

Bridges Collaborative Cohort [Application](#)

The [Bridges Collaborative](#) is seeking 50 partners—school districts, charter schools, and fair housing organizations—to join a cohort that will focus on increasing access to diverse, integrated, and inclusive schools and neighborhoods, as well as improving the quality of these schools and neighborhoods for children through two primary mechanisms: first, through strategic, meaningful collaboration among partners that leverages the strengths and successes of members for the benefit of the whole; second, through relevant and accessible research and expertise that is curated by The Century Foundation and the Bridges Collaborative to be timely and useful to members. The Bridges Collaborative cohort will seek to improve specific conditions and outcomes related to school diversity in each local community while collectively contributing to a broader national conversation on the benefits of school diversity by highlighting successes and demonstrating what is possible.

This application consists of three parts: (1) Basic Information, (2) School Diversity/Integration-Related Information, and (3) Membership and Commitment. The application portal requires you to submit the application in one sitting—it is highly recommended that applicants draft the answers to questions in a word document, and copy and paste them once it is time to submit. It is estimated that the application will take between 1-2 hours to complete.

Please complete this application by Friday, August 21, 2020 at 11:59 PST to be considered for the cohort. (Note that the original deadline was Aug. 7 and that it has been extended to give more time to organizations dealing with COVID-19-related issues.)

The first convening will be virtual (subsequent ones may be as well, due to COVID-19) and is set for October 15 and 16, 2020. Additional information is available on the Bridges Collaborative website. Reach out to Stefan Lallinger at lallinger@tcf.org with any questions.

PART 1. BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. These questions are for context and are not being used to judge the quality of the application. Applications to the Bridges Collaborative are by organizations not by individuals. Please reach out to lallinger@tcf.org with any questions. Check below to acknowledge that you are applying on behalf of an organization for membership in the Bridges Collaborative Cohort.

Organization Name - What is the name of your organization?: Howard County Public School System

Organization Type - What type of organization is your organization?

- **Public School District**
- Public Charter School or CMO
- Housing Organization

Senior Leadership Team - How many people are on your organization's senior leadership team? (all of cabinet): There are 25 members of the Superintendent's cabinet.

Senior Leadership Team Demographics - Briefly describe the demographics of the organization's leadership team (race, gender, age/experience, or any other relevant demographic factors): Without making assumptions on how members of the Superintendent's cabinet wish to be identified, the Superintendent's commitment and belief in diversity extends to the makeup of his cabinet that includes a team diverse in gender, race, age, backgrounds and experiences.

Organization's Mission - What is the mission of your organization?: Vision: Every student and staff member embraces diversity and possesses the skills, knowledge and confidence to positively influence the larger community.

Mission: HCPSS ensures academic success and social-emotional well-being for each student in an inclusive and nurturing environment that closes opportunity gaps.

Application Point Person Name - Who will be the organization's point person on this application?:
Dr. Kevin F. Gilbert, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Application Point Person Email Address - What is the email address of the point person on the application?:
Kevin_Gilbert@hcpss.org

Application Point Person Phone Number - What is the best number to reach the point person?:
[REDACTED]

PART 2. SCHOOL DIVERSITY/INTEGRATION-RELATED INFORMATION

The cohort seeks a mix of members that represent the full continuum of progress toward the ultimate goal of diverse and integrated schools and communities. This portion of the application is not judged on how much progress an organization has made to date, but rather the organization's commitment to the issue and level of detail provided about future plans.

The application review committee values the quality of ideas and amount of detail provided over the writing ability demonstrated. Bullet points are acceptable (okay to use hash marks or copy/paste bullet points from another source).

There are word limits for each answer. Although the answer fields do not enforce the word limits, please acknowledge your understanding that your answers must remain within the word limits.

Nature of Segregation - Describe how segregation manifests itself in the organization and/or the community it serves. (250 words or less): As we began a redistricting process in 2019 to ease crowding in many of our 77 schools due to rapid growth in the county, we looked at our main poverty indicator (Qualified for Free and Reduced Meals) and realize that several schools were well above our county average of about 22.5% - some schools nearing 70% - while other schools were below 5%. This was a surefire indicator of other challenges in the schools at the higher end of the FARMs rate including gaps in performance and opportunities, lower attendance and greater behavioral referrals. It also aligned with the racial makeup of the school as schools with higher FARMs rate were found in schools that were majority students of color and those with the lowest FARMs rate had higher percentages of white and Asian students.

