

**100,000 Opportunities Demonstration Cities Pathways to Careers Fund**

**Request for Proposals – Chicago**

The Pathways to Careers Fund seeks to create, accelerate, and expand innovative career pathways[[1]](#footnote-1) to improve job placement and retention for opportunity youth. The Fund builds on the work of the 100,000 Opportunities Initiative Demonstration Cities and seeks to deepen efforts already underway in Chicago/Cook County. The Pathways to Careers Fund and 100K Demonstration Cities are projects of the Aspen Forum for Community Solutions (“Aspen Forum”).

1. **Background and Purpose**

In the United States there are currently 5.5 million youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who are out of school and not working. At the same time, there are 3.5 million unfilled jobs. Jobs that require some training beyond high school, but not a four-year degree – sometimes called middle-skill jobs – make up the largest part of the labor market in the United States. However, young people are often unaware that these opportunities are available, nor are they aware of the steps they need to take to prepare for and secure these jobs. Joining the workforce in an entry-level position is often an important first step to gaining the additional education and training necessary to advance to higher skilled opportunities. At the same time, employers often do not have clear strategies to effectively recruit, train, and retain young workers.

In response, 100K Demonstration Cities are committed to creating or expanding the pathways young workers need to build skills, attain education and workforce credentials, and ultimately advance in their careers; employers are critical partners in these efforts. Thus, partnership with at least one employer is a required component of all proposals to the Pathways to Careers Fund; a list of sample pathways follows this RFP in Appendix B. Companies, like those engaged in the 100K Coalition (see Appendix C), help to launch careers for young people who are just entering the workforce as well as to develop the potential of those youth who have some work experience but are looking to gain new skills that will lead to a successful career. These companies have joined together and are operating with the belief that, with the right skills and training, opportunity youth represent an unrealized pipeline of talent and an economic engine that can be ignited.

Opportunity youth include a wide range of young people, from those nearing completion of their High School Equivalency, to those exiting the juvenile justice system, to those who have been cycling through low-wage, unstable employment for several years. These young people will require differentiated support to successfully participate in the labor market and develop careers.

*Rationale.* To support 100K Demonstration Cities to effectively align employer demand and career pathways with a supply of trained opportunity youth – we seek to pilot and test employer-connected pathways at the local level. The Pathways Fund will support the innovation needed to work collaboratively across systems, including workforce and education (K12 and post-secondary), to create pathways for opportunity youth.

*Approach.* The Pathways to Careers Fund is soliciting proposals to develop and document pathways that support training, education, and the transition to employment, as well as retention and ongoing career growth and learning for opportunity youth. A list of sample pathways projects is included in the Appendix B.

The Pathways to Careers Fund builds on the work of each Demonstration City’s backbone organization. These organizations play a coordinating role and are dedicated to aligning multiple systems and programs to better serve opportunity youth. The backbone organization for Chicago is [Thrive Chicago](http://www.thrivechi.org/our-work/).

As a collective impact organization, Thrive’s mission is to prepare Chicago’s youth for a vibrant future by aligning efforts and outcomes from cradle to career. Thrive achieves its mission through the following strategies: activating research and data to build awareness of local disparities where investment is needed and promising practices that improve youth outcomes; building the capacity of those working most closely with youth to ensure that they have the data, practices, skills, partners and resources needed to be successful; and testing and scaling innovative practices that are shown to improve youth outcomes.

In 2016, Thrive Chicago convened a cross-sector, collaborative planning process to build new knowledge about opportunity youth in Chicago and produce a set of shared strategies for connecting them with employment and education pathways. Members of this group included youth-facing public sector agencies, local funders, research institutions, youth leaders, and community providers. Included in the set of citywide strategies formulated by this group, which are still under development, is a recommendation to engage employers to develop direct employment pathways for opportunity youth in Chicago, which strongly complements with the goals of this Pathways to Careers Fund. Proposals should align with the backbone organization’s opportunity youth strategies.

