

Catalyze Pittsburgh: FAQs

Last revised: 9/29/26

1) Why are we doing this in Southwest Pennsylvania?

- a. Catalyze selected Pittsburgh as its second Regional Challenge, following Birmingham, Alabama in 2023, because of the region's leadership in emerging industries and occupations. Pittsburgh is a nationally recognized innovation hub, and its concentration of technology, robotics, and advanced manufacturing activity gives the region an early view of how emerging industries are changing workforce needs. The region also has a strong existing network of employers, educators, workforce organizations, and youth-serving partners, which provides the infrastructure needed to design and test new career-connected learning approaches.

2) What are the goals of Catalyze Pittsburgh?

- a. Catalyze Pittsburgh is a funding and learning initiative intended to strengthen the connection between emerging industries and career-connected learning (CCL) for youth ages 11-17 in the six-county region (Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Washington, Westmoreland). The Challenge aims to:
 - i. Source and fund innovative CCL models that connect youth to emerging industries and occupations
 - ii. Build stronger alignment among employers, educators, and youth-serving organizations
 - iii. Generate practical models, partnerships, and lessons that can inform CCL efforts in other communities

3) How does Catalyze Pittsburgh differ from the Catalyze Challenge?

- a. Some key differences between Catalyze Pittsburgh and the National Catalyze Challenge include:
 - i. Catalyze Pittsburgh grantees are required to work to build Career Connected Learning opportunities for learners in Armstrong, Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Washington, and/or Westmoreland Counties.
 - ii. Catalyze Pittsburgh seeks Career Connected Learning opportunities in Emerging Industries and Occupations.

4) Have you had these kinds of opportunities before?

- a. Yes. Catalyze Pittsburgh is the second Regional Challenge in the Catalyze network, following a successful Birmingham Regional Challenge launched in 2023. It also operates within the broader national Catalyze Challenge, which

has awarded more than \$17 million to over 65 initiatives since 2021. Partner4Work is the fiscal agent and convener for Catalyze Pittsburgh, supported locally by the Richard King Mellon Foundation.

5) What are Emerging Industries and Occupations (EIO)?

- a. Emerging industries are new or rapidly growing sectors driven by technological innovation, such as biotechnology, aerospace, robotics, and artificial intelligence. Emerging occupations are new roles, or existing roles that are changing significantly as technology changes. Emerging occupations need not be in emerging industries, but applicants must be able to make a strong case for how advances in technology have created or will create new career pathways and skill requirements for the occupation.

6) Who is able to submit an application?

- a. Organizations with an innovative idea or plan to build new solutions to improve Career Connected Learning for young people in SWPA are encouraged to apply. Educational institutions, non-profit agencies, for-profit businesses, labor unions, and system intermediates are all eligible applicants. Applicants must be legally incorporated and must have been in operations for at least three years.
- b. Catalyze Pittsburgh is designed to support innovative new ideas. Organizations proposing to expand or supplement existing work will not be competitive.

7) If I have applied to the Catalyze Challenge, am I eligible to apply to Catalyze Pittsburgh?

- a. Yes, applicants who have an idea for CCL in Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Washington, and Westmoreland Counties may apply to both the Catalyze Challenge and the Catalyze Pittsburgh Challenge. Applicants, however, may only receive one grant per innovation from any of the family of Catalyze Challenges.

