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**Financial Opportunity Center®**

**Puget Sound Partnership**

**Request for Proposals**

**April 2024**

**Introduction**

LISC Puget Sound is accepting proposals for those qualified and interested in grant funding to join a cohort of organizations in piloting an expansion of the Financial Opportunity Center® model in Snohomish, King, and Pierce County. In partnership with LISC Puget Sound, the recipient of funds will collaborate community partners to increase positive workforce outcomes by integrating financial coaching and access to public benefits into existing employment and training programs. **LISC Puget Sound will accept proposals up to, but not exceeding, $75,000.**

**Background**

*LISC Puget Sound*

With residents and partners, LISC forges resilient and inclusive communities of opportunity across America – great places to live, work, visit, do business and raise families. LISC is the one of the largest community development organizations in the country and the largest nonprofit community development financial institution. We have been supporting communities for more than 40 years. LISC is committed to racial equity and greater access to opportunity in low-wealth communities, many of which are Black, Indigenous, and communities of color. We recently relaunched the Puget Sound Office to advance housing, economic and racial justice by accelerating affordable housing, economic development, and wealth building opportunities.

*Financial Opportunity Center®*

Based on the Center for Working Families by the Annie E Casey Foundation, LISC has facilitated a national model aimed at disrupting poverty and increasing financial stability. Research shows that implementing interventions around asset building alongside workforce services increases stability and reduces poverty, with longer term interventions contributing to closing the wealth gap. Key outcomes from employment and financial coaching integration include:

* An increase in net income for 68% of participants who receive integrated employment and financial coaching services, with a median monthly gain of $300.
* 60% of participants see an increase in their credit score, a direct result of the financial coaching.
* Participants who receive integrated services have a higher average job placement rate of 43% compared to only 23% for participants who only received employment support.
* Participants who receive bundled services over a sustained period are more likely to achieve a major financial milestone such as purchasing a car or home and develop good relationships with financial institutions.

LISC Puget Sound is piloting a regional expansion of the FOC model centered on integration within existing workforce programming, particularly programming that is currently leveraging or is interested in onboarding workforce funding streams such as Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET). The model aims to support individuals in pursuing employment with family-sustaining wages, while incorporating integrated financial coaching elements to catalyze successful employment outcomes, disrupt poverty, and build wealth. Due to the nature of a pilot initiative, partners that can demonstrate an ability to lead with innovation, creativity, and accountability are encouraged to apply.

Current Financial Opportunity Centers based in Pierce County that are currently operating or are interested in operating BFET may apply to strengthen employment outcomes in their center.

**Puget Sound FOC Expansion Overview**

With the release of this Request for Proposals (RFP), LISC Puget Sound intends to initiate a three-year pilot expansion in partnership with a cohort of 3-5 organizations. Through this RFP, LISC Puget Sound will provide a grant award to qualified organizations that can demonstrate the capacity to deliver a bundled service model of integrated financial coaching elements within employment and training pathways, with the goal of increasing more positive workforce outcomes such as knowledge of benefit cliffs implications, financial ecosystem navigation, increasing savings and assets, and acquiring tools to ultimately build wealth. For this initial cohort, organizations currently leveraging BFET, WIOA, and/or other existing federal and state funding to support workforce programming will be prioritized. This RFP covers a grant period of 12 months with a yearly renewal option for up to two additional years, depending on availability of funds and performance of grantee. The initial funding year grant award will be up to $75,000 per year per host organization. Subsequent grant awards will be announced at a later time.

*Employment and Training Pathways*

LISC Puget Sound is seeking to understand and demonstrate how integration of financial coaching and benefits access supports during a time-bound training pathway can catalyze positive employment and financial outcomes for participants throughout and upon graduation of the program. This pilot is not designed for employment case management services that are not connected with an upskilling or reskilling pathway. Examples of employment and training pathways that would be competitive for funding include:

* A 12-week manufacturing training and certification program
* Pre-Apprenticeship training pathways for construction
* Digital skills training program
* Non-clinical healthcare eight-week training and job placement program
* Education and training pathways facilitated by Community and Technical Colleges

Programs that focus on pathways to careers with family-sustaining wages and are in demand will be most competitive, such as training programs in Green Jobs, IT, Healthcare, Manufacturing, and Construction. Additionally, BIPOC led-and-serving organizations providing employment and training pathways will be prioritized.

