**Request for Qualifications
for an Organization to Support and Advance
Cross-Sector Partnerships Focused on Adolescents**
January 2023-June 2024

Responses Due by 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)
October 19, 2022

Background
Many studies have documented the potential of the out-of-school time and youth-serving sector to support young people's learning and development. At their best, youth programs that operate outside of the school day are organized as supportive social environments, centered on rich relationships between adults and youth, and among youth, that support young people's intellectual, social, emotional, and physical well-being. Research has found that supportive after school programs may be especially important for young people who do not thrive in school.

For nearly 15 years, Wallace funded communities (primarily urban centers) across the country in their efforts to expand access to high quality opportunities through its Afterschool Systems Building and Summer Learning initiatives. Cities focused on different elements and made significant progress in aligning and expanding opportunities for young people. Wallace's work has shown that we need to continue to expand opportunities and strategies to better serve adolescents to ensure that they also are able to equitably access the benefits of quality youth programs and out-of-school- time experiences.

Despite these significant accomplishments, we know that many young people are underrepresented in program participation (Afterschool Alliance, 2020) - and many youth who could benefit do not participate in out-of-school time programming. This is especially true for adolescents who are facing systemic challenges or who are impacted by structural factors that make it difficult to thrive. Lack of participation may be most stark among the most marginalized groups of young people, such as those experiencing housing or food insecurity, those who are system-involved, have disabilities, LGBTQ+ youth, and others.

Research literature has long documented many structural and logistical barriers to participation in positive youth development opportunities — for example, transportation, fees, scheduling, and the like — and these barriers indeed persist in many places. Less attention has been paid to the social and cultural barriers that may discourage young people from choosing to attend, even when structural barriers are addressed. This begs the question: *How might communities strengthen partnerships to address current structural, logistical, social, and cultural barriers that limit the participation of marginalized adolescents in engaging and meaningful youth programs?*

Exploratory Phase of the Initiative Design
The Wallace Foundation is considering pursuing this question through a new, large-scale initiative that would launch in late 2024. In this future, multi-year initiative, we would partner with a number of communities to propel cross-sector partnerships that are focused on strengthening such youth sector systems. In this future initiative, we anticipate that we would commission a range of supports to nurture cross-site peer learning opportunities and provide technical assistance as needed. We would also engage researchers to study the implementation efforts of cross-sector partnerships, as well as the benefits for participating youth within those communities. This could include the possibility of local research-practice partnerships.

However, before designing and launching such a multi-year initiative, the Foundation is planning to carve out some preliminary time during which we can invest in, work with, and learn from a

cohort of communities that are already engaged in or developing cross-sector partnerships focused on mitigating structural, logistical, social, and cultural barriers for engaging marginalized adolescents in youth sector programs - and doing so with a focus on learning and development opportunities for youth beyond the traditional classroom.

In this one-year "Exploratory Phase" (roughly March 2023-March 2024), Wallace intends to support existing cross-sector partnerships' efforts to address adolescents, defined here as youth roughly aged 11-19, who are facing systemic challenges or who are impacted by structural factors that make it difficult to thrive. This support will come in the form of funding and will likely also include additional resources such as place-based technical assistance, networking opportunities and peer learning. We seek to simultaneously 1) support cross-sector partnerships to focus on planning around or mitigating structural and other barriers for marginalized youth to engage in youth sector opportunities; and 2) to learn from participating partnerships about the kinds of goals, audiences, approaches, and intended outcomes they see as desirable and feasible. We are particularly interested in learning about which supports they assembled or prioritized, as well as which barriers must be overcome, in order to make progress towards achieving their goals. The one-year exploratory phase is intended to help strengthen and propel existing or emergent strategies currently taking place within communities, and to assist Wallace in learning more about these strategies, as input into the design of a future initiative.

Here we share current thinking about this phase. However, we anticipate that some of this will change over the next few months as we select a research partner, select a community/coordinating consulting partner, solicit interest from cross-sector partnerships, and ultimately select partnership grantees.

In late 2022 and early 2023, we will recruit approximately 20 to 30 cross-sector partnerships interested in expanding and strengthening their programming to adolescents who are facing systemic challenges. Although this will be contextually driven, and we want to hear from communities about their focus areas, some groups of young people who could be included here would be: adolescents from high poverty backgrounds, youth with disabilities, migrant and immigrant youth, LGBTQ+, and systems-involved youth.

Partnerships selected to participate in this one-year exploratory phase will receive one year of funding expected to average $200,000, and access to other supports, such as peer learning and technical assistance.

Selection will be done in two parts: Based on the Expression of Interests, Wallace will invite a limited number of partnerships to submit full proposals by Jan. 11, 2023. From the full proposals, 20-30 partnerships will be chosen as grantees by the end of February 2023.

