



**APPLICATION FOR IMPLEMENTATION FUNDING
APRIL 2014**

I. OVERVIEW

The Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions is soliciting proposals for Implementation funding from communities that have received Development funding from the Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund in 2013. The Fund seeks to demonstrate the positive impact of cross-sector collaboratives on the options and life outcomes of young adults (aged 16-24) who are insufficiently attached to the education and workforce systems and seek new pathways to credentials and careers. Specifically, the OYIF works to: 1) demonstrate higher rates of reconnection to education and employment among opportunity youth and future generations; 2) catalyze the adoption of effective approaches in education and career attainment leading to family-sustaining careers for opportunity youth who are struggling to overcome structural and social inequities; and, 3) leverage systems and policy changes at local, state and national levels to remove systems barriers and enable increased adoption, replication and the scaling up of these approaches, including the provision of tools and strategies for communities and the field.

In 2013, the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions selected nineteen communities for 12-month planning grants (Development funding) to take first steps in developing a cross-sector collaborative facilitated by a backbone that focuses on improving outcomes for opportunity youth; determining first targets for building pathways to postsecondary credentials for opportunity youth, and taking initial steps in building those pathways; gathering and analyzing data on the local opportunity youth population to determine need and developing a strategy to track the progress of youth on the OYIF Common Indicators; and where possible, determine policy targets that could support improved outcomes for opportunity youth.

Under this next round of competition, the OYIF will select communities from among the Development grantees to receive funding for Implementation grants. These communities will receive awards from Aspen Institute of up to \$500,000 over three years, with a required 1:1 match. The match, which can be raised over a period of four years, must be new revenue and cannot include in-kind resources. Potential grantees do not have to have secured the match in order to receive an award. However, proposals must include a comprehensive plan for raising the match with a strong likelihood of success.

The OYIF is led by a Leadership Council comprised of the investors in this effort and a number of national experts from the field. The Council and its subcommittees exercise oversight of key investment decisions, as well as of the Common Indicators by which grantee progress will be tracked.

II. TIMELINE

Below is a timeline for the Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund selection process:

Release of RFP to invited communities	April 28, 2014
Bidder's conference (at OYIF April convening in Los Angeles)	April 23, 2014
Proposals due	June 2, 2014
Feedback memos to communities requiring modifications to their plans	June 30, 2014
Feedback phone calls with communities requiring modifications to their plans	Week of July 7
Final revised proposals due	July 16, 2014
Final selection of OYIF Implementation grantees	Week of July 21, 2014
Fall convening of the OYIF communities in Aspen, CO	October 27-29, 2014

III. AREAS OF WORK

The Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund has identified five areas of work that selected communities will take on as part of this initiative. The five areas of work are as follows:

- Collaborating for Impact
- Building Effective Pathways
- Using Data to Guide Decisions and Assess Impact
- Leveraging Funding to Support and Sustain Innovation
- Developing Supportive Policies

Participating communities will be expected to assess their progress to date and set goals in each of these areas of work. Given that the bulk of the Development grantees' work to date has been in the areas of Collaborating for Impact, Building Effective Pathways, and Using Data to Guide Decisions and Assess Impact, we expect that reports on progress in the first three areas will be more robust than in the last two areas. We do expect successful applicants to have robust goals and clear next steps in all five areas of work. In Appendix A

are self-assessment and planning tools that applicants are expected to use and send in with the narrative of the proposal.

IV. COMPONENTS

A. Grants

Under the Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund, up to eighteen communities will be selected for Implementation grants. Implementation grants are for up to \$500,000 over three years, with a required 1:1 match. Implementation grants will be made to backbone organizations working with existing collaboratives that have participated in the OYIF through a Development grant. Appendix D outlines specific selection criteria.

B. Learning Community

Implementation grantees are expected to participate in a national learning community with virtual and in-person opportunities to share lessons and challenges. Forms of cross-site learning will include:

1) Cross-site learning convenings of community collaboratives and backbone/grantee organizations

Twice per year, OYIF will convene communities for cross-site learning institutes. These institutes will be for teams from each community; communities will be expected to send between three and eight participants, depending on the size of the community (final numbers TBD). Grantees will pay for travel out of their grant funds.

Cross-site learning institutes will delve deeply into common lessons and strategies emerging from the work of the sites, and address common challenges encountered at the local level. Workshops will be tailored to address the areas of work of the initiative and will be accompanied by role-alike sessions for specific roles of collaborative partners. Selected grantees may be invited to participate as workshop leaders for some portion of the institutes to enhance the cross-site learning.

