

Sector Skills Academy Application

Introduction

Hello and welcome to the online application for the Sector Skills Academy. In the next few pages, we will provide you with an overview of the Academy, an explanation of sector strategies, eligibility requirements, and instructions to complete the rest of the application. An application for a scholarship is also included at the end of the application.

While completing the application, you may advance backwards only one page to review or change your answers. As a result, you should finish each question and be satisfied with your answer before moving onto the next page. You may also choose to "Save Page and Continue Later," which allows you to resume your application during another session. A unique link will be emailed to you to allow you access to your saved application. You must click on "Save Page and Continue Later" before exiting the survey to have your answers saved. Please back up all essay responses in a personal file. If you have any questions, please email Matt Helmer at amatt.helmer@aspeninst.org

COMPLETED APPLICATION MUST BE RECEIVED BY COMPLETING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AND DOCUMENT REQUESTS NO LATER THAN FRIDAY, JANUARY 24TH AT 5:00 EST VIA THIS ONLINE SOFTWARE.

Thank you for your interest in the Sector Skills Academy. We look forward to learning more about you and your sector initiative.

The Aspen Institute Workforce Strategies Initiative

About the Sector Skills Academy

Interest in sector-oriented workforce training has growing dramatically in the last decade, largely because such approaches hold the potential to improve employment opportunities for low-wage workers, while also supporting business competitiveness. That potential has prompted a variety of institutions—including community-based organizations, community colleges, labor-management partnerships, worker centers and business associations—to launch new initiatives. Several states, such as Pennsylvania, Michigan and Illinois, have developed workforce development systems that are organized around a sectoral approach. And today, the sector field embodies a diverse mix of industry-specific approaches. Sector strategies that help workers gain the skills and education they need to obtain quality employment and career opportunities in a particular industry are now very common. Other types of sector strategies that are designed to improve the quality of bad jobs or low-wage occupations within a particular sector, however, are also taking root in more communities. Together, strategies that build ladders to better job opportunities and strategies that raise the floor for workers in low-wage jobs comprise a field that is bursting with innovation and impact.

To build on the momentum of this work and to strengthen, sustain and grow the sector field, the first Sector Skills Academy was initiated in June 2005. Since 2005 the Academy, which is facilitated and managed by The Aspen Institute Workforce Strategies Initiative (AspenWSI) and funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, has graduated eight classes and nearly 225 Marano Fellows who are named in honor of Cindy Marano, a trailblazer in the sectoral field and a key leader behind the design of the Academy.

The Academy provides emerging leaders with an opportunity for experiential learning with practical applications for present and future work in the sector field. The Academy consists of three workshops over roughly a 10-month period that allow participants to acquire new skills, engage in peer exchange and benefit from relationships with guest faculty and facilitators. Faculty are drawn from experienced leaders in the field of sectoral employment development. As a result of participating in the Academy, fellows are expected to apply the lessons they learn in ways that enhance their work in their chosen sector.

Ultimately, the mission of the Sector Skills Academy is to improve the quantity, quality and sustainability of sector efforts on the ground, such that greater progress can be made toward improving economic opportunities available for lower-income individuals while supporting overall economic competitiveness.

Specifically, the Sector Skills Academy seeks to:

- Expand the number of leaders with the competencies necessary to succeed in using sector approaches.
- Help senior managers of organizations using a sector approach to strengthen the organizational capacity of their institutions to achieve lasting sectoral change.
- Create a learning community of leaders using the sectoral approach who have a sense of the broader field, including both strategies that increase access to good jobs and improve the quality of bad jobs, and who are able to articulate the sector approach to those in and out of the field.
- Transfer knowledge from peer leaders and to provide them with opportunities for continuous learning and renewal of their passion for the work.

What is a sector strategy?

