



Fund for Workforce Equity Round 2

Overview

The Fund for Workforce Equity will open applications for a second round of grants in 2024, with grant awards running from February 1, 2025-January 31, 2027.

In this round of funding, we anticipate awarding up to seven two-year grants of \$100,000 each to organizations working to center the voices of workers and learners in designing, developing, and implementing workforce programs and policies.

Eligibility

- The Fund for Workforce Equity is open to any nonprofit (501c3) organization, including fiscally-sponsored organizations, providing workforce development services primarily to or within historically marginalized or excluded populations, including workers and learners of color, Native Nations and communities, immigrants and refugees, and people with disabilities, including but not limited to the following:
 - Previous applicants to the Fund for Workforce Equity
 - Previous grantees of the Fund for Workforce Equity
 - Previous applicants to the WGNNC
 - Collaborative or partnership efforts
 - Worker centers, worker rights organizations, labor management partnerships
- Current awardees of the WGNNC fund are not eligible to apply for this round of funding

Focus Areas + Priorities

Within the broader eligibility criteria, the Fund for Workforce Equity has established a few priority areas and populations for this round of funding:

- **Populations:** Workers and learners with disabilities, refugees and immigrants, youth and young adults
- **Geographies:** All U.S.-based applicants are welcome to apply. However, we do have some funds set aside for organizations based in California, Southeast Michigan¹, and Western NY.²
- **Approaches:**
 - Approaches that align or integrate worker rights and workforce development
 - Approaches that focus on building worker power to improve workforce development programs, working conditions, and/or economic mobility

¹ Southeast Michigan encompasses the counties of Monroe, Washtenaw, Livingston, Oakland, Wayne and Macomb. Major cities in Southeast Michigan include Jackson, Adrian, Brighton, Blissfield, Detroit, Monroe, Tecumseh, and Ann Arbor.

² Western NY includes the following counties: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Monroe, Niagara, Genesee, Orleans and Wyoming. Major cities include: Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Jamestown and the surrounding suburbs.

- Approaches that empower workers and learners to shape and implement workforce programs and policies
- Applicants committed to applying lessons learned to their own employment and organizational processes.

Application Process + Timeline

There will be a two-stage application process for Round 2 of the Fund for Workforce, starting with a letter of inquiry (LOI). This process is intended to reduce the burden on most applicants and is based on feedback we received from applicants in Round 1.

A list of FAQs, which will be updated as we receive more questions, is available on our [website](#). If you have additional questions, please email FWE@workforce-matters.org.

Key Dates

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| August 16, 2024 | LOI Release | Staff |
| September 4, 2024, 3:30 pm ET | Applicant webinar | Staff |
| September 16, 2024 | LOI Due | Applicants |
| October 1, 2024 | Invites for full proposal issued | Staff / selected advisory committee members |
| October 31, 2024 | Full proposals due | Applicants |
| Week of Dec 2, 2024 | Grant recommendations to Advisory Committee | Staff + selected advisory committee members |
| Week of Jan 6, 2025 | Grant award letters issued + announcements | Staff |
| January 31, 2025 | Grant payments made | Funders Together |
| February 1, 2025 | Grant period begins | |
| January 31, 2027 | Grant period ends | |

We will notify all applicants about the status of their LOI on October 1, 2024.

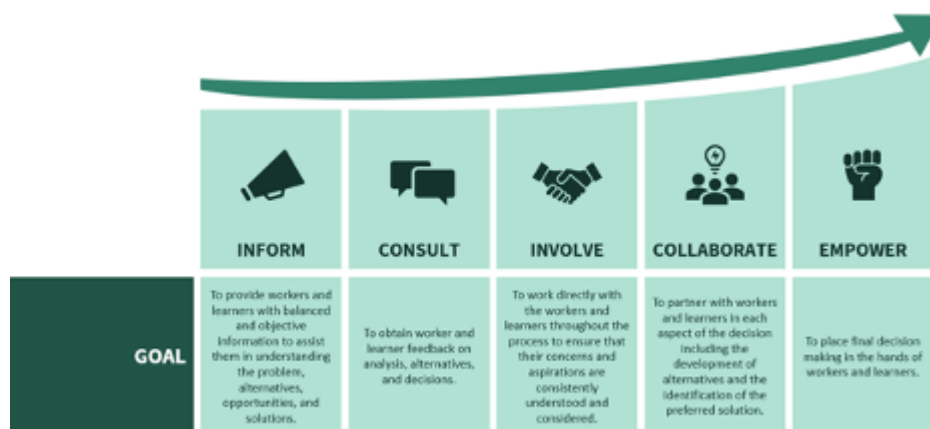
Information about the Full Proposal

If you are selected to submit a full proposal, you will be asked to submit more detailed information about the workers and learners you hope to engage, your approach to the work, what you hope to learn, and how you will compensate participating workers and learners. You will also be asked to share your definition of workforce equity and how you see your work advancing workforce equity. Finally, we may ask you to share about your previous work in this space, what you have learned, and how you might deal with change and challenges as you implement your work.