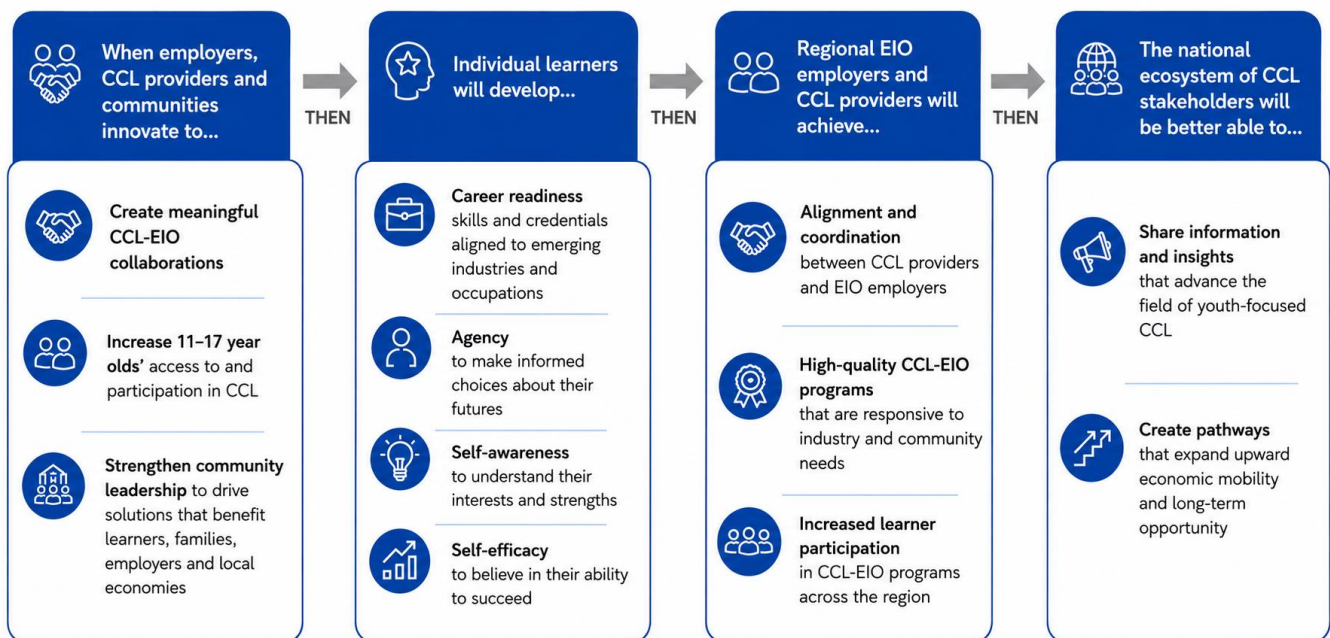
8) If my organization is a current grant recipient of the Richard King Mellon Foundation or Partner4Work, are we eligible to apply to Catalyze Pittsburgh? Will a successful application to Catalyze Pittsburgh preclude our organization from receiving other funding from the Richard King Mellon Foundation or Partner4Work?

- a. Current Catalyze, Richard King Mellon Foundation, Partner4Work funded providers are eligible to apply for Catalyze Pittsburgh for innovative ideas. Successful Catalyze Pittsburgh grant applicants will continue to be eligible

to apply for future funding from all entities. Catalyze Pittsburgh funds will not be awarded to organizations seeking to scale or sustain existing programs.

9) What types of solutions does Catalyze Pittsburgh seek?

- a. The Challenge seeks proposals that address two required elements across all phases:
 - i. **Employer/Industry Co-Design:** Programs must involve employers or industry associations directly in shaping and implementing the CCL approach, not just as advisors.
 - ii. **Increasing Access and Participation:** Programs must increase access to and participation in CCL among 11-17 year-old learners in emerging industries or occupations.



- b. Innovation is core to the Catalyze Pittsburgh Challenge. For the purposes of this challenge, **we define innovation as:**
 - i. a novel approach developed within the Pittsburgh Region
 - ii. a new application of an existing approach
 - iii. a new business or delivery model with the potential to achieve better outcomes for than the solutions available locally to date
- c. Applicants should also demonstrate expertise in positive youth development practices, have a plan for measuring impact, collaboration with local partners, and a qualified leadership/implementation team.

10) I have what I think is a great idea, but we are still in the ideation stage. Can we apply for support?

- a. Catalyze Pittsburgh is designed to support early stage ideas. Successful bidders in Phase 1 will be supported with a planning grant and technical assistance to help turn great ideas into reality.

11) We are interested in support from Catalyze Pittsburgh to expand our program. Is that possible?

- a. Catalyze Pittsburgh is not intended to support the expansion or sustainability of an existing program. We are seeking innovative approaches, whether they are novel approaches for our region, a new application of an existing approach, or a new business or delivery model that will result in improved outcomes.

12) Would a program that engages educators rather than youth be eligible for Catalyze Pittsburgh funding?

- a. Catalyze Pittsburgh cannot give feedback on specific projects, innovations, or concepts before an application is submitted. All proposals must directly impact the career opportunities and potential success of youth through career-connected learning. Educator professional development may support this outcome, but applicants would need to articulate a clear theory of change showing how the proposed work results in youth-level outcomes.

13) We are interested in applying for Catalyze funding for [insert occupation]. Is this considered an emerging occupation?

- a. Catalyze Pittsburgh cannot give feedback on specific projects, innovations, or concepts before an application is submitted. Rather, we've designed the application so that all organizations have the same opportunity to explain their innovation and describe how their innovation would increase low-income young people's access to and participation in career-connected learning aligned with emerging industries or occupations. The application will also provide an opportunity to describe the emerging industries or occupations that would be addressed by the innovation and make the case for why a chosen industry or occupation is emerging.

14) How many grants will Catalyze Pittsburgh award and at what level?

- a. Catalyze Pittsburgh will award up to 15 planning grants of \$15,000 each, depending on the quality and innovation level of proposals received. A select subset of planning grantees will be invited to apply for implementation-focused funding awards of up to \$350,000 after the "Refining the Innovation" phase is over.

