

Request for Proposal: Postsecondary CTE System Reform

ECMC Foundation is accepting proposals from organizations or institutions interested in developing and managing a program to support postsecondary system leaders at the state, regional, and/or local level. The goal of this program is to assist leaders at the system level who are positioned to scale effective practices and support efficient policies to improve outcomes for postsecondary career and technical education (CTE) programs. Potential program participants may include higher education coordinating board leaders, regional compact leaders, State CTE Directors, and city or state community and technical system leaders. This competitive grant process will lead to the identification of one organization or self-identified coalition of organizations to receive funding.

Proposed concepts should include a plan to recruit and select diverse program participants, offer innovative programming to build a community of practice among participants, and provide ongoing support for professionals 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, offer mentorship opportunities, and support participants in leading system reforms. Program participants should develop their expertise in reforming and improving postsecondary CTE across delivery modes, educational models, technological tools, and credentials types among other current issues facing postsecondary CTE.

Proposals should be sector agnostic and national in scope. Applicants should indicate the number and size of cohort(s) they will assemble and the experience level appropriate for the program participants. Program participants must not be elected officials.

ECMC Foundation will provide financial support to the selected organization to pay for management of the program, as well as expenses for program participants (e.g. stipends, travel reimbursement, etc.) and/or external coaches/mentors, the use of which the proposal should clearly articulate. Grant activities should not start before February 2021 nor end after January 2024.

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 publications open access.

The Challenge

The COVID-19 pandemic has sent the United States spiraling as it grapples with a national health crisis and record levels of unemployment, but it has also offered the reminder that [middle-skill jobs](#) are an essential part of the economy. Staffed by graduates of career and technical education programs, individuals employed in middle-skill jobs include those currently working on the front lines in hospitals fighting COVID-19, managing supply chain logistics, and growing the food required to feed a nation that largely remains at home.

While postsecondary CTE has gone above and beyond to prove its value in crisis, it still struggles with negative perception. Many Americans still associate CTE with vocational education (commonly referred to as [voc-ed](#)) where tracking was prevalent, postsecondary degree attainment was rare, and career trajectories were limited. CTE has changed significantly from the voc-ed days, but the lingering stigma has likely impacted resource allocation for CTE.

Today, there is a growing demand for a workforce with education beyond a high school diploma but less than a bachelor's degree. Postsecondary CTE provides the academic, technical, and professional skills needed to access the middle-skill jobs that offer family-sustaining wages and lifelong learning opportunities while providing employers with the qualified and diverse talent they need. While funding for CTE from the Carl D. Perkins Act (Perkins V) increased for the first time in 30 years to \$1.229 billion in 2019, it is still short of the nearly [\\$2 billion](#) needed to keep pace with inflation and only 38% of available resources were distributed to postsecondary institutions.

COVID-19 has exacerbated these funding shortfalls and now postsecondary CTE institutions are being asked to do more to support their students with fewer resources. Systems leaders will need to address issues brought on by the pandemic, especially those that address the increased demand from students and employers, while thinking ahead to reform inefficient practices beyond the current state of affairs. This opportunity seeks to arm system leaders, those responsible for setting budgets and determining strategy, with the knowledge and skills needed to lead system reforms, drive student success, and meet the demands of industry.

CTE Leadership Collaborative

ECMC Foundation is releasing this RFP as part of the [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 as the sixth and final in the collaborative. LC grantees provide professional development opportunities for leaders—known as *ECMC Foundation Fellows*—from a range of disciplines and a variety of approaches and commit to similar branding and a common list of expectations focused on field-building to create seamless opportunities for collaboration. Please see below for a brief summary of the five fellowship programs supported through this initiative.

