

Partnership Name (if applicable)

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Fiscal Agent: Centro Cultural Mexicano

Applicants must submit the [Letter of Interest Submission Form](#) and upload to the form a Letter of Interest as a PDF attachment **no later than February 16, 2024 by 11:59PM Pacific Time**. To ensure formatting aligns with the below guidelines, we encourage applicants to make use of this Letter of Interest template.

A Letter of Interest must adhere to the following guidelines:

- No more than five pages in total length, excluding the cover page
- Cover page identifies:
 - o Partnership name (If applicable)
 - o Application point of contact
 - o Name of the organization that will act as fiscal agent
- All bolded questions are numbered and answered serially (see pgs. 6-8 in the Request for Letters of Interest)
- Responses are single spaced in Times New Roman 11-point font

Note: All LOIs submitted to WSAC will be publicly available on the WSAC website in advance of the recommendations made to Council (est. May 2024).

1. Why are the partner organizations that are or will be included in this work the ones that came together to address educational attainment through place-based work in your region?

The partner organizations that came together in this work - Centro Cultural Mexicano, Latino Educational Training Institute (LETI) Cascadia College and Mi Centro - share a united vision of setting the foundations for generational wealth-building in our communities; this work involves achievement in postsecondary education and attainment of postsecondary credentials. We are coming together because we share a vision of empowerment through education for our Latino communities.

Centro Cultural Mexicano is a direct-service organization operating out of our spaces in downtown Redmond, Washington. Our mission is to inspire inclusive participation by the community in all aspects of education, culture, and society by providing opportunities to create a positive future. We provide all services fully bilingually in both Spanish and English, including: basic needs supports, health resource and information, postsecondary education supports, small business supports, internships and scholarship programs that connect students with skills and industry contacts, english and technology classes, and much more. We connect with our community through the engaging power of arts and culture; our signature attention to cultural and linguistic needs has earned us our communities trust and place as a trusted messenger. Centro Cultural Mexicano is committed to breaking down barriers and opening doors to opportunity for our Latino community and the communities we serve.

Mi Centro, based in Tacoma, Washington, primarily serves Pierce County. They offer a stunning variety of services including: scholarships, english classes, family support services, small business support and workshops, and cultural events! Their mission: To cultivate the advancement of the Latino and Indigenous communities by providing social services and educational programming while honoring our heritage and culture through the arts. Mi Centro has served our Latino community in Pierce County with dedication, passion, and attention to community needs in the realm of postsecondary educational attainment, and continues to make an impact through their work!

The Latino Educational Training Institute (LETI) is based in Lynnwood, Washington and has served our Latino community in Snohomish county. LETI's mission is to facilitate the personal and financial success of Spanish-speaking and bilingual persons and inspire Latino youth to pursue their dreams and become leaders in their communities. LETI strives to support family success and wellbeing through education, cultural awareness, and social responsibility. provides basic needs services, health information and resources, GED classes in Spanish, ESL classes, and a Latino Leadership Initiative which builds leaders through a partnership with local colleges as well as financial literacy classes, computer literacy workshops, and more.

Cascadia College has been a pillar of our community since its founding, providing accessible educational opportunities to all of our communities. Cascadias mission - "We are the community's college. We deliver accessible, equitable, and superior educational experiences to inspire every person to achieve their educational and career goals". This unwavering belief in the rights of every person to succeed in their postsecondary goals, and the work that Cascadia College has undertaken with community organizations to make admissions and financial aid accessible has already made a difference within our Latino Community.

Whether that involves college or trade school, our partner organizations and ourselves are already doing this work to raise attainment rates individually! Our ability to tackle educational attainment is directly related to the place-based work we are already doing within our Latino community in the state of Washington; our bilingual, culturally appropriate outreach and messaging is the means through which we reach our Latino community with the critical information and support they need to take the next steps towards postsecondary credential attainment. As stakeholders in our communities, as trusted messengers

of information, Centro Cultural Mexicano and our partners have years of experience successfully conducting these educational attainment activities. We have come together to form an emerging partnership which operates regionally in the greater Puget Sound area, and is community centered towards our immigrant, Spanish-speaking, and Latino communities, and all of our communities. We are coming together in a formalized partnership because we understand that we have an incredible amount of experience and expertise to share with each other in service to our communities. We already partner with each other in various ways, but this grant will allow us the opportunity to focus on assessing our community needs and addressing them on a visionary regional level.

2. How is or will the partnership be structured?

Our partnership will be structured as a collaborative effort towards our ideal of empowerment through education, with Centro Cultural Mexicano acting as contract administrator and fiscal agent. Each of the four organizations—Centro Cultural Mexicano, Mi Centro, LETI, and Cascadia College, operate in different geographic service areas, and have differing but successful approaches to raising educational attainment rates thanks to our deep understanding and trust we have earned over years of service within our communities. In order for all partners to share one guiding vision and to learn from each other's successes as well as challenges, Centro Cultural Mexicano will work in tandem with LETI and Mi Centro to build a comprehensive plan targeting the current service gaps and systemic barriers that impede our Latino community from obtaining postsecondary credentials. Cascadia College brings a shared vision for equity in education, and long-lasting impact. They will help with data and information as well as systemic and institutional knowledge around successful enrollment and retention strategies. As a partnership, this comprehensive and in-depth analysis will allow us to best serve our Latino community in their pursuit of postsecondary credentials. The partnership will thus be structured as four equal partners who are building a long-term strategic plan that will also produce short-term action items through the use of data, assessments, collection of community stories and experience, guided by a communal vision of empowerment that begins with this partnership. We are more effective when we work together toward a common goal in service to our communities.

