



## **Supporting Communities: General Operating Support for College Completion Nonprofits *Request for Proposals***

Trellis Foundation advances equitable educational opportunities in Texas by supporting postsecondary programs, practices, and systems that reduce disparities and lead to success for low-income students and students of color. Our approach is highly collaborative and prioritizes catalytic investments, focused on changing or informing change to policy, practice, and systems.

Trellis Foundation's work under TG Philanthropy nearly two decades ago was forged through learning with college access providers. Through the years, their services have grown as has our own organizational understanding. This Request for Proposals is an acknowledgement of the innovative and field-moving work that community-based organizations (CBOs) engage in and our commitment to this important section of the postsecondary completion ecosystem.

The past three years have brought a series of challenges for CBOs as they pivoted programming to virtual options, then contended with staff turnover and hiring struggles, and finally found their dollars further stretched through the costs of rising inflation.

To support our longstanding partners in the field, we are inviting eligible partners to apply for an 18-month general operating grant in support of their college completion support strategies. General operating funds may be applied to any organizational or programmatic costs, such as payroll or rent.

In addition, the past three years have elevated awareness nationally of the opportunity to increase support for leaders who represent the students that they serve, particularly students of color, and to support the work of organizations that are deeply embedded in the communities they serve. In recognition of the historic underfunding of grassroots organizations led by professionals of color, this RFP will prioritize supports for these organizations (see process overview section below).

### **Eligibility**

- 501(c)3 community-based organizations with a substantial mission and programmatic focus of postsecondary completion
- Focused on direct service to students (rather than serving primarily as a backbone, intermediary or data/policy partner)
- Based in Texas, serving Texas students



## **Process Overview:**

Trellis Foundation intends to award 12-20 general operating grants of \$100,000 for terms of up to 18 months. Funding will be disbursed in two payments: \$50,000 on execution of the grant agreement and \$50,000 following the 6-month progress report. Grant terms will begin Aug. 1, 2023, unless otherwise negotiated.

Applicants will submit an online application, to be reviewed by the Trellis Foundation Selection Committee.

When reviewing application responses, the Foundation will consider the following criteria in evaluating proposals:

- Alignment with Trellis Foundation [mission](#)
- Geographic distribution of finalists
- Percent of the organization’s work focused on college retention and completion supports for students
- Postsecondary retention and completion outcomes
- Racial equity is a key component of our mission; thus, while not a requirement for consideration, the Foundation will prioritize applications from organizations led by professionals of color.
- If an applicant is a former Trellis Foundation grantee, preference will be given to those whose grant ended on or before 1/1/2023. This allows us to prioritize supporting organizations not currently receiving support from the Foundation.

## **Timeline**

<b><i>Dates</i></b>	<b><i>Actions</i></b>
April 17, 2023	Release of RFP
<b>May 23, 2023</b> <i>Note: The Program Officer is able to answer application content-related questions until 5 p.m. on May 19. The following week technical support is available from the grants manager only.</i>	<b>Applications due by 5:00 p.m. (CT)</b>
May 24-June 23, 2023	Applications evaluated by Trellis Foundation review team; may include follow-up information requests and site visits
<b>July 12, 2023</b>	<b>Final Award Decisions</b>
July 2023	Grant Agreements executed



## **Instructions for Proposal Submission**

If your program is aligned with the identified goals and meets eligibility requirements, we invite you to submit a proposal using Trellis Foundation's [online grant application site](#).

The first time you visit the online application system, you will **need to create an account**. You can save the application and return to it later by logging in any time before the submission deadline with your email address and password.

### **Budget Details**

Please upload your organization's annual operating budget.

## **Questions**

- Additional information and answers to questions will be provided in a webinar on April 24, 2023, at 4 pm CT. [Register](#) to indicate your interest in attending the live discussion; a recording will be emailed to all registrants.
- Any additional information about Trellis Foundation can be found at [www.trellisfoundation.org](http://www.trellisfoundation.org).
- Please direct specific questions about this RFP to Jenny Achilles, Sr. Director and Chief Program Officer, at [jenny.achilles@trellisfoundation.org](mailto:jenny.achilles@trellisfoundation.org). For technical questions about submitting the application, please email [megan.beadle@trellisfoundation.org](mailto:megan.beadle@trellisfoundation.org)
- Jenny will hold office hours; appointments can be scheduled here: <https://calendly.com/jenny-achilles/general-operating-rfp-office-hours>

