



Workforce Leadership Academies Participant Overview

What is the Chicagoland Workforce Leadership Academy?

The Chicago Jobs Council, the Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance, the Aspen Institute, and local stakeholders are partnering to create a Workforce Leadership Academy for workforce development professionals in the Chicagoland region. The purpose of this Academy is to develop a network of workforce development leaders who are not only able to lead their own programs or organizations, but who can also work collaboratively to build effective workforce systems.

Workforce Leadership Academies create and support peer-learning communities of workforce leaders from nonprofit organizations, business associations, community colleges and universities, union-based training efforts, and public agencies. Participants in Academies work with leading practitioners from around the country, learn about practical planning tools, and have the rare opportunity to reflect on and develop effective workforce strategies to strengthen their local workforce system. Participants also engage in leadership development activities, including a 360-degree leadership assessment. Fellows are selected in a competitive application process and are typically senior-level managers with authority to implement program changes. Alumni of the Academies are part of the Aspen Institute [Economic Opportunity Fellows Network](#).

What challenges and opportunities does the Academy address?

Workforce development has been shown to help individuals prepare for and connect to better quality jobs than they might secure on their own. However, effective workforce development strategies are complex. They frequently involve multiple partners and require collaboration, for example, to work across organizations or to engage with employers about their workforce practices in new ways.

Successful initiatives require strong organizations with capable leaders who understand the complexities of their labor markets, bring together disparate funding sources to support their strategy, and collaborate with partners, including employers, local government, and community organizations. They deal with systemic barriers to employment opportunity that their constituents encounter and address disparate outcomes that job seekers face due to race, ethnicity, and gender. At the same time, senior workforce positions can be difficult to fill with qualified and diverse candidates, and few training programs exist to support professionals in the field. The Academy responds to this need by building local and regional workforce leadership and capacity to strengthen local workforce systems and advance equitable opportunities for workers.

What are the goals of the Academy?

The Academy will address the following key goals:

- Support a 12-month fellowship among leaders from across the workforce development system including leaders from nonprofit organizations, business associations, community colleges and universities, union-based training efforts, and public (city and state) agencies.

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- Provide a forum to work collaboratively to identify local and regional systems-based challenges and create shared solutions.
- Build the capacity of participating institutions to collaborate more deeply with employers and other strategic partners.
- Deepen skills and competencies of workforce practitioners to lead within their organizations and work collaboratively with stakeholders across the local workforce system.

How did the Academy get started?

Since 2012, the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program has collaborated with local and regional organizations to offer Workforce Leadership Academies. Recent academies have taken place in Seattle, Maryland, Toronto, Detroit, and Hartford. These academies evolved from the Economic Opportunities Program’s long-running national Sector Skills Academy. The national Sector Skills Academy has documented success in supporting workforce leaders to develop and implement effective workforce strategies. In a 2015 survey of more than 200 national alumni, respondents indicated that the Academy prepared them to effect meaningful change at the local level, create and strengthen partnerships with critical stakeholders, and strategize beyond their individual organizations for policy and systems change. The national Academy also provided participants access to a unique and valuable network of peers.

What are systems changes?

Long-term, sustainable solutions to workforce challenges often require strategies designed to overcome structural issues faced by workers. The Workforce Leadership Academy draws on the Economic Opportunities Program’s systems change framework. “Systems change” refers to:

- **Industry practices** that shape the way individuals are recruited, hired, trained, promoted and compensated within the workplace.
- The **education and training infrastructure** (including Workforce Investment Boards, community-based training providers, community colleges, union or apprenticeship programs).
- **Public policy**, including rules, regulations, and funding streams related to the workforce and education systems as well as those that influence business practices.

Using practical tools, Fellows will explore strategies focused on systems changes, including “raising the floor” and “building career ladders” for workers; responding to industry needs within and across sectors; and navigating the workforce policy and funding environment. Fellows also bring systems thinking to issues of race, ethnicity, and gender, including how these impact opportunities in the labor market and service delivery strategies. Fellows have an opportunity to step back from their day-to-day experiences to reflect on their own leadership style and the role of their organization within the local system.

For more information on systems change, please see the Economic Opportunities Program’s paper [Sectoral Strategies for Low-Income Workers: Lessons from the Field](#).

Who is qualified to participate?

Appropriate applicants are:

- Located and working within the Chicagoland region.
- Workforce development representatives working within nonprofit organizations, business associations, community colleges and universities, union-based training efforts, and public agencies.

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- In a position of leadership and decision-making authority related to workforce development efforts, with the capacity and ability to execute strategies on behalf of their organization.
- Engaged in or planning workforce development efforts in the Chicagoland region related to connecting workers to quality jobs and/or career pathways.
- Interested in designing and implementing effective strategies to strengthen their local workforce system.
- Committed to achieving equity across race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation.
- Eager for the opportunity to collaborate with others in their local workforce system, to reflect on their current work, to explore leadership practices, and to gain feedback from colleagues.

Inclusivity and diversity are core values of the Chicagoland Workforce Leadership Academy. Applicants of color are strongly encouraged to apply. The cohort will be established to represent diversity of organization type, industry focus, as well as race, ethnicity, and gender.

