



Invitation to Participate: Workforce Transformation Corps

Issuance Date: 08/29/2022

Closing Date and Time: Applications due no later than Wednesday September 21st, 5pm PST.

Summary of Opportunity

Eligibility: This funding opportunity is open to all workforce development boards in California. Preference will be given to applicants that can demonstrate a strong commitment to human-centered design and equity.

Submission Details: All final applications must be submitted via the electronic application tool no later than 9/21. All applications must be received no later than the due date with all sections of the application completed in accordance with instructions provided. *Please contact [Ben Sommer](#) at JFF with any questions related to this opportunity.*

Informational Webinar: JFF will host an information webinar to learn more about this opportunity. This webinar will be held on **September 14 at 10:00am PST**. To join the webinar live, please [register here](#). If you are unable to attend at the scheduled time, a recording of the webinar will also be made available on JFF's web page. Visit [this page](#) for updates about this opportunity and others as new details become available in the coming weeks.

About JFF

Jobs for the Future (JFF) drives transformation of the American workforce and education systems to achieve equitable economic advancement for all. www.jff.org

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I. Overview

Background on the Workforce Transformation Corps

In 2021, with support from the James Irvine Foundation, a group of partners that included Make Fast Studio, Aspen Labs, Jobs for the Future, Turning Basin Labs, California Workforce Association and CivicMakers set out to explore the degree to which human centered design principles were present in local workforce development boards (LWDBs) across California. The goal of this work was to develop a set of tools to help guide LWDBs towards discovering a more empathetic organizational body language. We hypothesized that by changing this body language, and the practices and policies that underlie it, workforce boards will deliver more equitable and meaningful outcomes to those they serve.

With insights gained from interviews with LWDB leaders, community-based organizations, and learner-workers, we developed a “[maturity model](#)” that maps LWDB behaviors along a spectrum of customer and community engagement across five unique dimensions: Purpose, Policies, People, Programs & Products, and Partners.

Now, in order to solve the deep structural barriers facing the public workforce system, JFF, along with these partners, is establishing a Workforce Transformation Corps. This Corps will initially include five, full-time fellows tasked with utilizing the maturity model to drive human-centered innovations alongside five California-based LWDBs.

The Opportunity for Future-Focused Workforce Boards

JFF, with continued support from the James Irvine Foundation, is offering five LWDBs in California an opportunity to implement human-centered design tools and principles that move towards customer and community-centered strategies within their organizations. This opportunity will utilize a fellowship model where the five selected LWDBs will host and work collaboratively with a “workforce transformation fellow” trained in human-centered design thinking. Fellows will be embedded within organizations for no less than 30 hours a week for a period of 12 months. Workforce transformation fellows will work with LWDB staff members to identify current pain points, needs, and place-based considerations and apply human-centered design tools and methods to solve problems and expand upon opportunities.

Five fellows will be selected through a competitive hiring process and trained in design thinking practices specifically customized for the public workforce system. All fellows will be fully compensated through the length of the fellowship program. Participating LWDBs will be matched with a fellow who has indicated regional proximity to the workforce board’s service region and has committed to spend no less than one day per week on-site. During the course of their engagement, fellows will work with LWDB leadership, staff, and other stakeholders to identify, clarify, and propose solutions to *a specific* human-centered design challenge within the host organization. Fellows will design and lead activities, work side by side with LWDB staff, provide mentoring, and serve as an human-centered design implementation doer and coach through the use of the draft Maturity Model.

Fellows will be supported by a learning community that will include structured professional development opportunities for fellows to share experiences and learning across regions. Select staff members from each participating LWDB will also be able to participate in this learning

community as well. Fellows will be overseen by Virginia Hamilton of Make Fast Studio, who will be the primary point of contact and coach for fellows as well as WDB leadership.

II. Eligibility, Award Benefits, and Timeline

Eligibility

- All workforce development boards in California are eligible to apply.

Award Benefits

- Full-time workforce transformation fellow for 12 months.
- Where applicable, project partners will support participating workforce boards in requesting a performance waiver to allow for experimentation in service delivery and programmatic design.
- \$20,000 subaward to support organizational participation. For example, funds might be applied to supporting existing staff person(s) as they work in close partnership with the fellow.
- Advisory services provided by CivicMakers to support iteration and implementation of work co-created by LWDBs and their respective fellows.
- Human-centered design professional development for a staff person along with the fellow.
- Promotion and socialization on JFF's national publishing platform highlighting fellow and workforce board engagement and innovations.

