



Creating Economic Connectedness to Support Young People's Economic Mobility

Request for Proposals

Round 1: Applications due April 17, 2023, 12:00 PM EST

Round 2: Applications due September 13, 2023, 12:00 PM EST



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Introduction to the Richard King Mellon Foundation

Since 1947, the [Richard King Mellon Foundation](#) (Foundation) has funded visionaries with bold ideas to advance prosperity in Southwestern Pennsylvania and environmental conservation across the United States. The Foundation's 2020 year-end endowment was \$3.1 billion, and its Trustees in 2020 disbursed \$130 million in grants and program-related investments.

The Foundation has six funding programs: Conservation; Economic Development; Economic Mobility; Health & Well-Being; Organizational Effectiveness; and Social-Impact Investments. All six programs invest in transformative, evidence-informed solutions that align with the Foundation's mission and contribute to positive change.

Economic Mobility Funding Program

The [Economic Mobility funding program](#) serves children and young adults from birth to age 24 who reside in low-income households in Allegheny or Westmoreland counties. The program addresses the problem that in Allegheny and Westmoreland counties, children in lower-income households have less access to opportunities that contribute to economic mobility in adulthood. Also, community-level factors create obstacles that impede some children's pathway to economic mobility.

The Foundation organizes its Economic Mobility program into four investment areas: Educational Attainment; Future of Work; Supportive Living Environments; and Places of Opportunity. Collectively, these four investment areas describe the Foundation's approach to addressing the problem of limited economic mobility for children who reside in low-income households.

Background

A growing body of research indicates that the strength of a person's social network and community connections – their social capital – plays a role in their lifetime economic trajectory. In 2022, research published by Raj Chetty and a team of researchers in the journal [Nature](#) honed in on the importance of social connections across economic class divides in order to boost children's upward economic mobility. Chetty and team found that “the degree to which people with low and high SES are friends with each other (which we term economic connectedness (EC)) is strongly associated with upward income mobility, whereas other forms of social capital are not” (Chetty et al, “[Social capital I: measurement and associations with economic mobility](#)”). In a second paper titled “[Social capital II: determinants of economic connectedness](#),” Chetty and the research team identified two key factors that account for approximately half of the

social disconnection between young people with lower and higher SES. These two factors were summarized by the [Brookings Institute](#) as:

- “lack of exposure to people of a different background (and particularly of lower-SES people to higher-SES people)
- “‘friending bias,’ which means that even when there are people of different backgrounds around, friendships remain strongly class-based”

Request for Proposals

The Richard King Mellon Foundation is issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) that identify the factors that limit the formation of young people’s social connections across economic classes in Allegheny and Westmoreland counties and prototype interventions to increase these connections. The long term-goal, which would be achieved outside of the timeline of any awarded grants, is to increase the upward economic mobility of young people who are ages 0-24 years old and who reside in low-income households in Allegheny and Westmoreland counties. Proposals submitted for this Request for Proposals fit within the [Economic Mobility program’s Places of Opportunity investment area](#).

Submitted proposals must clearly describe how:

- local agencies and researchers will partner in the data collection, analysis, and design of interventions
- data will be used to identify local and regional needs and opportunities and inform the development of solutions

Examples

Examples of ideas that may be considered include, but are not limited to, the items noted in Table 1. These are solely illustrative and not proscriptive. Applications may include a variety of services, products, or technologies. The Foundation welcomes a range of ideas and encourages thoughtful experimentation.

Table 1

Funding Purpose	Sample Ideas
Planning and Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use network mapping tools to visualize and analyze the relationships – and disconnects – between populations with low, medium, and high SES • Conduct a needs analysis to better understand local barriers to the formation of cross-class friendships and conduct a literature review to identify evidence to guide the development of interventions • Develop a logic model, staffing model, and financial sustainability analysis for an intervention designed to build cross-class friendships • Pilot an initiative and evaluate its impacts

Funding Guidelines

The Foundation's general eligibility criteria apply to the RFP. Please review our [application FAQ](#). Additional [detailed instructions for how to complete the application can be found in this PDF](#).

Funding Range

The Foundation expects to fund projects in the range of \$150,000-\$300,000, depending on the complexity of the proposed project and the number of collaborators. If an application is truly exceptional, the Foundation may consider providing more funding than this range. Successful grants may be invited to apply for follow-on funding or additional capacity-building funding opportunities at the conclusion of the grant.

Types of Support

The Foundation expects to provide Planning and Innovation grants through this RFP. The funded activities must be conducted within 6-18 months.

Planning and Innovation grants focus on experimentation and the development of new ideas. Recipients might describe activities such as piloting services or completing a feasibility study. Any evaluation activities should focus on understanding successes, challenges, and future possibilities resulting from the initial project. Grant funds awarded through this RFP may be used for a variety of expenses such as program and service delivery, consultant fees, or evaluation.

Collaborations Led by Public Sector or Nonprofit Organizations

For the purposes of this RFP, the Foundation offers additional guidance about collaborative proposals from public sector or nonprofit organizations.

Public sector organizations:

- may serve as the lead agency submitting a proposal for Planning and Innovation grants
- may participate as collaborating partners on all types of grants submitted by nonprofit organizations serving as the lead agency
- include entities such as school districts, courts, or departments of health or human services

Nonprofit organizations:

- may serve as the lead agency for all types of grants
- may participate as collaborating partners for all types of grants

What the Foundation Will Not Fund

The Foundation will not fund the following items through this RFP:

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

Application Timeline

Funding is expected to be awarded in two rounds during 2023.

Round 1	
Monday, April 17, 2023. Noon (12:00 PM) EST.	Applications submitted https://www.GrantRequest.com/SID_5499?SA=SNA&FID=35067
Friday, June 30, 2023	Funding Status Notification
Friday, July 14, 2023	Funds Issued for Awarded Grants
Round 2	
Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2023 Noon (12:00 PM) EST.	Applications submitted https://www.GrantRequest.com/SID_5499?SA=SNA&FID=35067
Friday, December 22, 2023	Funding Status Notification
Friday, December 22, 2023	Funds Issued for Awarded Grants

Inquiries

Please contact Lynne Ventress (lventress@rkmf.org) at the Foundation to discuss questions regarding this RFP. However, a discussion is discretionary and not a requirement.