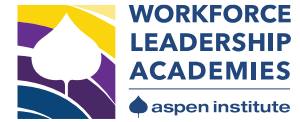


Project Summary

The Aspen Institute's Economic Opportunities Program (EOP) seeks local partners to implement Workforce Leadership Academies in up to six cities or regions. EOP will support local partner organizations that will be responsible for the day-to-day facilitation of the academy with centralized support from EOP. Organizations eligible to apply include nonprofits, city or state entities, community colleges, and intermediaries. Independent consultants and for-profits are not eligible.



Since 2014, EOP has worked with local organizations to deliver 14 Workforce Leadership Academies in 11 cities with over 200 participants. [Workforce Leadership Academies \(WLA\)](#) bring together leaders from across local workforce ecosystems into a 10-month Fellowship to deepen networks, strengthen systems leadership skills, apply race equity and systems change frameworks to leaders' work, and deepen understanding of effective strategies and programs. WLAs provide a forum for local leaders to work collaboratively to identify local and regional systems-based challenges and create shared solutions.

Local partners will position the academy within the local workforce ecosystem, develop an advisory council, facilitate all in-person and virtual academy sessions and activities, and position Fellows' proposed systems recommendations for maximum chances of gaining traction.

Selected partners will receive a challenge grant of \$50,000 toward local academy costs (estimated to be between \$100-160K) and access to curriculum and administrative resources developed through prior academies under a Creative Commons licensing agreement.

EOP will establish a facilitator forum among the selected partners: partners will receive biweekly coaching, meet in monthly virtual half-day sessions, and attend an in-person intensive 3-day retreat before their local academy launch.

Application Process

The application process will consist of two steps: a Letter of Intent to Apply to be submitted (via [this link](#)), followed by an invitation to selected organizations to submit a full proposal.

- June 8 (2:30 - 3:30 EST): Informational webinar
- June 24: Letter of Intent to Apply due
- July 11: Invitations for full proposals issued
- August 1: Full proposals due
- August: Finalist interviews
- September 1: Selected partners notified
- Mid-September: Kickoff Partner Network virtual meeting
- September-April: Advisory councils, outreach and recruitment, Fellows selection
- April-December 2023: 10-month academies operate
- January-March 2024: Virtual academy alumni assembly with Fellows from six regions

Informational Webinar

An information session on Zoom will be held on June 8th from 2:30-3:30 ET.

Register for the information session [here](#).

Request for Applications

Executive Summary

The Aspen Institute's Economic Opportunities Program (EOP) seeks partners to implement Workforce Leadership Academies in up to six cities or regions. Academies bring together leaders from across local workforce ecosystems into a 10-month Fellowship to deepen networks, strengthen systems leadership skills, apply race, and equity, and systems change framework to leaders' work, and deepen understanding of effective strategies and programs. Selected partners will receive a challenge grant of \$50,000 toward local academy costs (estimated to be between \$100-160K) and access to curriculum and administrative resources developed through prior academies. EOP will establish a facilitator forum among the selected partners: partners will receive biweekly coaching, meet in monthly virtual half-day sessions, and attend an in-person intensive 3-day retreat before their local academy launch. This initiative is made possible by the generous support of Walmart, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, and The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr Foundation.

What is a Workforce Leadership Academy?

A high-capacity, responsive, agile workforce ecosystem is critical for sustainable, equitable economic growth in a region. The workforce ecosystem is inherently interdisciplinary, involving many fields of practice, types of organizations, and government policies across various industries, firms, educational institutions, nonprofits, and public sector agencies.

Workforce Leadership Academies bring together leaders from across local workforce ecosystems. Academies are targeted to experienced senior-level managers of nonprofit organizations, public agencies, businesses and business associations, union-based training efforts, and community colleges and universities. By investing in leaders' knowledge, skills, and relationships, the Workforce Leadership Academies are well-positioned to build nimble collaboration so important to the ecosystem's success.

Workforce Leadership Academies strengthen the capacity of participating Fellows to develop and sustain effective workforce strategies, collaborate more deeply with employers and other strategic partner organizations, and expand the number and quality of leaders who advance opportunities for workers while also meeting the talent needs of employers. Participants in local academies work with leading practitioners from around the country, are introduced to practical planning tools, and have the rare opportunity to reflect on and strategize about how to apply principles that underlie effective workforce strategies to their local economic and social context. Fellows bring systems thinking and racial equity to all aspects of their work including their organizations, the labor market, and the local ecosystem. Participants also engage in leadership development activities, including a 360-degree leadership assessment. Through Collaborative Learning Labs (CoLabs), local academies provide a forum for local leaders to work collaboratively to identify local and regional systems-based challenges and create shared solutions.



Participants are recognized as Fellows of the Workforce Leadership Academy, and upon completion, become part of the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Fellows Network.

Academy Design

The Academy engages leaders in a ten-month peer learning cohort to:

- Expand and deepen professional **networks and partnerships**;
- Strengthen organizational and systems **leadership skills**;
- Apply a **race and equity lens** to assess and improve workforce services and strategies;
- Apply **systems change** framework to Fellows’ work; and
- Deepen understanding of **effective strategies** and programs.