Tentative Timeline for Exploratory Phase

Exploratory Phase Grantee Selection Occurs	*October 2022-February 2023*
RFQ for Lead Coordinating Consultant Released	*September 22, 2022*
Responses for Lead Coordinating Consultant due	*October 19, 2022*
Interviews for Lead Coordinating Consultant	*October 27-early November*
Selection Completed	*Early December*
Lead Coordinating Consultant contract term	*January 2023-June 2024*
Research Partner commences	*Early January*
Exploratory Phase	*March 2023-March 2024*
New Initiative launches	*June/July 2024 (tentatively)*

Which Communities would be Eligible?
While we are still refining eligibility criteria, cross-sector partnerships will be selected based on their alignment to the project goals and demonstrated past efforts to collaborate to achieve *positive benefits[1]* for young people. We hope to engage a diverse group of grantee communities in terms of: maturity of work; geography; population density; type of partnership/partners; and focus of their project.

Beginning March 2023, grantee communities, in addition to funding, may also receive consulting/coaching, place-based technical assistance (for example: community planning, asset mapping, financial analysis, continuous improvement, etc.), networking and peer learning opportunities .

Note: The cohort of exploratory phase grantees will not be the same cohort selected for the new initiative. This is because we intend to determine our focus and criteria for inclusion in the next initiative as a result of what we learn in the exploratory phase. Participating in the exploratory phase neither privileges nor excludes a community from being selected as a future grantee.

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[1] Cross-Sector Community efforts for older youth cover a wide range of focus areas, for example, youth workforce, college and career readiness, access to quality afterschool and youth development opportunities, harm reduction, etc.

Opportunity to Engage a Lead Coordinating Consultant and Peer Learning Designer

 Role & Qualifications

We are currently seeking qualifications for a **Lead Coordinating Consultant *and* Peer Learning Designer** for an 18-month engagement for the exploratory phase, with the possibility of extension to support initiative implementation. Strong candidate organizations will have knowledge and experience in the youth sector, cross-sector partnerships, strategic planning, experience connecting strategy to implementation, and adult learning. Candidate organizations should bring an equity and inclusion lens to this work and share Wallace's commitment to expanding opportunities for marginalized youth. Technical assistance needs will be determined by the portfolio of community partners that are selected; we expect that specifics will emerge in the early stages of implementation. Because we will not understand the context and needs of grantee candidates and across the selected portfolio until later in the year, we are seeking a Lead Coordinator Consultant who can be highly adaptive to a complex and rapidly changing set of variables.

We expect that the organization(s) we select will be expert collaborators - they will be highly adept at building relationships, facilitating conversations and meetings, helping align the efforts of diverse partners, and crafting effective communication protocols and approaches to problem-solving. These critical roles will serve as a bridge between The Wallace Foundation, the grantees and the research partners, ensuring that strategy and implementation are aligned and inform one another while supporting progress on grantee goals. The ideal candidate(s) will also have experience working with researchers and research firms.

We recognize that some firms have the capacity to provide project management at this scale, and are able to manage consultants and understand how to effectively design dynamic peer learning experiences in large and small groups. However, others might prefer to subcontract this peer learning expertise to another organization.

The ideal Lead Coordinating Consultant (LCC) candidates will have the capacity to perform several key functions:

- **Overall Coordination**. Coordinate the relationships, communication, collaboration, and all other aspects of the exploratory phase.
- **Design and Manage Peer Learning Opportunities.** Craft (in-house or through a subcontracted partner) responsive, multifaceted learning and networking opportunities for the whole group and in small groups.
- **Technical Assistance and Onboarding**. Manage quality control and oversee customized technical assistance to grantee communities.
- **Sense-Making and Translation.** Support Wallace and Research/other partners to extrapolate learning from across the portfolio of grantees and exploratory phase experiences to help inform and shape our long-term initiative. The LCC will **produce a**

draft five-year engagement plan for the full-initiative. This would align with the five-year research plan to be developed by the selected research team.

Overall Coordination

- Ensure a dedicated organizational lead person to manage day-to-day activities, supervise the effort and serve as the Wallace contact for us on this effort.
- Work closely with Wallace's Learning and Enrichment interdisciplinary team, which comprises program, research and communications staff.
- Coordinate the planning and logistics for Wallace site visits to communities and potentially participate in some site visits (ideally, *if feasible*, one visit per community during the exploratory phase).
- The Lead Coordinating Consultant will be tasked with clarifying expectations and helping to flag emerging issues for grantees.

Design and Manage Peer Learning Opportunities

- Design learning opportunities and supports that could be delivered in whole group, small group, or individually via an electronic platform, *depending on expressed need and interest from grantees.*
- Group communities into peer learning cohorts that optimize exchange and learning.
- Coordinate and facilitate virtual convenings, meetings and interactions as required (including, virtual platform, IT support, venue management, etc.) to support peer learning among participating communities.