Sector initiatives are industry-specific workforce development approaches. AspenWSI has defined a sector approach as a systems approach to workforce development, typically on behalf of low-income individuals, that:

1. Targets a specific industry or cluster of occupations;
2. Intervenes through a credible organization, or set of organizations, crafting workforce solutions tailored to that industry and its region;
3. Supports workers in improving their range of employment-related skills and ability to compete for work opportunities of higher quality;
4. Meets the needs of employers; and
5. Creates lasting change in the labor market system

Sector strategies promote systemic change that cultivates a win-win environment by restructuring internal and external educational opportunities, employment and business practices, and public policies to achieve changes beneficial to employers, low-wage workers, and low-income job seekers. Leaders in the field use a variety of strategies tailored to the regional economy, industry sectors and worker populations.

Within the sector field, there are two basic types of approaches. One approach involves helping workers move up into better jobs by removing the barriers and skills gaps that impede workers from getting those

jobs. Another approach aims to improve the quality of bad or low-wage jobs within sectors with poor job quality such as the restaurant or retail industries. Within both of these strategies, sector leaders may offer training and skills development for specific industries and occupations, conduct research about the industry or working conditions, convene businesses to discuss their challenges, advocate for public policy changes, help workers organize, or provide other types of services designed to meet the needs of workers and businesses. These initiatives often result in companies that have a more skilled workforce, while workers obtain improved income, benefits and employment opportunities.

Application Instructions

The Sector Skills Academy is designed for organizational leaders with direct responsibility and authority to implement a sector strategy. Job titles of qualified candidates will vary by institutional type. For example, an appropriate title might be an Executive or Program Director at a community-based organization, a Dean or Director of Workforce Programs of a community college, a High Road Employment Director for a worker center, a Manager of Workforce Programs at a labor-management partnership, or a Executive or Deputy Director of a WIB,.

Sector Fellows will be selected based on demonstration of core leadership competencies, a commitment to social and economic justice, an ability to design and implement a sectoral employment initiative, and an interest in learning about a variety of sector approaches and strategies including those that increase access to good jobs and those that improve the quality of bad or low-wage jobs. Applications from both leaders of existing sector initiatives and leaders of other industry-focused programs who seek to develop programs into full sector strategies will be considered. Inclusiveness and diversity of race, ethnicity and gender are core values of the Academy. Minority candidates are encouraged to apply.

We recognize that some applicants may currently operate industry-focused programs—e.g., training programs or advocacy initiatives—that will be developed into sector strategies and others may already lead sector initiatives. For example, an organization might operate an occupational skills training program but may not have engaged partners for services or have identified systemic change opportunities in the sector. For the purpose of this application, the term “sector initiative” will refer to both existing sector programs and other industry-targeted programs that are not yet sector strategies as we have defined them.

While organizations and practitioners may participate in several distinct sector initiatives, for purposes of this application, as illustration, we ask you to focus your answers on one primary industry on which you expect to focus as part of your fellowship experience.

COMPLETED APPLICATION MUST BE RECEIVED BY COMPLETING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AND DOCUMENT REQUESTS NO LATER THAN FRIDAY, JANUARY 24TH AT 5:00 EST VIA THIS ONLINE SOFTWARE. You may start and stop your application at various points during the process. When you are ready to stop the application, please hit the "Save Page and Continue Later" button below. A unique link will be emailed to you that will allow you to resume the survey where you left off. **You must click on "Save Page and Continue Later" and enter your email address when prompted before exiting the survey to have you answers saved. Please back up all essay responses in a personal file. While completing the application, you may advance backwards only one page to review or change your answers. As a result, you should finish each question and be satisfied with your answer before moving onto the next page.** If you have any problems, please email matt.helmer@aspeninst.org

In addition to answering the following multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions in this application, you will need to upload the following documents at the end of application. Please make sure to have these documents ready to upload before moving to the end of the survey.

- Your resume
 - Organizational chart
 - Authorization to Implement form signed by your supervisor ([download here](#))
 - Two references (one from your direct supervisor and one from a professional partner external to your organization)
-

1. Personal Information

Name
Organization
Job Title
Address
City
State
Zip Code
Phone
Fax Number
Email Address
Verify Email Address

Organizational Information

2. What type of organization do you work for? (check all that apply)

Community or faith-based organization
Business/Trade Association/Chamber of Commerce
Community College
Community Foundation
Funders Collaborative
Governmental agency
Labor-management partnership
Worker Center
Workforce Investment Board (WIB)
Other

3. Your Supervisor's Name

Supervisor's Job Title
Supervisor's Phone
Supervisor's Email

4. What is the annual operating budget of your organization (or division of a very large organization if appropriate - for example, a division of a community college that deals with workforce development)?

