

Advancing Together: Enhancing NC's Workforce Through Educational Attainment

A Call for Applications from Community-Based Organizations

DUE: Friday, November 12, 2021

How are community-based organizations increasing the number of NC residents getting a high-quality credential or degree after high school, especially for groups with historically lower completion rates?

The Institute for Emerging Issues (IEI) at NC State University is seeking applications from NC community-based organizations that are improving postsecondary (post-high school) educational attainment rates, especially for students from groups with historically lower levels of completion. Those selected will join IEI's "Educational Attainment" cohort.

Organizations selected for the cohort will benefit from:

- Increased visibility for an organization's efforts. We provide a statewide platform for each organization to talk about its work at the February 8, 2022 Emerging Issues Forum, "Advancing Together: Enhancing NC's Workforce Through Educational Attainment", in Raleigh. In addition, we will track and communicate each organization's efforts in this program, capturing lessons learned and inspiring others to scale what works.
- Free support to strengthen each organization. All cohort members will receive training in storytelling to enhance their ability to effectively communicate their work. Additional support will be tailored to the specific needs of each organization and will take place over a 12- to 24-month period, depending on the time needed to deliver the support.
- A virtual peer learning network to share with--and learn from--organizations working in communities across the state.

While there is no fee for participating in the cohort, members are asked to cover travel expenses for their organization's team members to attend the daylong Emerging Issues Forum on Feb. 8, 2022 in Raleigh and a dedicated cohort meeting the following morning. Please note that depending on the evolution of the pandemic, these meetings may become virtual events.

Information about the Forum [can be found here](#). Please direct any questions about this call for applications to IEI Assistant Director Pat Cronin (pcronin@ncsu.edu; 919-513-3540). **Applications are due no later than Friday, November 12, 2021, at 5:00 p.m. EDT.**

Additional information on the Call for Applications

North Carolina's Education Challenge and Opportunity

As our economy grows the vast majority of new jobs will require more than a high school diploma. Today, less than half of North Carolinians ages 25-44 are ready for this work. Without intentional action, we face a significant gap between the skills and experience that employers will need and what the state's labor force will be able to provide. Even more worrisome, economically disadvantaged and workers of color, the segments of the workforce growing fastest, are particularly less equipped for this future. And this was before the pandemic.

The Feb. 8, 2022 Emerging Issues Forum will bring together state and national leaders to call attention to this attainment gap and to the impact of the pandemic on efforts to close it. Because education is fundamentally local in character, a particular focus will be on spurring effective action at the community and regional levels across the state to boost educational attainment levels, especially for groups with historically lower attainment rates, including lower-income and students of color.

At IEI, we believe that **local communities** -- with their traditions, willingness to work, and history of coming together in tough times to solve big challenges -- are the unit of change to spark action to raise attainment levels for all students. Five community-based organizations will be chosen to be a part of our "Educational Attainment" cohort and each will work with IEI and each other to implement solutions that make them stronger and better equipped to succeed. We see community-based organizations as the experts that can lead change and inspire others to raise educational attainment levels and close attainment gaps across North Carolina.

IEI is accepting applications from community-based organizations that are actively working on successful efforts to improve postsecondary (post-high school) educational attainment rates, especially for students from groups with historically lower levels of completion. This can include but is not limited to efforts focused on postsecondary educational readiness, access, persistence and completion. We are especially looking for programs focusing on closing educational attainment gaps, such as those by income, race/ethnicity, geography or gender, for students between the ages of 11 (middle school) and 25 (young adult).

Who Can Apply: Community-based organizations refers to public and private entities located in a region, county, city, town, or neighborhood. These can include, but are not limited to, units of local government, educational institutions, businesses, non-profit organizations, and faith communities.

