



**Demonstration Cities Pathways to Careers Fund
Seattle/South King County
Request for One-Page Letters of Intent to Apply**

The Pathways to Careers Fund seeks to create, accelerate, and expand innovative career pathways¹ to improve job placement and retention for opportunity youth and create new models of multisector collaborations with value to each sector. The Fund builds on the work of the Demonstration Cities and seeks to deepen efforts already underway in Seattle/South King County. The Pathways to Careers Fund and Demonstration Cities are projects of the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions (“the Forum”).

I. Background and Purpose

In the United States there are currently 4.9 million opportunity youth, young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are out of school and not working. At the same time, there are nearly 6 million job openings. 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, 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 projects funded in the first round of the Pathways Fund follows in Appendix C.

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 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. The Pathways Fund will support the innovation needed to work

¹ The 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.

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.

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 Seattle/South King County is the Community Center for Education Results which supports the [Road Map Project](#).

Projects should also be designed with replication and scale in mind, and aimed at serving youth aged 16-24 with systemic/historic barriers to opportunity. All projects 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 January 2019.

Pathway Development. The Pathways to Career Fund seeks to invest in proposals that, with employers as partners, and 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 C for more description of what constitutes a career pathway, and for examples of the kinds of projects this fund seeks to support.)

II. Eligibility Criteria

Geography

The Pathways to Careers Fund focuses on the five Forum-supported Demonstration Cities, and this solicitation is specific to Seattle/South King County, Washington, and hence restricted to Letters of Intent from organizations serving young people in the Seattle/South King County.

Target Population

The Demonstration Cities and Pathways to Careers Fund are focused on opportunity youth. Equity is a priority of the Forum. We have a deep commitment to improving outcomes for the most vulnerable youth. We preference applications to the Pathways to Careers Fund that focus on creating more equitable outcomes for specific groups with multiple barriers, such as, but not limited to, young men of color, youth involved in the child welfare system or transitioning out of foster care, homeless youth, 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 Seattle/South King County:

1. Projects must be completed within 24 months of the start date (an initial planning period is allowed within the 24 month timeframe)
2. Projects must include collaboration with at least one employer; employers should be designers or co-designers of the proposed project
3. Projects must articulate and seek to address a business need or challenge experienced by the employer partner(s)
4. Projects funded through the Pathways to Careers Fund will be documented by the 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 the Forum, its evaluation partners, its backbone partners, 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

Preferred Eligibility Criteria

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

1. Support retention, persistence, and opportunities to advance in employment
2. Demonstrate a commitment to job quality as a feature of the employment opportunities supported through the project; a definition of job quality is included in Appendix B
3. Scale an existing proven effort
4. Demonstrate innovation in pathway design
5. Focus on reducing racial/ethnic and gender inequities in employment and/or education outcomes

III. Selection Criteria

The 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:

<p>1. Experience and Track Record Does the applicant have experience and demonstrated impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. serving an opportunity youth population?ii. developing partnerships with employers that address business needs and produce positive employment (hire, retention, and/or advancement) outcomes for youth?
<p>2. Commitment to Equity and Youth Voice:</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Does the applicant have a strategy for designing pathways that reduce racial and other inequities and prioritizing vulnerable populations? ii. Does the applicant clearly articulate the role of youth and a plan to engage youth as leaders in design and implementation of the project? iii. Does the proposal incorporate a commitment to youth voice, ownership, and engagement in opportunity youth efforts?
3.	<p>Feasibility</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Is the project accomplishable given the resources and the time available?
4.	<p>Impact</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Is the project likely to produce the impact it seeks for opportunity youth and employer partners? ii. Is the impact meaningful? iii. Does the applicant have a plan to collect data that will demonstrate that impact (including intermediary measures)?
5.	<p>Sustainability and Replicability</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Could the project be sustained or replicated beyond the grant period?
6.	<p>Learning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Is the project likely to produce learning that could be useful locally and nationally?

IV. Application Process

1. Applicants to the Pathways to Careers Fund must electronically submit a Letter of Intent to Emma Uman at Emma.Uman@aspeninstitute.org by 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time on Friday, September 28, 2018. We understand that plans will likely be emergent at the time of the Letter of Intent submission and that there will likely be some iteration and revision between a Letter of Intent and the full proposal.

