



Black  
Futures  
Lab

# Black to the Future Public Policy Institute

2024-25 Program Overview  
and Call for Applications

[CLICK HERE TO APPLY](#)



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# About the Black to the Future Public Policy Institute



**The Black Futures Lab (BFL) and the Black to the Future Action Fund work to make Black communities powerful in politics. The problems Black communities face are complex; the solutions to those problems require imagination, experimentation, and Black political power.**

The Black Futures Lab designs strategies that help us imagine the alternatives we deserve and builds the capacity of Black serving organizations to build Black political power; the Black to the Future Action Fund builds electoral power at the local and state level to implement those alternatives. Priority Black to the Future states include CA, GA, LA, NC, and WI. Other states will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Black to the Future Public Policy Institute (the Institute) is a program of the Black to the Future Action Fund. The Institute is a policy advocacy and leadership training fellowship that provides community leaders the tools needed to transform Black communities into constituencies that wield independent, Black political power.

We work to enact policies that improve the lives of Black people and ensure that Black people have what all people deserve—dignity, safety, and power. We work to ensure that governance in our communities is race-forward, guided by the orientation that our government is responsible for addressing the challenges in our communities. We believe in advocating for the solutions that are progressive solutions that move our communities forward.



## Institute Goals:

### TRANSFORM

Black communities into constituencies that wield independent political power.

### CREATE

a network of Black policy makers across the United States.

### IMPROVE

the lives of Black people.

## Institute Policy Areas:

**The Institute focuses on the following policy areas that directly impact Black communities:**

**Democracy/Voting Rights:** confronting those who conspire to steal our votes, protecting and building the democracy that is promised to us all.

**Families/Public Health and Healthcare:** challenging the policies and practices that leave us living sick and dying younger, protecting and delivering the care that we need to live long and live well.

**Economy/Economic Security:** removing policies that lock us out of good jobs and investing in the health and wealth of our communities.

**Structural Barriers:** procedural fixes that if achieved could increase Black political or policy power.

**Criminal/Legal:** transforming our current criminal legal and policing system.

## WE ARE CELEBRATING THE FIFTH YEAR OF THE INSTITUTE.

Over 100+ alumni have completed the program to date and are making significant strides to advance local and state policies that center Black communities, including fighting for housing reform and voting rights for all incarcerated persons, changing sentencing guidelines for human trafficking and domestic violence survivors, and redefining public safety by uplifting the leadership of the most impacted.

Most recently, Institute alumni passed major legislation in California designed to reduce barriers to entry for social equity operators working in the cannabis industry. In New York, fellows helped lead the charge to automatically seal certain criminal records to give more people a second chance, reduce recidivism, and contribute to their communities. You can join this incredible network of changemakers by applying to the Institute today.

**Timing:** Institute trainings occur online over an eight month period, **every Tuesday, from 1:00-2:45pm ET (10:00-11:45am PT)**, starting on **September 17, 2024 and ending on April 22, 2025.**

# Application Eligibility



- The Institute is specifically for members of Black communities who are already involved in organized efforts to improve the lives of Black people.
- Black cisgender and transgender individuals, non-binary, and genderqueer people are encouraged to apply. Black migrants, formerly incarcerated, and people with disabilities are also encouraged to apply.
- Applicants must apply as part of a team and have a policy idea that they would like to move in one of the following topics: Democracy/Voting Rights, Families/Public Health and Healthcare, Economy/Economic Security, Structural Barriers, and/or Criminal/Legal.
- Policy ideas should focus on state or municipal/county reform. Federal ideas are outside the scope of this training.
- Teams can be composed of 3 to 5 members. Team members must be working in the same state and must be sponsored by the same Sponsoring Organization.
- Demonstrated background in the policy making process strongly recommended; this can be through work, internships, or training such as school or apprenticeships.
- Black individuals living in the United States may apply. Priority will be given to individuals working in CA, GA, LA, NC, and WI and other states will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- In order to be eligible for the Institute, all applicants must be employed and sponsored by a “Sponsoring Organization.” Below lays out Sponsoring Organization eligibility requirements and commitments.



