

Families Lead California – Frequently Asked Questions

UNRESTRICTED FUNDS

Q: Can you clarify what is meant by unrestricted funds?

A: Unrestricted funds allow an organization to use funds flexibly for any legal purpose.

BUDGETS AND REQUIRED FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS

Q: Do you need a project budget? I don't see a budget worksheet as part of the application. Are audited financials required?

A: Project budgets are not required at this stage, although organizational budgets (including those for fiscally-sponsored projects) are requested. Additional financial documents, including audited financial statements if available, will be requested from organizations in the finalist pool. If audited financials are not available, Foundation staff will discuss with the applicant on a case-by-case basis.

Q: We are an entity within a larger organization. For the yearly budget, do you want the host organization's budget or just our programmatic budget?

A: At this stage of the application process the program/department budget is sufficient.

Q: In the RFA, you ask for the percentage of the budget allocated to "family engagement, leadership development, and/or organizing." Could you please clarify what this means?

A: Please provide the portion of the organizational or program/department budget that is devoted annually to family engagement, leadership development, and/or organizing.

PROPOSAL COMPONENTS

Q: How/where do we submit the narrative part of the RFA?

A: There is a narrative section as part of the online submission of your application. This can be accessed through a link on the Families Lead CA website: <https://www.hsfoundation.org/programs/education/families-lead-california/>.

Q: Can we include images that highlight our work with our grant? How about links to videos, websites, annual reports?

A: Images and videos are welcome but not required. You may include links in the narrative section of the application. If the applicant organization does not have an annual report, you may include a link to your website or any document that the organization uses to communicate about its work.

Q: Can you clarify the length of the narrative?

A: It is limited to a total of 2 pages.

Q: Are all of the questions under the "Narrative" about our proposed work as opposed to our current work? For example: "How does the project work with parents of young children?" Are we to discuss our proposed project? Are you looking for organizations that are seeking funding to develop new projects or are you interested in supporting existing programming already up and running by the applying organization?

A: The narrative asks about your current work with parents of young children (first prompt) as well as the vision for the next three years (last prompt). Please provide information about both. The funding is unrestricted, need not support a specific proposed project or new work.

Q: Do we need to have MOUs from partners at the time of the application? For example, commitments from school districts.

A: No, MOUs are not required at the time of application.

Q: In the Organizational Profile section, the RFA requests three current organizational partners with contact information. Will they be contacted to obtain references regarding our work/projects? We assume that these should be partners with whom we engage in similar work (e.g., parent leadership, empowerment, and advocacy toward ending systemic inequities).

A: Organizational partners should be those you work closely with to advance your goals. They demonstrate your network and alliances. They may be contacted as references.

GEOGRAPHY

Q: Will you be funding multiple organizations in the same city? Do you have any priority geographies for program implementation or a preference for state-wide implementation? Should we include the geographic area we plan to serve in this project or in general as an organization?

A: We are selecting for geographic balance and do not have any regions or locations that are preferred. Please use the service area that your organization currently serves.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Q: When the application asks about the percentage/number of parents served with young children (0-8), is this referring to the number of parents that the organization serves overall, or the number served by the part of our organization whose core focus is on parent engagement and leadership work? Or the subgroup who would be targeted for this work?

A: Please provide the percentage of parents served by the applicant organization (in the service area where funds will be used, if applicable) who are parents of children 0-8.

Q: In the parent engagement section of the application, you list parent engagement annually and parent participation in programs/services, what is the difference between these two?

A: There may or may not be a difference between engagement and participation in programs and services, depending on your program model. For example, a membership organization may have 100 parent members, but only 60 of them participate in programs/services, whereas for another organization engagement will mean the same thing as participation in programs/services.

EVALUATION

Q: Can you define what an “initiative level evaluation” is? Can you speak to the opportunity to evaluate projects? Can we include evaluation in the grant? Will the Heising-Simons Foundation hire the evaluators?

A: The Foundation will develop an evaluation framework for the Families Lead CA initiative (across all grantees) together with the grantee cohort after grants have been awarded. We plan to hire an evaluator to support that work. Individual applicants may include evaluation costs for any additional evaluation into their grant, should they wish.

ELIGIBILITY

Q: Are you looking for organizations working on activities targeting specific policy goals/issues (e.g., ECE/education, home visiting, etc.)? How about organizations that pursue local and/or statewide policy goals? Is the grant focused just on early education for children 0-8, or will it also include family leadership/system change around other issues, for example, children 0-8 with special health care needs?

A: We are looking for organizations whose policy goals are developed with, by, and for parents of children 0-8, and therefore, reflect their priorities across a range of policy goals and issues. Organizations that pursue local and/or statewide policy goals are eligible to apply.

Q: If our organization works with parents of children of a wider age range than (0-8) does that affect how we structure our proposal and/or reporting? Are we still eligible to apply or would we still be considered? How about organizations with programs that focus on parents of children ages 0-5?