Letters of Intent should, in **no more than one-page**:

- Succinctly describe the applicant’s experience working with opportunity youth – how long have you worked with this population, how many youth per year, on what issues, towards what goals, etc. – and developing and sustaining partnerships with employers

- Briefly describe the proposed project – what services will be provided/what activities will happen with youth and employers and when, the goals for youth at the end of the project, and an approximate number of youth to be served over what time period
 - Identify known or potential employer partners for this project and their role (i.e. hiring, co-designing training curricula, offering internship or job-shadow experiences, etc.), how the applicant and employer(s) would work together, and the business challenge that the project aims to address for the employer.
2. Applicants will receive feedback from the Forum on Letters of Intent by Friday, October 5, 2018.
 3. Full proposals will be due by November 9, 2018.

Appendix A

“Career Pathway” Definition

For the purposes of this Fund, the Forum uses the definition of “career pathway” as outlined in the [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#), Sec. 3 (Def.7). Note: Proposals do NOT need to have every element outlined below to be considered for the Pathways to Careers Fund.

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

For the purposes of this fund, the Forum uses the definition of “job quality” excerpted from [Job Quality: A Statement of Purpose](#) posted by the [Job Quality Fellows](#) of the [Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program](#) on December 14, 2017:

In practical terms, a quality job offers:

- *Wages sufficient to cover basic living expenses, a stable/predictable income, and opportunities to build wealth/assets;*
- *Working conditions that are safe, free from discrimination and harassment, and welcoming of workers’ concerns and ideas for improvement;*
- *Stable/predictable work hours;*
- *A package of benefits that facilitate a healthy, stable life. Typically, these benefits include health insurance, paid sick and vacation time, family/medical leave, an adequate retirement savings plan, disability insurance, and life insurance.*

The Forum recognizes the aspirational nature of the characteristics and qualities listed above. Employment opportunities available through Pathways Fund-supported projects need not meet every criteria as listed, but should demonstrate a commitment, by employer partners, to working toward creating these types of conditions in their workplaces. For employers seeking strategies to improve retention of entry-level workers, we recommend, [Investing in Entry-Level Talent: Retention Strategies that Work](#) by FSG. And for employers interested providing work-based learning opportunities, we recommend, [Making Work-Based Learning Work](#) by Jobs for the Future.

Appendix C

Pathways to Careers Funded 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 – Seattle/South King County. These examples are meant to be illustrative, not to provide a formula that projects must follow. The Pathways Fund seeks to support innovation and creativity in pathway design. Alignment with an example listed below does not guarantee funding.

Chicago/Cook County

- I. The Opportunity Youth Robotics Technician Training Program is a partnership between **Safer Foundation** and **BSD Industries** (a L3C social enterprise), designed to prepare and train justice-involved youth between the ages of 18-24 for advanced manufacturing jobs. Safer will provide assessments, job readiness training, case management support, job placement and retention support services; BSD will provide a boot camp (BOOST – contextualized bridging to ensure participants are prepared for training), and four levels of training in industry-recognized credentials, including Drafting (CAD), Electronics Technician (NOCTI), Certified Production Technician (MSSC), and Certified Robotics Production Technician (FANUC Programming). Exit ramps will allow students to earn a credential at each level and exit for work or other opportunities. During training, students will be offered on-the-job training in a plastics manufacturing plant. Upon completion, students will have the opportunity to be employed permanently in openings at BSD’s manufacturing plant or with other plastics manufacturers that Safer works with. Through the Opportunity Youth Robotics Technician Training Program, Safer will impact credential attainment, employment outcomes, earnings, and job retention, and ultimately, reduce justice involvement.

- II. **Skills for Chicagoland’s Future** (“Skills”) will meet the hiring needs of committed employer partners by placing young adults into entry-level jobs with four (4) Beacon Employer Partners, including **Walgreens**, that are committed to advancing youth along defined pathways into middle-income careers through the “Pivot to Success” program model. Skills will utilize its deep employer relationships and will leverage this expertise to effectively create new employment pathways for young adults. Skills will assess both the business requirements per occupation and the needs of the youth candidates to determine the level and extent of supports needed. Skills will partner with proven youth providers in Chicago to prepare young adults for jobs and provide the necessary supports after placement, as well as coordinate investment from the employers – including program design, tuition reimbursement, designated mentors, and cohort experience facilitation - in ensuring success and upward mobility of youth hires. Finally, Skills will utilize its extensive and existing set of business relationships to engage appropriate additional companies in the program.

