

WilliamPennFoundation

Request for Proposals

Increasing the Number of Certified Teachers in Philadelphia

Published December 9, 2024

Due January 31, 2025

William Penn Foundation
Two Logan Square, Suite 1100
100 North 18th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
williampennfoundation.org



Introduction

The William Penn Foundation (WPF) has a long history of investing in efforts to improve the lives of young children in Philadelphia. The Foundation's Children and Families program was created to expand access to programs and resources that support the healthy development and academic success of young children, ages 0 to 8, in Philadelphia. A full description of the Children and Families program, its goal, and all of 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, the percentage of certified K-12 teachers in Philadelphia will increase and the racial/ethnic make up of the city's teaching workforce will be more reflective of its students.

There are many options for aspiring educators to complete training and earn certification. Unfortunately, across the country and in the Commonwealth, the number of people entering and completing teacher preparation programs is declining. At the same time, we know that a well-prepared teacher is the single most important school-based element in a student’s academic success.¹ For this reason, we are supporting efforts aimed at increasing the number of well-prepared and fully certified teachers in Philadelphia, prioritizing grades K-3. In addition, research shows us that students of color benefit from having at least one same-race teacher during their schooling.² Given this research, we want to support efforts that help our local teaching force to more closely match the racial and ethnic composition of our student body.

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, pre-service education and training, recruitment, 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 make tangible improvements in the city’s teaching workforce. The specific criteria that will be used to assess all proposals can be found on pages 6 and 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 an 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 this important feedback and to align with the Foundation’s grantmaking values (as detailed on our website).

This RFP seeks projects that will increase the percentage of well-prepared teachers in Philadelphia and more closely align the racial composition of the teaching force and the student body.

¹ [Rice, J.K. \(2003\). *Teacher quality: Understanding the effectiveness of teacher attributes.*](#)

² [Blazar, D. \(2021\). *Teachers of Color, Culturally Responsive Teaching, and Student Outcomes: Experimental Evidence from the Random Assignment of Teachers to Classes. \(EdWorkingPaper: 21-501\).*](#)

Background

Research shows that diverse, well-trained teachers are positively related to student achievement, higher graduation rates, school attendance, and post-secondary completion.³

However, diverse and well-trained teachers are in short supply, particularly in Philadelphia. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, more than 15,000 in-state certifications were issued during the 2010-11 school year. By 2021-22, that number had dropped to approximately 4,200. Nationally and locally, Black, Hispanic, Asian, and other teachers of color are underrepresented compared to the population of students they serve. In Philadelphia schools, 86% of students identify as people of color, while only 32% of teachers do.⁴

In order to increase the likelihood of student success in Philadelphia, we are focusing on increasing the percentage of certified, diverse teachers. We are seeking to support projects and programs that research and experience show will be most effective in making progress on the objective above.

20-25% of teachers in Philadelphia are working with emergency certification, meaning they have not completed the necessary coursework or exams to be considered fully qualified.⁵



³ Jackson, C.K. (2018). *"What Do Test Scores Miss? The Importance of Teacher Effects on Non-Test Score Outcomes."* *Journal of Political Economy*, vol 126(5), pages 2072-2107.

⁴ Research for Action. (2021). *Evaluation of the Aspiring to Educate Philadelphia Pilot.*

⁵ Mezzacappa, D. and Ross, A. (2024, June 24). *"Philly needs to hire more than 450 teachers, with the worst shortage in special ed."* Chalkbeat.

Opportunity Overview

WPF will support efforts that will increase the percentage of teachers in Philadelphia who are fully certified. In addition, we will be funding efforts that are most likely to help the teaching force build a racial/ethnic profile that more closely matches the profile of the student body. We will prioritize projects that focus on teachers for grades K-3 but understand that programs may also serve other grade levels.

Funding will be directed toward efforts that help pre-service and in-service teachers to achieve certification and employment in Philadelphia public schools or help to retain certified teachers in Philadelphia public schools. These efforts may include improving teacher education, recruiting, retention, passing of certification requirements, mentoring, securing loan forgiveness, more supportive policies, or many other possibilities.

Please note: tuition scholarships, loan repayment, and independent research/data analysis projects are not eligible for funding under this RFP.

We are requesting proposals for **up to three years of funding**. After reviewing proposals, WPF will conduct site visits and gather additional information from a limited number of organizations.

Organizations that propose projects in partnership with other applicants will be considered on their individual merits. However, the Foundation recognizes that making significant progress on the objective is difficult and encourages organizations to include partnerships that leverage complementary strengths, resources, and expertise to reach proposed goals.