Proposals should also be designed with replication and scale in mind, and aimed at serving populations with systemic/historic barriers to opportunity. All proposals must demonstrate partnership with employers as a key component of the proposal design. Applicants to the Pathways to Careers Fund must be existing providers such as CBOs, community college programs, workforce system organizations, or adult education programs; eligible applicants may include partnerships among these providers but must include at least one employer partnership. In most cases, the Pathways to Careers Fund award amounts will range from $25,000 to $100,000. One time grants of up to 24 months will be awarded in May 2017. Employer partners can be from the 100K coalition (see Appendix C) or can be other employers.

*Pathway Development.* The Pathways to Career Fund seeks to invest in proposals that, with employers as partners, and ideally co-designers, clearly articulate and intentionally link education and/or training with successful employment outcomes for opportunity youth. Proposals may support pathways that help opportunity youth become work-ready and successfully transition to employment or support opportunity youth who are already working to persist and advance. (See Appendices A and B for more description of what constitutes a career pathway, and for examples of the kinds of projects this fund seeks to support.)

1. **Eligibility Criteria**

*Geography*

The 100K Demonstration Cities Pathways to Careers Fund focuses on the five existing 100K Demonstration Cities, and this RFP is specific to Chicago/Cook County – and hence restricted to proposals from organizations serving young people in Chicago/Cook County, Illinois.

*Target Population*

The 100K Demonstration Cities and Pathways to Careers Fund are focused on opportunity youth. Equity is a priority of the Aspen Forum. We have a deep commitment to improving outcomes for the most vulnerable youth. We welcome applications to the Pathways to Careers Fund that focus on creating more equitable outcomes for specific groups, such as, but not limited to, young men of color, youth involved in the child welfare system or transitioning out of foster care, youth involved in the juvenile justice system, or parenting youth.

*Eligibility Criteria*

In addition to focusing on improving education and/or workforce outcomes for young people in Chicago/Cook County:

1. Projects must be completed within 24 months of the start date
2. Projects must include collaboration with at least one employer
3. The applicant must be a non-profit organization
4. Projects funded through the Pathways to Careers Fund will be documented by the Aspen Forum and its partners to be shared via presentations and reports. All applicants must be willing to collect and share programmatic and outcome data with Aspen, its evaluation partners, Thrive Chicago, and have information about their project shared. All grantees of the Pathways Fund must be willing to participate in a third-party evaluation conducted by Equal Measure.
5. Recipients of the Pathways to Careers Fund agree to align their project with Thrive’s community strategy by participating in Thrive’s opportunity youth action teams. For more information about the action teams and how to join, please contact Amrit Mehra, amehra@thrivechi.org.

*Preferred Eligibility Criteria*

Although not required, preference will be given to proposals that:

1. Support retention, persistence, and opportunities to advance in employment
2. Feature employers as designers or co-designers
3. Scale an existing proven effort (for examples of different paths to scale that could be proposed, see Appendix B)
4. Demonstrate innovation in pathway design
5. Focus on reducing racial inequities in employment and/or education outcomes
6. **Selection Criteria**

The Aspen Forum and its partners have identified the following selection criteria for the Pathways to Careers Fund and will assess eligible applicants on the strength of their proposal in these areas:

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| --- |
| 1. **Experience and Track Record**i. Serving an opportunity youth populationii. Developing partnerships with employersiii. Commitment to youth voice, ownership, and engagement in the opportunity youth employment effort |
| 2. **Feasibility: is the project accomplishable given the resources and the time available?** |
| 3. **Impact: is the project likely to produce the impact it seeks? Is the impact significant? Does the applicant have a plan to collect data that will demonstrate that impact?** |
| 4. **Sustainability and replicability**  |
| 5. **Learning: is the project likely to produce learning useful locally and nationally?** |

