



Frequently Asked Questions About Membership

About the National Fund

What is the National Fund?

The National Fund is a dynamic national network of communities taking a demand-driven, evidence-based approach to workforce development. At the local level, the National Fund's partner organizations contribute resources, test ideas, collect data, and improve public policies and business practices that help all workers succeed and employers have the talent they need to compete.

What is a regional collaborative? What kinds of organizations can be considered a collaborative?

A regional collaborative is an entity that brings together local funders or investors around a shared strategic vision for regional workforce development. Most collaboratives have a host organization that supports the collaborative's financial and programmatic work. These can include United Ways, Workforce Development Boards, Community Foundations, Chambers of Commerce, and others.

What do collaboratives get for joining the network? Why should collaboratives join the network?

Membership in the National Fund network provides collaboratives with a number of benefits. Members get to participate in regular network learning activities throughout the year including webinars, in-person meetings, issue-specific working groups, and more. The network offers opportunities to connect with workforce leaders from across the country to achieve systems change and reach scale in efforts. Additionally, member collaboratives are eligible to apply for funding from the National Fund.

How many collaboratives are part of the network?

The number of collaboratives in the National Fund network is ever changing and evolving. You can find the current members of the National Fund network [here](#).

Can there be more than one NF member in any given region?

Typically, there is only one NF member in any given region, but there can be multiple member collaboratives in a state operating in different regions.

How do we know whether there is a National Fund collaborative in our region?

You can find all of the current National Fund regional collaboratives [here](#).

How does the National Fund organize its work? Does this have to align with our mission, and vice versa? Do we have to implement all the National Fund's solutions to join?

The National Fund has identified four integrated solutions through which it implements its work. These solutions are: Activate Employers to Make Jobs Better; Equip Workers for Success; Change Systems for Improved Outcomes; and Co-Invest for Impact. You can read more about each solution on our [website](#). While alignment with all of the National Fund's solutions is not a prerequisite to join the National Fund network, an explicit focus on at least two solutions is required for membership.

Membership Process

What's the process for joining? Is there an application?

The membership process begins with taking our [Readiness Questionnaire](#). Based on the results of this questionnaire, you may be contacted by the National Fund Network Director to discuss your [stage of development](#) and coaching needs for advancement. Upon reaching the final stage of development, you can complete the Membership Application. A final decision will be made by the National Fund Membership Committee. If approved by the membership committee, the final step is signing the National Fund Collaborative Agreement.

How long does the membership process take?

If your collaborative meets the criteria for [Stages 2 or 3](#), the National Fund Network Director will work with you to identify strategies to help you advance to the next stage of development. Every collaborative develops at a different pace. Stages 2 and 3 each last at least three months and end once a collaborative meets the criteria to advance to the next stage.

How do you decide which collaboratives can join?

Final membership decisions are made by the National Fund membership committee, made up of National Fund staff and network members. Their decisions are based on the following factors: the recommendation of the internal network team, a completed application, and meeting all membership criteria from Stage 0 through Stage 3.

Is there a membership fee?

There is no membership fee at this time

I signed the collaborative agreement. Are we in?

Yes. A collaborative agreement will be sent to collaboratives who pass the review of the National Fund membership committee. Signing the collaborative agreement is the final step in joining the National Fund network.

How long is a membership good for?

Membership is valid so long as your collaborative meets all membership criteria and the National Fund has a current collaborative agreement signed by your collaborative chair and primary staff on file. Current collaborative agreements are good through 2024.

We already do everything you say collaboratives should do. Can't we just become a member today?

All collaboratives, regardless of readiness, go through the membership process described above. The shortest time for membership approval for collaboratives already in Stage 3 is generally not less than three to six months.

How can we join the local collaborative?

The National Fund leaves all decisions regarding membership in local collaboratives to the network sites themselves. If you want to learn more about the local collaborative in your community, you can find a list of active collaboratives in the National Fund network on our [website](#).