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 review criteria described below are encouraged.

WPF has **\$6 million available** to advance this objective at this time. There is no minimum or maximum amount of funding that organizations may request. The grant amount requested should be commensurate with the contribution that the project will make to the overall objective. However, grant requests under \$1 million will be most competitive.

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.

Any direct services must be focused solely on current and future teachers for Philadelphia public schools.

Review Criteria

Proposals will be judged on the criteria below. **Applicants should address these criteria in their narrative responses to the application questions.**

Alignment with Objective			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Project activities and goals are unrelated to the defined objective.	Project activities and goals may advance the defined objective, but connection is vague.	Project will make a clear but indirect contribution to advancing the defined objective.	Project will make a clear and direct contribution to advancing the defined objective.
Program Design			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
The approach to the work is vague or unclear.	Outlines an approach to the work that describes one of the following: the organizational capacity to carry out the proposed program, a feasible plan to implement the work, or a detailed plan to track the outcomes and impact on the relevant objective.	Outlines a clear approach to the work that describes two of the following: the organizational capacity to carry out the proposed program, a feasible plan to implement the work, or a detailed plan to track project outcomes and impact on the relevant objective.	Outlines a clear approach to the work that describes the organizational capacity to carry out the proposed program, a feasible plan to implement the work, and a plan to track project outcomes and impact on the relevant objective.
Partnerships and Collaboration			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No identified partners or plans for collaboration.	Partners are identified but there are no clear commitments.	Some existing partnerships, a clear plan to build new partnerships, and a description of each partner's role to maximize impact.	Sufficient existing partnerships or commitments from partner organizations and a description of each partner's role to maximize impact.
Organizational Experience			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No implementation experience and no track record of success.	Limited implementation experience (less than two years) with advancing the specified objective and a minimal track record of success.	Some implementation experience (2-5 years) with advancing the specified objective and a track record of success in Philadelphia or other relevant cities or regions.	Extensive implementation experience (5+ years) with advancing the specified objective and a track record of success in Philadelphia and/or Pennsylvania.
Community Engagement			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No evidence of familiarity with the intended beneficiaries of the proposed effort and no plan for future engagement.	Minimal evidence of the applicants' familiarity with intended beneficiaries of the proposed effort, but there is a commitment to develop a stakeholder engagement plan during implementation.	Evidence of the applicants' familiarity with the intended beneficiaries of the proposed effort and there is a plan for ongoing stakeholder engagement during implementation.	Key components of the project were informed by the intended beneficiaries of the proposed effort and there is a plan for ongoing engagement during implementation.

Additional expectations:

Research-informed	Proposal is informed by relevant research about the obstacles to increasing the number of certified teachers in Philadelphia.
Evidence-based	Project will utilize practices that evidence has shown are likely to lead to the certification and retention of teachers.
Diversity	Proposal clearly outlines practices for ensuring participant diversity and integrating a culturally and linguistically responsive approach throughout the program.
Coordination	Project is being undertaken in coordination with other organizations and initiatives in the sector who are seeking to advance the same objective. If a project is being proposed in direct partnership with another organization or organizations, a letter of support must be included from each partner organization.
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 optional informational webinar on **Thursday, December 12, 2024 at 3:00PM ET.**

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

Budget

Project budgets should cover up to three years of funding and may include up to three months for planning. 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 email the address found at the end of this document to discuss further.

Application Process

Before you apply, please review your responses to the three questions below. If you can confidently answer “yes” to the questions, this funding opportunity may be relevant to you. If you respond “no” to any of the questions, this opportunity is not a good match for your project, and you should not apply.

	YES	NO
Will your initiative increase the percentage of teachers in Philadelphia public schools who are fully certified?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is your initiative focused on teachers who work or will work in public schools in the City of Philadelphia?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will your effort support greater alignment between the racial/ethnic diversity of teachers and students in Philadelphia public schools?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please also review all of the criteria on pages 6 and 7 and make sure that your program aligns with those.

If you answered “yes” to all of the questions above and meet the stated criteria, the application process begins by completing a proposal on our online submission system at <https://wpf.my.site.com/grantee>. Submit your application by 5:00PM ET on **January 31, 2025**. 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 organizations 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 teacherprep@williampennfoundation.org

Timeline

December 9, 2024

Proposal submission period opens.

December 12, 2024

Informational Webinar (see page 7)

January 31, 2025

Proposals due by 5:00PM ET

February 12-14, 2025

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.

February 17- March 7, 2025

Site visits conducted by WPF staff with selected applicants.

April 25, 2025

WPF Board review selected proposals.

May 2025

Project implementation can begin.