



ELEVATE INITIATIVE

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS





About the Elevate Initiative

Frontline Solutions, on behalf of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, is requesting proposals from organizations engaged in addressing disparities within the American workforce. This process reflects a desire on the part of the foundation to expand relationships with organizations and communities.

Up to ten (10) grants of between \$100,000 and \$300,000 will be awarded to organizations nationwide. Organizations should demonstrate a strong commitment to intersectional racial justice, and an ability to address economic disparities that affect Black and Brown workers as the result of structural racism.

A Black-owned, national consulting firm, Frontline Solutions centers its work on intersectional equity, community driven innovation, and activating broad networks for change. These are the tenets governing this process and the space for you to work within, from the release of this RFP, through the distribution of grants, and throughout our convening of a learning community. Specifically, Frontline approaches this process mindful of the following principles:

Transparency

We will provide complete information regarding the grant requirements, selection process, evaluation criteria, and the expectations of awardees.

Context

Frontline will endeavor to provide potential applicants with the fullest possible understanding of the context of this initiative in order to elicit the best possible proposals for achieving the goals of the project.

Respect

We want to respect your organization's time and work. We will not require superfluous information or documentation up front, but will clearly delineate what is required throughout the process in order to allow applicants the ability to determine whether this grant is appropriate for their work.

Equity

We are interested in securing applications from organizations that might not normally be in a position to apply to the Gates Foundation. As a result, we have developed a process that is designed to evaluate the quality of the proposals regardless of the resources applicants may have at their disposal to create the proposals.



Context

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Economic Mobility and Opportunity (EM&O) portfolio aims to improve the economic outcomes of America's most vulnerable individuals and their families. Along with the struggle of finding jobs that provide greater economic security or channels for advancement, many individuals often face systemic, institutional forces out of their control, referred to as 'structural barriers'. Among these, structural racism presents unique challenges to long-term upward mobility and economic security. Moreover, race often intersects with other identities to create new compounding barriers (e.g., discrimination experienced by Black women that neither Black men nor white women face). Even as workers move into 'good jobs' or achieve other positive signs of upward economic mobility, gaps in outcomes between white workers and Black and Brown workers and other groups remain.

Eligibility

Organizations applying for this grant opportunity must:

- Focus on economic mobility and have experience working in partnership with communities of color and including the perspectives of those with lived experience
- Be willing to help build and engage in a community of practice with peer organizations for approximately 12 to 15 months
- Demonstrate 501(c)(3) status or be a social sector focused organization supporting Black and Brown workers, indigenous workers, rural workers, returning citizens, immigrants, workers who are homeless or housing insecure, or women of color, etc.
- Be in good financial standing
- Be able to manage a grant of at least \$100,000. If that amount would represent more than 50% of the organization's total annual budget, you should be prepared to address the project's sustainability after the grant period
- Not solely engage in advocacy or any political lobbying efforts
- Provide services in the United States
- Be committed internally to racial equity
- Have publicly committed to a set of racial equity goals or plans
- Have a demonstrable track record of economic mobility programming



Format

Frontline Solutions and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation are interested in receiving responses from dynamic, qualified organizations. By following [this link](#), applicants will be able to submit text or video answers.

Funding Criteria

Target Populations: This RFP is focused on addressing structural and systemic barriers to economic opportunity and ensuring equitable outcomes in the American workforce. Applicant organizations should demonstrate a primary focus on addressing financial insecurity and poverty, with a priority on groups who have historically been affected by systemic inequity and injustice.

Below is a list of target populations with whom applicants might be working. We include these not to indicate that applicants should address the entirety of complex and important issues facing these groups, but as populations that your work engages and who have traditionally faced systemic racism and disadvantages in the workforce. These groups may include, but are not limited to:

- Black and Brown workers
- Black and Brown businesses and entrepreneurs
- Immigrant workers
- Indigenous workers
- Returning citizens
- Workers experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity
- Individuals residing and working in rural areas
- Young adults of color
- Women of color



Approaches

We are interested in evaluating proposals for programs that seek to change systems that adversely affect Black and Brown workers and other populations listed above. The specific vehicles or approaches to the work of building greater equity will factor in the evaluation of proposals and will ultimately enrich the community of practice. Examples of approaches include but are not limited to:

Emerging Industry Access

Initiatives that promote access to new or non-traditional industries and models in which economically vulnerable populations are currently underrepresented due to structural racism and lack of access, e.g. co-op models, advanced manufacturing, or tech.

Systems Change Initiatives

Efforts that advance economic mobility for one or more of the target populations on a systemic level. This might include programs that address the effects of systemic racism in areas ranging from procurement policies, funding allocations, community-led initiatives, or broader recruitment and retention in emerging industries.

