ACCELERATING INNOVATIVE + EQUITABLE WORKFORCE PATHWAYS GRANT OPPORTUNITY

DESCRIPTION

Blue Grass Community Foundation, with support from the Walton Family Foundation, is offering a funding opportunity for the development of new programs designed to accelerate innovation and equity in education-to-workforce experiences to better prepare Fayette County students in grades 6–12 for in-demand, high-wage employment opportunities. Successful projects will specifically address disparities that exist for students due to socioeconomic status, gender, and/or race and ethnicity.

This is a competitive grantmaking process, with applications reviewed by an independent, intergenerational, community-based RFP Review Team. Proposals with project budgets between $200,000 and $500,000 will be considered. The Review Team will award one or more grants totaling $500,000 for the two-year grant cycle (January 1, 2024–December 31, 2025). There will be two rounds of funding, the first in the fall of 2023 and the second in the fall of 2024. Projects awarded grants in the first round will be eligible to apply for additional funding in the second round.

Grant recipients will have access to support from Catalyst:Ed (CE)—a national nonprofit unlocking collective expertise to catalyze equity, innovation, and improvement in education.

ELIGIBILITY

- Applicant organizations must be located in Fayette County. Program proposals must be for service to youth in grades 6-12 residing in Fayette County.
- Proposals must be aimed directly at workforce development, and may include one or more approaches, such as career cultivation, skill development, and job awareness.
- Proposals must include one or more partner organizations, such as public entities, nonprofits, governmental agencies, or private corporations. Individuals are not considered partners.
- The lead applicant organization must be classified as a nonprofit public charitable organization under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code, a unit of government, or a school.
- The lead applicant organization must have a GuideStar Seal of Transparency at the Gold level or higher. GuideStar.org is a national database of nonprofits recognized by the IRS. Organizations have free access to their profile on the site and can provide added information to increase the level of Transparency. Click here to learn more about earning your seal of transparency. Please note if your organization is a school or government, your organization is not eligible to have a GuideStar profile and this requirement is waived.
• Applicant organizations must not discriminate in their hiring, volunteer participation, or provision of client services. Exceptions may be made for hiring practices for religious organizations that can demonstrate bona fide occupational qualifications based on religious beliefs for employment.
• Applicant organizations with religious affiliations will be considered for funding only if the project for which they seek support attempts to address the needs of the wider community without regard to religious beliefs.
• Applicant organizations must not have final grant reports that are past due to Blue Grass Community Foundation.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Program Description
• Identification of the need not presently being addressed
• Overarching approach and well-defined goals
• Implementation plan
• Capacity of the organization to implement the program
• Clear articulation of the vision of success and the value the project creates

Assessment Plan
An outline of the outcomes and impacts applicants intend to achieve and how they will measure their progress at quarterly intervals and at the completion of the grant period.

Letters of Commitment
Letters of commitment from all collaborative partners.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

Equitable (30 points)
Addresses disparities that exist for students due to socioeconomic status, gender and/or race and ethnicity.

Innovative (30 points)
Involves groundbreaking ideas, strategies or actions aimed at solving a problem or exploring new opportunities, using new concepts or technologies that challenge existing practices while generating positive change. Includes creativity, experimentation, and risk taking. Has potential to transform industries, communities or societies. Creates new opportunities and encourages creativity and learning that go beyond traditional approaches.
Impact on the community (30 points)
Shows how the project improves aspects of the community, whether through directly changing behaviors, educating others, or contributing to the work of nonprofits and other organizations.

Cross-Sector Collaboration (20 points)
Evidence of working in partnership early on in the process with key stakeholders representing partnerships across different sectors—e.g. public and private, school and community—to co-design the proposal and implement the action plan.

Sustainable (20 points)
Shows potential for continuing past the grant period, such as a plan to support a class on workforce development through ongoing earned revenue or sources of additional funding, so that the impact of the grant extends beyond the grant period.

Viability of work plan (20 points)
Indicates past history of partner organizations in successful implementation of relevant projects of similar scale to that proposed. Indicates the experience and expertise of lead individuals within partner organizations. Indicates skills and networks to achieve the desired outcomes for the project. A track record of at least some organizational success with budgets that are at least equal to the full grant amount indicates an applicant has the capacity and oversight to manage the grant investment.

Experiential (10 points)
Provides individuals with immersive and hands-on learning experiences while engaging in new ideas, skills and knowledge in a practical and interactive way through such things as project based learning, outdoor learning, apprenticeships or internships. Promotes active learning, critical thinking and personal growth through applying theoretical knowledge in ways that help participants learn to apply what they’ve learned to real world situations.

Scalable (10 points)
Shows potential to function at a larger scale without lessening project impact, either through growth of the funded project or through replicability by other entities. Shows potential for serving as a model for similar projects, to extend the impact of the grant.
21st century skills development (10 points)
Development of skills through experiential learning opportunities that are human centered to support continuous professional and community development. This should include an integration of industry focused skills as well as work ready skills that enhance a sense of community through, but not limited to: authentic listening, applied creativity, problem solving through a growth mindset, collaboration, and consensus building. Ensures that participants are gaining transferable skills that enhance their ability to engage in a work environment that supports the development of community and fosters a sense of belonging.

Deadline to apply:
October 23, 2023 by 11:59 pm

Finalist Presentations:
TBD

Grant Period:
January 1, 2024–December 31, 2025

How To Apply:
Visit Blue Grass Community Foundation’s Grant Portal to access the online application: https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=bgcf

Questions? Contact:
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