Benefits and Expectations for *Educational Attainment* Cohort Members

The five organizations selected for the *Educational Attainment* community cohort will:

- Participate in a virtual storytelling training in advance of the Forum. This includes attending an initial, virtual all-cohort welcome and training session on **December 7**

- (1-4pm) with additional organization-specific sessions to be scheduled at times convenient for each organization and the storytelling support provider.
- Attend and present their efforts to the Emerging Issues Forum audience in Raleigh on Feb. 8, 2022 and attend a dedicated cohort meeting on the morning of Feb. 9.
 - Work with IEI staff to identify key capacity-building needs for their organization.
 - Work with a support provider who will address one or more of those needs over 12-24 months, depending on the time needed to deliver the support.
 - Participate in four semi-annual peer learning meetings to be scheduled. These will be all-cohort virtual meetings that include sharing successes and problem-solving challenges.
 - Commit to sharing what you learn with a statewide audience to capture lessons learned and inspire others to scale what works.

These activities and a sample meeting timeline are provided in **Appendix 1**.

Application Criteria

Eligibility: As noted above, a “community-based organization” refers to a public or private entity located in a region, county, city, town, or neighborhood. Applicants must provide the following information to be considered for the *Educational Attainment* community cohort. The application narrative must not exceed three pages, single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, not including the cover page of each application (see Appendix 2 below for a template of this first page).

The application narrative should not exceed three pages and must include the following:

- Current Effort: Tell us about your organization’s efforts to improve postsecondary (post-high school) educational attainment rates, especially for students from groups with historically lower levels of completion. Describe recent activities and investments that have received public and/or private support.
- Your success: How does your organization measure success? Please provide relevant information that describes the impacts of your work in the past three years.
- Challenges and Opportunities: What are the current challenges and potential opportunities for boosting the effectiveness of your work? How might participating in the *Educational Attainment* cohort enhance your organization’s success?

Application submission and review: Applications are due no later than **Friday, November 12, 2021, at 5:00 p.m. EDT** and should be emailed in a **single PDF** to Pat Cronin at patrick_cronin@ncsu.edu.

An email will be sent to confirm receipt of the application. A committee will review each application against the criteria described above and select five organizations to join this effort. Those selected will represent a diverse mix of initiatives from across the state.

All applicants will be notified of their status by **November 23, 2021**.

Appendix 1: Outline of Cohort Activities and Timeline.

When	Focus
December 7, 2021, 1-4pm	<p>Welcome and “A Story to Remember,” Part I Get an introduction to the “Educational Attainment” cohort initiative and get to know others in your cohort.</p> <p>Start work on your team’s story with storyteller Jeff Polish: “What do you do?” It’s a simple question, but not always easy to communicate in a way that resonates with your audience. And if people can’t remember who you are or why you do what you do, you may be overlooked when it comes to attention, funding and other resources. As Jeff Polish often says, <i>“In the end, it’s more important to make people care deeply about why you do what you do, rather than get lost in the details of what you do. And that is what stories can communicate best—a relatable sense of motivation based on conflict or need.”</i> This session will break down the key components of a great story and how to best market your impact so that others will take notice.</p>
December/ January	<p>A Story to Remember, Part II Organization-specific practices with coaching from storyteller Jeff Polish.</p>
Feb. 8-9, 2022	<p>Attend/Participate in the Emerging Issues Forum (Feb. 8) and the cohort-only meetings (Feb. 9), both in Raleigh.* One person per organization will have their “Ted-style” talk featured during the Forum.</p> <p><u>IEI will provide five complimentary Forum tickets per cohort organization (which includes a ticket for your team presenter).</u></p> <p>*subject to being changed to virtual events as dictated by pandemic conditions.</p>
2022-2024	<p>Individual Capacity-Building Support IEI staff will work with each cohort member to determine key areas for strengthening its organization. Over a 12-24 month period, each organization will work with support providers to address at least one priority need.</p>
Sept. 2022 TBD	<p>Semi-Annual Cohort Meeting (virtual) Capacity building, program update and peer learning with cohort members.</p>
Feb. 2023 TBD	<p>Semi-Annual Cohort Meeting (virtual) Capacity building, program update and peer learning with cohort members.</p>
Sept. 2023 TBD	<p>Semi-Annual Cohort Meeting (virtual) Capacity building, program update and peer learning with cohort members.</p>

Feb. 2024	Final Semi-Annual Cohort Meeting (virtual)
TBD	Capacity building, program update and peer learning with cohort members.

Appendix 2: Educational Attainment Application Cover Page Template

Please include the following table as the first page of your application.

Lead Applicant Organization	
Person Submitting Application: Name	
Email	
Phone	