Technical Assistance and Training

- Conduct a needs assessment at the onset to inform the type of assistance and routinely solicit feedback on supports, tools, and experience from the grantees.
- Consultants/TA providers could be sourced externally from other organizations. Technical assistance will be designed around local context, need/interest and also for possible common deliverables such as, a community engagement plan, identification of data streams needed, cost modeling/fiscal analyses, community asset/resource mapping, etc.
- Subcontract and manage a group of consultants to provide training or advise cross-sector partnerships in a variety of areas that emerge from a thorough assessment of on-the-ground needs. If centralized TA in some areas is preferred, the Lead Coordinating Consultant will match and coordinate technical assistance for the grantee communities. There is also a possibility that grantees will source and contract their own local consultants (to be determined further in the selection process).
- Meet regularly with consultants to track progress, tweak approaches, and troubleshoot. The LCC will design mechanisms to monitor quality and a feedback loop with grantees for any central technical assistance that might be delivered.

Sense-Making and Translation

- Serve as a thought partner to the Wallace Foundation and its partners about exploratory phase and initiative design.
- Coordinate and communicate regularly with researchers and other partners.
- Communicate trends, progress and challenges to Wallace and research partners.
- With Wallace and research partners, help translate key learnings and leverage points from the exploratory phase that could shape the long-term initiative design. The learning agenda will be co-created among the partners.
- Recommend an approach to adult learning, including peer learning and technical assistance and coaching, for the long-term initiative.
- The Lead Coordinating Consultant will produce a five-year engagement plan based on interactions with grantees, cross-site analyses, and participation in the exploratory process. This culminating product will align with the plan to be produced by the research firm.

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THE WALLACE FOUNDATION

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Background and How We Work

The Wallace Foundation is the philanthropic legacy of DeWitt and Lila Wallace, founders of the Reader's Digest. Wallace is one of the nation's 60 largest independent, charitable foundations. Our mission is to foster equity and improvements in learning and enrichment for young people and in the arts for everyone. We are a national foundation, supporting work across the United States, without a focus on any community or region.

Our three focus areas are K-12 education leadership; learning and enrichment (youth development, afterschool, summer learning, and social and emotional learning); and the arts (arts education and nonprofits arts organizations). We work through interdisciplinary teams, consisting of program, research, and communications staff members at the foundation.
The Wallace Foundation takes an unusual approach for a private foundation. Most of our work is carried out through large-scale, multi-year initiatives designed to accomplish dual goals. We seek to help the grantees we fund (such as school districts) create value for those they serve by supporting and strengthening their work at the local level. We also work to add value to the field by designing our initiatives to address important unanswered questions, capturing what is learned by our grantees as they innovate, and then sharing these findings with practitioners, policymakers, and influencers in order to catalyze improvements more broadly.

While our initiative-based strategies disseminate lessons and evidence garnered through on-the-ground work by grantees, we also look for ways to augment this work with strategies to accelerate improvements in practice on a broad scale – both in policy and in practice. We initiate these kinds of strategies when we see field interest in an approach and when we feel we have sufficient evidence to share lessons about a feasible solution or improvement.

Our Commitment to Equity

At Wallace, our mission is to foster equity and improvements in learning and enrichment for young people, and in the arts for everyone. We view equity as embedding fairness in the formal and informal systems, structures, and practices of our society, giving all people the opportunity and supports necessary to reach their full potential as human beings.

Wallace is deeply committed to making investments that advance equity and inclusion – and that includes how we identify, select, and engage this exploratory phase grantee cohort.

In designing this Open Call, we have put significant thought into how we reflect our commitment to equity, from the types of projects we seek to fund to the language we use. And we're not doing it alone. We've listened to direct service and system-building partners as well as equity advisors to guide our work. Yet while we know we will not always get it right, we are committed to continuously improving our efforts to ensure our investments and efforts are aligned with our equity-driven values and goals.

Relevant Resources:

While these exploratory phase activities will be new for Wallace, they are being built on many years of Wallace's systems work and commissioned research on afterschool, summer programming, quality improvement systems, and social and emotional learning and partnerships. Here are a few resources produced by Wallace and some partners that are relevant and could be helpful as you consider applying for this opportunity. We invite you to explore our Knowledge Center for other resources.

