

Evidence to Outcomes: State and Local Workforce Fellowship

Since 2014, [Results for America](#) (RFA) has supported the evidence-driven transformation of the public and social services sector through fellowship programs for [state and local workforce leaders](#), [state education agency leaders](#), [city/county government leaders](#), and [nonprofit chief executives](#). From helping state government leaders implement federal K-12 evidence requirements, to assisting local government officials in strengthening their data and evidence capacity, to working with nonprofit CEOs on analyzing and publishing their evaluation results, RFA has recruited, engaged, and celebrated government champions committed to evidence-based policymaking.

In the fall of 2019, RFA launched a [State and Local Workforce Fellowship](#) to help data- and evidence-driven state and local government leaders make tangible progress in improving employment outcomes for residents. Despite tremendous pressure and unprecedented need, Fellows made incredible progress in 2020, and the need for an equitable recovery, driven by data and evidence is more pressing than ever.

2021 State and Local Workforce Fellowship Wins

- **California's** San Diego Workforce Partnership released two [evidence-based RFPs](#) for youth jobs services in October of 2020 which also leverage [job quality and equity metrics](#).
- **Colorado** developed [evidence of effectiveness definitions](#) (p 25) and required local areas to provide an evidence inventory in their local workforce plans.
- **D.C.** developed performance-based contracting and evaluation guidance.
- **Ohio** Jobs and Family Services supported Central Ohio in piloting [two outcomes-based contracts](#) with the intent of spreading the contracting strategy across the state.
- **Pennsylvania** [defined evidence of effectiveness](#) for the workforce system and conducted a field survey to learn how to support local areas in building evidence. The Governor's Office developed a grant template leveraging these definitions.
 - [Partner4Work](#), our Pittsburg Fellow, issued a performance-based [RFP](#) for training programs leading to industry-recognized credentials and employment.
- **Texas** Workforce Commission [defined and prioritized evidence](#) for the first time, and the first grant announcement under this system will be issued in March 2021.
- **Virginia:** [developed and launched a workforce data trust](#), connecting data across six agencies, a referral portal offering a single point of entry to all workforce customers, and performance dashboards to inform both the public and workforce officials. We also gained DOL approval for N. VA's use of WIOA Pay-for-Performance, the first in the nation.

To continue this important work, RFA will be launching Phase II of the Workforce Fellowship in March 2021. RFA's State and Local Workforce Fellows will have access to a peer network of leading workforce officials, expert technical assistance to solve problems and implement evidence-based solutions, and

support and resources to elevate and spotlight successes and continue to build momentum. By bringing together leaders from the most data- and evidence-driven state and local workforce offices and boards to collaboratively develop and implement strategies for building and using evidence to direct funding, the Fellowship will continue to create national proof points that set the stage for broader adoption across the country.

Each state and local team will select at least two of the following strategies, and we will co-create learning agendas that will inform action plans and needed resources. (Teams must select at least one of the strategies marked with an *asterisk)

1. *Defining Evidence: develop and adopt definitions for “evidence of effectiveness” at the state or local level.
2. *Linking Evidence to Funding: award a contract or grant using
 - a. Evidence definitions, and
 - b. Outcomes payments, or
 - c. Prioritize evidence in the agency budget or for all (new or existing) grant programs
3. Linking Evidence and Equity: use data on job quality and equity to
 - a. Evaluate government’s own practices as an employer
 - b. Direct grant and contract funding to organizations that prioritize job quality and equity (as part of the application process) and/or
 - c. Require providers to place participants into high-quality jobs and make progress on equity targets for participant outcomes
4. Building Evidence:
 - a. Initiate or expand state longitudinal data systems
 - b. Build internal evaluation capacity and/or implement external evaluations

RFA will provide the following opportunities to our State/Local Government Workforce Fellows:

Peer network of top government innovators from around the country to learn from a leading-edge brain trust. Fellows will consult with and support each other, offering new ideas and approaches and providing direction and courage when challenges inevitably arise.

Expert technical assistance to implement evidence-based strategies, including:

- **Training** from experts to develop the most important capacities and practices to effectively implement evidence-based strategies, which may include data access and integration, active contract/grant management, outcomes-based contracting, job quality and equity measurement and improvement, and evaluation and evidence-building.
- **Building new evidence** by identifying opportunities for improved performance management, low-cost evaluation, and research partnerships.
- **Access to a curated repository of action-oriented tools** such as sample RFPs, legislative language, contracts, toolkits, checklists, and strategies for leading organizational change.

Spotlighting and celebrating Fellows’ successes to drive public and political support and build demand among a broader group of workforce development decision-makers, including through articles, speaking opportunities, documentary films, op-eds, Congressional staff briefings, meetings with U.S. Department of Labor officials, and public events.

Ideal candidates for the Fellowship will meet the following criteria

Fellows should have a strong individual and organizational commitment to building and using evidence and data to direct workforce development funding and improve lives. Fellows will commit to working with RFA to implement at least 2 of the strategies listed above. Additionally, the workforce system cannot be strengthened by evidence and data alone and must leverage a diverse range of experiences and perspectives, including participants. To that end, we encourage teams to carefully consider their composition to better ensure that we identify and implement strategies that will improve equity and address systemic oppression.

RFA requests that Fellows apply as a state-local partnership with at least one representative from both the state and local levels who each have authority related to workforce funding. Teams may request to also include Fellows from WIOA, TANF, SNAP E&T, Perkins CTE, or other workforce funding streams to enhance connectivity and develop a comprehensive approach across the state. Teams may also consider adding representatives from the employer, provider, and participant communities. We encourage teams to identify who will directly interface with the Fellowship (2-5 people), as well as who may be needed on an implementation team or in an advisory role.

While each state is different, ideal Fellows may come from state workforce boards or teams within Governors' offices, state performance and innovation teams, or state employment and commerce agencies. At the local level, ideal Fellows may come from Workforce Development Boards, nonprofits acting on behalf of WDBs, or workforce advisors to mayors. You can find a list of our current fellows on our [State and Local Workforce Fellowship](#). State fellows will need the explicit written support of their Governor and a senior Executive Branch Sponsor that may be a direct supervisor. Local Fellows will need the explicit written support of their Mayor or a senior Executive Sponsor. These Governors, Mayors, and senior Executive Sponsors must agree to join more than 300 other local, state, and national leaders as [Moneyball for Government All Stars](#). Fellows should have direct access to the key decision-makers for the chosen strategies to enable implementation. RFA encourages teams to include Fellows that bring lived experience and to consider diversity of perspective.

DRAFT Timeline

February 2021: Statements of Interest from State and Local Fellows teams due

March 2021: Statements of Interest review, follow up calls and/or site visits, selection of Fellows finalized

April 2021: Kickoff meeting (virtual) with all Fellows teams

May 2021: Finalize Learning Agendas and Action Plans, identify TA and other resource needs

May 2021 - June 2022: Fellows teams advance their strategies with support from RFA, partner organization, and peer network. Attend three Fellows convenings (virtual, or in-person if appropriate). Partner with RFA to share stories and lessons through articles, case studies, and interviews.

June 2022: End of the official cohort. Individual projects may extend as appropriate.

Contact [Celeste Richie](#), Vice President of Workforce Development at celeste@results4america.org for additional details and to request an application.