Powering the Next Generation of American Workers

BlackRock Future Builders™

This guide supplements the ***BlackRock Future Builders Request for Proposals (RFP)*** website and provides applicants with additional detail, including the application text, to support proposal development and submission. To access the full RFP opportunity page, application portal, and related resources, please visit the official BlackRock Future Builders website: https://info.jff.org/blackrock-future-builders-rfp

How to Read This RFP Guide

This RFP Guide is organized into three parts: the ***Overview***, the ***Application Questions***, and the ***Appendix***.

The ***Overview*** provides the core narrative for the funding opportunity, including the purpose of BlackRock Future Builders, the types of solutions eligible for funding, applicant eligibility, grant structure, selection criteria, timeline, and submission process.

The ***Application Questions*** section outlines the information applicants will be asked to submit through Submittable, including organization details, proposed program type, program narrative responses, budget information, funding sources, and required attachments.

The ***Appendix*** provides supporting definitions, reporting guidance, and KPI reference materials to help applicants understand key terms, expected outcomes, and potential reporting requirements. The appendix is intended as a reference tool and does not replace the application questions or formal submission requirements.

Overview

BlackRock Future Builders is a $100M philanthropic initiative funded by The BlackRock Foundation to expand economic opportunity and power the next generation of America's skilled trades workers. Through this Request for Proposals (RFP) process, The Foundation seeks to support U.S. nonprofit organizations (i.e., registered 501(c)3 organizations) delivering or supporting high-quality skilled trades training.

This competitive grant opportunity operates in parallel to other BlackRock Future Builders partnerships and is intended to surface additional, regionally grounded solutions across the skilled trades ecosystem. Organizations may propose direct worker training programs or capacity-building efforts that enable systems to function more effectively and at greater scale.

The BlackRock Foundation intends to commit $25 million over two funding cycles to support two-year grants ranging from $500,000 to $1 million through this RFP process. This first round RFP will be administered by Jobs for the Future (JFF), a national nonprofit that transforms U.S. education and workforce systems.

Focus Areas & Solutions

Applicants may propose ***worker training*** or ***capacity-building*** solutions aligned to skilled trades workforce development.

Worker training interventions may include direct service proposals such as pre-apprenticeship or career navigation programs, workforce training programs, apprenticeship programs, or wrap-around participant supports that are supportive of training persistence and completion.

Capacity-building interventions are organizational and system-focused, rather than in direct service of participants, and may include, but are not limited to, proposals such as ecosystem-building, demonstration projects, technology or tool adoptions, or research, among others.

Eligibility

This application is open to U.S.-based nonprofit organizations (including Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands) that align with The BlackRock Foundation's charitable purpose to strengthen financial security for more people, and meet The Foundation's standard eligibility requirements.

Occupations: All skilled trades are eligible, provided applicants demonstrate a strong connection to infrastructure projects such as data center construction or related supply chains, energy infrastructure, or transportation infrastructure. Some examples include, but are not limited to, electricians, HVAC technicians, plumbers, pipefitters and steamfitters, ironworkers, insulation workers, and construction equipment operators.

Organizations must:

- Be recognized as a 501(c)(3) public charity or equivalent
- Propose funding for a specific program or project, not general operating support
- Demonstrate sound governance, leadership, and financial health

Additional requirements:

- Typically, no more than 25% of an organization's annual budget should be directed to administrative and fundraising overhead
- Applicants may request grant funding ranging from $500,000 to $1 million

Grant funds may not be used for lobbying, political activity, impermissible private benefit or inurement, or any other non-charitable purpose. Grant recipients must use funds only for the approved program, comply with applicable reporting and monitoring requirements, and adhere to any additional restrictions or safeguards (including, where applicable, expenditure responsibility requirements) specified by The BlackRock Foundation. The following types of organizations are <u>not</u> eligible for consideration:

- Organizations that discriminate against any person or group of people in their hiring and employment practices, codes of conduct, programs, services, or in any other aspect of their operations or activities on the basis of a person's or group of people's personal characteristics or attributes
- Lobbying groups, partisan political organizations, political candidates, or others to support or challenge specific legislation
- Personal or family foundations (private foundations)
- Civic organizations (e.g., a local fire department)

Grant proposals may support discrete pilot or demonstration projects within larger organizations, as well as organization-wide or core initiatives within smaller organizations, provided the proposed scope is appropriate to the organization's role, capacity, and ability to execute.

