

THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS

HOWARD HEINZ ENDOWMENT • VIRA I. HEINZ ENDOWMENT

Request For Proposals

Evaluation & Learning Partner: Pathways to Quality, Full-Time Employment for Young Adults

Background

About The Heinz Endowments

The Heinz Endowments works to grow an exemplary, sustainable region where everyone prospers and belongs. We are devoted to advancing our vision of southwestern Pennsylvania as a vibrant center of creativity, learning, and social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Our work is supported by reliable data based on results-focused goals to cultivate a world where all are treated with fairness and respect and have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.

The Heinz Endowments was formed in 2007 when two separate philanthropic organizations - Howard Heinz Endowment and the Vira I. Heinz Endowment - merged their individual charitable organizations into one. The Heinz Endowments is among the 60 largest philanthropic organizations in the United States, distributing approximately \$75 million in grants annually.

About the Strategy

In 2025, The Heinz Endowments launched a new programmatic focus on creating pathways to quality, full-time employment for young adults aged 16 to 24.

Young adults experience a critical period of transition beginning at the age of 18 as they move from a largely externally dictated structure to a self-determined one. Existing data suggest that this period of transition is particularly hard to navigate: as many as one in five young adults do not pursue a stable path, i.e., employment, military service, or post-secondary education, within 16 months of high school graduation.

The Departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services, the cascading public programs at state and local levels, community-based organizations and employers have yet to systematically meet the needs of young adults in our region. Further, there is little available data that demonstrates which resources young adults need most and which existing resources are accessible and effective in supporting this period of transition.

Based on field research, our theory of change builds on four core interventions:

- Developing and resourcing pathway navigators who offer personalized and informed guidance to support young adults in choosing and persisting in fulfilling, high ROI pathways.
- Elevating and supporting effective skill building programs with established relationships with quality employers that will create more and stronger pathways for young adults.
- Encouraging responsible employer action so that they invest in their current and future labor force.
- Coordinating efforts across skill building programs, human service providers, and employers to identify shared priorities and commit to aligned efforts.

The Heinz Endowments couples these interventions with research conducted with, by, and about young adults to understand their experiences. Learnings will actively shape our work.

The ultimate goal of the strategy is to demonstrate that a more effective system is possible and then motivate a public and private transformation to deliver positive outcomes at scale. We plan to commit \$8 million annually through at least 2031 to advance this goal.

About Our Evaluation and Learning Philosophy

The Heinz Endowments is a strategically focused private foundation. Staff use an array of monetary and non-monetary mechanisms to partner with diverse networks of field actors to motivate systemic change.

Given the complexity of the systems in which we work, we understand that no evaluation will definitively articulate a causal connection between our interventions and the ultimate impact we seek. We broadly think of exploring evaluation questions at three levels:

- What activities and outputs are resulting from this strategy? What is being done? Who is being reached?
- Is the system moving in the direction we want it to? Are we seeing progress on the outcomes we intended?
- In what ways is the strategy contributing to the desired systemic outcomes?
 - What contributions are our grantmaking and use of other monetary and non-monetary mechanisms making to the outcomes and impacts we see?
 - Is the logic set forth in the theory of change sound?

We orient every evaluative effort toward learning so that we can continuously iterate and improve our work, maximizing our potential for impact. We recruit evaluation and learning teams that deliver useful and actionable insights.

Our work only succeeds through effective partnerships. We engage evaluation and learning teams that design and deliver work plans that balance participant burden with learning returns, recognize multiple sources of data and information as valuable, and deliver meaningful and accessible findings for The Heinz Endowments and for our partners. We are committed to transparently sharing findings with the public.