5. How many staff does your organization (or division of a very large organization) employ?

6. How many staff do you supervise?

7. What is the annual operating budget of your sectoral initiative or industry-focused program?

Sector Initiative

While organizations and practitioners may participate in several distinct sector initiatives, for purposes of this application we ask you to focus your answers on the one primary industry you expect to focus on as part of your fellowship experience, if accepted, and answer the questions accordingly. There is an opportunity to provide information about other industries you have an interest or experience in at the end of this section.

8. What is your industry of focus? (Select one)

Accounting, Business, Finance or Office Administration.

Administration of Justice

Aerospace

Automotive technology or repair

Early Childhood Education

Construction

Energy

Health care

Hospitality and Tourism

Retail sales or management

Security

Information technology

Utility or Telecommunications

Manufacturing or Advanced Manufacturing

Transportation, Distribution and Logistics

Other

9. Please describe the target occupation(s) in your sector. For each occupation, list the title, typical wage, and benefits within 3 months of placement. For example, Certified Nursing Assistant, \$10.00 per hour, No Benefits.

10. Is your initiative designed to provide services to unemployed/underemployed workers, incumbent workers, or both?

Unemployed/underemployed workers

Incumbent workers (workers already employed in your sector of focus)

Both

11. What are the characteristics of the target population you seek to place or serve in this industry sector initiative? (check all that apply)

Working

Unemployed

Underemployed

Displaced workers

WIA eligible

TANF Recipients

Immigrants
People with disabilities
Youth
Parents
Formerly incarcerated
Women
Other

12. Sector initiatives are often comprised of or supported by a range of partners from varying organizational types that perform a variety of functions – from delivering training and supportive services, to influencing public policy makers to removing barriers to successful outcomes. What types of organizations do you partner with as part of your sector initiative? Indicate with a 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 the top five organizations you partner with. If you partner with less than five, please leave the remaining categories blank.

Community-based organizations
Faith-based organizations
Human service agencies
WIBs
One-stops
Community colleges
Economic development agencies
Community development corporations
Chambers of Commerce
Trade Associations
Unions
Worker Centers
Other

13. Most sectoral employment development programs provide training to individuals, including incumbent workers and the unemployed, either directly or through partnerships. Which types of training do you offer as a part of your sector initiative? Check either column or leave the field blank if you do not currently offer nor are you considering offering it.

Currently Providing

Considering Providing

Adult Basic Education (ABE)
English as a Second Language (ESL)
Life skills/ behavioral training
Job readiness (resume preparation, interviewing, and job search assistance)
Technical skills training
Integrated math, literacy, ABE, ESL or work readiness as a part of vocational/technical skills training
Distance learning
Internships, apprenticeships, or on-the-job training
Incumbent worker training
Leadership training
Worker organizing training
Workplace safety training
Worker Rights Training
Broker training from other organizations
Other

14. Workers may also need a range of non-training supports to help them persist and succeed in training and/or upon placement. Below is a list of supports that are sometimes provided as part of a sector initiative. Which supports does your organization currently provide as a part of your sector initiative? Check either column or leave the field blank if you do not currently offer nor are you considering offering it.