What is my commitment?

Each Fellow is expected to engage in 12 days of in-person sessions as well as continued learning, application, and collaboration between sessions. Participants are asked to commit to the process in writing and agree to fully participate in:

- An Academy opening three-day retreat (scheduled for January 30 to February 1, 2019). The opening retreat requires two overnight stays at the Loyola University Retreat and Ecology Center in Woodstock, IL.
- A series of five full-day workshops, occurring approximately every six weeks, scheduled between March and October 2019. These sessions will take place at The Chicago Community Trust (225 N. Michigan Ave.):
 - March 5, 2019
 - April 23, 2019
 - June 11, 2019
 - July 23, 2019
 - September 10, 2019
- Continued learning, application, and collaboration between workshop sessions (self-directed time of up to two hours between sessions as well as nine to 12 hours of collaborative project work across a small team of Fellows.
- A closing three-day retreat (scheduled for November 6-8, 2019) that requires two overnight stays at the Loyola University Retreat and Ecology Center in Woodstock, IL.
- A final, one-day reflective session on December 3, 2019 that includes a Collaborative Learning Lab presentation to local and regional workforce development stakeholders at the Chicago Community Trust (225 N. Michigan Ave.)

Fellows commit to participate fully and actively in all Chicagoland Workforce Leadership Academy events, both to enhance their individual experience and to contribute to peer learning for the group.

The opening and closing retreats will take place at the Loyola University Retreat and Ecology Center in Woodstock, IL, approximately 60 to 90 minutes northwest of downtown Chicago. All one-day sessions will take place at The Chicago Community Trust (225 N. Michigan Ave.). These sessions will run a full day, typically 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.

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Is there a cost to participate?

The program cost per participant is \$500, which assists with meeting costs and program materials. Financial assistance is available on an as-needed basis to ensure that cost is not a barrier to participation.

Application Process and Deadline

We will hold an Academy Information Session on **Tuesday, September 25 at 10:00 a.m. CT** to review the program and answer questions. An audio recording of this information session will be made available.

<https://cc.readytalk.com/r/b4cncuu3qw6l&eom>

The Chicagoland Workforce Leadership Academy application deadline is **Friday, October 19, 2018 at 5:00 p.m. CT**.

Applications will be reviewed and approved by members of the Chicagoland Workforce Leadership Academy Local Advisory Council. All applicants will be notified of the status of their applications by Friday, November 30, 2018.

The electronic application can be accessed and completed here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/cwla-app>

A PDF version of the application questions is available [here](#).

The materials for submission include:

- A completed application submitted online
- Your resume and/or link to your LinkedIn page
- Organizational chart
- Letter of reference from a supervisor or external collaboration partner
- [Commitment to participate form](#) signed by you and your supervisor

Academy Facilitation Team

Chicago Jobs Council

The Chicago Jobs Council (the Jobs Council), a respected, collective voice on anti-poverty issues, works to move people out of poverty through employment using on-the-ground expertise, advocacy and capacity building. Our vision is that all people, regardless of where they start or where they've been, can access employment as a pathway out of poverty. Our work aims to create a more equitable society as we strive to dissolve structural inequalities contributing to racial, ethnic and gender inequalities in employment. Through the Frontline Focus Training institute, the Jobs Council delivers training to help workforce professionals build their capacity to better meet the employment needs of disadvantaged job seekers.

The Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program

The Aspen Institute is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington DC. Its mission is to spark intellectual inquiry and exchange, create a diverse worldwide community of leaders committed to the greater good, and provide a nonpartisan forum for reaching solutions on vital public policy issues. The Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program advances promising strategies and policies to help low- and moderate-income Americans connect to and thrive in a changing economy. Over its 25 years of work, the Economic Opportunities Program has focused on expanding individuals' opportunities to connect to quality work, to start businesses, and to build assets and economic stability.

Chicagoland Local Advisory Council Members

Brenda Palms Barber, Executive Director, *North Lawndale Employment Network*

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Matt Bruce, Executive Director, *Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance*
Amanda Cage, Chief Program Officer, *Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership*
Ricardo Estrada, Consultant
Ellen Johnson, Director of Frontline Focus, *Chicago Jobs Council*
Eric Lugo, Executive Vice President Institutional Advancement, *City Colleges of Chicago*
Marty Miles, Workforce Development Consultant
Joel Mitchell, Deputy Commissioner, *Department of Family and Support Services*
Julio Rodriguez, Deputy Director, Office of Employment & Training, *IL Dept. of Commerce & Economic Opportunity*
Chris Warden, Director of Education and Training Policy, *Women Employed*
Owen Washburn, Vice President Global Philanthropy, *JPMorgan Chase & Co.*

Need additional information?

If you have any questions about the Chicagoland Workforce Leadership Academy, your eligibility to apply, or the application process, please email:

Ellen Johnson
Director of Frontline Focus
Chicago Jobs Council
ellen@cjc.net

If you experience technical difficulties with the application submission, please email:

Tony Mastria, Digital Communications Associate
The Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program
tony.mastria@aspennst.org

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