themselves and their families. These barriers can include access to childcare and transportation, the inability to forgo income during training, language barriers, and past involvement with the justice system. These barriers can also have an effect on employment retention. Experts suggest that an effective approach to addressing these barriers is for workforce programs to combine paid career training with “wrap-around” supportive services, which are non-training supports such as childcare, transportation, or counselling/coaching that can help job seekers overcome their challenges in finding and maintaining family sustaining employment.

White, non-Hispanic households earn nearly \$40,000 more per year, on average, than Black or Hispanic households.¹

In 2023, White households earned on average just under \$82,000 per year, which was higher than the national average of approximately \$75,000. But Black or African American non-Hispanic and Hispanic households each earned less than \$43,000.

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¹ Pew Charitable Trusts, Philadelphia 2024 State of the City, April 2024



US Dept. of Energy

What is a quality job?

While definitions vary, WPF is interested in supporting workforce training efforts that prepare individuals for jobs that provide:

- *A family sustaining wage with benefits that promote economic mobility*
- *Fair and reliable scheduling practices and safe and healthy working conditions*
- *Career ladders and potential for advancement*
- *An inclusive organizational and management culture*

Opportunity Overview

WPF would like to support efforts that expand the effectiveness of high-quality workforce training by reducing the barriers to accessing and completing workforce programs, transitioning to employment, and successfully completing the first year of employment. Through this funding opportunity, WPF seeks to support initiatives and programs that will result in career entry and advancement for populations facing significant barriers (e.g., school-age young people, aged 16-24 who are not in school and not working; returning citizens or individuals with justice system involvement; and immigrants) to achieving economic mobility for themselves and their families. It is important to note that this funding opportunity is not intended to support the creation of new workforce training programs, but rather to provide the additional resources needed to address persistent barriers to securing and retaining employment. Competitive proposals will be able to quantify the projected increase in the number of individuals facing high barriers that will complete training, transition to, and retain employment resulting from WPF's investment.

We are requesting proposals for two-year projects to reduce workforce training barriers in Philadelphia. After reviewing proposals, WPF will conduct site visits and gather additional information from a limited number of organizations.

All organizations will be considered on their individual merits. However, the Foundation recognizes that making significant progress on the objective is difficult and believes that the most competitive proposals are likely to be those that include robust partnerships that leverage complementary strengths, resources, and expertise. Furthermore, the Foundation recognizes that there are many different tactics or approaches that could be used to advance the objective stated above. All proposals that meet the criteria described below are encouraged.

WPF has \$5 million available to advance this objective. There is no minimum or maximum that organizations may request. The grant amount requested should be commensurate with the contribution that the project will make to the overall objective.



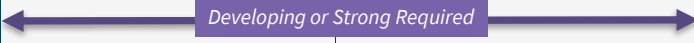
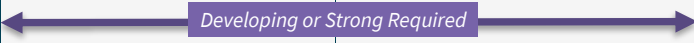
Eligibility

Applicants must be recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as 501(c)3 public charities or operate under a public charity fiduciary. Public charities include community-based organizations, schools and educational institutions, and other types of public-serving groups. Government entities are also eligible to apply.

Proposed projects must occur in Philadelphia.

Review Criteria

Proposals will be judged on the following criteria. Applicants should make every effort to address these criteria in their narrative responses to the application questions.

Alignment with Objective			
Absent	Emergent	Indirect	Direct
Proposal is unrelated to the objective.	Proposal may advance the objective, but strength of connection is unclear.	Proposal will make a clear but indirect contribution to advancing the objective.	Proposal will make a clear and direct contribution to advancing the objective.
			
Program Design and Development			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No specific plans, program approach, or partnership strategy for identifying and providing needed supports for populations facing high barriers.	Limited or unclear plans, program approach, or partnership strategy for identifying and providing needed supports for populations facing high barriers.	Moderate or promising plans, program approach, or partnership strategy for identifying and providing needed supports for populations facing high barriers.	Strong plans, program approach, and partnership strategy for identifying and providing needed supports for populations facing high barriers.
			
Organizational Performance and Capacity			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No implementation experience and no track record of success with barrier removal and/or with high quality workforce training that connects graduates to employment.	Limited experience (less than 1 year) and limited track record of success with barrier removal and/or with high quality workforce training that connects graduates to employment.	Some experience (1-5 years) and a track record of success with barrier removal and/or with high quality workforce training that connects graduates to employment.	Deep experience (5+ years) and a track record of success with barrier removal and with high quality workforce training that connects graduates to employment.
			
Partnerships and Collaboration			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No partnerships or coordination experience with relevant service providers, public agencies, and/or complementary programs.	Relevant service providers, public agencies, and/or complementary programs identified but there are no clear commitments or formal partnerships. No or limited experience providing program and service coordination leadership.	Some existing partnerships and connections to relevant service providers, public agencies, and/or complementary programs and a clear plan to build new partnerships to fill gaps in needed resources. Some experience in providing program and service coordination leadership.	Demonstrated partnerships or commitments from relevant service providers, public agencies, and/or complementary programs and a strong track record in program and service coordination leadership.
			