2) Strategy calls for site leads from each community

The OYIF will periodically organize conference calls of site leads from each participating community to assist them in staying focused on strategic action to accomplish the goals of the initiative.

3) Webinars

OYIF and JFF will organize webinars for grantees on topics emerging from the initiative as common challenges. These webinars will be optional and will be focused on specific areas of work of the initiative that merit additional support and cross-site learning.

4) Web-based digital forum for peer learning and tool-sharing

In collaboration with FSG, the Aspen Forum has developed a web-based collaborative workspace that can serve as the digital forum for communities taking a collective impact approach to improving outcomes for OY. Grantee sites will be invited to share emerging tools and materials, and collaborate on-line with peers across sites in problem-solving.

C. Common Indicators Framework and Third-Party Evaluation

The Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund seeks to demonstrate how community collaboratives can improve outcomes for opportunity youth, and will assess the extent to which the initiative demonstrates lower rates of disconnection from education and employment among opportunity youth.

All participating sites will gather data using a set of common indicators to assess both the progress of the collaborative in creating the kinds of policy and system changes required to provide new opportunities and pathways for opportunity youth and the impact of these opportunities and pathways on reconnecting opportunity youth to education and the labor market.

The expectation is that the collaborative's members will take collective responsibility for gathering the data on the opportunity youth they have agreed to follow. Collaboratives are also welcome to identify additional indicators they may wish to track based on their particular priorities (for example, if young people transitioning out of foster care are a priority, the collaborative may also want to gather data on the results of efforts to gain stable housing for these youth). The specific indicators OYIF is requesting all sites to gather information/data on are described in Appendix E.

The OYIF has secured an evaluator to partner with the Aspen Forum and JFF team to conduct a multi-year evaluation of the OYIF initiative. The goals for the evaluation are three-fold and include: 1) to assess and provide ongoing feedback on the performance of the Aspen Forum and JFF team as national intermediaries to support continuous improvement of the overall initiative; 2) to assess the impact of the OYIF's learning community; and 3) to evaluate the collective impact model as an effective strategy for building pathways to education and career-track employment for opportunity youth.

With these overall learning goals in mind, the evaluation will take place in two phases: 1) a 12-month design phase that will culminate with the evaluation plan; and, 2) an implementation phase that will evaluate the OYIF overall and will take place over years two – four of the initiative with a wrap-up year to follow. All Implementation communities will participate in the evaluation. OYIF/JFF will work closely with the evaluator and grantees to ensure tight coordination and alignment between the evaluation and the Common Indicators work to reduce any redundancy in efforts.

V. PROPOSAL AND SELECTION PROCESS

Development grantees will report on their progress for the Development year, and their goals for the Implementation phase, using the tools in the Appendix. While we recognize that the bulk of the work in the Development year was focused on Collaborative, Pathways, and Data, we are asking that you report on progress and set goals for the Implementation phase in all areas.

Proposals are due June 2, 2014. All proposals will be reviewed by two reviewers. Based on the initial review, some applicants will be required to make changes to their proposal plans. These sites will receive a feedback memo by June 30 that outlines the changes required, and site leads (and partners they wish to include) will participate in a phone call with the Aspen/JFF team to talk through the required changes during the week of July 7. Final revised proposals are due by July 16. Upon receipt of the final revised proposal, the team and the OYIF Leadership Council will make a final decision about funding the week of July 21.

Each applicant will be provided a link to their community's Dropbox folder (www.Dropbox.com) to upload a pdf of the proposal, including all attachments. A link to your community's Dropbox folder will be provided by Friday, May 25, 2014. If you have any questions please contact Monique Miles at Monique.Miles@aspeninstitute.org. Any questions regarding the content of the proposal can also be sent to Monique Miles.

VI. PROPOSAL APPLICATION

Proposals should not exceed ten pages excluding the executive summary, completed progress and three-year plan tools, list of members of the collaborative, and appendices. Proposal should be single-spaced, in a font no smaller than 11 points.

Your proposal should include the following:

- Cover letter
- Executive summary (up to two pages)
- Proposal text: summary of strategy (up to ten pages)
- Completed progress report and three-year plan tools
- List of participants in the collaborative
- Budget and budget narrative
- Letters of commitment
- No more than three other attachments

Each of these components is described below.