Primer on Wallace's Afterschool System Building Initiatives:
https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/growing-together-learning-together.aspx
An overview of a series of studies on Collective Impact completed by Columbia's Teachers College:
https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Building-Impact-Overview.pdf
A measurement framework for Citywide OST Systems that recommends measures for system, program and individual level outcomes.
https://www.everyhourcounts.org/resource-library
A partner organization who has designed a comprehensive continuous improvement system and cycle that is used by youth-serving systems and districts.
https://forumfyi.org/weikartcenter/

Overview of re-framing of a Learning Ecosystem
https://changingtheoddsremix.com/publications/remix-commentaries/2022/04/from-school-system-to-learning-ecosystem/

This report presents findings from the first two years of the Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning Initiative, a multiyear Wallace-supported effort exploring whether and how children can benefit from partnerships between schools and out-of-school-time (OST) programs focused on building social and emotional skills. (This was the most recent initiative launched by the Learning & Enrichment team.)

[Early Lessons from Schools and Out-of-School Time Programs Implementing Social and Emotional Learning -Wallace Foundation](#)

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Lead Coordinating Consultant and Peer Learning Designer
(click here for the word version of this form for use in preparing your responses)

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Organization name: _____

Instructions: *Please limit your response to six pages in total, 12-point font.*

Qualifications and Approach - *Please describe your qualifications and how you might approach this work on each dimension listed below.*

- ☐ **Overall Coordination of Complex Community Partnerships**
- ☐ **Managing Consultants and Quality Control**
- ☐ **Peer Learning Design** (describe in-house or subcontracted expertise/experience)
- ☐ **Sense-Making and Translation**
- ☐ **Produce plans for long term engagement**

I. **Capacity -** *Please describe your organization's capacity to deliver in each of the content areas below between January 2023 and June 2024.*
- ● **Subcontract and manage consultants to deliver TA for up 20-25 community partners from March 2023-March 2024. What has been your experience managing external consultants to respond to specific community needs?**
- ● **Describe your/partners' capacity to manage onsite or virtual convening support (including virtual platform, IT support, venue management, etc.) that optimize exchange and peer learning.**
- ● **Provide a dedicated organizational lead/project director to serve as a Wallace contact and manage day-to-day activities** (include their credentials and resume):
- ● **Indicate if you intend to subcontract the Peer Learning Designer role and to whom** *(pending Wallace agreement).*
- ● **Provide an estimate of the cost of the Lead Coordinating Consultant and Peer Learning Designer roles** (excluding the cost of subcontracting consultants given that the number and rates are an unknown variable at this point). We will add in the fees for consultants following consultant selection. Feel free to provide two models. *Estimates should include 8-12 hours monthly for participating in internal Wallace team meetings and workgroups that are centered around Sense-Making and Translation.*

III. Experience
- ● Describe your team's experience working at community or youth-sector systems levels (*outside of school).*

- Describe your team's professional expertise or lived experience serving adolescents who are facing systemic challenges or who are impacted by structural factors that make it difficult to thrive.
- Describe how you have worked to include research/researchers in your projects.
- Describe your core footprint and where the bulk of your work is within the United States. If you are a regional organization, briefly describe how you would adapt your approach to working in new regions.
- Describe your/your partner's qualifications for designing dynamic peer learning experiences for adults, in particular for learning online in large and small groups.

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Application Options, Process and Timing

The Lead Coordinating Consultant and Peer Learning Designer are expected to be contracted and begin work in early January. The contract will be for an 18-month period.

Timeline

Issue RFQ	September 22, 2022
Date to submit Intent to Apply	September 30, 2022
Office Hours with Interested Firms	October 3-9
Qualifications due	October 19, 2022
1st Round Interviews	November 1-7, 2022
Finalist Interviews	Week of November 28th
Selections made	*by* mid-December
Lead Coordinating Consultant work commences	Early January

Review Criteria

Wallace will review the qualifications of all organizations submitting responses to identify those that have demonstrated expertise and adequate organizational capacity to support communities during the exploratory phase and to inform Wallace in our planning for the full initiative. The Wallace team will request interviews via Zoom with those organizations that best match the project's needs.

Intent to apply

Please send an email LearningEnrichment@wallacefoundation.org by 5:00 p.m. ET on September 30, 2022, stating whether or not you intend to respond to the RFQ.

Pre-submission "Office Hours" with Wallace

We invite you to speak with us to learn more about this request for qualifications and working with Wallace. We ask that representatives on the calls include the senior leader at your organization who would work directly with Wallace and/or the grantees.

Tentative Office Hours

Monday, Oct 3, 2022	2:00-5:00 p.m. EST
Tuesday, Oct 4, 2022	1:00-2:00 p.m EST
Wednesday, Oct 5, 2022	2:00-3:00 p.m. EST
Thursday, Oct 6, 2022	9:30-11:30 a.m. EST
Friday, Oct 7, 2022	1:00-3:00 p.m. EST

We welcome your questions! Address inquiries to LearningEnrichment@wallacefoundation.org.