Timeline

- 8/29/22- Applications open
 - [Submit your application](#)
- 9/14/22 - [Informational webinar](#)
- 10/3/22 - Application closes
- 10/17/22 - Workforce boards are selected
- 11/30/22 - Fellows are selected
- 1/1/23 - Fellows begin their 12-month engagement with their assigned workforce board
- 12/31/23- Fellows present recommendations and finish their engagement

III. Key Responsibilities and Conditions for Award

Workforce boards selected for this opportunity will be required to:

- Submit all RFP application materials on time and in accordance with provided instructions.
- Designate a primary point of contact for grant management and coordination with Make Fast Studio and JFF staff.
- Commit to working with fellow to identify and reduce barriers to their success and regular reviews with Workforce Transformation Corps staff to review progress.
- Designate a primary staff person with dedicated time to team up with the fellow during the course of the year to include the cooperative review of lessons learned, contribute information to publications, and participate in events as appropriate.
- Dedicate a percentage of the executive director's time to the fellow and the capstone project.
- Dedicate office space, desk space, and equipment for the fellow.

IV. Outline for RFP Application Submission

The RFP application process will be completed using Google Forms. You may [access the application here](#). The tool **does not allow users to save their progress and return**. Therefore, it is highly recommended that you prepare all responses in advance and copy and paste them into the proper fields once you are ready to submit.

To complete your submission, please be prepared to provide the following information and brief narratives (250 words or less per question):

Part I: Basic Information

1. **Name of Organization:**
2. **Mailing Address:**
3. **Indicate which of the following best describes the region to be served as part of this initiative. You may select more than one.**
 - a. Urban
 - b. Suburban
 - c. Rural
4. **Primary Point of Contact:**
 - a. Full Name:
 - b. Organization:
 - c. Title:
 - d. Email Address:

e. Phone Number:

5. Where did you hear about this opportunity?

Part II: Narrative (brief narratives of 250 words or less)

For the questions below, please respond as thoroughly as possible.

1. How do you envision this fellowship program enabling your organization to better fulfill its mission?
2. Describe your organization's experience with human-centered design practices to date. This could include staff professional development, special projects, or ongoing administrative practices. Were there any barriers to adoption or implementation? If so, how were the barriers overcome?
3. Looking at the maturity model, in which areas do you see the greatest potential for improvement at your organization? (Purpose, Policies, People, Programs & Products, or Partners). See link to the maturity model in section I above.
4. Opportunity Statement (organization): Describe, in detail, an important opportunity you feel is outside your organization's current capacity to implement, and how you feel human-centered design can support you. What barriers are preventing your organization from addressing or solving this problem?
5. Opportunity statement (community): What is an important opportunity within your community that could be addressed through human centered design practices? What barriers are preventing your community from addressing or solving this problem?
6. In what ways will you support the fellow during your engagement with this initiative? In what ways will leadership, staff, community partners, and other resources support the fellow's efforts throughout the project?? Will you be dedicating any additional funds to this project?
7. Community connections: How do you view your organization within your community's ecosystem? Describe:
 - a. Who are your core community partners? How are they critical to your mission?
 - b. Describe your ability to usher in new and innovative ways to connect your community to economic growth opportunities.
 - c. Describe your history and ability to connect to and serve diverse populations including Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and other underrepresented communities.

Part III: Budget

Budget: Each LWDB will be provided with \$20,000 to help with the implementation of this project. This could be used for additional staff training, consultant support, community meetings, payments to "lived experts" for participation in design sessions, or to offset staff time. A simple budget template will be made available to each participating LWDB, which will be used

to document and submit for approval before the disbursement of funds. No budget information is required for the application.

Part IV: Submission Checklist

All California LWDBs are eligible to apply. However, those wishing to apply will not be able to save their application progress and return later; the entire application must be completed and submitted in one session.

Submission checklist - Please be sure you have the following prepared prior to accessing the online application form. This will streamline the application submission process.

Required:

- Complete responses to all questions listed above in Section II, ready to be copied and pasted into the application submission tool.
- Letter of support from CEO or Board Chair explaining confidence in LWDB's role in leading the initiative and confirming the LWDB's ability to receive funding.
- Confirmation of support from your Title I provider.

Optional:

- Letters of support from one or more community partners describing the general role and impact of the LWDB in the region. Community partners can include community colleges, school districts, housing non-profits, city or county governments, anti-poverty agencies, chambers of commerce, employers, or others.