Commitment to Integration - Give 2-3 examples that demonstrate the organization's commitment to increasing access to integrated schools/neighborhoods or improving the quality of experience for children in diverse schools and neighborhoods. These can be past actions, current resources allocated for specific purposes, future plans, and so on. (250 words or less):

1. Our [Strategic Call to Action](#) is titled "The Fierce Urgency of Now" which is from a Martin Luther King Jr. quote from 1963 when he led a march for freedom and jobs in the nation's capital, stating: "We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there "is" such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action." This is the driving sentiment of our mission and vision which is built on ensuring equity.
2. We completed a redistricting process that eased crowding in all of our most crowded schools, but also advanced socioeconomic equity by addressing the proportion among schools of students receiving Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) program services. Ultimately, 33 total schools above the countywide average of 22.5 percent saw an overall decrease in their FARMS percentage. 13 of these 33 schools experienced a 5-22 percentage point decrease in their FARMS rate. The FARMS percentage for four schools below the countywide average increased by a minimum of 8 percentage points, putting them closer to the countywide average.
3. HCPSS has worked to advance equity, embrace diversity, and promote inclusion into every major undertaking. It is committed to eliminating disparities in access, opportunity and inclusion as the key to closing performance and opportunity gaps and providing the nurturing and supportive school environment that every student deserves.

State of Diversity/Integration Initiatives - Describe the state and progress of school diversity/integration initiatives in the organization. (250 words or less):

Staff Diversity - Higher levels of staff diversity lead to diverse viewpoints and perspectives, which add value to all school communities. When students see their identities reflected in their teachers and other school staff, they are more engaged in learning and improve academically, social-emotionally and behaviorally. HCPSS continues to work toward bringing staff diversity into line with the diversity of our student body, and to enhance efforts towards ensuring a wider pool of highly qualified prospective candidates amidst a severe shortage of teachers regionally and nationally. The [Teachers of Color](#) recruitment event, part of a larger workforce diversity initiative, drew more than 160 educators representing global nationalities.

Professional Learning - is essential to organizational development, and high quality professional learning experiences are essential to instilling the tenets of diversity, equity, and inclusion. All newly hired teachers participate in the New Educators Orientation program, which includes training on DEI principles and importance. All school staff completed one or more professional learning modules in Equity or Institutional Racism at the end of the 2019-2020 school year.

Restorative Justice Practices - HCPSS has accelerated the application of restorative justice practices as a primary, long-term strategy for achieving higher levels of student engagement and achievement, narrowing achievement gaps among student groups, and ensuring nurturing, inclusive and safe learning environments for all students.

Several other initiatives are described in detail on the [HCPSS Diversity, Equity and Inclusion webpage](#).

Hopes for Participation - What do you hope to gain from the experience of being a part of the cohort? What will you bring to the cohort? (150 words or less): We feel that through our recent redistricting process that received national attention and the intense focus that current leadership has brought to the county

in terms of implementing equitable practices that serve every single student, there is much that we will bring to the table in terms of educating other leaders in education as they consider greater integration in schools and classrooms. Additionally, we realized that there is still much to learn and far greater work to be done. The collaborative efforts of The Century Foundation through our most recent process provided tremendous value in terms of generating greater community understanding and providing staff and community partners with a more global view of what it was we were hoping to accomplish. We wish to establish a greater partnership with The Century Foundation and those that become part of the Bridges Collaborative.

Goals - State 1-3 quantifiable goals that the organization aims to achieve in the next two years in relation to school diversity or integration; these goals should be specific, measurable, and attainable.

(150 words or less): Several quantifiable goals are detailed in our [Strategic Call to Action](#) (with measures) including:

1. Each and every student receives a high-quality education through access to individualized instruction, challenges, supports and opportunities.
2. Students' mental health and social-emotional learning are nurtured through skill development, collaborative dialogue and a restorative culture in our classrooms and communities.
3. All students see diversity and inclusion reflected in the curriculum and respect the contributions of all populations.

Strengths - A key component of the Bridges Collaborative is leveraging the strengths of members to the benefit of the rest of the group. The following is a list of some of the strengths and challenges faced by prospective collaborative members across the country that represent opportunities for peer learning. Select 2-4 items from the list that represent strengths for your organization (things you do demonstrably well).

- ENGAG: Engaging board members on diversity in schools/communities
- ENGAG: Engaging local governments on zoning or other issues
- ENGAG: Listening to the community about prior experiences w/ integration
- ENGAG: Partnering with local constituencies on an integration plan
- **ENGAG.: "Making the case" for integration to specific constituencies**
- ENGAG: Collaborating with local nonprofits to promote integration
- POL: Lobbying for changes to state/federal law to promote integration
- POL: Securing funding for projects aimed at increasing diversity
- POL: Adopting a local strategic plan to improve integration
- **POL: Implementing integration measures that outlast individual leaders**
- STAFF: Increasing diversity of employees
- **STAFF: Training staff in culturally relevant approaches**
- STAFF: Holding meaningful conversations about race and class with staff
- STAFF: Retaining high performing staff
- INCL: Creating an environment where all parties have respect and agency
- INCL: Preventing gentrification (or other) from restricting access to quality
- INCL: Balancing differing expectations/values by different constituencies
- INCL: Creating a cohesive parent or resident orG. in a diverse community
- INCL: Holding meaningful conversations about race/class w/ students
- INCL: Holding meaningful conversations about race/class w/ community
- SCHOOL: Reducing disproportionate academic outcomes for diff. pops
- **SCHOOL: Embedding a culturally responsive curriculum**
- SCHOOL: Using magnet or specialized schools to attract new populations

