# REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

# LUMINA FOUNDATION STATE POLICY PARTNERSHIPS

# Background

Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation in Indianapolis that is committed to making opportunities for learning beyond high school available to all. We envision a system that is easy to navigate, delivers fair results, and meets the nation’s need for talent through a broad range of credentials. Our goal is to prepare people for informed citizenship and for success in a global economy.

Our investments and operations are guided by our Equity First approach that puts racial justice and equity at the center of everything we do. We believe that equity is achieved when outcomes – such as the likelihood of having a high-quality postsecondary credential – cannot be predicted by a person’s race or ethnicity. And that racial justice will be realized when the policies, practices, systems, and root causes that lead to inequitable outcomes are dismantled and eradicated. All of our new work will be aligned with these definitions and we will:

* Design our work to increase educational attainment among the groups who face the greatest barriers to securing education and building their skills. It also means we will work to remove barriers that cause differential outcomes by race and ethnicity.
* Focus on efforts designed to benefit people of color.
* Work with partner organizations on how they demonstrate commitment and capacity to lead on racial justice and equity.
* Support our partner organizations’ efforts to form racially and ethnically diverse boards, leadership teams, and staffs that reflect the communities they serve.

**State Policy**

Situated within the Public Policy & States Division at Lumina, the State Policy portfolio works to advance state-level policies that increase postsecondary attainment and improve outcomes for Black, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, and adult learners.

Lumina Foundation is refreshing and releasing an updated State Policy Agenda to guide its state policy work over the next five years. The Agenda, focused on addressing historical systemic racism in postsecondary education, seeks to build a fairer, more racially just system supported by three policy pillars (see pages 4-5 for a summary):

* Robust and equitable state financing of the public colleges, universities, and training centers that serve the greatest numbers and highest percentages of students of color, students from families with low incomes, and working-age adults.
* Coherent, comprehensive programs of student financial aid resources that serve those in the greatest financial need, especially among students of color.
* Fair and consistent systems for assessing and validating people’s knowledge and skills that include pathways for adult learners of color to earn quality credentials.

**Funding Opportunity**

As Lumina Foundation launches its new State Policy Agenda, we are seeking to identify and dismantle laws, regulations, and policies that have derailed postsecondary educational attainment for Black, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, and adult learners.

Through this Request for Qualifications, we seek to learn more about organizations working to advance education policy at the state level. We will use this RFQ to identify organizations that will be invited to submit proposals to partner with Lumina to advance the three policy pillars of the State Policy Agenda.

# Eligibility

State-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations advancing education policy at a state level are eligible to respond to this Request for Qualifications.

National organizations, regional higher education compacts, SHEEO agencies, postsecondary systems/institutions, and organizations incorporated as 501(c)(4)s are not being considered for this request.

All legal proceedings and matters pertaining to this grant will be governed by the laws of the State of Indiana.

**Application Process**

Eligible organizations are invited to respond to this Request for Qualifications by completing the attached Request for Qualifications form. Responses must be submitted to StatePolicyRFQ@luminafoundation.org by midnight eastern time on **Thursday, September 9, 2021.**

After reviewing responses, we anticipate inviting up to seven organizations to participate in [Equity Discussions](https://www.luminafoundation.org/news-and-views/reflections-on-luminas-racial-justice-and-equity-journey/) with Lumina staff, and then submit comprehensive proposals by mid November. Grants will be finalized and begin in January 2022 and span approximately 12 months.

# Funding & Use of Funds

Grant awards will be in the range of $200,000 for activities that address racial disparities in postsecondary attainment and help advance Lumina’s state policy agenda. Final grant amounts will be based on the organizations’ budget requests and quality of proposals.

Lumina funds may be used on grant activities that increase the visibility of Lumina’s state policy priorities and the exploration/implementation of those policies. Eligible activities may include, but are not limited to:

* research and data collection/analysis
* communications
* convenings
* nonpartisan policymaker education
* advocacy
* coalition building
* to defray staffing and/or consultant expenses
* memberships, publications
* travel

Lumina funds cannot be spent on scholarships, creating scholarship funds, or other forms of direct financial support to students (or other individuals). Funds may not be used for lobbying at the local, state, or federal level, or to conduct any activities designed to comment on or influence legislation, the outcome of any election, or to register voters.

# Criteria

Lumina Foundation will select eligible applicants based on their ability to address the following criteria:

* **Mission alignment:** organizations working to improve educational outcomes for Black, Hispanic/ Latino, Native American, and/or adult learners
* **Commitment to racial equity:** organizations which demonstrate a commitment to racial equity and whose leadership and staff are representative of the communities they seek to serve
* **Demonstrated Outcomes:** organizations with a track record of successfully advancing state level policy
* **Organizational Capacity:** organizations that are well-positioned to advance state policy and/or have partnerships in place to advance state policies aligned with Lumina’s State Policy Agenda.