Lead organizations should be prepared to provide the following information for this proposal:

- Basic information: name, address, website, mission statement, head of organization details
- W-9
- Most recent Form 990
- List of board of directors of lead organization
- Letters of Commitment from partners (if applicable)
- IRS 501(c)(3) determination letter
- Most recent financial statements
- List of top funders

Grant Structure

Grants will be awarded for a ***two-year period***. Proposed budgets should be clearly aligned to activities, deliverables, and expected outcomes, and reflect efficient, cost-effective use of funds. The scope of funded work should be feasible within the grant timeframe and appropriately tailored to the applicant's organizational capacity.

Reporting & Key Performance Indicators

Grantees will be required to submit biannual progress reports over the grant period. Reporting will focus on progress against a defined set of key performance indicators (KPIs) aligned to the proposed intervention, such as participant outcomes, system-level improvements, employer engagement, and other relevant measures of progress and impact.

Selection Criteria

Applications will be initially evaluated using a structured rubric. Core evaluation criteria include:

- Strategic fit with regional labor demand – alignment to documented skilled trades workforce needs and regional priorities
- Strength of the proposed solution – clarity of the intervention, outcomes, and connection between activities and impact
- Ecosystem engagement – depth of partnerships across employers, training providers, workforce systems, and public agencies
- Program design – quality of training or capacity-building models and related supports that drive access, persistence, and completion

- Organizational capacity and readiness – ability to execute at scale, manage funds, and deliver within a two-year timeframe
- Leadership strength and governance – experience and credibility of organizational leadership and demonstrated ability to lead complex initiatives and partnerships
- Sustainability and catalytic impact – potential to scale, accelerate, or sustain outcomes beyond the grant period
- Data, budget, and implementation feasibility – strength of data collection plans, realistic timelines, and cost-effective budgets

Timeline & Key Dates

- RFP release date: Monday, June 1
- Submit questions to FutureBuildersRFP@jff.org by: Wednesday, July 1
- Proposals due: Friday, July 10 by 11:59 p.m. PT
- Anticipated award notification date: Late September

How to Apply & Contact Information

Submission method: Applications must be submitted on Submittable. JFF will not accept emailed submissions.

Application Questions

The application questions below are provided for preview purposes only. All applications must be submitted through the Submittable platform.

Basic Information

Primary Contact Information for Application

- Primary Contact Name (First and Last)
- Title
- Organization Name
- Email Address
- Phone Number

Applicant Organization Information

- Legal Organization Name
- EIN
- Street Address
- City
- State
- ZIP Code
- Website
- IRS Organization Status (501c3, public charity, foundation, operating charity fiscal sponsor)
- Is your organization using a fiscal sponsor?

Organization Role (Select all that apply):

- Direct training provider
- Employer or employer consortium
- Workforce intermediary
- Sector or industry partnership
- Systems-change or policy organization
- Technology or data platform
- Capital access or financing intermediary
- Other (please specify)

How did you hear about this funding opportunity? (This will be a drop down)

- Email from our organization
- Email from a partner organization
- JFF website
- BlackRock website
- Social media (LinkedIn, X/Twitter, Facebook, Instagram)
- Online advertisement
- Professional association
- Conference or event
- Webinar or info session
- News article or press coverage
- BlackRock employee
- Other (please specify)

Has your organization received any funding from BlackRock or The BlackRock Foundation in the past? (Yes/No)

Program Narrative Questions

The BlackRock Foundation seeks proposals that directly or indirectly increase the number of individuals prepared for and successfully entering skilled trades careers. Applicants may include training providers, workforce intermediaries, sector partnerships, or other organizations or coalitions that strengthen the skilled trades talent ecosystem. Proposals must address how the work will lead to measurable improvements in workforce readiness, training capacity, job placement, retention, or wage progression.

Proposals must fit into one of two possible program types: Worker training or capacity-building.

“Worker training” interventions may include proposals such as pre-apprenticeship or career navigation programs, workforce training programs, apprenticeship programs, or wrap-around participant supports that are additive to training.

“Capacity-building” interventions may include, but are not limited to, proposals such as ecosystem-building, demonstration projects, technology or data infrastructure, or tool adoption, among others.

Proposals may include both worker training and capacity-building components, as long as they are both clearly connected to meeting the proposal’s goals.

