

Request for Ideas: Places of Opportunity

Overview and Purpose

The Richard King Mellon Foundation requests ideas for funding consideration that are aligned with the newly launched 2021-2030 Strategic Plan for Economic Mobility.

Through this Request for Ideas, the Foundation seeks to seed new ideas for transforming communities into connected Places of Opportunity for children and youth in Allegheny and Westmoreland counties that catalyze possibilities for their futures.

Our vision is that all children and youth living Allegheny and Westmoreland counties will be able to access their most promising future. We believe that economic mobility is best achieved by investing in pathways to opportunity for vulnerable children and youth. Unfortunately, children and youth in households with lower incomes in the region have less access to opportunities that contribute to economic mobility in adulthood. Community-level factors can help catalyze possibilities or create obstacles that impede opportunity for them.

To address this need, the Richard King Mellon Foundation seeks bold ideas and innovative approaches to transform the communities where children and youth live into engaged, collaborative, and accessible Places of Opportunity. Ideas should align with at least one of the outcomes described in Table 1 on the following page. These outcomes are drawn from the Foundation's [Economic Mobility](#) Funding Program. One helpful resource in understanding this correlation is this powerful research from [Opportunity Insights](#).

Table 1. Places of Opportunity, Priority Outcomes

Places of Opportunity	
Priority: Connected and safe communities	
Outcomes	
Community Engagement & Capacity	Initiatives that increase civic engagement, participation in social associations, volunteering, and community connectedness.
Cross-Community Collaboration	Initiatives that facilitate collaboration between communities, including by sharing missions and goals, co-creating and sharing programs and services, and partnering in systems change.
Community Spaces	Initiatives that increase access to physical and virtual community spaces that benefit children and youth, such as libraries, parks, community gardens, and recreation centers.
Resilient Places	Initiatives that create communities with supportive resources to prevent or reduce youth involvement with the justice system.

Proposed ideas should focus on creating Places of Opportunity for children and youth that are connected and contribute to youth's resilience. Examples of ideas that will be considered under each outcome include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Community engagement and capacity.** Strong ideas will contribute to children and youth living in engaged communities where neighbors share and express a sense of care for each other's well-being. Some example ideas could aim to create opportunities for children and youth to engage in service projects in their community; to provide leadership and public speaking trainings to youth; or engage youth in the design and implementation of in-person neighborhood networking initiatives.
- **Cross-community collaboration.** Strong ideas will help make the region's economic mobility resources more accessible to all children and youth. Some example ideas could increase children's regular access to physical or virtual assets in neighborhoods where they do not live or organize learning communities across neighborhoods to co-design services and programs for children and youth.

- **Community spaces.** Strong ideas will provide children and youth greater access to recreational, social, and community-based learning opportunities to build skills that prepare them for a brighter future. Some example ideas could include programming in parks or public spaces to make them accessible and inviting for children and youth, or engaging youth to create public art or historical experiences that give children access to cultural traditions and other sources of hope.
- **Resilient places:** Strong ideas to prevent or reduce youth involvement with the justice system could include programs to support the diversion of low-risk youth from court involvement or formal justice system supervision.

Guidelines

The Richard King Mellon Foundation invites nonprofit and public sector organizations to submit bold and novel ideas to the Places of Opportunity RFI. The Foundation expects \$250,000 will be available per idea. However, if an idea is truly exceptional, the Foundation may consider providing more than \$250,000.

Ideas that are considered for potential funding must have the following characteristics:

- Align with the Foundation’s Economic Mobility funding program, including benefitting children and youth ages 0-24 years; serving residents of Allegheny or Westmoreland counties; and prioritizing children and youth from low-income families in those counties.
- Align with at least one outcome listed in Table 1.
- Include evaluation activities that focus on understanding successes, challenges, and future possibilities from the project.
- Can be complete the funded activities within 6-18 months after a grant award is made in December 2021.
- Currently in one of the two following stages:
 - Planning and Innovation: These submissions are focused on experimentation and the development of new ideas. Recipients might describe activities such as piloting minimally viable products/services or completing a feasibility study. Any evaluation activities should focus on understanding successes, challenges, and future possibilities resulting from the initial project.
 - Scaling-Up: Expanding the reach of a promising model or project with a track record of successful implementation.

RFI Submission Requirements

The Foundation will accept ideas via our RFI Submission Form found at <https://www.rkmf.org/pages/nonprofit-and-public-sector-partners>.

Respondents are asked to provide contact information and other basic project details, alongside an Executive Summary and a Logic Model.

The Executive Summary should include the following information:

- The Priority or Priorities where the project aims to positively impact outcomes (see Table 1)
- Explanation of challenge or need that the project will address
- Description of the population that will be served
- Overview of proposed activities
- Intended impact

The Logic Model should be completed using the template provided in the RFI Submission Form.

Review Process and Timeline

RFI Submissions will be reviewed and select respondents will be invited to submit a full proposal for funding consideration.

The full timeline is described in Table 2.

Table 2.

2021 RFI Timeline	
April 27	RFI open for submissions on the Richard King Mellon Foundation website
July 16	Initial RFI submissions due via the Richard King Mellon Foundation website
August 20	Select respondents invited to submit full proposals
October 1	Full proposals due
December	Awards finalized and announced

What We Will Not Fund through this Request for Ideas

The Foundation will not consider funding any of the following items through this RFI process:

- Endowments
- Advocacy, political causes or events
- Existing deficits or retroactive funding
- Event sponsorships

Questions

If you have any questions, please visit the FAQs on our website or contact us at rkmf@rkmf.org.