*Financial Coaching Integration*

LISC Puget Sound recognizes that employment and training programs operate differently depending on scope of programming and community served. Subsequently, how financial coaching is integrated may vary between organizations and even between different training pathways within an entity. Your proposed model should aim to maximize the efficacy of the bundled service model to ultimately increase positive workforce outcomes. Outlined below are elements that should be considered as part of your application.

* **Design of financial coaching elements:** LISC Puget Sound will be partnering with a financial empowerment partner who has a strong background in financial coaching integration and partner training. As a part of the cohort, the financial empowerment partner and LISC staff will help finetune your proposed integrated model and incorporate best practices from the field to make it as impactful as possible.
* **Service Delivery:** In response to this RFP, you will outline how you propose to integrate financial coaching and screening for additional resources into your existing programming model. This can vary and range from direct coaching with a trained staff member to embedding a financial empowerment curriculum into certification or training classes. Research shows that financial coaching interventions are most successful when they involve more than one touchpoint and involve individuals who have the bandwidth to engage with the information. Research indicates that clients who receive bundled services (employment & training plus financial coaching) over a sustained period are more likely to achieve a major financial milestone such as purchasing a car or home or earning a credential. Partner organizations are encouraged to propose a model that maximizes touchpoints where possible, while also being achievable and realistically embedded within current programming structures.
* **Timing:** For this cohort model, the emphasis of financial coaching integration should be primarily focused on clients who are currently in a pathway towards employment, about to enter/re-enter the workforce, or who recently started employment with a steady income. While there is value in providing certain financial coaching supports to an individual who is experiencing a crisis, this model will prioritize individuals who are on the path towards employment or are upskilling for greater income potential.
* **Scalability:** During the pilot, there will be a focus on scalability, both in increasing effectiveness of interventions, but also increasing the number of participants served. Organizations that have an interest in and infrastructure to incorporate the Financial Opportunity Center model into multiple training pathways will be prioritized.
* **Data tracking as part of the Pilot Cohort**: While there may be outputs/outcomes specific to your programs that will be helpful in evaluating the impact of integration, cohort members will be asked to report on specific quantitative and qualitative data to inform how to improve individual models, understand where there are opportunities across the cohort for adaptation, and illuminate opportunities for system change advocacy. Specific data to be collected will include, but is not limited to:
  + Number of clients served
  + Number of clients placed in jobs
  + Retention rates for clients placed in jobs
  + Number of clients with increased net income
  + Number of clients with increased credit scores

*Cohort Model*

**Commitment to Peer Learning and Continuous Process Improvement:** LISC seeks to partner with organizations with a clear commitment to self-reflection, information sharing, engagement in continuous process improvement, and development of evidence-based practices informed by research and evaluation. Agencies supported through this RFP will commit to participate in check-in meetings, training sessions, cohort networking meetings (anticipated commitment is one group meeting every other month), which seek to build staff capacity and improve client financial outcomes. LISC will facilitate the provision of training, professional development and technical assistance designed to strengthen professional practices and client outcomes.

**BFET Technical Assistance:** In addition to ongoing financial coaching integration technical assistance, Cohort members will also have access to technical assistance and support regarding BFET implementation. This is available for organizations who are not currently leveraging BFET but would like to and need support initiating the program as well as organizations who have been leveraging BFET but would like to learn new ways to maximize it for their agency and clients.

**Systems Change:** In addition to financial coaching integration, LISC Puget Sound recognizes that many barriers for individuals in building wealth and challenges for organizations in serving communities are systemic and institutional, and there needs to be a robust systems change approach that parallels and is informed by the learnings and expertise of the cohort. The Financial Opportunity Center Cohort will be integral to informing LISC Puget Sounds advocacy agenda regarding workforce and financial opportunity.