Workforce Development Programs

Programs that build skills, promote skills transfer, or offer meaningful training opportunities that lead to living wage jobs and pathways to advancement. This also includes initiatives that work at scale and directly involve industry and public sector representatives, which seek to address systemic barriers to access or promotion within sectors, or which assist with system navigation, social enterprise development, or entrepreneurship pathways.



Selection Criteria

Impact

Potential impact of programs that address structural racism and intergenerational mobility gaps for Black and Brown workers and other populations facing structural bias
Reach: Scope of the project and the strength of its dissemination strategy or ability to be replicated populations facing structural bias

Credibility

The degree to which the organization demonstrates success in addressing the issue of structural racism as it affects the Black and Brown workforce and other population groups referenced above

Alignment

The project scope and proposed outputs align with the desired outcomes of the RFP

Shared Learning

The organization is committed to actively participating in a learning community that includes all grantees and is facilitated by Frontline Solutions for the duration of the grant.

Collaboration

The organization is able and willing to build and participate in a community of practice with other grantees to enhance collaboration, share strategies, and refine learnings.

Commitment to racial equity

The organization represents, listens to, and is deeply connected to the community it aims to support through its work (preference for organizations led by people of color).



Grantee Archetypes

We are very interested in receiving applications from organizations that represent a diversity of approaches to this work. We have listed below a number of archetypes - by no means exhaustive - that speak to the different types of organizations that offer unique perspectives of techniques for furthering this work.

- A non-profit that works directly with Black workers addressing the structural barriers they face (e.g., discriminatory employment barriers)
- A community-based organization that works with local small and mid-sized businesses to improve education and career pathways in the Hmong community
- A community-based organization led, or predominantly influenced, by Latinx farm workers in northwest Arkansas
- A Black-led community-based organization that partners with health and human services providers that offer wraparound services
- A research organization (e.g., think tank, university department or initiative) that is working in partnership with a community to understand new economic opportunities, develop a catalog of employer practices, or engage in community-based participatory research
- An organization whose programming includes helping Black and Brown workers navigate various systems, including federal benefits, employment services, etc.
- A non-profit that wants to scale a model for improving employer practices among small and medium-size businesses in their area focused around race
- A for-profit enterprise addressing structural racism among employers in growth sectors committed increasing the attraction, retention, and advancement of women of color
- A community development financial institution directly engaged in investments that promote indigenous people's access to the workforce



Selection Process + Key Dates

Frontline Solutions will receive and review first round applications and then invite finalists to submit additional documentation and sit for one-on-one interviews.

Wednesday, December 2, 2020	RFP Launch and Webinar
Wednesday, December 16, 2020	Webinar
Tuesday, January 5, 2020	Webinar
Monday, January 11, 2021	RFP Due at 11:59PM EST
January 28, 2021	Second Round Applicants Notified; Full Proposals Requested
Sunday, February 14, 2021	Second round/Full Proposals Due at 11:59PM EST
Friday, February 26, 2021	Finalists selected and announced
Mon., March 1 - Fri. March 12, 2021	Finalist Interviews
Friday, March 26, 2021	Final Decisions
Mid-April 2021	Announce Grantees



Application Questions

1. Project Name and Description
2. Total Requested Grant Amount
3. What ideas or plans do you have for the project's sustainability following this one-year grant? Has the organization managed grants of this size before? What personnel or resources do you have in place to do this?

For the questions below, you can answer with text, video, or both. Choose the format that you feel allows you to show up your best to articulate your work. If you decide to do a video, it does not need to be professional quality and you are free to use any device of your choosing including cell phone, laptop, tablet, or camera. Please ensure that video is filmed in landscape (horizontal) and has adequate sound quality. Please try and upload in .mp4 or .mov file format. Video do not need to be longer than 2 minutes, and text responses no longer than 500 words.

4. Please tell us what we need to know about your organization's commitment to racial justice. You can respond either through text and/or video.
 - Please specifically address the people and communities you define as your organization's primary stakeholders and primary beneficiaries.
5. How does your organization promote improved economic outcomes for its key populations?
 - Please include a discussion of the organization's programs involving systems change, workforce development, and/or access to non-traditional industries.
6. How does your organization know that these initiatives are working?
 - If you are able to provide numbers and hard data, that is welcome, but not required. Please be sure to discuss the factors you consider when communicating or evaluating your successes.
7. How would a grant of the requested amount help your project or organization do this work better?
 - For example, would it help you deepen the impact or effectiveness of your program or project, expand the number of people you could reach, help you replicate the program in other places, help you create new partnerships to work more effectively, or something else.