The California Better Careers Design Group

Co-designing outcomes-driven solutions for California jobseekers

Instructions to Apply for the Design Group or Learning Community

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Introduction and Inspiration

The Better Careers Design Group was born from the need to develop solutions for issues that affect an entire local workforce system, such as cross-agency referrals and employer engagement. The Design Group is also a response to recent state-wide initiatives that center outcomes and innovation, including Cal-OAR, CalWORKs 2.0, and the Future of Work Commission. It tackles issues at the local level, where dollars and policies meet the people, while connecting local agencies (e.g. counties and Local Workforce Development Areas) with state-level guidance. By engaging representatives from state-level agencies through the Learning Community and workshops, Design Group solutions will inspire multi-level conversations and be positively influenced by the state-level push for greater coordination across agencies.

Opportunity Overview

The Better Careers Design Group is a cross-sector group, organized by Third Sector, that will collaborate to apply new skills and design solutions for systemic workforce challenges and advance the equity of economic outcomes in California.

18	**15**	**6**
month-long curriculum, applying human-centered and outcomes-oriented design to solutions	**participant organizations**, including local government agencies and organizations in the Better Careers initiative	**interactive workshops** and additional technical assistance sessions to develop local plans to implement solutions

From January 2020 through June 2021, the Design Group members will partner with people and communities they serve to investigate problems that exist within their local workforce systems. Members will learn and utilize human-centered and outcomes-oriented design while building relationships across sectors and gaining guidance from state-level agencies. Members will create collective, localized Outcomes-Driven Solutions Plans that promote equity and further at least one of the goals of the Better Careers initiative:

- Help under-resourced jobseekers secure jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage
- Improve training opportunities that lead to quality jobs and advancement
- Identify successful models of matching employers with middle-skilled workers
- Build and grow a diversified pool of talented workers

An Outcomes-Driven Solutions Plan is a series of changes that Design Group members can implement to improve economic outcomes for under-resourced jobseekers in a county or Local Workforce Development Area. Solutions Plans enable a collective approach to solving problems, while integrating feedback from internal and external stakeholders. As an illustration, a Solutions Plan might focus on creating a platform to match employers with jobseekers. This plan could detail a new way for several local government agencies and services providers in the workforce system to coordinate their employer engagement, including operational solutions, resources needed, and projected results. (Please note, this example is purely illustrative. Design Group members will select issue areas to explore and test potential solutions.)

While funding for implementation is not guaranteed, a key focus of the Better Careers Design Group will be networking with funders that may be able to help participating organizations implement their Solutions Plans.

The Design Group is supported by a grant from the James Irvine Foundation, which allows members to participate at no cost. Each organization in the Design Group will be offered a $25,000 participation grant to compensate them for their time and will be reimbursed for all workshop travel and lodging expenses.

Members of the Design Group will graduate with

1. *An understanding of how to apply an outcomes orientation to their work,*
2. *An understanding of how to apply human-centered design to their work, and*
3. *A Solutions Plan to address issues in their local workforce system.*

A virtual Learning Community, comprised of Design Group members and additional organizations, will learn from the Group's progress and discoveries. The Learning Community's experience will be furthered by interactive webinars, resources related to the curriculum, and participation and guidance from state-level agencies, such as the California Department of Social Services. Organizations, including agencies outside California and service providers not funded by the Irvine Foundation Better Careers initiative, may opt to only apply for the Learning Community.

Background on Third Sector

Third Sector is a 501(c)3 organization whose mission is to accelerate the transition to a performance-driven social sector. Our approach is to facilitate inclusive conversations about measurable outcomes between public sector agencies and community stakeholders, then operationalize mutual goals by re-writing funding agreements between public agencies and community organizations. Third Sector centers equity in our projects and works with clients to develop solutions that will lead to equitable outcomes regardless of race, ethnicity, income or location. **When our work is complete, organizations entrusted to use public and private funds have the systems, tools, and data to do more and do better for the people they serve.**

The Third Sector approach leads to positive changes in how local government agencies and their service providers interact, which leads to better outcomes for service recipients. In 2017, Third Sector worked with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to develop resources for county social services departments to help them better focus Expanded Subsidized Employment (ESE) programs on participant outcomes, resulting in the Outcomes-Oriented Toolkit for ESE Programs. Since then Third Sector has led two pilot projects in Fresno and Santa Cruz counties, applying an outcomes methodology to transform ESE programs through the use of qualitative and quantitative data, relationship building and incentives.

