



REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

for

Rural Advancement and Leadership Development

January 2021

INTRODUCTION

Texas Rural Funders (TRF) believes the future of Texas depends on strong, successful rural communities. To that end, TRF is exploring the development of a program focused on supporting emerging leaders in rural Texas. This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) will provide critical information to TRF to better understand 1) the landscape of organizations qualified to develop and implement a program and 2) how those organizations would work with TRF to meet our objectives. We encourage you to respond to this RFQ and forward it to other organizations who may have relevant expertise in rural advancement and leadership development.

ABOUT US

TRF (formerly Texas Rural Funders Collaborative) grew from conversations in 2017 among a handful of funders interested in rural Texas. It has now grown to include 18 different funding organizations with assets ranging from \$12 million to \$50 billion, and geographic priorities spanning two Texas counties to all 254.

Our Belief: Texas Rural Funders believes the future of Texas depends on strong, successful rural communities.

We strive to honor, strengthen and preserve rural communities.

Our Goal: To bring attention and resources to rural Texas, leveraging local assets for success.

We Work with Communities: We are dedicated to working with and within rural communities to amplify opportunities and rural voices.

We have a rural advisory committee which includes more than 100 individuals who live and work in rural communities, informing our work with their experience and perspective.

We Take a Cross-Sector Approach: With a diverse network of funders, we are able to address systemic challenges.

For additional information about TRF and its members, visit www.texasruralfunders.org.

INFORMATION REQUESTED

TRF seeks information about your organization's qualifications, approach, and cost (including a high-level budget) to develop and implement a program for rural Texans based on the following principles and guidelines. *Responses to this RFQ will be used for information purposes only. TRF will use this information to develop a Request for Proposals, with a goal to release in spring 2021.*

The following list is intended to provide a baseline for TRF's goals for this program. We encourage respondents to be creative and include in their responses any additional components viewed as necessary for a successful program.

- I. Collaborative. The program will be developed and implemented in close collaboration with TRF.
- II. Fills a gap. The resulting program is one that is wanted and needed by, and adds value to, rural communities. Participants will be able to articulate how participation helped them personally and supported their community. The program will be clearly distinguishable from existing programs and will fill a gap for rural Texans. (TRF completed a scan of existing programs in Texas and beyond; however, TRF envisions a new program unique to our priorities and aspirations.)
- III. Focused on community. The units of participation are teams of individuals from communities, not individuals. Through the program, each team will develop an action plan to address a real issue of importance in their community. Leadership development activities will be contextualized to participants' local context; participants will grow as leaders through the work they do during the program.
- IV. Practical and sustainable leadership tools. Participants will learn tools and techniques that can be applied to a range of challenges well beyond the life of the training. The program should allow for multiple opportunities for real-world practice and application of leadership approaches.
- V. Cultivates diverse leadership. A program with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion is critical to TRF. The resulting program must include strategies to both engage and remove barriers to participation for individuals, particularly for people of color, young people, and women. Additionally, it will address barriers to participation for people who have multiple professional and personal responsibilities.
- VI. Results in meaningful relationships. Participants will build meaningful relationships and connections both within and beyond the

community/region. The program will create opportunities for peer learning and will support a culture of collaboration across organizations and sectors. It will leverage TRF and other networks to connect participants with state agencies or other organizations that may be positioned to provide long-term funding or support for their communities' priorities. The program will also provide meaningful continued engagement with alumni.

To support this goal, TRF expects at least some programmatic elements to be delivered in person (if possible and within guidelines for COVID restrictions); however, we are open to a hybrid approach, incorporating a mix of in-person and virtual programming. If in-person programming may create barriers to participation, it would be helpful to understand strategies to help participants overcome some of those barriers.

- VII. Creative. While TRF may initially start with a small set of communities to test an approach, we embrace the opportunity to support a creative and bold program. In addition, TRF envisions multiple cohorts of participants with each cohort experiencing about a year-long program; however, we are open to exploring other timeframes that may be more conducive to meeting the guiding principles outlined in this section. We envision a program that will take place over a period of time longer than a single one-day session or multi-day conference.

TIMELINE

| TARGET DATES (all 2021) | DESCRIPTION OF EVENTS |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Wednesday, January 20 | RFQ Released |
| Friday, February 19 | Deadline for submissions |
| Spring | RFP Released |
| Fall/Winter | Program Development and Implementation |

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Submissions should include the following sections and should not exceed 10 pages in length. We understand some information may differ between RFQ and RFP phases. Some sections, such as team profile, may be illustrative for purposes of completing the RFQ.

- I. Executive summary of no more than two pages.
- II. Description of the respondent's approach to leadership development, research-based rationale for the approach, and anticipated participant outcomes of an engagement with TRF.
- III. Summary of relevant experience, providing brief descriptions of the three most significant relevant engagements. At least one example should describe work within a rural context. Such descriptions may be generic and need not name the individual client but should summarize the context, outcomes, challenges, and successes resulting from the work.
- IV. Overview of a potential work plan and estimated costs to perform the necessary activities to achieve the described scope of work. Any proprietary procedures used in this work process should be marked CONFIDENTIAL on each relevant page.
- V. Team profile, providing the specific make-up of the team to be assigned to this project, including brief bios for team members, identification of a lead contact, and relevant experience of this team individually and collectively.

NEXT STEPS

Please submit a full response to tpennington@greatertexasfoundation.org no later than February 19, 2021.

Questions may be submitted in writing to tpennington@greatertexasfoundation.org. Please allow 2-3 business days for a response. Questions relevant to more than one respondent may be shared on TRF's website.

The Texas Rural Funders will use this information to develop a Request for Proposals, with a goal to release in spring 2021. Please note organizations who submit a RFQ may be invited to submit a proposal for program implementation; however, participation in the RFQ process does not guarantee an invitation to submit a proposal, and the RFP may not be limited to organizations who respond to this RFQ.