**Priority will be given to organizations:**

* Leveraging the [Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET)](https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/community-partnership-program/basic-food-employment-training-bfet) Program.
* Initiatives supporting residents of Everett, WA, particularly those in the Casino Road Neighborhood.
* Projects connecting families to green jobs.
* [Black Home Initiative](https://www.blackhomeinitiative.org/) partners in Seattle that are interested in using the FOC model to provide housing preservation services, including legal and financial assistance.
* Programs in Pierce County that build on the efforts of the United Way of Pierce County [Center for Strong Families](https://www.uwpc.org/center-strong-families-0).
* Programs that link Community College students to food, housing, and public benefits.

**Timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| April 16, 2024 | Application Available |
| April 26, 2024 | **Recommended:** [Applicant Information Session 11am](https://lisc-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_UBzVX369T12scRD17dExSA) |
| May 15, 2024 | **Applications Due by 11:59 p.m.** |
| Mid-Late May 2024 | LISC Puget Sound reviews and scores applications |
| June 2024 | Awardees Announced |

**Application Submission**

Applications must be received no later than 11:59 p.m., **Wednesday, May 15, 2024**. Late or incomplete applications will not be reviewed for funding.

Applications and all additional documentation should be emailed to [PugetSound@LISC.org](mailto:PugetSound@LISC.org) by the deadline.

**Questions or Assistance**

For questions and technical assistance related to this grant application, please contact: PugetSound@LISC.org.

**Applicant Information Session (Recommended)**

Organizations that are considering applying are recommended to attend the Applicant Information Session at 11am on Friday, April 26th. [Register here.](https://lisc-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_UBzVX369T12scRD17dExSA)

**Applicant Eligibility Requirements**

All applicants must meet the following criteria to be eligible for grant funding.

* Applicants must have at least three years of experience implementing job training and employment programs;
* Applicants must currently be a BFET provider, WIOA provider, and/or have a strong interest in becoming a BFET provider;
* Applicants must be a 501c (3) or governmental agency (ex: Postsecondary Institution)
* Applicant must have a Federal Tax ID number/employer identification number (EIN) to facilitate payments from LISC Puget Sound
* Applicants must have a Unique Entity Identity Identifier (UEI) number registered at SAM.gov.
* Applicants must not be suspended or debarred from receiving Federal funds.
* Financial stability, indicated by an independent audit of the finances within the last two years.

**Eligible Expenditures**

Grants must be used to promote service integration of financial coaching elements and may support staff salaries related to service delivery or other service integration functions. Funds may also be used for cohort-related training and travel expenses.

**Important Information**

Grants will likely include a blend of public and private funding. If selected, LISC will request additional information, as required for our contracting process. This will include, but not necessarily be limited to, two years of financial statements (audited preferred), outcomes metrics related to this project, A-133 audit status, and information about organizational infrastructure.

**Strong Applications**

In addition to proposals clearly outlining how your organization intends to integrate financial coaching elements into employment and training programming, the following attributes will be sought:

* Proposals with a current history of success in achieving workforce programmatic services and outcomes.
* Proposals that demonstrate a strong understanding of the challenges individuals are facing regionally related to poverty, financial stability, and the income/wealth gap and how integrating financial empowerment services will support positive outcomes for their clients.
* BIPOC led-and-serving organizations providing employment and training pathways will be prioritized. Proposals that embed anti-racist and social justice frameworks into their overall approach to workforce programming and integration of financial coaching.
* Organizations that have an interest in and infrastructure to incorporate the Financial Opportunity Center model into multiple training pathways will be prioritized.
* Programs that focus on pathways to careers with family-sustaining wages and are in demand will be most competitive, such as training programs in Green Jobs, IT, Healthcare, Manufacturing, and Construction.