1. **Required Application Components**
2. **Pathways to Careers Application Cover Sheet**
3. **Proposal Narrative that responds to Section III: Selection Criteria and addresses the prompts and/or questions raised below** —in less than 8 pages (section 1. should not exceed one page, the length of the other sections is at the discretion of the applicant).
	1. Experience and Track Record (not to exceed one page)
		1. Describe your experience serving the opportunity youth population, developing partnerships with employers, and how your organization engages youth in its work. Please include any measurable accomplishments.
		2. If the proposal has an explicit focus on a sub-population of opportunity youth, please include information on your experience and track record serving that specific population.
		3. If the proposal is based on an existing collaboration, describe the history of that collaboration.
	2. Pathway Design and Impact
		1. Describe the proposed project in detail, including:
			1. How many opportunity youth will be served, over what time period? If there are particular sub-populations of OY that will be focused on, what are they?
			2. What are the goals of this pathway and how will progress or goal attainment be measured? Detail both client-level outcomes sought and systems-change outcomes sought, if applicable.
			3. Complete the chart found in Appendix D (detailing # of youth, descriptive characteristics, and intended outcomes). Include this chart at this point in the Proposal Narrative.
			4. Describe the intervention in detail, including, as applicable:
				1. How will youth be recruited to this pathway?
				2. Are there age/skill/education level requirements or other criteria for participation?
				3. What types of supports, if any, will be available during the transition to/during employment? For how long post-hire will these services be available?
			5. If employers have been involved in the design of the pathway, please describe their role.
			6. Are there partners in implementing this work – including employers and/or education institutions? If so, what role will they play and what is the role of the applicant? [Please attach letter(s) of commitment from key implementation partners.]
		2. Describe how the project fits into the Aspen Forum’s priority interest areas for Chicago/Cook County namely:
			1. Supporting retention, persistence, and opportunities to advance in employment
			2. Featuring employers as designers or co-designers
			3. Scaling an existing proven effort
			4. Demonstrating innovation in pathway design
			5. Focusing on reducing racial inequities in employment and/or education outcomes

Clarify how the project meets one or more of these priority areas, and indicate how progress would be tracked against these specific goals.

* 1. Plan for Documentation & Evaluation
		1. If this is an existing pathway, how has it been documented? [you may include an attachment if existing documentation or evaluation exists]
		2. If this is a new pathway, how will you capture the design and implementation phase, so that successes and challenges can be shared with others?
		3. Describe how you will measure and evaluate success of the effort. Describe whether your existing data collection system will be able to report the outcomes you seek.
	2. Plan for Financing and Sustainability
		1. Describe any existing public and private funding streams for the project.
		2. If increased public funding would be necessary to sustain this project, describe that need, and the plan for how it could be secured.
		3. Describe any direct or in-kind support that employers have offered to support this project. If the project is successful, what long term commitments are employers prepared to make?
		4. If appropriate for this project, describe your approach to making a return on investment argument for employers. How are you articulating the business value of the project?

**III. Budget and Budget Narrative:** Please attach/provide a spending plan [up to 24 months] for the proposal.

* Provide a budget narrative describing the total budget, the amount of funds requested, and their proposed use. Budget narrative should not exceed one page, single spaced.

**IV. Evidence of Non-Profit Status**: Please provide evidence that the fiscal agent (grant recipient) meets the requirements of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Please include a copy of your 501(c)(3) determination letter with your application.

**V. Attachments:**

* Please attach letters of commitment and/or Memoranda of Understanding from employers who would interview, hire, or participate in some other way in the proposed pathway to support your proposal.
* *If a post-secondary connected pathway*, please attach letters of commitment and/or Memoranda of Understanding from any educational institution partners.

**Proposals must be submitted to Emma Uman at** **Emma.Uman@aspeninstitute.org****. Deadline for submission is March 10, 2017 by 6:00 p.m. Pacific Time.**

**Appendix A**

**“Career Pathway” Definition**

For the purposes of this Fund, the Aspen Forum uses the definition of “career pathway” as outlined in the [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](https://www.congress.gov/113/bills/hr803/BILLS-113hr803enr.pdf), Sec. 3 (Def.7). Note: Proposals do NOT need to have every element outlined below to be considered for the Pathways to Careers Fund.