Letter of Inquiry Questions

Please note that these questions are provided for informational and planning purposes only. All [Letters of Inquiry](#) must be submitted through the [JustFund portal](#). In addition to the answers to these questions, we will also review applicants' JustFund Common Application.

1. The Fund for Workforce Equity has a number of target populations and geographies for this round. Please tell us if you are proposing work that primarily or substantially serves one or more of the following (check all that apply)
 - Youth and young adults
 - Immigrants and/or refugees
 - People with disabilities
 - Workers and learners in California
 - Workers and learners in Southeast Michigan ³
 - Workers and learners in Western New York ⁴
2. What work are you currently doing within your organization and/or your workforce programs to involve and empower workers and learners most impacted by racial, ethnic, and gender disparities? If you're not currently doing this kind of work, why do you want to do it now? (Suggested length – up to 1 page)
3. Where do you think your current work falls along the [spectrum of worker and learner engagement](#) and why? How will a grant from the Fund for Workforce Equity help you to build on these efforts? (Suggested length – up to 1 page)



Required Attachments

- 501c3 (for organization or fiscal sponsor)
- Organizational Budget

³ Southeast Michigan encompasses the counties of Monroe, Lenawee, Washtenaw, Hillsdale, Jackson, Ingham, Livingston, Oakland, Wayne and Macomb. Major cities in Southeast Michigan include Jackson, Adrian, Brighton, Blissfield, Detroit, Monroe, Tecumseh, and Ann Arbor.

⁴ Western NY includes the following counties: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Niagara, Genesee, Orleans and Wyoming. Major cities include: Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Jamestown and the surrounding suburbs.

LOI Rubric + Scoring

The following five categories will be used to score the LOI: *Eligibility, Priorities, Approaches, Worker Engagement, Rationale*. Each category will be scored using the scale and criteria below.

| Excellent | Very Good | Good | Fair | Poor/ Nonresponsive |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|
| <i>20 points</i> | <i>15 points</i> | <i>10 points</i> | <i>5 points</i> | <i>0 points</i> |
| Response is specific, detailed, and provides examples | Response is sufficiently detailed | Applicant answers the question, but more detail would be helpful | Response is vague or too general; not specific enough | Response does not answer the question or meet criteria |

- 1. Eligibility:** Does the applicant meet the Eligibility requirements of the Fund for Workforce Equity as outlined below?

The Fund for Workforce Equity is open to any nonprofit (501c3) organization providing workforce development services primarily to or within historically marginalized or excluded populations, including workers and learners of color, Native Nations and communities, people with disabilities, including but not limited to the following:

- Previous applicants to the Fund for Workforce Equity
- Previous grantees of the Fund for Workforce Equity
- Previous applicants to the WGNNC
- Collaborative or partnership efforts
- Worker centers, worker rights organizations, labor management partnerships
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- 2. Priorities:** Does the applicant meet the priorities of the Fund for Workforce Equity as outlined below?

Within the broader eligibility criteria, the Fund for Workforce Equity has established a few priority areas and populations for this round of funding:

- **Populations:** Workers and learners with disabilities, refugees and immigrants, youth and young adults
- **Geographies:** All U.S.-based applicants are welcome to apply. However, we do have some funds set aside for organizations based in California, Southeast Michigan, and Western NY.

- 3. Approaches:** Does the applicant's proposed project align with the approaches prioritized for Round 2 of the Fund for Workforce Equity as outlined below?
- Approaches that align or integrate worker rights and workforce development
 - Approaches that focus on building worker power to improve workforce development programs, working conditions, and/or economic mobility
 - Approaches that empower workers and learners to shape and implement workforce programs and policies
 - Applicants committed to applying lessons learned to their own employment and organizational processes.
- 4. Worker Engagement:** Is the applicant able to articulate the following:
- 1) How their work involves and empowers workers and learners impacted by racial, ethnic, and gender disparities?
 - 2) Where they think their work falls along the spectrum of worker and learner engagement?
- 5. Rationale:** Does the applicant clearly explain how funding from the Fund for Workforce Equity will help them build upon their efforts to involve and empower workers and learners impacted by racial, ethnic, and gender disparities?