A: We understand that parent leadership organizations work with parents of children of all ages. Applicants need not be limited to work with parents of children 0-8, but our selection priorities preference organizations that demonstrate a track record of working with parents of young children ages 0-8 to advance equity. Organizations that focus on a narrower age range, such as 0-5, are eligible to apply. Applicants should make clear how much of the organization’s work focuses on families with children 0-8 and the nature of that work.

STAFFING

Q: In the staffing section of the application, you ask for # of staff, is this specific to the program seeking funding or the organization as a whole? How should part-time staff be counted?

A: Staffing is for the applicant organization or fiscally-sponsored project as a whole. Please provide full-time equivalents. For example, 2 half-time staff would be recorded as 1FTE.

Q: In the Organizational Profile section, the application asks for the number of staff or contractors hired from the community served by the organization. Please define “community” – is this service area/geography or community/identity of people (e.g., low-income parents)?

A: Please describe how many of the organization’s staff or contractors are reflective of the community that participates in the activities and programs of the organization and/or is part of the intended beneficiary group. This may be geography and identity, for example, “immigrant parents in a particular neighborhood” or, more broadly, “low-income parents of children ages 0-8.” This will depend upon how your organization defines beneficiaries/participants. We understand that this may be a good faith estimate.

Q: For your preference on organizations with BIPOC leadership, do you mean BIPOC Executive Director/CEO specifically, or can it be about the diversity stats of the senior management team?

A: We seek to fund organizations that reflect the community served in their staffing and leadership. We strongly encourage applications from BIPOC-led organizations, however, that is not a requirement. Leadership does not refer exclusively to the CEO or ED, but may include other key positions, for example, board and leadership team members.

PARTNERSHIPS AND APPLICANT ORGANIZATIONS

Q: If organizations are working together on power building and parent engagement, as part of a coalition, do you recommend they apply jointly or as separate organizations? Are you open to accepting an application from a pair of organizations working in collaboration to deliver the program?

A: Coalitions are welcome to apply together, but each application will need a single fiscal lead agency who will be the grant recipient. The choice of whether to apply jointly or separately is up to the applicant and depends upon which configuration will serve the work best. We expect this funding opportunity to be competitive, so if a coalition applies as separate organizations, please have a plan for how to proceed if not all of them are funded.

Q: Is a national organization eligible to apply? Our organization works with multiple school system partners in California, but we are a national, virtual organization. Do we meet the definition of “operating in” California?

A: If a national organization has a chapter or entity operating in CA, that work would be eligible. A national organization or coalition will need to demonstrate the CA focus and restrict funding to CA activities.

Q: We are a federation of regional chapters that also do work at the state level. How should we reflect that structure in an application?

A: Organizations with regional/state and local entities are eligible to apply, and there are no requirements about whether the application(s) are structured as separate entities or as a coordinated single entity. That decision should be driven by what makes the most sense for the applicant. We do expect that the pool will be competitive and will be looking for diversity and balance in terms of geography, participants, and type of organization. If separate chapters or federations apply, please have a plan for how to proceed if not all of them are funded.

Q: Can you clarify what an emerging organization is? Does that mean a newly established organization?

A: Yes.

FOCUS AREA

Q: What variety of program models are you seeking to support and [what] impacts are you hoping this grant program will have in terms of metrics (i.e. # of families, etc.)

A: We’re looking for a range of models and goals that will make up the cohort. Metrics for success have not been predetermined, we plan to develop those together with funded partners.



Q: Does your definition of “parents” include caregivers such as Family, Friend & Neighbor (FFN) caregivers who are vital to many under-resourced families?

A: The goals of Family Lead California are to amplify parent voice and leadership so that systems and policies reflect their priorities. With deep appreciation for the role of FFN caregivers, they are not the intended focus of this funding opportunity.

Q: Can you share more about the focus on “direct” service to families? Could that include efforts that build the capacity of other organizations to partner with families?

A: In considering the continuum from direct service to power-building, Families Lead California has been informed by the work of the Center for the Study of Social Policy framework described in [Ripples of Transformation: Families Leading Change in Early Childhood Systems](https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/FirstFive-EngagementToolkit-5.pdf). (<https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/FirstFive-EngagementToolkit-5.pdf>). Efforts to build the capacity of other organizations to partner with families are not excluded from this funding opportunity. Successful applicants will demonstrate that strategies and priorities have been developed with and for parents and reflect their priorities.

Q: If organizations are doing both service delivery and power building, do you recommend that they apply including both aspects of the organization or focus on one strategy?

A: Grantees may use funds for both or either.

LOBBYING

Q: Can the funding be utilized for grassroots lobbying? What about direct lobbying?

A: No. As a private foundation, the Heising-Simons Foundation is prohibited by the IRS from funding grassroots or direct lobbying activities. However, the Foundation may award grants to 501(c)(3) (or equivalent) organizations that engage in lobbying activities supported by other sources of funding. If your organization is selected as a finalist, additional financial documents will be requested and the structure of funding can be discussed at that time.