- III. **Youth Guidance** and **Sprint** have partnered to increase access to employment opportunities for up to 60 opportunity youth. Participants will receive targeted support to overcome obstacles to employment, explore career opportunities, and develop job skills. Upon completion of training, youth will receive job placement assistance and retention support. For participants interested in retail careers, Sprint will provide targeted skill training and orientation to opportunities at the company. Qualified applicants will have an opportunity to interview. This progressive career pathway will increase youth's employability skills and provide access to mid-skill career opportunities that provide strong opportunities for advancement. As an employer, Sprint will benefit from an increased pool of qualified candidates and improved employee retention.
- IV. **Youth Job Center's (YJC) Retail/Customer Service Career Pathways** is an intensive program building upon the foundations of Gap Inc.'s This Way Ahead program. YJC offers intensive skills development and sustained support for Opportunity Youth (OY) before, during and after job placement. Rather than structuring programs on a linear path, YJC has constructed a support process that includes revisiting issues and building on youth's successful development of skills or knowledge in their work and career development; it is this sustained support to address challenges that sets the program apart from other career pathways programs.

Employer partnership is critical to the success of the Retail/Customer Service Career Pathway; YJC will work closely with employers, including **Gap Inc.**, **Starbucks Coffee Company**, and **Supreme Auto Repair**, to design, develop and implement the training content and delivery, to engage youth, build essential skills and reach successful outcomes for both participants and employers. YJC's sustained support in Career Pathways programs reduces the fall off risks across the many transitions from job seeking to job stability.

Los Angeles

- V. Over the last three years, **The Bixel Exchange's** LA Tech Talent Pipeline, a partnership with the Office of Mayor Eric Garcetti, facilitated over 100 employer-driven and co-designed work-based learning (WBL) experiences, such as company tours, job shadows, and interactive learning projects, to help participants build their portfolios and get "real-world" experience in tech. As part of an effort to better serve opportunity youth through our program, The Bixel Exchange is launching the Tech Opportunity Pipeline, which will expand upon this past year's successful pilot that connected foster, home-insecure and justice-involved youth to tech career pathways through our existing LA Tech Talent Pipeline Program. Over the course of the next two years, Bixel Exchange will reach 90 foster and/or

justice-involved youth with our Tech Opportunity Pipeline through a combination of customized WBL activities, professional development opportunities, paid internships and job placements with employers such as **mitu Network, Riot Games, Launchmaps,** and **Michelson 20MM**. Furthermore, we will engage with at least 10 employer partners and 10 foster/ justice-involved youth serving organization to produce systems-change level outcomes throughout the tech industry in LA. Our multi-stakeholder “systems-change” LA Tech Talent Pipeline initiative is an innovative approach to knowledge transfer and social capital infusion into LA County underrepresented and disenfranchised youth that provides them with access to be on-track to a successful well-paying career in the growing tech industry. By cultivating relationships with over 60 employer partners, Bixel Exchange reduces biases and barriers in the tech industry around hiring at-risk and underrepresented youth, while also helping companies become champions for tech career pathways.

VI. **LeadersUp** will create an “opportunity market” to benefit Opportunity Youth in Los Angeles County in partnership with the **American Hotel & Lodging Association** (AHLA.) We will leverage the LeadersUp Talent Solutions Model - a theory of change for creating large scale shifts in practice that creates bottom-line benefits to employers, opportunity youth and the local community:

1. To engage cross-sector stakeholders to INNOVATE talent solutions that are employer-led, demand-driven and career-pathway centered;
2. To track and collect INSIGHTS that build evidence for shifting business practice to create a new pipeline of talent targeting the OY population;
3. To amplify results and INFLUENCE policies with key stakeholders and decision makers at the local and regional level; and
4. To create sustained IMPACT through a data-driven implementation science that fuels systems change for the hotel and lodging industry.