Community Outreach & Engagement			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Organization has not involved people with lived experience (i.e., knowledge and understanding gained from personal experience) in the design or management of training programs or support services.	Organization has minimally or episodically involved people with lived experience in the design of training programs or support services.	Organization has a clear plan to involve people with lived experience in the design of training programs or support services.	The design of the organization's training program and support services is informed by and led with involvement of people with lived experience.

Employer Partnerships			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No formal hiring partnerships with employers.	Occasional or episodic trainee placements achieved, but no formal hiring partnerships with employers or reliable jobs pipeline.	Demonstrated efforts underway to develop formal hiring partnerships with employers and a pipeline of jobs and addressing the barriers that limit workforce entry, retention, and advancement.	Strong formal hiring partnerships with employers with a demonstrated pipeline of high-quality jobs in place that pay a family sustaining wage.

Accessibility			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Training services are not accessible due to one or more of the following: high cost, inconvenient location and/or timing, insufficient language access and lack of support services.	Training services are moderately accessible to high barrier populations due to high cost, inconvenient location and timing, inconsistent language, and limited support services.	Clear and specific efforts are being made to make training services more accessible in terms of cost, location, timing, language access, and availability of support services.	Paid training services take place in a highly accessible location(s), during convenient times, no cost barriers, and have consistent availability of language access and strong supportive services.

Additional expectations:

Agency Performance and Capacity	Clearly describes agency's experience successfully training and placing participants. Capacity and performance data (staffing, range of services, outcomes, etc.) should be stated.
Organizational Resources and Capacity	Has an implementation plan that includes existing and new staff, if needed, professional development, technology, data management, and other agency resources to deliver the proposed services.
Partnership	Proposals that describe intentional collaboration with other applicants will be most competitive.
Advance Other Objectives	Projects that strongly advance this objective and contribute to other WPF program objectives will be given additional consideration.
Budget	The requested budget is reasonable for the proposed activities and the stated results.

Learning and Evaluation

Grantees will be expected to complete a brief written report each year describing how they have made progress toward the objective above and what they have learned during the year.

In addition, organizations funded as a result of this RFP will be convened in a Learning Community to build networks among those advancing a common objective, to share learning and best practices, and to identify ways in which progress could be enhanced. Grantees will help to determine the frequency, content, and specific goals of the Learning Community. The overhead funding included with any awarded grants is, in part, meant to help subsidize staff participation in the Learning Community.



Webinar

Interested organizations are invited to participate in an informational webinar on **Tuesday, July 9, 2024 at 10:00 ET.**

Register for the webinar at <https://lu.ma/william penn foundation>.

Budget

Project budgets should cover two years of funding and may include reasonable amount of time for planning, if needed. Organizations are encouraged to build on their existing programs, using WPF funding to supplement or enhance those efforts.

Project budgets should be all-inclusive, including any fees to partner organizations or consultants. This information can be provided in the proposal narrative.

Except in rare circumstances, total funding from WPF should not exceed 25% of a participating organization's operating budget.

All aspects of project development and execution, including planning, design, materials, community engagement, staffing, and implementation, are eligible for funding.

In rare cases, it is possible that *everything* an organization does is focused on advancing the specific objective stated above. If that is the case, an organization may be eligible for general operating, rather than project support. If you believe that to be the case, please contact the Program Officer named below to discuss further.

The Application Process

The application process begins by completing a proposal on our online submission system at <https://wfp.my.site.com/grantee>. Submit your application by 5:00PM EST on **August 1, 2024**. A WPF team will review all proposals and will notify applicants if they have been selected to move forward in the review process. **To download a working copy of the application to draft responses, please [click here](#).**

Selected applicants will take part in a site visit with WPF staff so that the Foundation can learn more about applicants' work. Site visits will be approximately two hours in duration. We ask that organizations use this time to introduce key staff working on the proposed project, to show WPF staff where the work will take place, and to elevate the voices of the potential beneficiaries of the proposed project. Based on a combination of the written materials and the learning from the site visit, **a final slate of organizations** will be recommended to the WPF Board for consideration of their proposals.

This request or any subsequent response does not commit William Penn Foundation or the responding organization to any future funding or engagement. If you have any questions, contact workforce@williampennfoundation.org.

Timeline

July 1, 2024

Proposal submission period opens

July 9, 2024

Informational Webinar (see previous page)

August 1, 2024

Proposals due by 5:00PM EST

August 16, 2024

Select applicants notified that their proposals have been chosen for further consideration and a site visit. Other applicants will be notified that their proposals are not advancing in the process.

August 19– September 6, 2024

Site visits conducted by WPF staff with selected applicants.

October 25, 2024

WPF Board review selected proposals

November 2024

Project implementation can begin