Currently Providing

Considering Providing

Tutoring

Financial assistance with training or academic-related expenses

Academic advising

Case management to coordinate non-academic supports

Coordination of student/peer support networks

Assistance with transportation concerns (financial support for, direct provision of service, or other)

Assistance with child care (financial support for, direct provision of service, or other)

Rental assistance

Health care assistance

Legal assistance and supports

Wage recovery assistance

Personal counseling/mental health

Referrals to specific community resources

Emergency cash supports

Financial counseling, e.g., assistance with financial aid, IDAs, EITC or other tax assistance, and debt removal

Job placement

Job retention support (in additional to follow-up or data collection activities)

Other

15. Many sector programs also deliver a range of non-training services to their business customers or to their industry generally—services that are ultimately geared toward helping businesses in the targeted region compete more effectively and continue to provide jobs for local populations. Do you provide any non-training business services? (Select all that apply) Please see pages 42-43 in Sectoral Strategies for Low-Income Workers for further description of these types of services

<http://dev.aspenwsi.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/07-0141.pdf>

Management consulting

Human resources technical assistance

Technical consulting

Market development

Industry research

Employer surveys

Convene industry forums

Create business consortia

Other

16. Please describe any non-training services you provide business customers as indicated in the previous question. If you are not currently providing these types of services, but are planning to, please briefly describe your plans.

17. How does business in this industry currently support your sector initiative? (check all that apply)

Hire graduates
Assist with and/or provide input on curriculum
Serve on industry advisory or programmatic boards
Provide instructors
Provide job shadowing, mentoring, or internship opportunities
Provide materials, equipment, meeting space or other in-kind resources
Make financial donations
Pay fees for services
Provide paid release for employees to attend training
Offer tuition reimbursement or other benefits that facilitate training and education.
Convene or help convene other business leaders
Partner with us on public policy advocacy
Other

18. Please provide us with some narrative context for the basic information outlined above, including: When the project was or will be launched and how long you have been working on it? What have been the initiative's major accomplishments to date (please describe these both qualitatively and quantitatively to the extent possible)? What is the problem your initiative currently addresses, with respect to both businesses in your target industry and low-income participants seeking to obtain employment or advance in the industry? What are the primary goals and activities you see for the sector initiative and your work within that initiative over the next year? 250 words or less

19. What are your current responsibilities vis-à-vis this initiative? Please describe briefly Is there any additional information you think we should have about your work in other sectors, in order to properly evaluate your candidacy? Provide any additional information here.

Leadership Development

20. Effective sector leaders exercise a variety of leadership practices in order to lead people, programs, partnerships and change, and they engage in self-reflection for their continual growth and development as leaders. Please answer the following questions, and feel free to illustrate with examples from your current work. First, how would you describe yourself as a leader? Why? Second, what ways do you think you need to further develop as a leader? Why? Please answer the questions in 500 words or less.

Systems Change

21. Sectoral strategies often catalyze broad support within industries or communities to create systemic change. This change can come in many forms, affecting institutional processes and rules, public policies and regulations, or business relationships that influence low-income workers' access to opportunity. For an explanation and examples of systems change in sector work, please see pages 20-35 in Sectoral Strategies for Low Income Workers at <http://dev.aspenwsi.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/07-0141.pdf> Please give a specific example of how you have already worked to effect systems change OR, if you have not yet addressed systems change in an existing industry-targeted program, an idea you may have for transforming the industry, workforce development system, education and training infrastructure, support services system, and/or other entities to support economic opportunity for low-income workers while at the same time supporting healthy and

sustainable business practices. In your answer, please describe the specific changes you were seeking to bring about or are considering working toward, the types of organizations (CBOs, businesses, government, educational institutions, etc.) that you and/or your organization were able or hope to engage in the process, and what has been or what you anticipate to be most challenging about these partnerships and what there is to be learned from them. Please describe in 500 words or less.

Sector Initiative Challenges

22. What do you think are the key issues challenging your sector initiative? If you are currently operating an industry-focused program, what are the key issues challenging the evolution of the program into a full sector strategy that engages partners to achieve systems change? (for example, challenges with industry analysis, partnerships, financing, engaging business, meeting worker/job seeker needs, identifying systems change goals, etc.)? Please describe in 150 words or less.

Personal Motivation and Goals

23. Please state briefly what motivates you to work in the sector field in 40 words or less.

24. What three personal and/or professional objectives do you have for participating in the Sector Skills Academy?

25. As noted earlier, the sector field comprises a diverse set of strategies and approaches. Some strategies involve helping workers move up into better jobs by removing the barriers and skills gaps that impede them from getting higher-quality jobs. These strategies are often focused heavily on training and developing workers' skills and education. Another set of strategies is aimed at improving the quality of bad or low-wage jobs in industries such as retail, restaurant and home health care. These strategies may also include training and skills development components, but they are also likely to involve research, policy advocacy, promotion of "high-road" business practices, and worker organizing. Please describe in 150 words or less your experience and interest in learning more about strategies aimed at improving the quality of bad or low-wage jobs.