- SCHOOL: Merging schools to create a more diverse school
- SCHOOL: Leveraging school choice to create diverse schools
- SCHOOL: Changing the perception of a school to attract new populations
- HOUS: Placing low-income families in high opportunity neighborhoods
- HOUS: Ensuring a wide range of incomes are represented in a community
- HOUS: Ensuring low-income residents have access to quality services/enrichment
- HOUS: Changing the perception of a neighborhood to attract new pop.s

Challenges - Select 2-4 items from the list that represent things you would like to learn from other organizations who do these things well.

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Describe One Strength - Describe one strength that you selected from the list above. Briefly describe what your organization does in relation to this area. How might you share your learnings in a way that would be useful to other Collaborative members? (250 words or less): STAFF: Training staff in culturally relevant approaches is vital to creating equitable learning environments. Staff who are well trained in diversity, equity and inclusion are more effective in their roles, and support the establishment of school and office cultures that provide more inclusive, engaging and supportive learning environments where the dignity of all is

valued. Quality instruction is improved by supporting the development of culturally responsive teachers who have access to a strong set of diverse, district-provided instructional resources.

A focus on equity is incorporated into every administrator's full year evaluation. At the onset of a full evaluation year, school-based leaders identify key actions that will be taken to foster an equitable learning environment for all students. School-based leaders also are engaged in regular professional learning focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as effective discipline practices. Finally, there is at least one staff member in each of our schools designated as a diversity, equity, and inclusion liaison. This person assists leadership, works with staff, and supports young people in moving the diversity, equity, and inclusion work in the school.

Newly added or updated staff training sessions related to diversity, equity, and inclusion include: Restorative Justice 3-day introductory session, Leading Peace Circles 4-day intensive session, Cultural Proficiency, Trauma Informed Care, Student Voice, Culturally Responsive Teaching, and a Microaggressions workshop.

PART 3. COMMITMENT AND PARTICIPANTS

These are the expectations for participation in the Bridges Collaborative:

- Participation by at least two employees of a member organization in at least two out of three national convenings. (The first convening will be virtual and is set for October 15 and 16, 2020.)
- Participation by at least two employees of a member organization in at least three online workshops or trainings.
- A commitment to providing bi-annual updates on the status of integration efforts in a member organization's community.
- The completion of two short presentations: one at the beginning of the two-year experience, describing the goals of participation and two-year plan for advancing integration and one at the end of the two-year experience, describing what has been accomplished and plans for the future.
- Participation in media training and a commitment to develop and practice messaging and public statements tailored to a member's local context.

Checking the box indicates an understanding of the commitment required of participants.

List of Participants (Names, Titles, Emails for 2-5 Individuals)

The Bridges Collaborative believes that a team is critical to an organization's success and that identifying the right mix of people is crucial for collaboration. Please read the guidance and think critically about who from your organization will participate in the cohort.

People: Organizations can designate between two and five individuals to be a part of the Bridges Collaborative. Please read the descriptions of the ideal profiles and describe the team the organization plans to nominate.

Requirements: One member should either be the head of the organization (that is superintendent or CEO) or in the cases of very large organizations, a C-Suite-level employee (such as a chief of enrollment, deputy superintendent). A second member should be the most senior member of the organization that deals directly with school integration and diversity initiatives. (In some districts, this will be enrollment officers, or innovation zone chiefs.)

Members 3-5 are optional, and can be any individuals who add perspective to the school integration/diversity work the organization hopes to undertake. These can be policy advisors, chiefs of staff, principals, teachers, nonprofit partners, and so on.

Please list the name, title, and email for each of the 2-5 members designated as cohort participants from your organization.:

Dr. Michael J. Martirano, Superintendent - Michael_Martirano@hcpss.org

Dr. Kevin Gilbert, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - Kevin_Gilbert@hcpss.org

Dr. Kendra Johnson, Community Superintendent - kendra_johnson1@hcpss.org

Nancy Thompson, School Principal - nancy_thompson@hcpss.org

Josh Wasilewski, School Principal - joshua_wasilewski@hcpss.org

Miscellaneous - Is there anything else you want us to know?: Thank you for all that The Century Foundation has done and we look forward to participating in this important work.

SUBMIT