Academy Structure

Over their academy year, Fellows participate in:

- An opening three-day retreat (two overnights)
- Five academy sessions (5 hours) and 5 academy labs (3 hours) held during the same week approximately every 4-6 weeks, conducted virtually for four virtual session/lab sets and in person for one set.
- One leadership 360 assessment debrief workshop
- A closing three-day retreat (two overnight stays)
- Collaborative Learning Lab presentations at an in-person stakeholder event

Local partners may also decide to offer additional networking and social events.

Previous Local Academy Partners	
Baltimore	The Baltimore Workforce Funders Collaborative
Seattle	SkillUp Washington
Hartford	United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut
Toronto	The Metcalf Foundation
Detroit	Corporation for a Skilled Workforce
Chicago	Chicago Jobs Council
New Orleans	New Orleans Business Alliance
Jersey City	Hudson County Community College
Dallas	Corporation for a Skilled Workforce
Jackson	City of Jackson
Phoenix	Center for the Future of Arizona

Since 2014, EOP has worked with local organizations to deliver 14 Workforce Leadership Academies in 11 cities with over 200 participants. In an evaluation of three academies held between 2019-2021, Fellows indicated that the academy supported their development as organizational and systems leaders, specifically through skills to collaborate with other strategic partners, lead programmatic and organizational change within their organizations, and lead workforce systems-change strategies within the region. Fellows described gaining new knowledge from each other about existing resources in the system, which facilitated opportunities for engaging more practically and immediately in systems change work. For example, in one city, the Mayor’s Office and the Housing

Authority began working on ways to better align their youth engagement activities toward creating more meaningful out-of-school time experiences. Fellows said that the academy strengthened their ability to build their understanding of industry sectors and regional labor market trends including how to engage with employers in new ways. In another city, Fellows developed a new approach to working with retail and hospitality employers that was subsequently implemented. Fellows also increased their capacity to disaggregate data and generate insights about disparities in outcomes related to hiring, job quality, and advancement. One Fellow revamped their organization's paid time off policies that improved conditions for its workers of color.

[Visit our website](#) to see local Academies and Fellows' bios to date.

Scaling the Workforce Leaders Academies

Given the success of the Workforce Leadership Academy, EOP proposes to scale the academy approach by building a network of local partners to deliver academies and advance the systems changes identified by Fellows. EOP will support local partner organizations that will be fully responsible for day-to-day facilitation of the academy with centralized support from EOP – an evolution of the traditional model of EOP co-delivery of services. EOP will also leverage the Aspen Institute's communications support to raise Fellows' voices around critical systems issues and the role of ongoing leadership and staff development for the field.

Partners will receive:

- A \$50,000* challenge grant toward the estimated \$100-160,000 total local costs. A budget worksheet designed to help applicants estimate costs can be found [here](#)
- WLA application platform for review and selection of Fellows with local advisors
- Annotated agendas, slide decks, and pre-session review materials for all academy sessions, 360 leadership assessment process, CoLab working groups, and Advisory Council planning meetings
- Session evaluations administered by EOP for ongoing local program monitoring and improvement
- Templates for external communications related to the academy
- Support in identifying and preparing national guest faculty
- Training and technical assistance for the local facilitation team in the use of all materials and methods, including a three-day intensive training retreat and monthly virtual workshops with the network of local partners, and individual biweekly local partner coaching.
- Academy session evaluation and process for integrating feedback, as well as pre-enrollment and midpoint surveys.
- The academy curriculum will be available to partners under the Creative Commons licensing agreement # CC BY-NC 4.0 Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0 International.

* Challenge grant funds will be disbursed in two installments of \$25,000; second year disbursement subject to funding availability.

Timeline

The overall timeframe for academy activities is as follows:

Local Launch				Local Academies Delivery												What's Next?		
Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Advisory Councils		Fellows Outreach and Recruitment		Selecting Fellows			Opening Retreat	5 Sessions + 5 Labs 360 Leadership Debrief Social and Networking Activity						Closing Retreat		CoLab Stakeholder Event All-Academy Assembly		
Monthly online Facilitator Forum sessions, 3-day in-person training retreat and bi-weekly check ins																Evaluation		

September to December 2022

- Launch of local advisory councils; development of local outreach and recruitment plan
- Launch of Facilitator Forum with virtual sessions focusing on positioning academies locally

January to March 2023

- Outreach, recruitment, and selection of Fellows
- Monthly Facilitator Forum virtual sessions continue
- Local partners' three-day retreat intensive in-person training on academy curriculum materials

April to December 2023

- Local academies operate in 6 US cities/regions
- Monthly Facilitator Forum virtual sessions continue

January to March 2024

- Local stakeholders' meetings for Fellows to share their recommendations for local workforce ecosystem changes
- A virtual academy alumni assembly with Fellows from each cohort engaging around common ecosystem challenges

Local Partner Roles

Partners are responsible for all aspects of local delivery:

- Position the academy within the local workforce ecosystem context and dynamics, guide recruitment and outreach, provide links to local innovation, policymakers and workforce leaders.
- Develop an advisory council made up of local workforce ecosystem stakeholders who serve as academy advocates. Advisors recruit and select Fellows, connect Fellows to local innovation, attend a Fellows reception and the Collaborative Learning Lab presentation, and assist the partner organization in positioning Fellow's recommendations.
- Facilitate all in-person and virtual academy sessions and activities.
- Lead communication and community care with Fellows before, during, and between sessions.