**Other benefits.** Applicants and grantees may be invited to join upcoming convenings and other conversations hosted by Lumina Foundation and our partners.

Organizations that are not selected for this funding opportunity may be eligible to apply to Lumina Strategy Labs for [technical assistance funding](https://www.luminafoundation.org/campaign/strategy-labs/technical-assistance/).

**Timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Milestone** | **Date(s)** |
| RFQ Released  | Thursday, August 12, 2021 |
| **RFQ Deadline**  | **Thursday, September 9, 2021**  |
| RFQ Evaluation Window | Monday, September 13 – Friday, September 24  |
| Equity Discussions with select organizations  | Tuesday, September 28 – Tuesday, October 5  |
| Final Proposals Due   | Wednesday, November 17  |
| Grant start date | January 2022 |

**Next Steps**

RFQ responses should be sent to StatePolicyRFQ@luminafoundation.org by midnight eastern time on **Thursday, September 9, 2021**. We will notify applicants by mid October about the status of their requests. Prospective applicants may email this address with questions in advance of submitting proposals.

**State Policy Priorities**

**Background**

Lumina Foundation’s State Policy grantmaking is guided by an Agenda that recommends policies to state leaders that are designed to increase attainment and redress the racial disparities that persist in our postsecondary education and training systems. The forthcoming update to Lumina’s State Policy Agenda will focus on addressing policies that disproportionately harm Black, Hispanic/Latino, Native American[[1]](#footnote-2), and adult students (equity populations).

**Priorities**

During the next several years, Lumina Foundation will work toward the following objectives with policymakers, advocates, and other stakeholders. We seek to undo policies that harm people of color and explore policy solutions that bring us closer to racially just education and training systems.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Challenge** | **Policy Priorities** |
| **Student-Centered State Financing of Public Colleges and Universities** |
| State budgets often create funding environments that systematically shortchange the colleges, universities, and workforce training centers that serve most Black, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, and adult students within higher education. Broad access institutions like community colleges, regional public universities, and minority-serving institutions receive substantially less public funding than selective research universities.[[2]](#footnote-3) | States can address systemic finance barriers facing institutions that predominantly serve students of color by taking three related steps:* Review and evaluate data describing how public funding is distributed across institutions and sectors, uncovering the presence and degree of funding inequities that favor institutions and sectors that serve significantly lower percentages of students from equity populations.
* Design student-centered funding models that direct money to colleges and universities that enroll the largest percentages of equity populations.
* Integrate new funding models into strategic, long-term plans for talent investment and economic development.
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| **Financial Aid Programs** |
| Students and their families face significant barriers in paying for education after high school. Nearly one-third of all college students come from families living at or below the federal poverty line, while 36 percent struggle with not knowing where their next meal will come from, and nearly 10 percent lack stable housing.[[3]](#footnote-4) The increasing expense of college, coupled with the diminishing purchasing power of financial aid, keeps Black, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, and adult students from securing the knowledge and skills required for economic mobility. In addition, students must navigate complicated application processes and regulations that hinder them. | State policymakers can take the following steps to address college affordability challenges: * **Analyze data about financial aid applicants and recipients** to understand which students are well served by the state’s financial aid system and which have been left behind.
* **Increase state funding for need-based aid** to assist the people who need help, especially people from racial, ethnic, and income groups financial aid programs have disproportionately left out.
* **Broaden eligibility for need-based programs** by removing restrictions related to a student’s age, the time elapsed since high school graduation, and part-time enrollment; reassessing academic standards when they disproportionately harm students of color who may have received unequal and unfair access to educational resources; and ending requirements that disqualify undocumented students from receiving in-state tuition and state financial aid.
* **Allow state aid to be used for short-term credentials and cover costs beyond tuition**
* **Simplify and streamline programs, processes, and communications** to ensure Black, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, and adult students have the resources they need to succeed.
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| **Inclusive Pathways for Adults** |
| Processes and procedures for awarding credit for prior learning, especially learning gained in short-term credential programs, on the job, or in the military, are often inconsistent. Few states ensure through policy and procedures that credit for demonstrated learning that students bring with them will transfer into their new college and that these credits will count toward degree program requirements.[[4]](#footnote-5)  | To create a racially just policy environment that supports inclusive pathways for adults, states should consider the following policies and practices: * **Adopt and implement quality credential criteria**
* **Validate and accept quality learning by** requiring public colleges and universities to apply relevant credits earned elsewhere toward their programs.
* **Align financial incentives.** Build incentives for learning recognition into education funding to encourage colleges and universities to enable more students to earn credentials while accumulating fewer unnecessary credits.
* **Ensure proper oversight.**
	+ Use state systems to collect course-level data and data about short-term credential programs, disaggregated by race and ethnicity and reported annually, to hold institutions accountable for how they award transfer credit.
	+ Create a centralized and widely publicized appeals process that allows students to contest the denial of transfer credit.
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# REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ) FORM

