

United Way Career Academies Funding Opportunity: Purpose Driven Paychecks for Youth Request for Proposal (RFP)

Summary: Greater Twin Cities United Way’s Career Academies Initiative is releasing the third round of funding to support partnerships focused on quality work experiences for youth tied to Career Pathways in Minnesota.

This round of funding will award approximately 8-10 grants at an average of \$50,000 to partnerships who best meet the requirements of this RFP.

Applications are due **5pm CST Friday, February 9th** in our grant portal.

Key Dates for Applicants

Andar Portal Registration Opens- registration required to apply (more information below)	Wednesday, January 3 rd
Application Opens	Monday, January 8 th at 9:00 am
Applications Due	Friday, February 9 th at 5:00 pm
Applicants Notified of Grant Decisions	March 2024
Grant Term Begins	June 1 st , 2024

For more information, contact: rfp@gtcuw.org

Introduction

Greater Twin Cities United Way’s Career Academies

Greater Twin Cities United Way set out in 2015 to re-shape how our schools prepare students for success. We founded Career Academies to provide more youth a path toward a meaningful career, while ensuring key industries have the skilled workers they need.

With support from the Pathways to Prosperity Network and Jobs for the Future (JFF) out of the Harvard School of Education, we have aligned school districts, colleges and employers behind a powerful vision: to unite public education and employment systems so that all students in Minnesota have pathways to wealth-building and purpose driven careers.

Partnering with school districts, post-secondary partners and employers across Minnesota, Career Academies provides specialized funding, technical assistance and coaching, and a platform for peer-to-peer support focused on building sustainable career pathways alongside local businesses.

Together, we work to ensure students have equitable access to college credits, rigorous and relevant curriculums, and meaningful and supportive work experiences.

Purpose Driven Paychecks for Youth

A critical part of a successful career pathways strategy is high-quality work experiences for youth that are aligned and stackable within a specific pathway, allowing for youth to advance in one career field or transition to another, increasing pay or experience. Since our work started in 2015, the education field has made significant progress toward offering career pathways aligned work experiences for youth. And yet, our system of internships and youth work experiences are often disconnected from career pathways. We see an opportunity for academic and work experiences to be aligned around a student's individual interests, strengths and career aspirations.

Through Purpose Driven Paychecks, United Way will catalyze school-business partnerships to fill the gaps that exist in our current educational system toward all students in Minnesota accessing wealth-building, purpose driven careers.

Community Input

Purpose Driven Paychecks launched in 2022 through input and feedback from members of the Career Academies Community of Practice, a group of experts in the field of education, career pathways and workforce development. Learnings from students, families and school districts during the pandemic and civil unrest in 2020 also underscored the importance of Greater Twin Cities United Way catalytic leadership on this issue. Career Academies is committed to leading strategy and decision-making with student voice and feedback. As part of this commitment, we hire student interns to be part of the team that makes decisions and influences strategy for the Purpose Driven Paychecks funding opportunity each year.

Funding Opportunity Overview

Purpose Driven Paychecks will fund **partnerships** focused on expanding the *number* of high-quality work experiences and/or the *quality* of pathways aligned work experiences for young people. The grant term is 12 months beginning June 2024.

Partnerships must include a public school district OR charter school AND at least one employer. The partnership can include additional members as well such as employer associations (i.e., Chambers), youth employment organizations, municipalities or service delivery cooperatives. Partnerships must demonstrate their ability to meet this RFP's goals.

Funded partnerships can expect to have access to and participate in the following activities as part of this grant program:

- Participate in Career Academies [Community of Practice](#) convenings.
- Access to ongoing technical assistance from Career Academies staff as needed.
- Participate in an initial kick-off meeting with Career Academies staff and lead partner organizations.
- Participate in a mid-grant check-in with Career Academies staff.
- Contribute to the learnings of Career Academies through information sharing and storytelling.
- Work with United Way's communications and advancement teams to elevate learnings, messages and successes.
- Participate in conversations with United Way and local employers interested in being connected to career pathways work.

Funding Eligibility

Organizations must meet these requirements to be funded:

- Your Lead Organization is a 501c3 or 501c6, has a fiscal sponsor who has a 501c3 or 501c6 or is a public school district or charter school.
- Your partnership serves youth ages 14-22 with a primary focus on students currently enrolled in high school.
- At least 50% of students supported by these funds identify as:
 - Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander and/or a Youth of Color
 - Family income level is at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (may use Free and Reduced Lunch data to verify this criteria if available)
 - Live with a disability that presents significant barriers to employment
- Your partnership includes at least one public school district or charter school AND at least one employer partner.¹
- Your partnership is already in place and has a history of working together.
- Your public school district or charter school partner has existing career pathways² through which they are preparing youth for work experiences.
- Your partnership's student work experiences pay *at least* \$12.50 (stipend or hourly) for a minimum of 40 hours per individual student experience.
- Lead organization or the fiscal sponsor has an annual budget of at least \$250,000.
- Your Lead Organization meets United Way's financial standards and received an unqualified opinion on your most recent audit report. This will be determined by an assessment of your financial documents as part of the application review.

For any special considerations related to these criteria, or any other questions related to the application process, please contact us at RFP@gtcuw.org.

¹Additional partners are welcome and can include youth employment organizations, employer associations, service cooperatives and/or other partners. Please note that listed partners will be included in general grant communications.

²Career pathways are defined as a sequence of educational and work experiences aligned with high-wage, high-demand career fields that include access to college credit, rigorous and relevant coursework, and related work experiences.