### **FAQs:**

- How to I apply for this grant?  
*Please review the hard copy of the application on the following pages. The application must be submitted via the [online link](#).*
- What do you mean by postsecondary?  
*We include industry-based credentials, as well as associate's degrees and bachelor's degrees. For this grant, preference will be given to organizations that support a path to an associate's or bachelor's. Thus, if your programming includes industry-based credentials, stronger applications will include clearly articulated paths from the credential to an associate's—with formal MOUs executed with a college, if needed.*
- What do you mean by retention and completion metrics?  
*Examples include: semester-to-semester persistence, year-to-year retention, and graduation. Additional details are provided in the application template.*



- My organization provides high school students with college visits and FAFSA completion help. Are we eligible?  
*If your organization does extensive college access programming, please explain how you support students once they have enrolled in college to ensure that they successfully complete their program. If you do not provide any support to students once they begin their postsecondary education, your organization is not eligible.*
- My organization helps students complete short-term workforce training programs. Are we eligible?  
*If your programming includes industry-based credentials, stronger applications will include clearly articulated paths from the credential to an associate's—with formal MOUs executed with a college, if needed.*
- All of the leadership at my organization is white. Should I still apply?  
*Leadership demographics are not meant to exclude any applicant. You may apply. Strong applications will include a diverse leadership team.*
- What do you mean by organization leadership?  
*This includes the executive director and any senior-level staff. We anticipate that senior leadership will have significant decision-making authority and likely also supervises other teammates.*

# Trellis Foundation

## General Operations Grant Application

*This hard copy template serves as a guide for preparing for the online application.*

**The following information will need to be entered directly into GivingData. All information is required.**

Legal name of organization to  
appear on grant agreement,  
if awarded:

Organization's mailing  
address, city, state, zip:

Organization Telephone:

Organization Fax:

Organization Web site  
address:

President/  
Executive director:

Tax ID:

Tax Status:

Grant project contact Name:  
(principal investigator):

E-mail:

Phone:

Grant submission contact: Name:

E-mail:

Phone:

Signatory Contact Name:

Information E-mail:

Phone:

Amount sought from Trellis  
Foundation:

Project timeframe (Start and  
End Date):

**In the online application, the following fields will allow the applicant to select the options that best describe their organization.**

**Geographic Area Served:**

You will be asked to select the COUNTIES served by your organization. Counties will be sorted and listed under the appropriate regions. Region and county information can be found by visiting:

<https://comptroller.texas.gov/economy/economic-data/regions/2022/>.

**Population Served:**

- K-12 Students
- College Age-Traditional (18-24)
- Adult Learners/nontraditional (24+)
- Non-Student Adults
- First-generation in college
- Students Experiencing Homelessness
- Veterans
- Foster Youth
- Opportunity Youth
- Justice system-impacted youth/adults
- Immigrant Communities
- Rural Communities
- Parents/Guardians
- Single Parents
- Undocumented
- Unemployed/Underemployed

**Keywords:**

- Academic/Transfer Advising
- Bridge/Transition to College
- Basic Needs/Emergency Aid
- Career Planning/Assistance/Placement
- Case Management
- College Retention Advising
- Cultural Competency
- Data/Monitoring & Evaluation
- Debt Management/Financial Literacy
- DEI/Racial Justice
- Direct Student Aid
- Dual Credit/Early College/PTECH
- Mental Health
- Mentoring
- Pathways and System Alignment
- Parental/Family Engagement
- Policy Development/Advocacy
- Professional Development-staff/faculty
- Workforce Development

**The following documents will need to be entered as attachments via document upload in GivingData.  
All documents are required in the online application.**

- ✓ Complete organization budget
- ✓ Organization W9
- ✓ List of organization's board of directors, trustees, or regents
- ✓ Copy of organization's IRS determination letter (State-supported organizations and public postsecondary education institutions are exempt from this requirement)
- ✓ Copy of organization's most recent IRS Form 990 (State-supported organizations and public postsecondary education institutions are exempt from this requirement)
- ✓ Copy of organization's most recent audited financial statement (State-supported organizations and public postsecondary education institutions are exempt from this requirement)
- ✓ Resumes of the organization's executive level leadership
- ✓ If applicable, most recent strategic plan and/or results of any outcomes evaluation

