

## Request for Proposal: InformED Journalism Fellowship Program

Most recent education stories tend to capture narrow realities of postsecondary education. While a number of major news publications will fixate on affirmative action cases at the Ivies, the continued fall of higher education's credit outlook, or even the "Five Recent Campus Novels You Need To Read," this is not representative of the greater landscape in postsecondary education. The problem is that for the majority of students attending postsecondary institutions, their experience is not waking up in a cloistered campus dorm, walking to class, and heading to the big football game on Saturday.

The majority of American postsecondary students are what used to be termed "non-traditional," or what the Institute for Women's Policy Research calls "independent." Independent students are defined as individuals with

at least one defining characteristic outlined in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), including being at least 24 years old; married; a graduate or professional student; a veteran; an orphan, in foster care, or ward of the court; a member of the armed forces; an emancipated minor; someone who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless; or having legal dependents other than a spouse. (IWPR, 2018)

A report issued in 2018 concluded independent students constitute **over half** (51%) of college-going students, many of whom attend two-year colleges and trade schools. In recent years, elected officials have started to take notice of such institutions as potential partners to make significant improvements in education, the workforce and the economy broadly. More specifically, institutions offering career and technical education (CTE), where many independent students attend, have garnered support from both the **Obama** and **Trump** administrations. In July 2018, with bi-partisan support, the President signed the *Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act* (Perkins V) into law. With the growing number of independent students attending postsecondary institutions and the **increased availability** of government funding supporting CTE, there is an urgent need for well-informed media coverage on issues that affect the majority of students.

The concern is that education stories in the media are both **rare and frequently not informed** by education research. Further **analysis of media coverage** discovered that only "1.4 percent of national news coverage from television, newspapers, news Web sites [*sic*], and radio dealt with education." A **similar study** on education coverage in news from 1980 to 2015 found that "the three networks [ABC, NBC, CBS] combined to average 66 stories, which amounted to 194 minutes of broadcast time" out of an estimated 21,000 minutes of total news coverage per year.

Coverage of postsecondary education is even slimmer. In 2009, researchers **uncovered** that "of all the education reporting, only 2.9 percent is devoted to two-year institutions of higher learning, compared to 12.5 percent for colleges and 14.5 percent for universities."

In order to tell a more representative story, it is imperative to support journalists interested in improving postsecondary education discourse. By providing additional support to journalists, the hope is that they will be equipped with the tools to present the American public with more well-rounded coverage of postsecondary education. This coverage in turn will lead to a more accurate representation of today's learners and the institutions they attend.

### 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.

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 postsecondary CTE programs that are part of career pathways leading to portable certificates or degrees.

### **CTE Leadership Collaborative**

This RFP is being released as part of the ECMC Foundation **CTE Leadership Collaborative (LC)**, an initiative focused on bringing together diverse perspectives and equipping leaders with the tools, resources and skills needed to advance postsecondary CTE.

The partner selected for this opportunity will join a community of organizations supporting leaders with the intent to improve the state of postsecondary CTE. Please see below for a brief summary of the first two grants made through the LC.

- The CTE Research Program at North Carolina State University - Sponsored by ECMC Foundation will advance CTE research and knowledge by supporting graduate students and postdoctoral researchers from a range of postsecondary institutions and a variety of academic disciplines. The goal is to grow high-quality postsecondary CTE research, which currently significantly lacks visibility and financial support.
- The Postsecondary Leadership Success Program at ACTE - Sponsored by ECMC Foundation will support current and aspiring leaders in CTE. The goal is to provide professional and career growth opportunities to the next generation of leaders at nonprofits and postsecondary institutions offering CTE programs.

LC grantees commit to similar branding and a common list of expectations focused on field building to create seamless opportunities for collaboration.

### **Opportunity**

ECMC Foundation is accepting proposals from organizations or institutions interested in developing and managing a program to help a diverse cohort of journalists expand their awareness about postsecondary career and technical education. This competitive grant process will lead to the identification of one organization selected to receive funding.

Proposed concepts should include a plan to recruit and select program participants, offer innovative programming to build a community of practice among participants, and provide ongoing support for journalists seeking to advance in their career and/or refine their skills. The ideal program will engage participants throughout their involvement, allow for the exchange of ideas, and offer mentorship opportunities. Proposals should indicate the number and size of cohort(s) to be assembled and the experience level appropriate for the program participants. ECMCF will provide financial support to the selected organization to pay for management of the program, as well as provide pass through funds for program participants, the use of which should clearly be articulated in the proposal. Grant activities should not start before August 2019 or end after July 2022.

ECMC Foundation believes that a successful program will include the following activities in an effort to develop the individuals as leaders and advance the postsecondary CTE field.

- Support the development and publication of written pieces;
- Offer skill building and networking opportunities;
- Attend a yearly ECMC Foundation convening;
- Encourage attendance and presentations at relevant conferences;
- Make any produced research, data, or published pieces open access.

#### **Application + Timeline**

In order to be considered for this opportunity, interested organizations must submit a **Letter of Inquiry to ECMC Foundation by March 20, 2019 using the prompts below**. Final notifications will be issued no later than April 1, 2019. The organization selected for this grant opportunity will be asked to submit a full proposal (including a more concrete action plan and budget) to ECMC Foundation by April 29, 2019.

#### **Eligibility + Selection Criteria**

Any organization with a commitment to education and/or journalism 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](mailto:pbourke@ecmc.org)). All final Letters of Inquiry must be submitted via the [online portal](#) no later than 5:00 PM (PT) on March 20, 2019.

## Broadening Education Coverage Letters of Inquiry

Please address the following questions and submit your answers via the [online portal](#).

Organization Name	
Program Title	
Program Duration	
Requested Amount	

### Organization

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

- Does your organization have experience facilitating similar programs and how successful have those initiatives been?
- How does this program align with the overall mission of your organization?

### Proposed Program

Explain how you will help journalists expand their awareness about postsecondary career and technical education and understand the diverse populations enrolled in CTE programs.

- What is the ideal experience level for a participant in this program? Why?
- What supports will your organization offer that will prepare journalists to report on this field?
- 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 program participants?
- How will you develop the leadership capabilities and build community among participants?
- How will you incorporate the activities listed in the Opportunity section above?

### 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.

#### Disclaimer

ECMC Foundation reserves the right, where it may serve the Foundation's best interests, to request additional information or clarification from candidates or to allow corrections for errors or omissions. There is no expressed or implied obligation for ECMC Foundation to reimburse responding firms for any expenses incurred in preparing submissions in response to this request.