Note on Financial Review: Your *Lead Organization* must meet the financial standards for Greater Twin Cities United Way grantees based on a review of financial documents in order to receive funding. You will be asked to upload financial documents as part of this application. **Please note, Lead Organizations that are public school districts DO NOT need to submit to a financial review.** Please note that charter schools are not exempt from financial review.

Funding Priorities

These criteria are not required but your partnership will be scored based on how well they meet these criteria. Partnerships that score highest will be most competitive for funding.

- Your partnership and use of funds primarily focuses on a specific population of young people (i.e. Black, Indigenous, Students of Color and/or youth living with a disability).
- Your partnership provides high-quality work experiences for youth OR you plan to work toward high-quality work experiences as part of the grant program.
 - Greater Twin Cities United Way's Career Academies defines high-quality work experiences aligned with career pathways as latticed and stackable, allowing for youth to advance in one career field or transition to another, increasing in pay or experience. These work experiences should include:
 - \$15/hour starting pay and at least 40-hours per experience
 - student choice in their design (e.g., students choose their own pathway and provide feedback to improve program quality)
 - Meaningful certification or credential
 - guaranteed employer benefits upon completion of the program (e.g., hiring priority, tuition support, etc.)
 - employers demonstrating a commitment to youth development (e.g., mentorship, connections to professional networks, etc.)
- Your partnership's work experiences are aligned to high wage, high demand career pathways within [your local area](#).
- Your partnership's career pathways represent student voice in their design (e.g., student advisory group regularly provides feedback on program design).
- Your partnership can demonstrate or is working toward a long-term, sustainable approach to high-quality, youth work experiences.
- Your partnership is bringing forth creative solutions that have the potential to influence the field of career pathways toward more equitable outcomes for youth. Examples include but are not limited to cross-sector programming (e.g., agriculture and business), culturally specific approaches, or multiple touchpoints within the partnership (e.g., guest speakers, intern hosts, teacher externships).

Learning Approach and Required Information Sharing

- Funded partnerships will be required to submit a written annual report to Greater Twin Cities United Way at the end of the grant term that includes outcomes data and narrative reporting.
- Funded partnerships will be asked to submit information on two required outcome measures:
 - Total number of youth who receive work experiences as part of this funding
 - Number of youth who receive newly created work experiences as part of this funding (a subset of "Total number of youths")
 - Average hourly pay of youth work experiences
- Funded partnerships will be asked to select at least two additional outcome measures that best align with work they are pursuing around quality youth work experiences. Below is a menu of potential outcome measures. Partnerships can select from this list or submit their own measures.

Greater Twin Cities United Way staff will work with partnerships to finalize these measures at the time of grant award.

- Number and type of certifications earned through youth work experiences
- Number and type of pathways with internships
- Improved recruitment and retention policies at an employer partner because of this partnership

Application Process

Partnerships wishing to apply for this RFP must submit an online application by **5pm CST Friday, February 9th**.

Select one organization to be the "Lead Organization" for your partnership. The Lead Organization will fill out the application on behalf of the partnership. If funded, the Lead Organization will receive grant funds on behalf of the partnership and acts as the primary point of contact for grant communications.

Applications will be scored by a team of Greater Twin Cities United Way staff and current Career Pathways students against an evaluation rubric. The application will ask questions in each of the areas below and weight them as indicated.

Area of Assessment	% of Total Score
Student Focus	25%
Strength and Approach of Partnership	20%
Sustainability of Work	20%
Career Pathways Programming	10%
Quality Youth Work Experiences	25%
Total	100%

Applicants with the highest scoring applications will be most competitive for funding. Applicants will be notified of funding decisions by email by April 2024.

Greater Twin Cities United Way reserves the right to make awards that support a balanced grant portfolio that most effectively advances our mission, goals, and priorities. Toward this end, and in addition to criteria identified in this RFP, funding decisions may include considerations of geography, scale and environmental factors, among other factors.

Grant Terms, Payments and Other Grantee Requirements and Opportunities

- Grants will average \$50,000; grant term is 12-months beginning June 2024.
- Grant awards will be made in 2 payments. 85% of the award will be paid upon signature of the grant agreement. The final 15% of the award will be paid upon completion of the annual report.
- Funded partnerships will be asked to provide direct deposit information for payment.
- Funded partnerships should expect to attend an initial kick-off meeting with Career Academies staff and lead partner organizations, and a mid-year check-in with Career Academies staff.

Check-ins will be a chance to update Greater Twin Cities United Way on the work, discuss any challenges and how we can help support you and access technical assistance.

- Grantees will be invited to participate in the Career Academies Community of Practice, a quarterly gathering of school districts, employer partners and community organizations that hold a shared vision of career pathways centered on wealth-building for students.

How To Apply

Greater Twin Cities United Way recently changed its funding portal to the software system *Andar*. To access this funding opportunity (and subsequent funding opportunities), you will first need to register for an Andar account, which you will be able to do on the [landing page](#) on January 3rd, 2024, by following a link to the [portal registration survey form](#).

Once you have submitted this registration survey form, you will receive an email within three business days directing you to log in to your new Andar account portal. This is where you will complete the full Purpose Driven Paychecks application, which will become available in your new portal on January 8th, 2024. If you have already submitted this survey form and completed your account registration, you can follow this [link](#) to access your account and the full RFP. Please refer to this [one-pager](#) for further details on how to register for your Andar account and navigate the portal.

Application Resources and Other Questions

During the application period, Greater Twin Cities United Way staff are available to answer your questions and assist with your application.

- Contact us at rfp@gtcuw.org and a Greater Twin Cities United Way staff person will respond to your question within 1-2 business days.