Which type of program are you proposing? (check all that apply)

- Worker Training
- Capacity-Building

The Data

1. What skilled trades occupations or occupational pathways does your work target or influence (directly or indirectly)?

   Describe the projected regional, statewide, or national demand for these occupations over the next two years. Cite relevant labor market data, employer demand signals, or industry studies that demonstrate the workforce gap your work seeks to address. Capacity-building applicants should clearly describe how their work connects to and influences these occupational outcomes.

Regional Context

2. Select your service area for this proposal: (multi-select)
   - National
   - Multi-state
   - Statewide
   - Regional
   - County
   - City/Local

3. Describe your region's (local communities, state, national) current ecosystem for training and placing workers in these occupations. What related initiatives, funding streams, employer partnerships, public policies, or sector strategies already exist? How does your organization complement, strengthen, or uniquely contribute to this landscape?

   Capacity-building applicants should describe their role within the ecosystem and how their work enables or accelerates workforce readiness, placement, or retention outcomes.

Role in the Skilled Trades Ecosystem

4. Describe your organization's primary role in the skilled trades talent ecosystem.
   How does your role increase readiness, capacity, placement, retention, or wage advancement in the skilled trades?

Intervention and Outcomes

5. Describe your proposed intervention and how it responds to the workforce need identified above.

- If you provide direct training or participant services, summarize the program model, core activities, and service components.
- For capacity-building applicants, describe how your intervention strengthens, enables, coordinates, finances, improves quality of, or scales skilled trades preparation and placement efforts (e.g., employer engagement, curriculum alignment, instructor development, data infrastructure, policy reform, shared services, capital access, technology platforms).

6. What measurable outcomes will your work drive during the two-year grant period?
   Outcomes may include but are not limited to:

   - Number of individuals enrolled, trained, credentialed, or placed
   - Retention or wage progression outcomes
   - Increased employer commitments or apprenticeship slots
   - Expanded training capacity
   - Reduced time to placement
   - System-level improvements (policy adoption, funding alignment, credential recognition, etc.)

   Clearly describe how your activities will lead to your proposed outcomes within the two-year grant period.

Catalytic Impact

7. How will this funding enable your organization and region to scale or accelerate workforce efforts beyond current capacity? What unique regional assets (e.g., employer networks, policy supports, data systems, technology platforms, or financing mechanisms, partnerships) will you leverage to increase impact? If serving a specific population, explain the rationale [for that focus] based on workforce gaps and barriers to employment.

Constraints, Assumptions, & Risk Mitigation

8. What are the primary risks or constraints that could affect your ability to meet project goals (e.g., recruitment challenges, employer demand fluctuations, partner coordination, policy timelines, funding gaps, data access)? What strategies will you use to mitigate these risks and ensure successful implementation?

Program Design

9. How does your work ensure alignment with industry standards, employer demand, and high-quality career pathways.

   - If you provide training, describe recruitment strategies, curriculum design, and wrap-around supports in detail, noting industry-recognized credentials and any apprenticeship alignment (Registered Apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship), union or non-union pathways, work-based learning components, and employer engagement.
   - For capacity-building applicants, describe your proposed core activities, tools, or structures in detail.

   Provide evidence of effectiveness, including prior outcomes or comparable initiatives where available.

Participant Supports & Barrier Reduction

10. What support is provided—directly or through partners—to improve participant enrollment, persistence, completion, and employment outcomes across the skilled trades ecosystem? Examples may include stipends, transportation, childcare, case management, financial coaching, mentoring, or employer-based supports. How do these supports improve retention and long-term career outcomes?

    For capacity-building applicants, describe how your intervention might strengthen access to or coordination of such services.

Sustainability of Outcomes

11. How will you sustain program operations, partnerships, and outcomes beyond the grant period? Where applicable, describe plans for:

    - Long-term funding
    - Institutionalization within workforce or education systems
    - Policy adoption
    - Employer investment
    - Ongoing performance accountability

    For capacity-building proposals, explain how structural changes (e.g., funding alignment, employer practices, credential standards, data systems) will persist after grant funding ends**.**

Organizational Capacity & Readiness

12. Describe your organization's capacity to implement this project at the proposed scale. Include staffing structure, leadership experience, governance structures, and past performance. If applicable, describe partner roles (e.g., fiscal sponsor, training providers, employers) and how you will coordinate implementation.

Ecosystem Engagement

13. Describe the depth and strength of your organization's partnerships across employers, education and training providers, workforce organizations, and other community-based partners. How are these relationships actively engaged in your work (e.g., advisory roles, co-design, hiring commitments, governance, or board participation), and what commitments have partners made to support program implementation and outcomes?