Since Third Sector was founded in 2011, we have worked with over 40 communities to deploy more than $806 million of government resources towards outcomes. One-third of our 62 engagements have focused on facilitating changes in public funding to improve workforce development outcomes, higher education persistence and success, or both. Third Sector's largest office presence is in the state of California, where we have facilitated 19 outcomes-driven funding relationships both at the state agency and county levels.

Funding and Services Awarded

This Design Group will bring together innovators across sectors in the California workforce system to study design principles and put them into practice. The 18-month curriculum will teach an integrated, collaborative approach to generating ideas and establishing feedback loops around improving outcomes. Group members will learn principles of human-centered design and outcomes orientation that can impact many aspects of their day-to-day work. Group members will also develop Outcomes-Driven Solutions Plans for their communities that can be presented to stakeholders or funders to secure resources, establish partnerships, and implement solutions.

Each Design Group organization will select two staff members to join the Design Group, which will span from January 2020 to June 2021. These members are expected to manage or execute applied activities within their organization and attend all six of the quarterly workshops. As noted above, Design Group members will be offered a small grant to compensate them for their time ($25,000 per organization) and will be reimbursed for all workshop travel and lodging expenses.

Workshops

Design Group organizations agree to send two representatives to each of the six full-day Design Group workshops held between January 2020 and June 2021. If possible, the same two representatives should attend all six workshops over the course of the project in order to build on their understanding of outcomes-driven design and reflect with the Group on their experience putting lessons into practice. Workshop themes will adapt to members' problem areas and may include problem definition, user research, prototyping, and aligning funding and incentives

Applied Activities

The greatest benefit for participating organization will come from the post-workshop applied activities, where they will apply design principles in their own context with guidance from Third Sector. These activities are mandatory investments in the process of solving challenges and building partnerships. The applied activities will include both core activities which are consistent across the entire group and special activities which will vary by a member or team's objectives. All activities will be complementary to the work that organizations currently do, and most will coincide with staff members' ongoing job responsibilities (e.g. strategy meetings with senior leadership, management of community engagement).

As an example, Design Group members may be asked to analyze quantitative data on the beneficiary population to understand equity needs. This would require workshop participants to coordinate with their internal data teams and potentially with other Design Group members to pull data, disaggregate by characteristics like race and ethnicity, and interpret findings. (This is an illustrative example. Applied activities will vary based on the problems that Design Group Teams choose to explore.)

For each organization, diagnosing and solving local and systems-level problems using tools and approaches learned in the Design Group will take approximately 15-20% of two staff member's time. Ultimately, each organization's choice and structure will determine how this time and management of the activity is distributed among staff. In some cases, activities will be additive to staff members' typical responsibilities and require additional staff time, and in others they will mainly require applying a new method to existing responsibilities.

Technical Assistance

Each Design Group organization may take advantage of up to two hours of technical assistance from Third Sector after each workshop to dive deeper into workshop topics or discuss applied activities. These one-on-one sessions will provide members with expert guidance on how to research, design, and implement continuous improvement processes that are human-centered and data-led.

Eligibility Criteria

The Better Careers Design Group application is open to Irvine Better Careers initiative grantees as well as any governmental/quasi-governmental agencies located in California focused on at least one goal of the Better Careers initiative. This may include, but is not limited to:

- County/city social services or human services departments
- Other local government departments that fund or deliver workforce development programs
- Workforce development boards
- Community colleges with programs focused on under-resourced jobseekers (e.g., apprenticeship programs)

Third Sector will select up to ten governmental/quasi-governmental agencies and up to six Irvine Better Careers initiative grantees to be a part of the Design Group. 'Design Group Teams' will be formed around particular California counties or Local Workforce Development Areas. For example, a Design Group Team may include: i) community-based organizations that are part of the Irvine Better Careers initiative; ii) a county social services department; iii) a municipal juvenile justice department offering a job training re-entry program iv) a workforce development board operating within the same county; and v) a local community college offering apprenticeship programming.