Cover Letter

Please include a cover letter when you submit your proposal, signed by the head of the backbone organization. The letter should briefly describe the proposed project, state the amount requested, indicate the organization that will receive the grant, and state the organization's commitment to the initiative.

Proposal Executive Summary (Maximum Two Pages)

In the Executive Summary, you should briefly:

- Identify the backbone organization
- Identify the amount requested
- Identify the cross-sector collaborative and key leaders engaged in the collaborative
- Summarize the number and types of pathways that you have in place for the

- opportunity youth population that serve as the building blocks for this effort
- Summarize your proposed activities and strategies, including for building out your pathways for opportunity youth, and your proposed funding streams
- Summarize your policy targets

Proposal Text (Maximum 10 Pages For Both Parts)

Part 1. Summary of Strategy

In this section, you should summarize your strategy across all areas of work. In preparing this section, you should refer to your completed tools. As you address your strategy for each area, please also discuss how you will ensure that the work in each area is not siloed, but is part of a coherent strategy for opportunity youth in your community. Explain how your work across all five areas aligns and is mutually reinforcing.

Please begin by summarizing your three-year goals and consider the following questions in your narrative summary:

- How will you strengthen your collaborative, including both membership and operations, to ensure you achieve your goals and objectives?
- How will you identify and engage specific partners/key stakeholders in your collaborative efforts in a way that leverages strategic moments and opportunities? In particular, how will you engage employers in your collaborative?
- What does your data reveal to you about the different segments of the OY population in your community and how has that influenced your strategy?
- How does the data on your opportunity youth population, and your mapping of your existing pathways for opportunity youth, drive your strategy for enhancement and development of pathways?
- If you have identified a specific subpopulation(s) of OY (e.g., foster care, homeless, court-involved) as an initial priority focus for your pathway development, which one(s) have you chosen and why?
- What specific steps will you take to undertake your pathway development, and how are you utilizing collaborative members – and particularly employers – to do so?
- What labor market information are you using to ensure that your pathways address the skills gap by leading to credentials that have value in the regional labor market?
- How will your policy/advocacy strategy support your effort to improve outcomes and create new pathways for opportunity youth?
- Looking at the programs and pathways you have in place, and that your collaborative will develop and/or expand, what do you expect to be your outcomes regarding the number of opportunity youth earning postsecondary credentials and reattaching to the labor market? How will your workplan result in achievement of these outcomes?
- Across all five areas, what do you anticipate to be your biggest challenges and your biggest opportunities?

Part 2. Support Needs of Site

The Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund will continue to create a robust learning community among grantee sites through productive cross-site convenings, to be held twice per year,

through webinars, 1:1 consultation calls and through the web-based hub. The convenings and webinars will focus on the areas of work of the initiative: Collaborative and Backbone, Pathways, Data Capacity, and Policy.

In your budget, please be sure to include travel costs for 5-7 members of your collaborative to attend twice-yearly learning institutes.

In this section, please identify what you anticipate will be your most pressing site support and technical assistance needs. You should use the results of your Reporting and Planning Tools to complete this section. You may use the chart below to guide your answers.

Area of Work	Anticipated Questions/Challenges
Collaborative and Backbone	
Pathways	
Outcomes and Data Capacity	
Match for Innovation	
Policy	

Self-Assessment And Planning Tools

Please begin your proposal process by completing the self-assessment and planning tools, which are in the Appendix.

- There are five tools; one for each area of work.
- You may complete the tools with bullet points rather than full text.
- We intend these tools to be used for an honest self-assessment of your progress during the Development year and your plans going forward. We'd also like you to submit them with the proposal. Our intent is to prompt careful assessment and ambitious planning, while allowing for communities to be true to their local context.

Once you have completed the self-assessment and planning tools, you should turn to the other areas of the proposal.

List Of Participants In The Collaborative

Please include a list of all members of your collaborative, with name, title, organization, and contact information.

Budget And Budget Narrative

See budget tools in Appendix.

Letters Of Commitment

You should include at least two letters of commitment from key partners in your collaborative.

VI. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Self-Assessment and Planning Tools for Implementation Grants

Appendix B: List of Participants in the Collaborative

Appendix C: Individual Budget Tools for Implementation Grants

Appendix D: OYIF Proposal Scoring Rubric

Appendix E: Common Indicators