# LUMINA FOUNDATION STATE POLICY PARTNERSHIPS

# Section I: Organization Information

**PROPOSAL CONTACTS**

**Project Director**

Name:

Title:

Telephone: Fax:

E-mail:

Address (if different from above):

**Who has legal authority to execute a grant agreement on behalf of your organization?**

Name:

Title:

Telephone: Fax:

E-mail:

Address (if different from above):

**Financial Contact**

Name:

Title:

Telephone: Fax:

E-mail:

Address (if different from above):

**ORGANIZATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS**

As part of our Equity First approach, Lumina Foundation seeks to partner with organizations that reflect the racial diversity of our equity populations and the communities they aim to support.

**Please indicate if your organization qualifies for any of the following designations. Select all that apply.**

[ ]  Minority Owned/Led

[ ]  Women Owned/Led

[ ]  Small Disadvantaged Business

[ ]  Service-Disabled Veteran Owned

[ ]  LGBT Owned

[ ]  Native Owned/Led

**Does your organization collect demographic data about staff, board, executive leadership?**

[ ]  Yes [ ]  No

**If yes, please complete the following table in its entirety (using numbers, not percentages). Please mark “0” where applicable.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Organization Staff** | **Leadership Team** (directors, VPs, executives) | **Board of Directors** | **President/ CEO/Executive** |
| Women |  |  |  |  |
| Men |  |  |  |  |
| Non-Binary |  |  |  |  |
|   |  |  |  |  |
| Black or African American, non-Hispanic/Latino |  |  |  |  |
| Hispanic/Latino |  |  |  |  |
| White, non-Hispanic/Latino |  |  |  |  |
| Asian |  |  |  |  |
| Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander |  |  |  |  |
| Native American or Alaska Native |  |  |  |  |
| Multiracial or Other |  |  |  |  |
| Unknown/Did Not Answer |  |  |  |  |

**Section II: Proposal Information**

If awarded a Lumina Foundation State Policy Partnership grant:

1. Which state would be the focus of your work?
2. Which policy priority would your organization focus on? Refer to Lumina’s State Policy Agenda (see pages 4-5 for a summary) for additional information. (Select all that apply)

[ ]  Student-Centered State Financing of Public Colleges and Universities

[ ]  Financial Aid Programs and Investments

[ ]  Inclusive Pathways for Adults

[ ]  Other policy priority

 If other, please indicate the policy area your work will focus on:

1. Which activities does your organization anticipate focusing on? (Select all that apply)

[ ]  Research and data collection/analysis

[ ]  Communications

[ ]  Convenings

[ ]  Non-partisan policymaker education

[ ]  Advocacy

[ ]  Coalition building

[ ]  Other (please describe)

###  Please provide brief responses to the following questions. You may link to any public statements or documents to support your narrative, if applicable). Please limit narrative response to three pages total.

### Organization Description/Mission Alignment

* 1. Please share your organization’s mission statement.
	2. Please describe how improving outcomes for Black, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, and/or adult learners though policy change aligns with your strategic direction and priorities.

### Commitment to Racial Equity

How has your organization demonstrated a commitment to racial equity?

**Demonstrated Outcomes**

Please describe your organization’s track record of advancing state-level education policy. *(e.g., Have past organizational efforts led to the exploration and/or adoption of education policy in your state? How has your organization partnered with policymakers to explore/adopt new policies or make changes to existing policies to better serve students? What tactics has your organization successfully used to advance state-level education policy?)*

**Organizational Capacity**

1. What opportunities (or “policy windows”) does your organization see over the next two years to advance Lumina’s State Policy Agenda in your state? Briefly describe your proposed strategy to capitalize on those opportunities.
2. How does your organization’s leadership and staff capacity (and any partnerships that may be in place) align to these opportunities? Please include a brief description of the stakeholders who will work on the project.

1. In referring to some communities of color, Lumina Foundation uses the terms Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American. We acknowledge the complex history behind some of these terms and recognize that individuals within these communities may identify differently. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. See [*How Higher Education Funding Shortchanges Community Colleges*](https://tcf.org/content/report/how-higher-education-funding-shortchanges-community-colleges/?agreed=1&session=1) (2015), from the Century Foundation; [*Dire Disparities*](https://ticas.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/dire-disparities.pdf) (2019), from the Institute for College Access and Success; and [*Gaps in College Spending Shortchange Students of Color*](https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-postsecondary/reports/2018/04/05/448761/gaps-college-spending-shortchange-students-color/) (2018), from the Center for American Progress. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. https://www.luminafoundation.org/campaign/todays-student/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. See <https://alcpolicytoolkit.com/> from Research for Action; and *The Transfer Reset: Rethinking Equitable Policy for Today’s Learners* (2021) from the Tackling Transfer Advisory Board. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)