

Request for Qualification (RFQ): Evaluation Partner for Postsecondary Career and Technical Education Leadership Collaborative

In 2018, ECMC Foundation launched the CTE Leadership Collaborative (LC), an initiative focused on bringing together diverse perspectives and equipping leaders with the resources and skills needed to advance postsecondary CTE. Through grants made to leading organizations and institutions, ECMC Foundation provided funding for six fellowship programs offering professional development including mentoring and skill-building opportunities; in-person and virtual convenings; writing and presenting about learnings; attending conferences; and participating in capstone projects. Each fellowship program (listed below) supports leaders from a range of disciplines and a variety of approaches—known as ECMC Foundation Fellows (Fellows)—dedicated to improving postsecondary CTE.

- [The CTE Research Program at North Carolina State University](#) supports graduate students and postdoctoral researchers to increase postsecondary CTE-focused research.
- [The Postsecondary Leadership Success Program at ACTE](#) supports CTE practitioners to develop leaders at nonprofits and postsecondary institutions offering CTE programs.
- [The Higher Education Media Fellowship at the Institute for Citizens & Scholars](#) supports journalists to increase and improve coverage of postsecondary education, especially CTE.
- [The Strategic Data Project - CTE at Harvard University](#) supports community college data professionals to improve student success and generate insights about workforce outcomes.
- [The CTE Industry Fellowship Program at JFF](#) supports industry leaders to promote CTE graduates within company hiring policies and practices.
- [The Postsecondary State CTE Leaders Fellowship Program at Advance CTE](#) supports aspiring state leaders to implement high-quality and equity-centered programs & policies.

The CTE LC addresses the absence of notable and targeted professional development for non-professor occupations and recognizes a need for shifts in innovation, diversity, and destigmatization in the postsecondary CTE field. The goals of the CTE LC include building community and inspiring collaboration, increasing knowledge and applying learnings, introducing opportunities and fostering innovation, and raising awareness to increase equitable outcomes in postsecondary CTE.

The \$20 million initiative is designed to run through 2025, when we estimate that more than 500 ECMC Foundation Fellows will be working to improve postsecondary CTE by addressing field-level research gaps, incorporating evidence-based approaches to student success, deepening related media coverage, improving campus-specific data use, integrating company hiring practices, advancing state-wide policies, and more.

While the six grantee partners oversee the majority of the programmatic activities, ECMC Foundation serves as the connective tissue to ensure collaboration across programs by convening Fellows on an annual basis, hosting networking events, facilitating communication across Fellows, and offering funding opportunities to support Fellows interested in collaborating on projects.

About this Project

The goal is to document the elements, learnings, and impacts of the LC at the individual (Fellow), fellowship (grantee), initiative (model), and field (postsecondary CTE) levels.

At the individual level, how have the fellowships supported Fellows in meeting their professional goals? How has the collective work (e.g., publications, presentations) of the Fellows contributed to informing practice and policy within the field? Given how CTE and its practitioners are often overlooked in the broader education sector, have the fellowships fostered belonging and connection for Fellows?

At the fellowship level, how has participation in the LC impacted their organization, if at all? What elements of the fellowship programs are grantee partners sustaining? In what ways did our strategy of awarding multi-year grants and renewing grant funding with decreased funding over time support sustainability efforts? Have the LC fellowships impacted the approach of the organization towards implementing education programs?

At the initiative level, how has the LC contributed to the growth of leadership in CTE, if at all? Are the roles that the Foundation and grantee partners have taken on appropriate? In what ways did the model facilitate collaboration between grantee partners? What aspects of this model are novel? How does this deviate from other cross-segmental professional development programs? Could this model be of value to other fields including those that connect to the philanthropic community? Did the initiative impact some practitioner demographics (journalist vs state leader, for example) more than others?

At the field level, how has the LC advanced the postsecondary CTE field, if at all? Is there a documented change in uplifting the needs and opportunities to increase financial support, build public will, improve practice and policy, and drive equitable student outcomes in CTE, with the ultimate goal of boosting program persistence and credential attainment to ensure graduates can access positions paying family-sustaining wages and employers have the qualified and diverse talent they need? Do the participating Fellows represent a change of the face of postsecondary CTE leadership? How does the demographic make-up of Fellows compare to the broader field of postsecondary CTE practitioners and students?

