

Request for Proposal: Elevating Postsecondary Leadership

“Like business and industry, vocational education is engaged in a struggle to adapt to change - a struggle to survive. Simply to remain a viable part of American education, we need astute, creative leaders at all levels - leaders for the ongoing work of delivering vocational education to the youth and adults of this nation, and leaders for our professional associations” ([Edmunds, 1988, p. 24](#)).

This warning from Neil Edmunds, the former president of the American Vocational Association, is just as relevant today as it was 30 years ago. While vocational education has now been rebranded as career and technical education (CTE) and has gained support from both the [Obama](#) and [Trump administrations](#), issues related to leadership development still need to be addressed.

In recent years, CTE has been held up as an option that can [result in a family sustaining wage and help close the skills gap](#). ECMCF believes that while there is great potential for CTE, much of the success of students and programs comes down to the leaders who implement the work at the organizational level. Research suggests that such leadership may be lacking at CTE programs across the country. Specifically, education researchers have [raised concerns about the number of experienced leaders retiring](#), [the additional demands placed on CTE leaders](#), and [the greater need for leadership development opportunities for staff](#).

In order to respond to these issues, supporting the next generation of leaders at nonprofits and postsecondary institutions offering CTE programs is imperative. By providing additional support to up-and-coming leaders in the field and acknowledging the quality work completed by well-established authorities on CTE, ECMC Foundation (ECMCF) intends to encourage a culture that supports leadership development in CTE. To amplify the voices of both the rising and well established generation of CTE visionaries, ECMCF will recognize distinguished leaders at various stages in their career.

Background

[ECMC Foundation](#) is a Los Angeles-based, nationally-focused foundation whose mission is to inspire and to facilitate improvements that affect educational outcomes—especially among underserved populations—through evidence-based innovation. It is one of several affiliates under the [ECMC Group](#) enterprise based in Minneapolis, which together work to help students succeed.

The Foundation makes investments in two focus areas.

- College Success is focused on increasing the number of college students from historically underrepresented backgrounds, including low-income and first-generation populations, who pursue and attain bachelor's degrees.
- Career Readiness is committed to connecting adults with limited or no education beyond high school to industry-informed, transferable, and accredited postsecondary CTE programs that are part of career pathways that lead to portable certificates or degrees.

Request

ECMCF is looking for a partner to select and support a diverse cohort of extraordinary staff and administrators at nonprofit organizations and postsecondary institutions working to advance postsecondary career and technical education. The selected partner will recruit and select program participants, offer innovative programming and community building activities, and provide ongoing support for practitioners seeking to advance in their career.

The ideal partner will provide support to up-and-coming leaders in the field in addition to well-established authorities on CTE. The partner should find ways to connect program participants throughout their involvement, allowing for the exchange of ideas and informal mentorship opportunities. In addition to program support for the operating organization, ECMCF will provide pass through grants for two cohorts of approximately 10-15 rising and established leaders. The final number of participants and size of the pass through grants will be determined in partnership with the selected organization. ECMCF requests that program participants be titled "ECMCF Fellows," but co-branding the title with the partner organization is negotiable.

The organizational partner selected will also work to ensure that ECMCF Fellows meet the following ECMC Foundation expectations:

- Write blog posts to share their experiences and best practices, which will be posted on ECMC Foundation's website and included in a yearly ECMC Foundation publication
- Share experiences and best practices working in postsecondary CTE with ECMC Foundation and the greater community of Fellows
- Attend a yearly ECMC Foundation convening
- Apply to present at a minimum of one professional conference annually
- Make research, data, and best practices open access

ECMC Foundation expects that two cohorts of Fellows will participate in the program over the course of the grant period starting no earlier than November 2018 and ending no later than May 2021. There may be an opportunity to extend the program into the future pending the outcomes of the first two cohorts.

Requirements

In order to be considered for this opportunity, interested organizations must submit a Letter of Inquiry to ECMC Foundation by June 22, 2018 using the guiding questions below. All submitted Letters of Inquiry will be considered for this opportunity and one organization will be selected to administer the program. All organizations will be notified of their status no later than July 2, 2018 and the organization selected for this opportunity will be asked to submit a full grant proposal (including a more concrete action plan and budget) to ECMC Foundation by August 1, 2018.

Eligibility + Selection Criteria

Any organization with a commitment to education and background in leadership development is eligible to submit a Letter of Inquiry. A small team from the Foundation will evaluate all submitted Letters of Inquiry. The team will select the organization with the strongest mission alignment and ability to accomplish the expectations established by ECMC Foundation.

Contact + Submission Process

Questions may be directed to Patrick Bourke (pbourke@ecmc.org). **All final Letters of Inquiry must be submitted to Patrick by email no later than 5:00 PM (PT) on June 22, 2018.**

Elevating Postsecondary Leadership Letters of Inquiry

Please prepare a brief (up to three page) Letter of Inquiry addressing the following questions.

Organization Name	
Program Title	
Program Duration	
Requested Amount	

Organization

Provide an overview of the organization's purpose, relevant history, and data on its effectiveness.

- Does the organization have experience facilitating similar programs and how successful have those initiatives been?

Program Design

Explain how you will structure the program.

- What will you do to amplify the voices of the ECMC Fellows, promote their work, and lift up the postsecondary CTE field?
- Will the program have any additional requirements beyond those outlined above?
- How will you utilize the pass through grant funds? (e.g., unrestricted funding, special project support)

Program Timeline and Action Plan

Provide the approximate start and end dates and a summary of the activities for which you are requesting support.

- What actions will you take over the course of the grant period to identify and support ECMC Fellows?
- How will you develop the leadership capabilities and build community among participants?
- How will you be sure the Fellows meet ECMC Foundation expectations?

Measurements of Success

Explain how you will evaluate the program's success and the metrics you will use to measure successful implementation and program effectiveness.

Budget Narrative

Include a detailed list of the expenses (e.g., staff time, professional development) that comprise the total amount requested.