Preference will be given to organizations with pre-existing relationships that apply as a complete (or semi-complete) Design Group Team. Each organization will need to submit an individual application for their organization and indicate their team in the "Team Members" section.

Selection Factors

Applications will be reviewed by Third Sector on a rolling basis between October 3 – 18, 2019. Equal weight will be given to responses to Questions #4 – #8 in the Application Questions section below.

As a whole, the Better Careers Design group will be as representative as possible of:

- Different California geographies, with the goal of forming teams within two to four counties or Local Workforce Development Areas
- Barriers faced by the beneficiary population of services provided or funded
- Career pathway options for participants in the services provided or funded
- Experience with outcomes orientation and human-centered design

Out of respect for the busy schedules of applying organizations, Third Sector will schedule interviews with organizations when their application is received. Third Sector will cancel the interview if the organization does not meet consideration criteria upon review of application.

How to Apply and Key Dates

All changes to instructions to apply for the Better Careers Design Group and Learning Community will be posted at http://www.thirdsectorcap.org/better-careers-design-group and emailed to organizations on the email list, which can be joined at http://bit.ly/BCDG-email-list. Please attend the informational webinar on October 3, 2019 or watch the recording, which will be available within one week of the webinar, before completing the application.

Applications are due Friday, October 18, 2019 by 5:00pm PST. Organizations may apply online at http://bit.ly/bcdg-app (for the Design Group), http://bit.ly/bcdg-lc-app (for the Learning Community only) **or email answers in PDF or Word form** to Drew Souders at dsouders@thirdsectorcap.org. Contact Drew Souders if you need to request an extension to submit your application.

The following timeline is subject to amendment. Any amendment will be posted the webpage above.

Better Careers Design Group Formation Timeline	
Wed, Sept 18, 2019	Application available to review
Thurs, Oct 3, 2019	Informational webinar; Recording posted within one week
Oct 3 – Oct 14, 2019	Open information period
Oct 3 – Oct 18, 2019	Open application period
Fri, Oct 18, 2019	Applications due by 5:00pm PST
Oct 14 – Oct 25, 2019	Interviews scheduled with applicants for time slots between Nov 12 – Nov 25, 2019. (An interview will be cancelled if the organization does not meet consideration criteria upon review of application.)
Oct 21 – Nov 8, 2019	Full application review
Nov 12 – Nov 25, 2019	Finalist due diligence interviews
Fri, Dec 13, 2019	Announcement of Better Careers Design Group and Learning Community
Dec 16 – Dec 18, 2019	Applicant feedback
Dec 18, 2019 – Jan 17, 2020	Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Third Sector and Design Group organizations developed and finalized
Jan (TBD), 2020	Kickoff webinar
Feb (TBD), 2020	First workshop

Application Questions: Join the Design Group

1. **Contact information**

   Organization contact: Name, Title, Email address, Phone number

   Participating staff: Staff members (Names, Titles, Email addresses, Phone numbers, Years at organization) able to attend workshops and to lead assignments. (Organizations must identify at least 2 mid- or senior-level staff who will attend Design Group workshops and manage contributing activities. These staff members should have varied experience in the areas of programming, data analysis, and/or contracting; strong ideation, relationship building, and community engagement skills; and direct access to executive-level decision-makers at their agency.)

2. **Type of organization**

   - Government agency
   - Workforce development board
   - Irvine Foundation Better Careers initiative grantee
   - Other (please describe)

3. **Organization characteristics**

   Describe the following aspects of your organization:

   - County(ies) where you provide and/or fund workforce development services.
   - Unique barriers faced by the beneficiary population you serve.
   - Career pathway options for participants in the services you provide and/or fund (For example: construction apprenticeships, private employer subsidized employment, college to career, etc.).
   - Data collection process, including any participant outcomes tracked, data sources currently accessed (e.g. EDD, federal data sets, Worknumber, etc.), and how data is used to inform decisions.
   - Approximate amount of funding dedicated to your main workforce programs or initiatives. If helpful, use the chart below to identify each program, the total budget, and the funding source(s).