Funding Support to Network Members

What do you mean when you say you only fund collaboratives?

The National Fund provides grants to its members to implement our solutions. A collaborative is eligible to apply/receive funding if they meet the following criteria: they have a signed Collaborative Agreement, they are a 501c3 organization as described by the IRS or designates an organization to receive funds on their behalf, and employ a

current site director or interim site director with an active search for a permanent director underway.

As a member of the network am I guaranteed funding?

A collaborative is not guaranteed funding. Every member collaborative in good standing can apply for funding via a competitive request for proposals (RFP) process. The National Fund provides support

throughout the RFP process to ensure every collaborative has an equitable chance to apply for and win funding. New members must wait three months after submitting a signed Collaborative Agreement before becoming eligible for funding, depending on grant opportunities on the horizon. This waiting period is designed to dissuade collaboratives seeking to join the National Fund solely to apply for specific near-term grant opportunities.

How much funding do you distribute? Do all collaboratives get funding?

The National Fund's goal is to create a funding portfolio that represents a diverse group of collaboratives and equitably distributes resources across the network. Funding amounts and durations vary depending on the grant programs being offered. Historically, grant amounts to collaboratives can range from \$50,000 to \$600,000 depending on the program, duration, and scope. You can find announcements regarding funding to collaboratives [here](#). Depending on the initiative, every collaborative in good standing may apply for funding. Some funding opportunities have a specific industry or solution focus, which may prohibit certain collaboratives from applying.

How can we apply for funding from the National Fund?

The National Fund uses a competitive request for proposals (RFP) process to solicit ideas when making funding available to the network. All

collaboratives in good standing may apply for these funding opportunities.

What do you expect from the collaborative in order to receive funding?

The applying collaborative must be in good standing with the National Fund – specifically, they must be up to date on all requested data and materials from previous awards. The collaborative must also have a signed collaborative agreement.

What level of match do you expect? Does “in-kind” count as a match?

The National Fund typically requires a 1:1 cash match for funding that can be secured over the life of the grant – this supports our solution to co-invest for impact. It also ensures that local investors are committed to the work and promotes sustainability. Consideration will be given on a case-by-case basis for an in-kind match when a cash match is unavailable. We require that you list the sources of your match funding in your funding applications.

What areas of work does the National Fund support? Job training, work-based learning, other?

The National Fund provides funding in support of [our solutions](#). Each funding opportunity is unique and can include a variety of work areas.

Organizational Support to Potential Network Members

What help can you provide to assisting us in organizing a “regional workforce collaborative”?

Generally, the National Fund does not create or organize “regional workforce collaboratives.” Rather, the National Fund is here to support communities who are interested in creating or have already created a collaborative. Sometimes, the National Fund is able to provide consulting services for a fee to assist communities in this process.

Can you get on a call with us and speak with our funders? Our United Way, WIB, Chamber etc.?

Please complete our [readiness questionnaire](#) first. Based on your results, a staff member at the National Fund can get on a call to briefly speak about our organization if you meet [Stage 2 or 3](#) and plan on becoming a collaborative. In the interim, you can visit our [website](#) and share links to our [FAQs](#), [resources](#), and [presentation about membership](#) to have a basic understanding of the National Fund.

Can you send someone to make a presentation about the National Fund at our next meeting/conference/event?

We can schedule time with a National Fund staff member to discuss presenting at one of your events. When talking with our staff, please discuss your target audience so we can determine the best strategy for sharing more information.

Can you send me the organizational structure, budget, bylaws and other docs from a sample collaborative? We just want to copy another collaborative.

We do not suggest that you replicate another collaborative's organizational structure, budget, etc. Every collaborative is unique to the community it serves. We encourage you to complete our readiness questionnaire. It will prompt you to consider important factors such as a shared vision, existing champion organizations, etc. Additionally, please see the resources section of the [membership webpage](#) for more information regarding forming a collaborative.