

THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS

HOWARD HEINZ ENDOWMENT • VIRA I. HEINZ ENDOWMENT

Request For Proposals

Longitudinal Study of Young Adults in Southwestern Pennsylvania

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 Longitudinal Study

In 2025, The Heinz Endowments launched a new programmatic focus on Workforce for young adults in the Southwestern Pennsylvania region.

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, and clusters of community-based organizations 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.

We seek to better understand young adults' individual journeys to identify useful resources, effectively coordinate services, test interventions, and offer evidence to public and private leaders on how best to build a system that supports all young adults in reaching their full potential.

We intend to begin a long-term, collaborative research engagement by establishing a regional longitudinal study with an external partner that can help us do the following:

- Fully understand the economic health and trajectory of young adults in the SWPA region
- Identify barriers (e.g., economic, social, and structural) that prevent young adults from engaging in education, workforce programs, and springboard employment opportunities over the duration of their transition into early adulthood (between the ages of 18-24)
- Explore the types of support currently utilized by young adults in the region to understand if utilization is correlated with upward career mobility and long-term well-being
- Measure how disconnection and/or disengagement from education or employment opportunities impacts young adults' financial, health, and social outcomes
- Examine the motivational factors that influence young adults' decisions about education and employment opportunities and how these factors may change over time
- Contextualize the impact of disconnection on unfavorable economic outcomes, including unemployment and underemployment

We anticipate that the survey questions will address topics including, but not limited to:

- Basic demographic information (e.g., age, gender, participant race/ethnicity, household characteristics, caregiving responsibilities)
- Education and workforce participation (e.g., educational attainment, enrollment in educational and/or training programs, barriers to accessing educational and/or workforce development programs, employment status, wages and/or salary over time)
- Financial stability (e.g., sources of income, financial stress, housing stability, debt)
- Social and emotional well-being (e.g., mental health including ACEs, self-efficacy, sense of belonging, social support networks, community engagement)
- Health and behavioral factors (e.g., access to healthcare, healthcare utilization, food security and nutrition)
- Barriers and motivations for engagement (e.g., supports needed to succeed, supports received, aspirations including career goals and plans)
- The relative market penetration and overlap of existing programs and training opportunities designed to re-engage young adults such as workforce development, education outreach, and mentorship programs

The research partner must:

- Utilize a representative sample of 18–24-year-olds across Southwestern Pennsylvania that allows for subgroup analyses
- Explicitly have an appropriate plan for compensation/incentives for participants
- Explicitly provide a mitigation strategy for distress from potentially sensitive questions

- Explicitly consider the accessibility needs of cohort participants, such as those with vision impairments, disability accommodations, or limited English proficiency
- Provide a plan for data stewardship that explicitly articulates roles and responsibilities, defines policies and procedures, and implements processes to ensure data security and disposal
- Package and publish an anonymized, public version of the dataset for research purposes on an annual basis

Project Requirements

The Heinz Endowments is seeking a long-term partnership with a nonprofit, research firm, or academic institution to design, administer, and analyze a 5-year, cohort sequential study of young adults between the ages of 18-24 in the Southwestern Pennsylvania region.

We anticipate the total duration of this engagement will be approximately six (6) years, with one year for planning, beginning in October 2025. The total budget for this project is up to \$3 million over six years. Your organization must have been granted and be able to maintain 501(c)(3) status over the six-year period to be eligible to apply. Disbursement of funding is contingent upon a successful grant application submitted by July 15 and approval by The Heinz Endowments' Board of Directors in October of 2025.

The research partner will work closely with Heinz Endowments staff to design and recruit members of an advisory committee to provide input over the course of this engagement.

The Heinz Endowments expects the selected partner to work closely with our staff and maintain clear, open communication throughout the project. Collaborative tasks include working with The Heinz Endowments to:

- Finalize a detailed timeline and methodology for administering a total of five (5) waves of the survey over a six-year period, including the selection of a survey administration method (e.g., sampling parameters) and survey format (i.e., web-based, paper-based, phone-based)
- Finalize survey content and question format, with an iterative approach that allows for refinement and modification of additional customized content between waves
- Incorporate feedback on the survey instrument based on the results of cognitive testing and/or validation processes
- Participate in regular check-ins
- Participate in meetings with stakeholders as needed
- Participate in external webinars and other public engagements – for example, to share information on survey methodology
- Create analytical and informational materials as requested, including but not limited to infographics, briefs, and other materials for dissemination to a wide variety of stakeholders

Proposal Requirements

Please submit your proposal and all required documents to THEworkforce@heinz.org **no later than 5:00 pm ET on Friday, June 13**. The Heinz Endowments will carefully review all proposals and follow up with all applicants via email by **Friday, June 20**.

Proposal Format

The proposal should be structured as follows:

- Background
 - Name of your nonprofit, research firm, or academic institution
 - Name, phone number, and email of primary point of contact
 - A brief description of your institution, organization, or group, including capacity, qualifications, and relevant experience delivering the specified services outlined above in the “Project Requirements” section
 - Please explicitly describe your experience with survey-based research, denoting expertise with cohort sequential designs, stratified random sampling, weighting, implementation, and data management.
 - Brief description of your team’s familiarity with workforce, education, and/or adjacent human services systems and issues
 - List of team members who will be involved in this project and a brief description of their role
- Scope of Work
 - Detailed methodology for survey design process, validation plan, sampling, weighting, and implementation. Proposals should include power analyses to justify sample size, with special consideration paid to anticipated subgroup analyses.
 - We anticipate that a stratified sampling method will be required to understand representativeness within and across cohorts.
 - Timeline and deliverables
 - We expect that Year 1 of the six (6) year project timeline will be utilized for planning purposes, including but not limited to planning for survey design, administration, participant incentives/compensation, and data management.
 - We expect that Years 2-6 will be utilized to implement the survey in a structured, cohort sequential model that successfully engages five (5) distinct cohorts of young adults between 18-24 years old. Please provide a *tentative* timeline for survey administration that will achieve this objective.
 - Detailed budget
 - Please provide a thorough explanation of how you determined the costs included in the budget, including (when applicable) hours per team member, their hourly rates, and **their responsibilities for this project**.
 - The maximum overhead rate for this proposal is **15%**.

- If your institution requires IRB review, please include a description of the requirements and timeline of this process in your proposal.
- Reference Materials
 - Two (2) references for similarly contracted services within the last ten (10) years including name, address, phone number, email address, scope of services provided and length of service.
 - One (1) sample work product of similarly conducted survey projects.
- Appendix – Resumes/CVs for all team members listed in the “Background” section

Timeline

- **June 13:** Proposal & all materials submitted for review
- **June 20:** Submissions reviewed and all participants notified via email about proposal status
- **June 23 – July 3:** Interviews with selected finalists and Heinz Endowments staff
- **July 7:** Selection of partner confirmed and all finalists notified via email
- **July 15:** Grant application submitted by selected partner for funding consideration in October

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated using a comprehensive set of criteria including a strong orientation towards partnership with The Heinz Endowments, a thoughtful and deliberate engagement approach for selecting and working with study participants, team members’ availability and percentage of time allocated for this particular engagement, the demonstrated quality and breadth of relevant experience(s), and overall familiarity with the region, which is strongly preferred but not required.

Questions

Please email any questions related to the RFP to THEworkforce@heinz.org by **Thursday, June 5** so that staff may respond to your inquiry in a timely manner.