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The term “career pathway” means a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that:

* Aligns with the skill needs of industries in the economy of the state or regional economy involved;
* Prepares an individual to be successful in any of a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including registered apprenticeships;
* Includes counseling to support an individual in achieving the individual’s education and career goals;
* Includes, as appropriate, education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;
* Organizes education, training, and other services to meet the particular needs of an individual in a manner that accelerates the educational and career advancement of the individual to the extent practicable;
* Enables an individual to attain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent and at least one recognized postsecondary credential; and
* Helps an individual enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

**Appendix B**

**Sample Pathways to Careers Fund Projects**

This list is intended to provide context for the types of projects that could be selected for funding from the Pathways to Careers Fund – Chicago/Cook County. These examples are meant to be illustrative, not to provide a formula that proposals must follow. The Pathways Fund seeks to support innovation and creativity in pathway design. Alignment with an example listed below does not guarantee funding.

* + A workforce training organization partners with two employers that agree to interview all youth who successfully complete the training, and a mentoring organization, that will provide on-going career navigation and support to all the youth for a year following the completion of the training, with the expectation that retention of OY will increase by 25%.
	+ An existing program that scales to prepare additional opportunity youth for employment in growth sectors.
	+ An existing training program that currently has employer partnership innovates with elements of the program design to improve concurrent education outcomes for vulnerable sub-populations, such as young men of color. The existing program has the data capacity to examine outcome sub-population outcome data.
	+ A program that has existing employer partners that wants to scale (either through new partners or to additional locations of current partners) but needs to capture the essential program elements, and evaluate effectiveness; and will create a guide to support scaling and expansion.

**Appendix C**

**List of 100,000 Opportunities Initiative Coalition Members**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Accenture | Nordstrom |
| Alaska Airlines | Panda Express |
| Chipotle | Papa Johns |
| Cintas | PCC Natural Markets |
| CVS Health | Pizza Hut |
| Delaware North | Porch |
| Domino's | Potbelly |
| EY | Prudential |
| FedEx | Red Robin |
| Five Guys | Republic Services  |
| Food Services of America | Savers |
| Gene Juarez | Sprinkles |
| Greyston | Starbucks |
| Hilton WorldWide | Sweetgreen |
| HMS Host | Swiss Post |
| Hyatt | Taco Bell |
| JCPenney | Target |
| JP Morgan Chase | Teavana |
| Leisure Care | T-Mobile |
| Lyft | Toms  |
| Macy's  | Ulta |
| Mars | Villa |
| Microsoft | Walgreens |
| MOD Pizza | Walmart |

**Projects do NOT have to only work with employers on this list.**

**Appendix D**

**Populations Served and Outcomes Sought**

Please include this chart in the Proposal Narrative in the location indicated

**Blank chart to use/insert:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Proposed OY Segment/Program Name (1 or more)** | **# to be served** | **Population demographics** | **Population situational factors** | **Intended outcome** | **Amount of time until outcome is achieved** |
|  |  | Age range: Gender(s): Race(s): [add others as needed] | Edu level of participants: Foster Youth?: Parenting?: Justice Involved?: [add others as needed] |  |  |
|  |  | Age range: Gender(s): Race(s): [add others as needed] | Edu level of participants: Foster Youth?: Parenting?: Justice Involved?: [add others as needed] |  |  |

(see next page for an example of how to complete the chart)

**Examples of how to complete the chart:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Proposed OY Segment/Program Name (1 or more)** | **# to be served** | **Population demographics** | **Population situational factors** | **Intended outcome** | **Amount of time until outcome is achieved** |
| GED for BMOC | 75 | Age range: 18-24Gender: maleRace(s): black, Latino, Native[add others as needed] | Edu level of participants: no HS degreeFoster Youth?: NoParenting?: NoJustice Involved?: Yes (about 50%)[add others as needed] | 50% will complete GED; 25% will attain employment and sustain for 6 months | 18 months from project start date |
| Enhanced Employment Pgm | 50 | Age range: 18-24Gender: bothRace(s): all[add others as needed] | Edu level of participants: HS degreeFoster Youth?: NoParenting?: NoJustice Involved?: No[add others as needed] | 75% will retain employment for 12 months; 25% will take one or more college credits | 24 months from project start date |

1. The Aspen Forum uses the definition of “career pathway” as outlined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Sec. 3 (Def.7); for reference, the full definition is included in Appendix A. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)