- Secure and prepare all local guest faculty, and, with EOP support, confirm and prepare national guest faculty.
- Work with CoLab teams to position their proposed recommendations for maximum chances of gaining traction.
- Coordinate logistics for all in-person events and virtual events.
- Administer all travel and honoraria expenses for national guest faculty.

Criteria for Partner Selection

Potential partners will be considered using the following criteria:

- **Strategic Alignment:** The local partner has knowledge of the city or region's workforce development system as well as connections to senior workforce stakeholders. Effecting change in the workforce ecosystem is aligned with the partner's strategic priorities. The partner is explicitly committed to racial equity and inclusion.
- **Credible Convening Capacity:** The local partner and its advisory council can attract leaders from a mix of organizations that make up the local ecosystem, including nonprofit organizations, public agencies, business associations, union-based training efforts, intermediaries, and community colleges and universities. The local partner operates as a neutral stakeholder working on behalf of common interests of the workforce ecosystem and local area.
- **Facilitation Capability:** The local partner can organize and facilitate in-person and virtual events and support a robust cohort-based learning experience. The local partner has identified a team and the needed organizational administrative supports to ensure academy success. This facilitator team has the capacity to customize session agendas, identify and prepare local and national guest faculty, lead all sessions, coach CoLab working groups, and administer 360 leadership assessment (The facilitation team has typically included two senior staff members who co-facilitate each session and event, often supported in logistics and administration by other organizational staff as needed).
- **Financial Capability:** The local partner is able to secure local funding match for the challenge grant.

Final selection of partners will also include consideration of diversity of geography and organizational type, as well as capacity and interest in replicating or adapting Academies over multiple years or across local regions beyond the grant year.

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- Mid-September: Kickoff Partner Network virtual meeting

Informational Webinar

An information session on Zoom will be held on June 8, 2:30-3:30 ET. During this session, participants will learn about the academy experience from alumni and prior partners and discuss a detailed overview of the application process, including both the initial letter of Intent and the full application.

Register for the information session [here](#). The event will be recorded, but we encourage participation so that interested parties can ask questions and engage in discussion.

This initiative is made possible by the generous support of Walmart, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, and The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation.

Application Information

Eligibility

Organizations eligible to apply include nonprofits, city or state entities, community colleges, and intermediaries. Independent consultants and for-profits are not eligible.

Letter of Intent to Apply Survey

EOP invites interested organizations to complete the [Letter of Intent to Apply](#), which requests the following information:

Organizational Overview

1. Organization name
2. Organizational type
3. Number of employees
4. Geographic focus
5. Contact person, title
6. Organizational chart
7. W9 form
8. Please provide a short overview of your organization (include links).
9. How many years have you been in operation?
10. Who are your primary constituents and/or audiences?

Strategic Alignment

11. How does your organization engage with workforce development in your city/region? What geographic area (city, county, region) would this academy serve?
12. How do the academy goals align with your organization's strategic priorities?

Credible Convening Capacity

13. Workforce development ecosystems typically include nonprofit organizations, public agencies, business associations, union-based training efforts, intermediaries, and community colleges and universities. Among the mix of institutional types in your community, where does your organization have strong connections? Weak? Whom might you engage on your advisory council to offset that weakness?
14. Provide the names and titles of three workforce ecosystems leaders outside of your organization who are interested in bringing an Academy to your city/region.

Facilitation Capability

15. Describe your organization's prior experience in facilitating cohort-based learning communities and include any relevant examples.

Financial Capability

16. Identify potential match funding sources.

Other

17. Please share any other information, including questions, that might help in this application process.

If selected, EOP will invite organizations to complete the full proposal, which requests the following information:

Full Proposal

If invited to apply based on the information from the Letter of Intent to Apply the following additional information will complete your application at a survey link to be provided:

Organizational Overview

Please name the organization executive who, if selected, will authorize the Agreement.

Strategic Alignment

1. What do you see as opportunities and challenges in the ecosystem that are ripe for change? Please provide links to relevant reports on your local ecosystem.
2. In what ways has your organization worked to advance racial equity and inclusion internally as an institution? Externally in relation to program service delivery, community collaborations, or other efforts?

Credible Convening Capacity

3. List advisory council members (including titles and organizations) that you have invited or that you will pursue.

Facilitation Capability

4. Identify the facilitation team members who will deliver the Academy and participate in the partner network, including attending the three-day intensive training event. Provide link to their bios (LinkedIn or organization website). Provide a one or two sentence description of each person's role.
5. Describe two examples of convenings, meetings, or other events your organization has hosted that engaged multiple stakeholders or partners in your city or region.

Financial Capability

6. Submit the [budget template](#) with confirmed sources described.

For more information about the Workforce Leadership Academy, contact EOP at eop.program@aspeninstitute.org.