Program / Initiative	Funding Source(s)	Budget

Word Limit: 250

4. **Team members** (Optional, recommended)

   If you are applying as a team, identify the Better Career grantees and/or government agencies in your team. (Note: A team is a group of organizations that serve the same county and/or Local Workforce Development Area and are willing to collaborate on local solutions. **All team members must complete separate applications.** Organizations that apply as teams will be preferred for the Design Group. Organizations that apply as a team may also be asked to reorganize based on the needs of the Design Group.

   Word Limit: 200

5. **Workforce development goals**

   Describe your organization's existing or planned programs or initiatives that are expected to positively affect the equity of economic outcomes for your community. Include analysis of historical data or stakeholder engagement related to these outcome goals for the population you serve and/or fund services for.

   Word Limit: 250

6. **Capacity for participation**

   Design Group organizations will receive $25,000 and be reimbursed for workshop travel and lodging expenses. Organizations will be expected to complete necessary activities between workshops to diagnose and solve local and systems-level problems, making progress on the goals of the Design Group. These activities will be complementary to the work that organizations already do and may fit within their staff's current responsibilities (e.g. community engagement, data disaggregation). This problem-solving—using the tools and approaches learned in the Design Group to complete applied activities and attending in-person workshops—will take approximately 15-20% of two staff member's time. This time may or may not be additive depending on the current responsibilities of the two staff members chosen for the Design Group.

   Describe how organizational leadership will ensure that two staff members are able to commit 15-20% of their time to diagnosing and solving local and systems-level problems, including collaborating with internal staff across multiple agencies or departments such as fiscal, data, program, and contracting. (For example: the Design Group participating staff will transition specific responsibilities to another team member; the Design Group participating staff will set aside time during regularly scheduled strategy sessions with executive leadership and/or other departments to gather feedback on prototypes from the Design Group; etc.)

   Word Limit: 250

7. **Priorities and interests**

Describe how the Design Group's focus on partnerships and training on outcomes orientation and human-centered design aligns with your organization's current initiatives and strategic vision. Include issues or challenges with how your local workforce system operates that have motivated your organization to apply. Include examples of previous work related to aligning resources to outcomes, design thinking, or other innovative solutions the organization has explored.

Word Limit: 250

8. **Commitment to Equity and Inclusion**

Explain how your organization demonstrates a commitment to equity and inclusion. (For example: organization's history developing and utilizing community engagement, including its impact on strategy, programming or operations; organization's process for creating or tracking equity goals; etc.)

Word Limit: 250

Application Questions: Join the Learning Community

Organizations admitted into the virtual Learning Community will receive updates, materials and webinars related to the Design Group's progress and lessons, including guidance from participating state-level agencies. They will not attend the six in-person workshops or receive the $25,000 participation grant.

1. **Contact information**

   Organization contact(s): Name, Title, Email address

2. **Type of organization**
   - Government agency
   - Workforce development board
   - Irvine Foundation Better Careers initiative grantee
   - Other (please describe)

3. **Organization characteristics**

   Describe the following aspects of your organization:
   - County(ies) where you provide and/or fund workforce development services.
   - Unique barriers faced by the beneficiary population you serve.

- Career pathway options for participants in the services you provide and/or fund (For example: construction apprenticeships, private employer subsidized employment, college to career, etc.).
- Data collection process, including any participant outcomes tracked, data sources currently accessed (e.g. EDD, federal data sets, Worknumber, etc.), and how data is used to inform decisions.
- Approximate amount of funding dedicated to your main workforce programs or initiatives. If helpful, use the chart below to identify each program, the total budget, and the funding source(s).

Program / Initiative	Funding Source(s)	Budget

Word Limit: 250

4. **Priorities and interests**

Describe how the training on outcomes orientation and human-centered design aligns with your organization's current initiatives and strategic vision. Include issues or challenges with how your local workforce system operates that have motivated your organization to apply. Include examples of previous work related to aligning resources to outcomes, design thinking, or other innovative solutions the organization has explored.

Word Limit: 250