This Project will focus on achieving and measuring progress against these goals:

- To understand the talent gap/needs assessment for the hotel and lodging industry and design a career pathway initiative to be piloted and tested with AHLA member companies.
- To launch 2-3 career pathway pilots with AHLA members, recruit and train 100 opportunity youth and connect 25-50 to career pathways.
- To provide onboarding and post-employment support to employers and OY to increase the likelihood of retention and pathway advancement outcomes.
- To track outcomes and compile key learnings to share with learning community.

VII. Operation Emancipation is **The RightWayFoundation's** revolutionary, flagship employment and life-readiness program for transition age foster youth that integrates and simultaneously provides employment and mental health services. Overall, activities of the program include: Workforce Development (job readiness training workshops, one-on-one job coaching, paid internship placement, job placement); Mental Health Services (peer support group sessions, mental wellness groups, one-on-one therapy, empowerment workshops); Financial Literacy (basic personal finance workshops, credit check assistance, savings account assistance); Case Management (ongoing case management year-round, 24-hour crisis response); Supportive Services (flex funding to support an array of youth needs, including haircuts and makeovers, interview and workplace attire, hotel vouchers and rental assistance, transportation assistance, food assistance); and Alumni Events (holiday celebrations, social events and outings, concerts). Completion of 32-hour Operation Emancipation program provides youth the skills to be placed in paid internships, customer service/retail positions, and the ongoing support and services to retain the job and pursue long-term career/educational goals. The RightWay Foundation partners with many employers that hire youth who have completed the Operation Emancipation program, including AEG L.A. Live, Crews 1972, Jersey Mike's Subs, HMS Host, TJ Maxx, Aramark, and Legends.

New Orleans

VIII. The goal of the **Greater New Orleans Foundation's** Workforce Innovations program is to accelerate and expand career pathways within the healthcare and hospitality sectors in New Orleans. It is based on and supported by the successful national model, WorkLab Innovations. GNOF's Workforce Innovations program will provide post-hire supports to 100 opportunity youth that work at **Ochsner Hospital System** and **the Windsor Court Hotel**. Like the national model, resource and referral specialists - called Navigators - will be available at job sites to help opportunity youth with issues such as childcare, transportation, and housing that inhibit their ability to progress in their careers. To better support opportunity youth, especially the subpopulations of parenting youth and boys and men of color, the Navigator will implement a holistic case-management approach to provide solutions to barriers tailored to opportunity youth. Employers will also benefit from this program as it will minimize work disruptions, decrease absenteeism, and ultimately increase employee retention and engagement. This personalized, immediate, and human-to-human assistance when and where people need it most - at work- meets the goals identified by the Forum. Through six years of successfully implementing the New Orleans Works program and nearly 35 years funding and developing best practices with our region's top performing nonprofits, GNOF is well positioned to expand the pathway to careers for New Orleans' youth.

- IX. While serving 200 youth over two years in employability training and job placement, **Liberty's Kitchen** will pilot a new Career Track program with three model partner employers to assist 15 motivated Liberty's Kitchen graduates to get hired, retain employment for a year or more, and take meaningful steps toward promotion and wage growth. This pilot will result in a documented model pathway from youth unemployment to one-year job retention and a projected path from one-year retention to a management position within partner companies.

The model is being co-designed by Liberty's Kitchen with three model employers: **Ace Hotel New Orleans, The Ruby Slipper Café, and City Greens**. The model will intentionally integrate one-on-one coaching, career advancement planning, employer mentorship, and collaboration on upskilling and remediation to scaffold longer job retention and accelerated career advancement. Throughout the project Liberty's Kitchen will coordinate structured convenings, summits, and check-ins with employer partners and Career Track participants to maintain positive momentum and continually strengthen the pilot intervention.

- X. **Urban League of Louisiana** in partnership with employer partners including the **Intercontinental Hotel**, is engaging former opportunity youth in development of a unique workforce initiative that provides specialized education and skills training to prepare opportunity youth to compete for jobs in the hospitality sector. The program features workshops which arm opportunity youth with important skills and knowledge requisite for career advancement, while also providing employer partners with a clearer understanding of how to better support this population in navigating and overcoming barriers to workplace success.