- **The CTE Research Program at North Carolina State University** supports graduate students and postdoctoral researchers from a range of postsecondary institutions and a variety of academic disciplines. The goal is to increase high-quality postsecondary CTE research, which currently lacks significant visibility and financial support.
- **The Postsecondary Leadership Success Program at ACTE** supports current and aspiring leaders in CTE. The goal is to provide professional development opportunities for the next generation of leaders at nonprofits and postsecondary institutions offering CTE programs.
- **The Woodrow Wilson CTE Media Fellowship** supports education journalists. The goal is to increase the number of journalists equipped with tools and networks to provide richer and more comprehensive coverage of postsecondary education, particularly CTE.
- **The Strategic Data Project - Career and Technical Education at Harvard University** helps data professionals at community colleges. The goal is to improve the use of data to support students in the successful completion of CTE programs and generate insights about the workforce outcomes of their various CTE programs.
- **The CTE Industry Fellowship Program at JFF** facilitates learning opportunities for industry leaders from across the United States. The goal of the program is to build the knowledge and leadership capacity of Fellows to act as change agents within their companies and strengthen their companies' policies and practices to hire and promote CTE graduates.

Fellows selected through each grantee program engage with other ECMC Foundation Fellows at the annual CTE Leadership Collaborative Convening, regular receptions at conferences, and

through additional funding opportunities. The goal is to inspire engagement with leaders from different fields all with the shared intent to advance postsecondary CTE.

Background

[ECMC Foundation](#) is a Los Angeles-based, nationally-focused foundation with a mission 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 and presently underserved backgrounds who persist through and graduate from an institution of higher education with a bachelor’s degree.
- Career Readiness is committed to improving postsecondary career and technical education programs that lead to academic credentials and careers paying family-sustaining wages.

Eligibility

Any organization or institution with a commitment to postsecondary education, education policy, professional development, and/or background in leadership development is eligible to submit a Letter of Inquiry.

Because this initiative will likely involve payments to individuals employed by various government entities, the selected organization must ensure that all such payments are in compliance with any applicable legal restrictions, including but not limited to, restrictions on lobbying by public charities. Accordingly, ECMC Foundation is seeking proposals from organizations with demonstrable experience, resources and knowledge necessary to ensure legal compliance in making any payments to government employees.

Timeline

The deadline to apply is 5:00 PM (PT) on November 2, 2020. Final notifications will be issued no later than November 6, 2020. The organization selected will be asked to submit a full proposal (including a detailed action plan and budget) to ECMC Foundation by November 20, 2020.

Submission Process

In order to be considered for this opportunity, interested organizations must submit a Letter of Inquiry via ECMC Foundation’s [online form](#).

Selection Criteria

Each submitted Letter of Inquiry will be reviewed based on the applicant’s:

- Alignment with the Opportunity section of the RFP
- Clarity of submitted Letter of Inquiry
- Attention to participants’ experiences
- Experience leading similar programs
- Commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Reputation in the field of CTE, postsecondary education, education policy, professional development, and/or background in leadership development
- Efficacy of plans to measure success of the program

Contact

Questions may be directed to Patrick Bourke (pbourke@ecmc.org).

Postsecondary CTE System Reform Letter of Inquiry

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

Organization Name	
Program Title	
Program Duration	
Requested Amount	

Organization (character limit: 2500)

Provide an overview of your organization's (and, if applicable, your partners') purpose, relevant history, and data on its effectiveness.

- Does your organization have experience facilitating similar programs and how successful have those initiatives been?
- Does your organization have experience supporting system leaders?
- What experience does your organization have in influencing CTE, postsecondary education, education policy, professional development, and/or leadership development?

Proposed Program (character limit: 8000)

Explain how you will help system leaders understand the challenges and opportunities facing postsecondary CTE and embark on reforms.

- What stakeholder group/s do you hope to serve and how will you address any potential challenges with serving this group/s?
- How will you embed practices to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in this program?
- How will you incorporate the activities listed in the RFP, develop the leadership capabilities, and build community among participants?

Measurements of Success (character limit: 2250)

Explain how you will evaluate the program's implementation and effectiveness.

- What key outcomes and outputs/milestones will you track over the course of the grant period?

Budget Narrative (character limit: 1250)

Include a detailed list of the expenses (e.g., staff time, consultants, participant stipends, travel, technology, supplies) that comprise the total amount requested. Applicants will not be expected to budget travel expenses to attend the annual CTE Leadership Collaborative Convening.