15) How can I show my partnerships in my application?

- a. Applicants can upload letters of support, MOUs, or other evidence of partnership to their application. Please combine all evidence of partnership into a single PDF file.

16) Where can I go for more information?

- a. Consult the Application Guide on the [Catalyze Pittsburgh Challenge webpage](#). For direct questions on Catalyze Pittsburgh, please reach out to CatalyzePittsburgh@partner4work.org

17) How many projects will be selected for implementation grants?

- a. There is no current expectation surrounding the number of projects that will be selected for the full implementation award. The number of projects invited to apply for implementation grants will depend on the number of planning grants awarded, work done by successful bidders during the planning process, and available funding. Catalyze Pittsburgh continues to raise additional funds to help support innovations in SWPA.

18) Can you provide some guidance regarding the outcomes that you are looking to achieve--e.g., is the goal to have youth actually placed into employment in emerging industries and occupations by the end of the implementation period or is it ok to target youth to enroll in advanced educational programs in emerging industries?

- a. Outcomes for each project will vary based on the targeted age range, goals of the application partners, and other factors. Outcomes do not need to include being placed in employment or advanced education, but should be proposed by the bidder and be specific and clear. Outcomes must be tied directly to Career Connected Learning in Emerging Industries and Occupations.

19) Does the lead institution need to be from Pittsburgh? Could a national organization be the lead?

- a. Applicants do not need to be currently located in the Pittsburgh region, however, the young people who are being supported by this innovation must reside in this region and non-local applicants should be able and willing to create a team comprised of people with experience, relationships, and knowledge of the Pittsburgh community and regional economy.

20) Is there an ideal number of youth to be engaged in the planning or implementation phase?

- a. The appropriate number of youth to engage in each phase of the project should be identified by the bidder and will depend on the proposed

outcomes of the innovation. Catalyze Pittsburgh does not have a pre-determined number of young people we seek to serve through this work.

21) Is it critical to have a workforce partner in the planning phase or is that something that we could explore in the planning phase?

- a. Applicants must demonstrate an ability to establish and maintain a clearly defined collaboration with local partners and targeted industry employers to be successful. While projects can build these connections during the planning phase, our expectation is that applicants will have employer partners willing to enter into the planning phase with them upon application.

22) Would technological advancement within [x industry] be up for consideration for a project or should it more strictly fall within the suggested industry?

- a. Catalyze Pittsburgh will not answer specific questions about whether an industry or occupation is emerging during the application period. Applicants should build the case for why they think an occupation or industry is emerging in their proposals.

23) What is considered low income?

- a. Catalyze Pittsburgh will not provide specific guidance regarding a definition of low-income. Applicants should explain how they determined if the majority of the youth whom they plan to serve live in low-income households or communities. For example, applicants could provide the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the school or district; provide Census data about income in the community; cite household income data gathered via current programs and services.

24) Does the three-year operating requirement apply only to the lead applicant, or to all named partners and contractors participating in the project?

- a. Only the lead applicant must have been in operations for three years. Partner organizations do not need to meet that requirement.

25) Can an organization submit multiple applications?

- a. An organization can submit multiple applications. However, the organization's leadership should curate the total set of applications prior to submission. For example, in large organizations such as universities, faculty should confer with the university's administrative and leadership team before submitting an application. The purpose is to ensure that each application from the university is substantively different from the others and aligned with the university's mission and priorities.

26) My organization has an indirect cost rate of [X]. Is that an allowable expenditure?

- a. Catalyze Pittsburgh defines **direct costs** as expenses associated only with the project. This may include materials, supplies, transportation, or any

other expenses that are specific to only the project. **Indirect costs** are any project expenses that are associated with running the organization as a whole, like administrative staff salaries.

In the applications due on October 30, 2026, indirect costs should not exceed 15% of the proposed budget. If for-profit applicants include indirect costs, the for-profit applicant must focus indirect cost expenditures on charitable activities, with any long-term benefit for the organization being incidental or secondary. If a for-profit applicant includes indirect costs in its proposed budget, the applicant should add rows into the budget template to explaining exactly what the proposed indirect costs are. Note that profit is not an allowable expenditure with Catalyze Pittsburgh funding.

In the applications due May 2027, indirect cost rates should not exceed 20% of the proposed budget.

No funds distributed from Catalyze Pittsburgh can be used for lobbying, advocacy, or political causes or events.

27) Must my application focus on one specific EIO?

- a. No. Applications may focus on a single emerging industry or occupation (EIO) or on more than one. Applicants should choose the scope that best fits their program design, their partners, and the young people they plan to serve. Whatever scope you choose, employers or industry leaders with expertise in each EIO named in your application should be involved in shaping the program.