- XI. **The Youth Empowerment Project (YEP)** and **the Link Restaurant Group (LRG)** will pilot an innovative career pathway partnership that will provide opportunity youth ages 18-24 with soft skills, training, and work experience in multiple aspects of the hospitality industry including direct customer service, event planning, sales and administration. Participants referred from YEP will receive extensive training and wraparound social supports before and during their six-week externships with LRG, in which they will earn stipends and gain experience working alongside the staff of some of New Orleans' most popular local restaurants.

Phoenix/Maricopa County

- XII. **Arizona Center for Youth Resources'** Pathways to Success proposal, grounded in successful processes, operating structure and ability to build on our publicly funded programs, includes effective and innovative program design to help youth access employment, education, and training to succeed in the labor market and to match

employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. The 24-month program is designed to create a skilled, well-educated, demand-driven workforce by assisting 480 economically disadvantaged youth to gain the knowledge and skills required to enter higher-wage career pathways. Comprehensive services are provided through an integrated delivery system that takes advantage of the strengths, perspective, and expertise of multiple organizations and leverages resources to minimize ancillary costs associated with comprehensive youth development programming. The Career Paths service design places emphasis on soft skill building through Career Skills Training, Customer Service Excellence Training, and Financial Literacy which are critical components needed for employment retention and complement the four innovative, collaborative middle-skill career paths supported through the Pathways Fund project: Barista, Security Guard Card, A+ Training and Customer Service. Strong collaboration with our employer partners whom are willing to partner and hire – **Starbucks, Securitas, Drafting Cloud, and Convergent** – ensures participants transition into employment and self-sufficiency.

- XIII. **Chicanos Por La Causa** Workforce Solutions will serve 300 opportunity youth over the course of two years with a focus of on youth who live in the Maryvale neighborhood of Phoenix. Career pathways in the Healthcare, Retail, and Financial sectors will include GED, remedial education, and college courses in partnership with Rio Salado College. The majority of opportunity youth we serve require remedial education before they can start a traditional career pathway that includes community college courses.

The current remedial education system is failing opportunity youth in Maryvale; only 4% of students who begin remedial education ever graduate with an associate's degree. Chicanos Por La Causa proposes to work with Rio Salado College to change the status quo and bring a streamlined, needs-based, "boot-camp" style remedial education program to Maryvale to more quickly qualify students for college courses. Not only has this model proven more effective, but it also better utilizes the community's limited resources. This new model more than doubles the number of successful students at a fraction of the price. By providing the boot camp in locations across Maryvale, we will remove a critical barrier for opportunity youth in Maryvale and increase the number of opportunity youth that matriculate into college courses. Participants will then select from a range of career pathway options and receive the training, support, and services needed to start a quality career with opportunity for career growth.

Seattle/King County

- XIV. The **Accelerator YMCA of Greater Seattle**, in partnership with **Chipotle Mexican Grill**, will support pathways for opportunity youth (OY) ages 16-25 to become work-ready and successfully transition to employment as well as help those who are already

working to persist and advance within their career. The project aims to bridge the gap between employment and stability among opportunity youth and young adults by building tangible life assets such as stable housing and employment, access to higher education, soft skills, and social/emotional development for upward mobility. The Accelerator YMCA's strategy is to strengthen existing programs and support local employers who are at the forefront of this effort. The Accelerator YMCA will provide case management support to 30 existing Chipotle employees to maintain employment as well as access educational trainings and work towards advancement. In addition, Chipotle Mexican Grill will interview and/or hire 80 new opportunity youth candidates who have the support of a YMCA case manager.

- XV. **Grads of Life, Year Up Puget Sound, and T-Mobile**, will serve a cohort of young adults during summer 2017 through an innovative partnership that opens a wide range of doors for opportunity youth, and would serve as a model for a similar program locally in 2018, and be replicable for other markets and other retail employers. As a result of this partnership, young adults will have intensive professional skills training, six weeks of paid technology retail experience, and the opportunity to earn education-friendly employment with T-Mobile, coursework towards a degree at Bellevue College, and/or participation in Year Up's traditional one-year program. Interns will gain the skill set required to attain employment with other retail employers, as well. As with Year Up's traditional one-year program, this partnership will help T-Mobile recruit, train, employ, and retain a diverse workforce interested in continued growth through education and professional development. Interns will serve as a proof point for hiring managers that opportunity youth, presented with a pathway and training, will succeed in technology-related retail roles.