Eligibility and Selection Criteria

Any institution, organization, or consultant with demonstrated knowledge of postsecondary education or leadership development is eligible to submit a proposal; current LC grantees, sub-grantees, and ECMC Foundation Fellows are not eligible to apply for this opportunity. A team from the Foundation will evaluate all submitted proposals using the following criteria.

- Expertise in leadership development or postsecondary education. Understanding and experience with postsecondary CTE not required but considered a plus.
- Experience designing and implementing culturally responsive, equity-centered evaluations focused on systemic change, particularly in the social sector.
- Capacity to conduct this evaluation including technical knowledge and skills.
- Experience designing formative and summative evaluations of similar size and scope.
- Ability to collaborate and engage funders throughout the evaluation.

Scope of Work and Deliverables

We imagine that the scope of work will include but not be limited to the following tasks.

- Review background documents including Fellow presentations and publications, annual Fellow survey results, and grantee proposals and reports.
- Develop an evaluation plan which identifies the evaluation questions and methods.
- Implement the evaluation plan in partnership with ECMC Foundation staff, grantee partners, and/or Fellows and secondary data sources.
- Submit an interim and final report.

The grants and activities associated with the LC are set to conclude by December 31, 2025. We aim to begin this project in early 2023 and conclude the evaluation by June 30, 2026.

Key deliverables for this project include:

- An **evaluation plan** identifying the evaluation questions, metrics or indicators that will address these questions, and methods by which these questions will be answered.
- The **interim and final reports** incorporating graphics and visualizations to highlight key findings and concepts with standalone executive summaries for each.
- A **final presentation** summarizing the key findings and recommendations from the evaluations as well as an in-person oral presentation.

Budget

We have budgeted \$400,000 for this project and will work with the selected evaluation partner to finalize an approach and budget that best meets the scope of work.

Submission Instructions

To expand our pool of qualified applicants and honor their time, we have structured this opportunity as a two-step process. Currently, **we invite interested parties to submit relevant qualifications to carry out this project**. Please note, this submission does not ask for a full proposal or scope of work. For more details about our process, please see the key dates and timeline section on the following page.

Submissions for this RFQ should include the following elements:

- **Organization description** - Provide a brief description of your organization and/or yourself including your approach to culturally responsive, equity-centered evaluation focused on systematic change. *(approximately 1 - 2 paragraphs)*
- **Capacity statement** - Describe your capacity to conduct this evaluation including the technical knowledge and skills that you and/or your team would bring to this project. *(approximately 2 - 3 paragraphs)*
- **Relevant experience** - Supply a list of up to four relevant (considering the content and approach of this solicitation) projects including the following for each: a brief description, scope of work, date completed, client including the name of the hiring manager or the primary contact, and link(s) or attachment(s) to project deliverables. *(1 page)*
- **Proposed team** - Include bios for key members of the team and their hourly rates. *(1 page)*

Key Dates and Timeline

Below are key dates related to this opportunity:

- Release RFQ: Monday, November 14, 2022
- **Close application: Friday, December 9, 2022 at 5PM (PT).** Submissions should be sent to Anna Fontus by email (afontus@ecmc.org) as a MS Word or PDF attachment.
- Notify those invited to submit full proposal: Friday, December 16, 2022
- Prepare full proposal: Those invited to submit full proposals will receive instructions on Wednesday, January 4, 2023 with a due date of Monday, January 23, 2023.
- Interview finalists: Tuesday, January 31, 2023 and Wednesday, February 1, 2023
- Notify finalists of decision: Week of February 13, 2023

If you have any questions about this opportunity, please contact Anna Fontus by email (afontus@ecmc.org). We will post a list of frequently asked questions and our response to each on our website and update it as we receive questions.

About ECMC Foundation

ECMC Foundation is a Los Angeles-based, nationally focused foundation with a mission to improve higher education for career success among underserved populations through evidence-based innovation. It is one of several affiliates under the ECMC Group (www.ecmcgroup.org) enterprise based in Minneapolis. ECMC Foundation makes investments across three strategic priorities: removing barriers to postsecondary completion; building the capacity of institutions, systems and organizations; and transforming the postsecondary ecosystem; and uses a spectrum of funding structures, including strategic grantmaking and program-related investments, to invest in both nonprofit and for-profit ventures. Working with grantees, partners and peers, ECMC Foundation's vision is for all learners to unlock their fullest potential. For more information, visit www.ecmcfoundation.org.