3. How have or will the partner organizations learn from each other and the communities served, and how does or will the partnership incorporate this learning into ongoing work?

Centro Cultural Mexicano has worked with our partner organizations in the past to best serve the needs of our communities - primarily our spanish-speaking, immigrant, and Latino communities. Our partnership with LETI as part of the Washington State Department of Health community driven outreach program has resulted in strong collaboration through Centro Cultural Mexicano's technical assistance offerings and our combined efforts in bringing spanish-english bilingual health messaging to our communities across different geographic service areas. We have learned from each other about how we can each improve our service, how to better streamline our processes, and we have woven a true safety net for our communities. When community-serving organizations come together with a shared vision and goal, we are able to rapidly learn, as well as deeply affect our organizational approach to creating long-lasting and meaningful impact. This partnership will incorporate our continued learning into the realm of postsecondary credential attainment.

We have worked with MiCentro on strategies for systemic change in various arenas. We confer often on best practices, effective strategies, and ways to strengthen our organizations so we can best serve our communities. In addition, our Executive Director is the current chair of the WA STate Commission of Hispanic Affairs, and the MiCentro Executive Director is the past chair and current vice chair; the relationship between our two organizations has been built through trust and statewide and local work over time. MiCentro also has an extensive history of promoting and facilitating post-secondary education.

Our partnership with Cascadia College encompasses engagement with community to ensure bilingual and equitable access to opportunity. We often support each other at events and share critical information

in order to best promote positive educational outcomes including opportunities for financial aid. Our Centro Cultural Mexicano Executive Director also serves as a Trustee at Cascadia College. Cascadia College has been integral to our efforts in connecting our Latino students and families with the resources and opportunities necessary to attain secondary education credentials.

Partner organizations will continue to collaborate with one another to best assess community needs. We will learn from the communities we serve through the lens of being by-and-for organizations; we not only serve our communities but represent them. Our comprehensive plan for raising educational attainment rates will be based directly on the learning we undertake as part of sharing in our communities lived experience. Not only do our community members have lived experiences of navigating these postsecondary education systems, but our organizations - the people who work to better our communities' outcomes- also have our own lived experiences as members of our Latino community. We are learning from a place of understanding and this partnership takes into account the very real challenges that face our communities.

4. Who are the focal population(s) in your partnership's work, and what assets do learners and families in these populations bring to their educational journeys?

Our partnership's focal population are adult learners in our Spanish-speaking and Latino communities. We value education. We know that our Latino community and the values held in our culture brings many positives when seeking postsecondary attainment. Our assets include hard work, tenacity, and a drive to pursue our goals. We also know that many in our communities have already worked, or had work experience in their country of origin before immigrating - which provides a great foundation for the hard work, problem-solving, and communication skills needed in postsecondary education. Many in our community are fortunate to be bilingual. This is an asset to bring to higher education arenas. Our lived experiences allow us to contribute a varying perspective which is extremely valuable in any setting and contributes to innovation and creative problem-solving.

5. What is the geographic region where the focal population(s) that would be served by this investment live?

Our focal populations live in King County, Pierce County and Snohomish county.

6. What are some of the systemic barriers that learners and families in your focal population(s) encounter?

Learners and families in our focal populations encounter major systemic barriers: time, cost, and possible limited English language skills. Many of our adult higher education students are juggling families and work and school. Many in our communities are cost-burdened and do not have the financial access for higher education costs. In addition, lack of affordable and accessible childcare is a huge issue for parents who want to seek higher education. And for many of our community members, language access is a huge barrier. There are many in our community who lack the technology skills to navigate financial aid and other assistance. Many do not have computers or broadband—these are huge barriers! We know that our community wants access to higher education, and we and our partners provide avenues towards attainment, and know that this formalized partnership would allow us to come up with long-term, regional plans of action together, with greater impact.

7. What work do you propose undertaking during the granting period?

Our partnership is proposing the creation of a comprehensive strategic plan created through shared knowledge and resources amongst our four organizations, with the intent to raise postsecondary educational attainment rates over time. We will engage in community assessments, mutual learning, the sharing of best practices, the improvement of our processes and approaches through data analysis; we will create a shared vision of what these systemic barriers are based on our own lived experiences - and more

importantly, the lived experience of the communities we serve. Our work in the granting period is aimed at building regional organizational capacity with a shared intentional approach, strengthening our ‘safety net’ of educational supports and services in a unified and organized manner across the region, and developing our unified vision of a comprehensive strategic plan for increasing postsecondary educational attainment.

8. How will this proposed work contribute to increasing educational attainment for the focal population(s) in your region?

This proposed work will build organizational capacity within our partnership, and increase regional institutional shared goals to serve the needs of our Latino community with regards to entering postsecondary education and successfully attaining postsecondary credentials. A shared vision for our communities, forged from community input, data, and assessments will lead Centro Cultural Mexicano, LETI, and Mi Centro, and Cascadia College to a unified plan of action—share one common ideal and one common goal. By sharing our past learnings, our lived experiences, our challenges, and guiding the creation of new best practices, we can chart a course for long-term and short-term, fully bilingual spanish and english language direct-service implementations which will contribute to increasing educational attainment for our consistently underserved focal population (our Latino community) in our regions.