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**Application for Financial Opportunity Center® Partnership**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Applicant organization name:** | | |
| Primary contact: | Phone #1: | |
| [Email:](mailto:) | Web Site: | |
| Alternate contact: | Phone: | Email: |
| Address of organization: | | |
| City: | State: | Zip: |
| **Project Information** | | |
| Brief Project Summary (5 sentences max.) | | |
| Proposed projects may apply for up to $75,000 per year.  Requested Grant Amount: $ | | |

ELIGABILITY CRITERIA

**Applicant Eligibility**

1. Is the applicant a nonprofit, for-profit, local government, or a Tribe?

Nonprofit  For-profit Local government  Tribe

1. Does your organization have at least three years of experience implementing job training and employment programs?

YES  NO

1. Does the applicant have a Federal Tax ID number/employer identification number (EIN) to facilitate payments from LISC Puget Sound to the provider?

YES  NO

Provide: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Are you registered on SAM.gov? (Please contact us if you need assistance)

YES  NO

1. Does your organization have a Unique Entity Identity Identifier (UEI) number?

YES  NO

Provide: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Is your organization suspended or debarred from receiving federal funds?

YES  NO

1. Does your organization currently operate BFET?

YES  NO

1. If your organization currently does not operate BFET are you interested in participating in technical assistance to onboard BFET?

YES  NO  NA

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Applications are reviewed and evaluated based only on written information and attachments provided by the applicant. Please respond in this document or in a separate document. If using a second document, please indicate which questions you are responding to by including the header.

**SECTION #1 – Organization Description**

**1. Organization History.** Provide an overview of your organization. Include the primary location of the organization, type of organization (for-profit, nonprofit, etc.), size, years in operation, history of organization, mission and vision, areas of focus and/or services, and any other relevant information that helps provide an overview of the organization.

**2. Financial Management Capacity**. Describe your organization’s capacity and experience in managing Federal, state, and other public funds and experience with grant accounting. Has the organization received any audit or monitoring findings in the past three years? If yes, what were they and how were they resolved?

**3. Equity.** Please describe your organization’s approach to centering equity in effective service delivery. Include your knowledge and experience providng culturally appropriate and relevant services for BIPOC community members, youth (18-24), individuals experiencing income instability, and unemployed or underemployed individuals.

**SECTION #2 – Core Activities**

**4. Describe Employment and Training Pathways Involved in Pilot.** Please describe your organization’s training and employment programming that you propose embedding financial coaching as part of this pilot. Include the names of the pathways, the duration of the programs, the number of cycles per year, and the typical number of participants enrolling and graduating from the program. Please share releavant information regarding participant demographics, supports you are already providing trainees and any job retention and industry wage data helps support the full understanding of your programs. Lastly, describe key challenges your participants experience and how adoption of financial coaching within training pathways can help mitigate them.

**5. Describe your proposed Financial Opportunity Center approach.** Please describe in detail your approach to integrating financial coaching and benefits access (if applicable) within your training programs. How do you propose it be implemented to best fit the structure of the programs and needs of the participants? What are they most important topics to cover given your experience or feedback participants have provided? What resources or structures do you already have within your organization that you would leverage and what resources and support do you anticipate needing?

**SECTION #3 –Outcomes**

**6. Data and Outcome Tracking.** Please describe how you currently track data elements in your programs. Of the required data components (clients served, job placement, job retention rates, net income, and credit scores), which do you already collect? What level of flexibility does your data tracking system have to include any additional elements if needed?

**7. Potential to Scale.** Please describe opportunities to scale the Financial Opportunity Center model into additional training pathways or other programs within your organization.

**SECTION #4 – Budget and Timeline**

**8. Budget.** Please outline the proposed budget for this grant. You may use an alternative format such as Excel to respond to this question.

**9. Readiness to Proceed.** Describe the current infrastructure (staff, programming, etc.) that you currently have in place for this project. Describe the additional infrastructure you would need to build before you could launch the project and the associated timeline.