

What is the New Orleans Workforce Leadership Academy?

Workforce Leadership Academy is a partnership between The New Orleans Business Alliance, the Aspen Institute, and local stakeholders and designed for workforce development professionals in the New Orleans area. The purpose of this Academy is to develop a network of workforce development leaders who are not only able to lead their own programs or organizations, but who can also work collaboratively to build effective workforce systems.

The Workforce Leadership Academy creates and supports peer-learning communities of workforce leaders from nonprofit organizations, business associations, community colleges and universities, union-based training efforts, and public agencies. Participants in the Academy work with leading practitioners from around the country, learn about practical planning tools, and have the rare opportunity to reflect on and develop effective workforce strategies to strengthen their local workforce system. Participants also engage in leadership development activities, including a 360-degree leadership assessment. Fellows are selected in a competitive application process and are typically senior-level managers with authority to implement program changes. Alumni of the Academies are part of the Aspen Institute [Economic Opportunity Fellows Network](#).

What opportunities does the Academy address?

As the economic development engine for New Orleans, we aim to make New Orleans a top tier city for human and financial development and investment. Our challenge in realizing this goal is centralized around utilizing equity as a growth strategy, that positively impacts businesses and residents alike. New Orleans is a “Top City to Start and Do Business” (WalletHub) and was recently selected as a hub for tech leader DXC Technologies. Additionally, New Orleans is an up-and coming “Next in Tech City” (USA Today).

However, we face fundamental issues around talent development. Developing a leadership base that deeply understands and can successfully navigate the complexities and opportunities for the New Orleans’ workforce system is central to addressing issues of economic opportunity and equity.

So often the work of what we desire—to be a high functioning talent development system—is siloed among partners who are often unaware of the full range of tools and assets provided within their network. A workforce development leadership experience in New Orleans ensures that a strong pool of connected local and diverse leadership talent exists to tackle to complexities of talent development in our community.

What are the Academy Goals?

The Workforce Leadership Academy will:

- Support a 12-month fellowship among leaders from across the workforce development system including leaders from nonprofit organizations, business

- associations, community colleges and universities, union-based training efforts, and public (city and state) agencies.
- Provide a forum to work collaboratively to identify local and regional systems-based challenges and create shared solutions.
 - Build the capacity of participating institutions to collaborate more deeply with employers and other strategic partners.
 - Deepen skills and competencies of workforce practitioners to lead within their organizations and work collaboratively with stakeholders across the local workforce system.

What is My Commitment?

Each Fellow is expected to engage in 12 days of in-person sessions as well as continued learning, application, and collaboration between sessions. Participants are asked to commit to the process in writing and agree to fully participate in:

- An Academy opening three-day retreat (scheduled for March 20–22, 2019). The opening retreat requires two overnight stays at the Lod Cook Alumni Center on LSU's campus in Baton Rouge, LA.
- A series of five full-day workshops occurring approximately every six weeks, scheduled between April and October 2019. These sessions will take place in New Orleans, LA.
 - April 11
 - May 16
 - July 18
 - September 19
 - October 17
- Continued learning, application, and collaboration between workshop sessions (self-directed time of up to two hours between sessions as well as nine to 12 hours of collaborative project work across a small team of Fellows).
- A closing three-day retreat (scheduled for November 13–15, 2019) that requires two overnight stays at the Lod Cook Alumni Center on LSU's campus in Baton Rouge, LA.
- A final, one-day reflective session on December 12, 2019 that includes a Collaborative Learning Lab presentation to local and regional workforce development stakeholders at the New Orleans Business Alliance (1250 Poydras Street, Suite 2150).

Fellows commit to participate fully and actively in all New Orleans Workforce Leadership Academy events, both to enhance their individual experience and to contribute to peer learning for the group.

How did the Academy get started?

Since 2012, the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program has collaborated with local and regional organizations to offer Workforce Leadership Academies. Recent academies have taken place in Seattle, Maryland, Toronto, Detroit, and Hartford. These academies evolved from the Economic Opportunities Program's long-running national Sector Skills Academy. The national Sector Skills Academy has documented success in supporting workforce leaders to develop and implement effective workforce strategies. In a 2015 survey of more than 200 national alumni, respondents indicated that the Academy prepared them to effect meaningful change at the local level, create and strengthen partnerships with critical stakeholders, and strategize beyond their individual organizations for policy and systems change. The national Academy also provided participants access to a unique and valuable network of peers.

What are systems changes?

Long-term, sustainable solutions to workforce challenges often require strategies designed to overcome structural issues faced by workers. The Workforce Leadership Academy draws on the Economic Opportunities Program's systems change framework. "Systems change" refers to:

- Industry practices that shape the way individuals are recruited, hired, trained, promoted and compensated within the workplace.
- The education and training infrastructure (including Workforce Investment Boards, community-based training providers, community colleges, union or apprenticeship programs).
- Public policy, including rules, regulations, and funding streams related to the workforce and education systems as well as those that influence business practices.

Using practical tools, Fellows will explore strategies focused on systems changes, including "raising the floor" and "building career ladders" for workers; responding to industry needs within and across sectors; and navigating the workforce policy and funding environment. Fellows also bring systems thinking to issues of race, ethnicity, and gender, including how these impact opportunities in the labor market and service delivery strategies. Fellows have an opportunity to step back from their day-to-day experiences to reflect on their own leadership style and the role of their organization within the local system.

For more information on systems change, please see the Economic Opportunities Program's paper [Sectoral Strategies for Low-Income Workers: Lessons from the Field](#).

If you have questions about the Workforce Leadership Academy in New Orleans, contact Sheldon Ballom, sballom@nolaba.org.