Referral Source

26. How did you hear about the Sector Skills Academy? (check all that apply)

Print brochure

E-mail

Aspen Institute or AspenWSI website

Word-of-mouth

Direct contact from The Aspen Institute/Workforce Strategies Initiative

Direct contact from NNSP

Aspen Webinar on the Academy

Another Website (please name below in the next question)

Another organization (please name below in the next question)

Other

27. If you learned about the Academy through another organization or website, please specify below.

28. Commitment to Participate

By checking the box below, you agree that if selected for this program, you will commit to full participation in all activities of the Academy including:

Three 3-day sessions over the course of a 10 month period:

- April 28-30, 2014 in Aspen, Colorado (travel and arrival on Sunday April 27)
- September 15-17, 2014 in Cincinnati, Ohio (travel and arrival on Sunday, Sept. 16)
- December 8-10, 2014, Location to be determined (travel and arrival on Sunday, Dec. 7)

Peer groups and webinars between work sessions

Development and launch of a new or enhanced sector initiative

Payment of \$250 materials fee

Purchase of airfare or alternate travel to all three meeting sites

\$125/night lodging fee for the three meetings (total of \$1,125)

Total costs, not including travel, will be paid to the Aspen Institute through three invoices are \$1,375, which covers all food and lodging during the three meetings and your materials.

Scholarships are available to a limited number of participants. A scholarship application is attached at the end of this application.

Check I Agree

29. Upload Your Documents

In addition to answering the following multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions in this application, you will need to upload the following documents next.

- Your resume
- Organizational chart
- Authorization to Implement form signed by your supervisor (download here)
- Two references (one from your direct supervisor and one from a professional partner external to your organization)

Along with your application, please include two (2) letters of reference explaining why you would be an appropriate candidate for participation in the Sector Skills Academy. One letter should be from the individual who holds direct responsibility for overseeing your work. The second letter should be from someone representing an organization other than your own with which you have partnered in the past. Both references must be willing to be contacted by the Selection Committee for discussion of your application.

The letters of reference should provide the following information:

1. Professional relationship to applicant;

2. Contact information including name, organization, title, address, email, and telephone number;
 3. Examples of the applicant's leadership competencies, achievements and commitment to his/her work;
 4. Areas in which the Sector Skills Academy might benefit the applicant and the organization that he/she represents; and
 5. Expression of commitment to support the applicant, if selected for the Academy, in his or her efforts for meaningful inquiry and practical application of concepts to his or her current work.
-

Scholarship Application

The Sector Skills Academy is offering a limited number of scholarships to individuals applying to join the 2014 Academy. Scholarships are intended to remove barriers to participation in the Academy, in order to create a diverse community of Fellows. The exact number of awards will be determined based on available funding and results of the selection process.

Fees commonly associated with attending the Academy include a \$250 materials fee, a \$125/night lodging fee for three nights at each of the three fellowship meetings (\$375/meeting). Fees paid to Aspen are a total of \$1,375 paid through three separate invoices to correspond with each of the three meetings. Travel to and from the three Academy meetings, including flights and ground transportation, are the responsibility of the participant. Scholarships may be designed to cover some combination of these items, depending on the need described below.

To apply for a scholarship, please answer the following questions. If you are not applying for a scholarship, please skip the following questions.

30. Race/Ethnicity

Black/African American
American Indian/Alaskan Native
Caucasian
Asian/Pacific Islander
Hispanic
Other

31. Gender

Male
Female

32. Age Range

21-35
36-50
51-65
66+

33. Please provide a statement of financial need for the scholarship. In particular, describe the costs you would like the scholarship to cover and why.

34. In addition, please briefly explain why you should be chosen for this scholarship.