Data Collection Methodology

14. How will you collect, manage, and use data to track participant progress and outcomes over the two-year period? Describe your tools, partners, and processes for data collection, evaluation, and continuous improvement. Include plans for any ongoing participant engagement after training completion.

Budget

15. Provide applicant organization's 2026 operating budget.

16. Provide a high-level summary of your proposed budget and [project] timeline. How are costs aligned with deliverables and outcomes? Please attach your project budget. See template linked below.

Additional Funding Sources

17. List up to five primary funders supporting this work (current or pending):

- Funder Name
- Funding Amount
- Funding Duration
- Funding Confirmed (Y/N)
    - Note: Funding is considered confirmed when an organization has a signed grant agreement/commitment letter

Do you have another funder to add? *If yes is selected, response boxes will populate*

18. If applicable, describe how this grant would complement existing funding to your organization and whether it fills a gap, enables expansion, or catalyzes new work.

Attachments

19. Please attach the following documents: Acceptable file types: .pdf
    - W-9
    - Most recent Form 990
    - List of board of directors of lead organization
    - Letters of Commitment from partners (if applicable)
    - IRS determination letter
    - Most recent financial statement

Appendix A: RFP Narrative Key Terms & Definitions

Completion of an Apprenticeship Program or Training Program: Completion is defined as a participant successfully finishing the program that results in credential attainment. For Registered Apprenticeship programs, completion is defined as earning a journey worker credential/journey-level certification (or equivalent program completion credential recognized by the sponsor/industry). For pre-apprenticeship and other training, completion is defined as earning the industry-recognized credential(s) tied to the program design.

Credentials in Scope: Industry-recognized credentials (defined by the grant; reported by credential type).

Job Placement: Placement into a Registered Apprenticeship or other certified skilled trades roles that don't require apprenticeships (e.g., HVAC, carpentry). Placements must be training pathway aligned. Placements in unrelated occupations pathways (i.e., a job not related to the individual's training) will not be considered for reporting purposes.

Placement Window: Placement is counted when it occurs within 90 days of program completion (or within 90 days of exit, if applicable).

Pre-Apprenticeship Program: A program designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in Registered Apprenticeships or other high-quality apprenticeship or work-based learning programs and ultimately careers.

Registered Apprenticeship Program: An apprenticeship program approved by either the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship or by a state apprenticeship agency. Participants in Registered Apprenticeship programs receive on-the-job supervision and mentorship, are paid increasingly higher wages as they progress through their training and earn industry-recognized credentials upon successful completion of the program.

Retention: Participant is currently active in the apprenticeship/training program and working toward credential attainment (active status at reporting cut-off).

Skilled Trades: Occupations requiring a particular skill set, ability, or knowledge, including but not limited to electricians, HVAC technicians, plumbers, pipefitters and steamfitters, ironworkers, insulation workers, construction equipment operators, and other industrial skilled trades, and advanced manufacturing occupations explicitly connected to infrastructure, energy transition, and AI-related supply chains.

Solutions: Any program, project, or initiative that aims to fill critical labor market gaps by training and placing participants directly into jobs or work-based learning programs such as an apprenticeship.

Support Services: Services that address the interrelated barriers preventing learners from successfully completing work-based learning programs, such as financial literacy education, transportation, childcare, housing, and emergency assistance.

Training Program (Workforce Training Program): A structured education or workforce program that prepares participants for high-demand skilled trades roles but is not a Registered Apprenticeship. These programs typically combine classroom and/or lab instruction with hands-on learning, are aligned to employer and labor market needs, and are designed to lead to industry-recognized credentials and/or direct employment in the skilled trades.

Work-Based Learning: An approach to training in which a student or worker completes meaningful tasks in a workplace. Such programs are designed to prepare participants for full-time work and help them acquire the knowledge and skills they need to enter or advance in particular career fields.

Appendix B: KPI Data Dictionary & Reporting Schedule (Two-Year Grant)

Purpose and Reporting Expectations

Grantees will collect and report performance data to document progress toward the goals of their proposed project.

The following metrics represent standard reporting requirements. Because this funding opportunity is designed to support a broad range of strategies — including worker training, system-building, capacity-building, and related implementation activities — not every metric in this appendix will apply to every proposal.

This appendix provides a ***menu of potential reporting metrics*** that may be used across funded projects. In the application, applicants should identify the metrics that best align with their proposed activities, intended outcomes, and grant logic model. Final reporting expectations for selected grantees will be determined in partnership with The BlackRock Foundation and will reflect the specific scope, deliverables, and outcomes associated with each funded project.