Scope of Work

We seek an evaluation and learning team to partner with The Heinz Endowments from mid-August 2025 to mid-August 2028. Given the recent launch of the strategy, this timeframe will focus on demonstrating that a more effective system is possible. Our efforts will include:

- Developing partnerships with new and established community-based organizations that deliver programming
- Identifying and building mechanisms to set targets and track outputs and outcomes
- Facilitating collaborative learning engagements
- Connecting with a wide array of system actors and leaders
- Identifying, setting targets, and monitoring long-term signals of systems change
- Iteratively adapting the strategy

We anticipate co-creating an evaluation and learning plan that examines:

- Alignment and delivery of monetary and non-monetary resources
- Outputs of individual grants
- Outcomes across clusters of related grants
- Coordination and cohesion across partners
- Signals of change in skill building, human service, and employment systems
- Validity of our hypotheses for how best to influence these systems to deliver impact
- Alternative interventions and emerging best practice in this and related fields

A preliminary budget is estimated at \$600,000 based on the scope and timeframe of this engagement.

Beyond August 2028, The Heinz Endowments will likely expand interventions and emphasize strategic communications, coalition building, and advocacy to scale positive outcomes. We anticipate soliciting proposals for an evaluation and learning team to engage from mid-August 2028 through mid-August 2031. This may or may not be the same team.

Timeline for Key Deliverables

Over the course of the engagement, we will look to the evaluation and learning team to deliver:

- Internal short-term reflection and goal setting – quarterly
- Formative infographics, dashboards, reporting to include progress against targets, key updates from our network of partners, key updates on the changing landscape – annually
- Forum to share and discuss findings with grantee partners – annually
- Recommendations to refine the theory of change – annually in January
- Summative reporting – August 2028

Preparing and Submitting a Proposal

Interested evaluation and learning teams need to submit a description of team members' qualifications, a work plan with an associated budget, and references. Submissions should be no more than 12 pages in total.

Proposal Format

Be sure that your proposal addresses the following:

- **Qualifications:** a brief description of your organization with an emphasis on team members' experience and their anticipated role in this engagement
- **Work Plan:** an outline of core categories of activity that articulates a purpose, participants, and timeframe for each category
- **Budget:** a proposed cost accounting of time and resources to deliver the core categories of activity in the work plan; also includes hourly rates for each team member
- **References:** two references for similarly contracted services within the last 5 years including name, phone number, email address, scope and length of engagement. The Heinz Endowments will only contact references for finalists. We will alert finalists before contacting their references.

Timeline

Please submit your proposal to THEworkforce@heinz.org no later than 5:00 pm ET on Monday, June 30. We will carefully review all submissions and follow up with applicants via email by Friday, July 11.

Finalists will be invited to interviews during the weeks of July 14 and July 21. Consider holding the following interview windows on your and your colleagues' calendars. We hope to meet the full team that would be a part of this engagement.

- July 15, 11:30am – 3:00pm
- July 17, 9:00am – 12:00pm
- July 23, 2:00pm – 5:00pm

We plan to contact references the week of July 28 and extend an engagement offer by Thursday, July 31.

Selection Criteria

Our selection process will look holistically at evaluation and learning teams. Through proposal submissions, we will be focused on teams' demonstrated familiarity and experience:

- Evaluating programmatic interventions in the workforce system, particularly those designed to support young adults.

- Engaging community-based organizations in building and implementing a practice of evaluation for learning
- Facilitating learning discussions about evaluative findings with participants with varying degrees of comfortability
- Developing, testing, and refining theories of change
- Conceptualizing systems and identifying reliable indicators of change
- Connecting with individuals in southwest PA or similarly situated geographies
- Delivering meaningful work at reasonable cost

Through interviews and reference discussions, we will be focused on finalists' abilities to:

- Offer ongoing and critical thought partnership
- Co-create and iterate on the evaluation design, engagement, and deliverables
- Develop actionable recommendations
- Communicate succinctly and effectively

Questions

Please email questions to THEworkforce@heinz.org.

Interested individuals and organizations may also request a pre-submission discussion with the Director of Learning, Evaluation, and Research to ask clarifying questions about this opportunity using the following link: [Evaluation & Learning RFP Pre-Submission Discussion](#). A pre-submission discussion is not a prerequisite for proposal submission; this is an optional offering.