Key Definitions and Terms

- **Centering worker voice and agency:** Centering worker voice and agency means to include, respect, value, and honor the perspectives and lived experiences of learners, workers, and job candidates in meaningful ways in the design, delivery, and evaluation of workforce programs, services, and policies. Read more about this concept in Workforce Matters' [Racial Equity Framework for Workforce Development Funders](#).
- **Good Jobs:** There are many ways to define what makes a good job. The 2019 report "[Not Just a Job: New Evidence on the Quality of Work in the United States](#)" (Gallup) outlines ten key characteristics of job quality, as ranked by workers themselves: 1) Level of pay; 2) Stable and predictable pay; 3) Stable and predictable hours; 4) Control over hours and/or location; 5) Job Security; 6) Employee Benefits; 7) Career Advancement opportunities; 8) Enjoying your day-to-day work; 9) Having a sense of purpose and dignity in your work; 10) Having the power to change things about your job that you're not satisfied with. The Families & Workers Fund and Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Institute released a [working definition of good jobs](#) in 2022 that includes many of the same elements organized under three main components: 1) economic stability, including family-sustaining pay; 2) economic mobility, such as through access to training and wealth-building benefits; and 3) equity, respect, and a voice in the workplace.
- **Power sharing/Power building** – power sharing/power building refers to how to create or change structures and supports such that workers and learners, who typically have less “power” with respect to programs that they participate in and the staff that run them, have and can exercise greater agency in these contexts. Definitions on the site [Racial Equity Tools](#) provide more context for what we mean. Power sharing is part of what it means to be inclusive. According to Racial Equity Tools, to be **inclusive** means to authentically bring traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities and decision/policy making in a way that shares power. Power can be defined as (A) The ability to name or define. (B) The ability to decide. (C) The ability to set the rule, standard, or policy. (D) The ability to change the rule, standard, or policy to serve your needs, wants, or desires. (E) The ability to influence decision makers to make choices in favor of your cause, issue, or concern. So, if power is the ability to name or define, decide, set the rule/standard/policy/change the rule, standard/policy OR the ability to influence decision makers, then sharing power in this instance would mean giving the learner/worker the ability to do the above to the same extent as the organization.
- **Targeted Universalism:** [Targeted universalism](#), a framework put forth by [john a. powell](#) and the [Othering & Belonging Institute](#), “is the pursuit of universal goals with targeted or tailored measures, programs or interventions.” Targeted Universalism rejects the concept of a blanket universal solution, as that would likely be indifferent to the reality that different groups experience the institutions and resources of society in different

ways. Targeted strategies to achieve a goal or solution address the realities of the different groups. Targeted universalism also rejects the claim of formal equality that treats all people the same as a way of denying difference. In targeted universalism any proposal is evaluated by the outcome, not just the intent. For example, while a goal for employment may be universal, strategies used to achieve that goal may differ to be especially sensitive to the needs of the most marginal groups.

- **Workforce Equity:** In an equitable workforce, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, and other demographic characteristics no longer predict one's outcomes in the labor market. All people have equitable access to jobs that are safe, pay a living wage, offer benefits, provide career pathways, and opportunities for mobility.⁵And, disparities in compensation and employment are eliminated for all demographic groups across all occupations and sectors. Workforce equity is achieved by centering communities most impacted by racial, ethnic, and gender disparities and working collaboratively to transform policies, institutions, and structures.
- **Worker + Learner Engagement:** In the first round of the Fund for Workforce Equity, our evaluator SPR Associates included the engagement spectrum below ([Figure A](#)) to help grantees and funders understand how grantees were working to engage workers and learners in their funded projects. In Round 2, we will be looking for ways in which applicants propose to move their projects and/or organizations toward the right-hand side of the spectrum in terms of engaging workers and learners most impacted by racial, ethnic, and gender disparities. This engagement spectrum was developed by SPR and the International Association for Public Participation. It was originally developed as the Spectrum of Public Participation in the early 2000s.
- **Worker power:** According to the [National Employment Law Project](#), worker power means workers can collectively shape working conditions and influence the rules and structures of work so that their communities can thrive.
- **Worker rights:** While there is no single definition of workers' rights, rights included in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights ([Articles 23 and 24](#), 1948) and the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (1966), as well as the International Labor Organization, provide for: the right of everyone to freely choose or accept work (e.g. no forced labor or compulsory labor); the effective abolition of child labor; the right to just and fair wages; the right to a safe and healthy work environment; equal opportunity for employment and promotion; rest, leisure, and reasonable limitation of working conditions and access to periodic holidays with pay; and freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.

⁵ Credit: The National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance and Pathways to Work, Dallas.

Figure A: Spectrum of Worker + Learner Engagement