Grantees will ***not*** be expected to report on every metric listed below. Instead, funded projects will be assigned a tailored set of reporting requirements based on the nature of the work proposed.

Reporting will generally include:

- selected quantitative metrics aligned to the approved project scope; and
- a brief quarterly narrative summarizing progress, implementation lessons, barriers, adaptations, and emerging outcomes.

The BlackRock Foundation recognizes that grant partners operate within varied data environments, reporting systems, and jurisdictional requirements. Wherever possible, grantees should leverage existing data systems, administrative records, and program documentation to meet reporting expectations.

Applicants should select the measures below that most closely align to their proposed grant goals and activities. The final set of required KPIs will be confirmed during grant finalization.

Worker Training

Outcome Area	***KPI***	***What to Count/Definition***	***Unit of Analysis***	***Data Source(s)***	***Reporting Frequency***
Enrollment	***# Grant-Funded Participants Enrolled***	Individuals enrolled in training supported by grant dollars during the quarter.	Participant	Sponsor/provider rosters; training provider SIS/LMS; grant enrollment list	Bi-Annual
Supportive Services	***# Participants Receiving Supports + Support Types***	Participants receiving at least one support (financial literacy education,	Participant	Case management logs; partner records	Bi-Annual

		transportation, child care, tools/PPE, tutoring, case management). Include type of support counts.			
Participation	***User Experience***	Satisfaction scores, usability ratings, and qualitative feedback.	Employee	Surveys, interviews.	Bi-Annual
Participation	***# Active Participants (Retention Count)***	Participants currently active in-program and working toward credential attainment at quarter end.	Participant	Sponsor/provider records; RAPIDS (if available)	Bi-Annual
Training Hours/Dosage	***# Hours Delivered (Total) + Avg. Hours/Participant***	Total instructional/support hours delivered, and average hours completed per participant (where tracked).	Hours + Participant	Attendance logs; LMS	Bi-Annual
Credential Attainment	***# Earning Industry-Recognized Credentials***	Count of industry-recognized credentials earned during the quarter. Report by credential type.	Credential Event + Participant	Credentialing body reports; provider/sponsor records; testing records	Bi-Annual
Credential Attainment	***# Earning Journey Worker Credential***	Participants who earned journey worker credential/journey-level certification	Participant	Sponsor records; RAPIDS; licensing/credential documentation	Bi-Annual

		during grant period (subset of credential attainment).			
Employment/Placement	***# Placed within 90 Days***	Participants placed into apprenticeship, employment, or retained employment within 90 days of completion/exit. Specify whether placement is in-field/related-field.	Participant	Employer verification; wage records (if available); participant follow-up	Bi-Annual
Advancement	***Average Hiring Wages***	Cohort average wages on enrollment.	Participant	Intake + program records	Bi-Annual
Advancement	***Average Wages Post-Placement***	Wages reported by employer or participants following placement.	Participant	Employer verification; wage records (if available); participant follow-up	Bi-Annual

Capacity-Building

Outcome Area	***KPI***	***What to Count/Definition***	***Unit of Analysis***	***Data Source(s)***	***Reporting Frequency***
Ecosystem Activation	***# Active Employer Partners***	Employers engaged in hiring, interviews, curriculum validation, work-based learning, or documented placement	Employer	Engagement logs; MOUs; sponsor notes	Bi-Annual

		collaboration during the quarter.			
Ecosystem Activation	***# Ecosystem Events Hosted or Participated In***	Co-design sessions, roundtables, committee meetings, communities of practice, and attendance.	Event	Engagement logs	Bi-Annual
System Change	***# of Work Artifacts***	New articulation agreements, updated CTE frameworks, toolkits, use-cases, white papers, etc.	Work products	Deliverables or outputs.	Bi-Annual
Tool or Process Adoption	***Active User Rate***	% of registered users using the tool above a threshold (e.g., at least X sessions/month).	Organization	Administrative data	Bi-Annual
Tool or Process Adoption	***User Experience***	Satisfaction scores, usability ratings, and qualitative feedback.	Employee	Surveys, interviews.	Bi-Annual
Tool or Process Adoption	***# of Participating sites or systems***	Organizations actively participating in pilot or adoption. # of internal systems using tools (LMS, CRM, etc)	Ecosystem	MOUs, contracts, project meeting attendance	Bi-Annual