

Skills-First Implementation Fellowship

The Burning Glass Institute (BGI) invites applications for the **Skills-First Implementation Fellowship**, a year-long initiative supporting organizations that serve as activators within their workforce ecosystems—such as employer coalitions, education networks, workforce boards, and technology builders. This fellowship is designed to accelerate high-quality, real-world adoption of the Skills-First Workforce Initiative’s shared skill taxonomies in systems that directly shape hiring, learning, and mobility. Organizations are requested to submit a proposed Skills-First implementation project for completion over the term of the cohort. The selected group of organizations will participate in a structured fellowship where each organization will implement skills-first resources into critical talent workflows and work together to discuss progress, challenges, and best practices across their projects.

By leveraging the Skills-First Workforce Initiative’s [Shared Skills Taxonomies](#) and supporting resources, partner organizations can become force multipliers to help drive scale for skills-first practices, leveraging pre-existing, employer-validated infrastructure rather than disconnected efforts. Successful applicants will demonstrate their ability to operationalize skills-first resources within live systems such as job descriptions, learning platforms, and credential frameworks, enabling consistent, skills-based language across tools that shape hiring, learning, and advancement. Selected projects must demonstrate integration into live systems, programs, or workflows—such as active job postings, advising tools, training programs, or employer processes—rather than exploratory pilots or planning exercises.

Selected projects as part of this fellowship will include integration of shared skill taxonomies into environments with active workers, job seekers, or learners, including:

- Career navigation or job posting workflows
- Education and training pathways
- Credentialing or certification platforms
- Employer or workforce data systems

Specificity is key – listing the specific employers, training providers, platforms, or systems where implementation will occur is critical in for prospective projects.

Grant Details, Eligibility, and Requirements

a. **Eligibility:** Applicants should be nonprofit organizations focused on workforce development, learning and upskilling, career navigation and hiring, or other related topics. All applicants must have a 501c3 or equivalent legal status.

b. Administrative Details:

- i. Award Size: Up to \$100,000 per grant
- ii. Application window: December 9, 2025 – January 9, 2026
- iii. Submission format: Applicants must complete the web application form in order to apply
- iv. Public Information Session: December 16, 2025, 3:00PM EST
- v. Notification of Intent to Select: January 12-16, 2026
- vi. Intended Grant period: January 2026 – February 2027
- vii. Fellowship Kick Off Event: Tentatively February 17 -18, 2026 in Washington, D.C.

c. Participant Expectations:

- i. High-quality completion of proposed project funded by the Skills-First Implementation Fellowship Grant, with real implementation demonstrated with target stakeholders over the course of the grant period.
- ii. Quantification of the reach of implementation project, with details on who was impacted by the work, and how.
- iii. Participation cohort kickoff, progress check-in, and learning sessions.
- iv. Submission of final outcomes report on completion of the project.

Application Requirements – To Be Completed Via Web Application Form

a. Applicant Information

- i. Organization name and address
 1. Primary point of contact: Name, title, email address, phone
- iii. Is your organization a 501c3? Yes/No
- iv. Communities served (geographic, target populations, “users”)

b. Proposal Narrative: Applicants should respond concisely to the following questions, limiting responses to 300 words or fewer per free-response question. We appreciate clarity, pragmatism, and specificity over generalization – for example, a target audience of “High school seniors planning their next career step” is clear, “Individuals interested in skills-based careers” is not.

i. Problem Statement & Project Description

1. What is your proposed initiative to undertake as part of this fellowship? How will your project drive use of SFWI’s Shared-Skill Taxonomies as part of the project?
2. What is the key challenge that your skills-first implementation project will seek to address?
3. Who is the target audience for this work? How will your project move the needle in improving opportunity for these individuals?

ii. Implementation Plan

4. What existing access/relationship do you have to your target audience for this work? How can you ensure their participation/buy-in?
5. Please provide a timeline and key milestones for implementation during the grant period.

iii. Vision for Success

6. How many jobs/jobseekers/workers/learners do you anticipate impacting as part of this project? Describe how success will be measured, including data or metrics that will be tracked throughout the project.
7. Explain how your organization will continue or scale skills-first implementation beyond the grant period.

iv. Capacity & Partnerships

8. Describe your geographic footprint (local, regional, or national) and any partners that will support scaling or piloting.

Selection Criteria

a. Quality & Feasibility of the Implementation Plan

- i. The extent to which the proposal aligns with the Skills-First Workforce Initiative’s objectives, specifically the adoption and implementation of the Skills-First (SF)

taxonomy in ways that reach a substantial number of workers, jobseekers, employers, or learners.

ii. Strength of the proposal's alignment with realistic use cases for adoption.

b. Network Access and Reach

- i. Demonstrated access to meaningful networks of employers, training providers, or learners that serve as strong and sizeable target audiences for this work.
- ii. Strength and breadth of partnerships or local networks capable of supporting regional pilots or broader implementation.
- iii. Direct connection to career navigation, hiring processes, skills training, or other relevant topics.

c. Implementation Capacity & Operational Readiness

- i. A realistic and achievable timeline for implementation within the grant period, with evidence of the organization's ability to meet deadlines on comparable projects.
- ii. Clearly defined milestones indicating expected progress and deliverables.
- iii. Evidence of success in prior implementation efforts, pilots, and comparable skills-focused projects.

d. Sustainability & Contribution to Skills-First Movement

- i. A clearly articulated description of the workforce, employer, or system challenges the project seeks to address.
- ii. A plan for active collaboration and participation within the fellowship structure, including contributions to shared learning.
- iii. Presentation of a compelling and meaningful use case with potential for continuation beyond the pilot phase.

e. Synergy with Other Cohort Projects

- i. As a tiebreaker: How this project aligns not only with SFWI goals for adoption but also with the other cohort projects to ensure minimal redundancy and high opportunity for cross-collaboration.