**The following pages will be used as a reference document in the development of Trellis Foundation Board materials.**

**All yellow sections must be completed by the applicant.**

**All formatting should remain as it is in the template document, with the exclusion of the removal of yellow highlights once the applicant has entered their data in that section.**

**Prior to submitting a formal application online, organizations should save the following pages as one complete Word document. The document will then be uploaded into the APPLICATION NARRATIVE field in the GivingData application. This data will not be entered into separate text fields in the online application.**



# Trellis Foundation

*General Operating*

## Project Title

### Organization Legal Name

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

## Organization Background and Mission

Please describe the history and mission of your organization.

## Postsecondary Completion

This description does not need to be restricted to work covered by Trellis Foundation funding, nor does it need to be an exhaustive description. How does this work align with the Trellis Foundation mission? Please describe the portion of your work that is focused on postsecondary completion. We anticipate that most applicants will focus nearly all of their programming on postsecondary completion. If this is not the case for your organization, please describe how postsecondary completion is related to your work. For example, if your organization does extensive college access programming, please explain how you support students once they have enrolled in college to ensure that they successfully complete their degree or credential.

## Goals, objectives and deliverables

Please share your organization's disaggregated postsecondary outcomes metrics in a historical context. Please also share your intended outcomes metrics for this year. Please include numbers of students as well as percentages. Include baseline/comparison metrics as relevant, if you have them. This may be provided in a narrative form or in a table.

For example:

Our organization currently serves:

- 100 first-year college students (30% African-American, 40% Latino, 30% white not of Hispanic origin; 65% female, 35% male)
- 100 second-year students
- 50 third-year+ students

Over the past 5 years we have averaged:

- 95% semester-to-semester persistence for first-year students (80% African-American, 97% Latino, 83% white)
- 85% year one-to-year two retention rates (xx% African-American...)
- 40% degree completion in two years (xx%...)
- 65% degree completion in 150% time to degree (3 years) (xx%...)
- 75% degree completion within 5 years

Our goals for the current year are:

- 97% semester-to-semester persistence for first-year students (85% African-American, 97% Latino, 85% white)
- Etc.

## Grant Learning Questions

We appreciate learning along with our grantees and reflecting on the ways each grant can inform your future work and the broader field. In this section, please identify 2-3 questions that your work over the next year can inform. We will ask you to reflect on the questions in each report. An example might be: What supports will resonate most with Black male students? Or: Can we codify x approach in a way that is replicable? Or: Will this framing of the question resonate with our community in a way that leads to robust engagement in the steering committee?

## Community Partnerships

Describe your organization's role in your regional postsecondary ecosystem. Include descriptions of any formal and informal partnerships within the last 12 months with other individuals or organizations (nonprofits, corporations, other foundations, state & federal agencies). The goal is to understand partnerships that specifically move your work forward as well as how you see collaboration within the greater postsecondary education/economic mobility ecosystem in your region and your role in it. This ecosystem often includes ISDs; colleges and universities; nonprofits support college access, success and workforce development; intermediaries and backbone organizations bringing partners together; etc.

## Leadership Demographics

Please complete this chart on the demographics of your organization's leadership. Please note, that while Trellis Foundation values diversity of multiple forms of representation, this RFP is specifically focused on increasing our support of organizations led by BIPOC professionals. Racial equity is a key component of our mission. We understand to achieve this, foundations must increase support

for organizations that mirror the populations that they serve. In recognition of the historic underfunding of grassroots organizations led by professionals of color, this RFP will prioritize supports for these organizations. Highest priority will be given to those organizations with both an executive director and a majority of managerial/supervisory staff of color.

Please use numbers with a numerator and a denominator, rather than percentages. For example, Executive director will likely be 1/1 with the denominator representing the total number of individuals that hold these positions and the numerator representing the number of individuals who identify according to the race and ethnicities in the chart below. For staff who identify as two or more races/ethnicities, please include them in the numerator for EACH race/ethnicity and increase the denominator accordingly.

While we understand that board composition is an important component of power dynamics, for this RFP we are focused on paid staff positions, because compensation is also an important component of power dynamics.

	Ethnicity		Race				
	Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White
Executive Director							
Managerial/Supervisory Staff							