# Sponsoring Organization Criteria



- Sponsoring Organization can be a for-profit, non-profit, or government group. Applicants must be paid staff members with the Sponsoring Organization. Sponsoring Organizations are responsible for the team's participation in the Institute.
- Sponsoring Organizations must have a demonstrated commitment to impacting public policy to support and uplift Black communities. Sponsoring Organizations are expected to provide operational support and guidance to teams during the development and execution of their campaigns. Where necessary, Sponsoring Organizations might be asked to provide office space to aid fellow participation in the training.
- Sponsoring Organizations are required to commit to the goals of the Institute and provide ongoing support to the team they are sponsoring, throughout the duration of the program and policy campaign.
- Members of the Sponsoring Organizations' leadership team will be expected to participate in the Institute's interview process and virtually join three team presentations that take place during the program.
- Sponsoring Organizations must make sure that the applicant is available for the webinars which are 1 hour and 45 minutes long, and will take place **1:00-2:45pm ET (10:00 -11:45am PT)/EVERY Tuesday starting on September 17, 2024 and ending on April 22, 2025.** Webinars are "camera on" unless there are extenuating circumstances that are cleared by the Institute in advance.
- Sponsoring Organizations must make sure the participants have time (2-4 hours per week) for reading, homework, campaign work with their team/coalition and meetings with their mentor.
- Participants are expected to work in coordination with their Sponsoring Organization to create a policy plan to be initiated in 2025/26.
- Sponsoring Organizations will be required to submit a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement with the Institute. The MOU outlines the relationship between the Institute, the participant, and Sponsoring Organization and a commitment to participate fully in the program and policy campaign. Failure to actively participate and fulfill the requirements of the MOU may result in fellows being asked to leave the Institute.

**\*Note, if your Sponsoring Organization has a fiscal sponsor, that fiscal sponsor will receive the stipend on behalf of the Sponsoring Organization. The fiscal sponsor will be responsible for payment disbursement. It is preferred that all teams apply with the support of a Sponsoring Organization. Teams applying with only a fiscal sponsor may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Fiscal sponsors typically provide fiduciary oversight, financial management, and other administrative services to support an organization's mission and activities.**

# Mentor Support and Guidelines

In your application, you will be asked to identify 1-2 experts in your community that could serve as potential mentors to your team. Mentors play a pivotal role in supporting fellows throughout the program and contribute to their success. Mentors act as strategic advisors on policy campaigns and provide the direct, practical guidance many advocates on the ground require to increase their influence in policy making. The Institute will provide mentors with a stipend to support their participation in regular monthly meetings over the course of 10 months, which will consist of an 8-month program and 2-month policy planning period. Mentors will be expected to support fellows throughout the duration of the Institute and meet regularly with your team. Please note, you may not be matched with the mentor you suggest.



## Mentor Eligibility

- ✓ Mentors must identify as Black and preferably already be involved in organized efforts to improve the lives of Black communities.
- ✓ Mentors are required to live, work, or have tangible experience developing campaigns and/or advocating for policy in the state where teams are based.
- ✓ Mentors must have deep experience in policy making or the political process at the municipal or state level.
- ✓ Former elected officials, academics, lobbyists, legislative staffers, policy specialists, or those otherwise familiar with the legislative and policy making process are encouraged.

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\*Mentors may not be employed by or be on the board of the Sponsoring Organization.

# Institute Details



## How is the Institute structured?

Webinars are 1 hour and 45 minutes in length. Webinars will take place **1:00-2:45pm ET/10:00-11:45am PT** each Tuesday starting on **September 17, 2024 and ending on April 22, 2025**.

- Webinars are “camera on” unless there are extenuating circumstances that are cleared by the Institute in advance.
- Trainings are led by Institute staff, national policy experts, and guest trainers.
- Reading and homework will be assigned in advance of each webinar.
- Participants are expected to work with their teams and Sponsoring Organizations to create a policy advocacy campaign of their choosing, that can be initiated in 2025.
- Each team will be provided with a mentor, who will act as a strategic advisor for the campaign and offer practical guidance and technical assistance.

## What are the key dates?



### **MAY 1, 2024:**

Application Portal Opens



### **JUNE 5, 2024:**

Online Application Deadline at 8:00pm ET/5:00pm PT



### **JULY 9 THROUGH JULY 11, 2024:**

Candidate Interviews (with the team and Sponsoring Organizations)



### **SEPTEMBER 17, 2024:**

The Institute begins. Weekly webinars (Tuesdays 1:00pm-2:45pm ET/10:00am-11:45am PT)



### **APRIL 22, 2025:**

The Institute concludes.

*BFL may provide ongoing technical assistance and campaign support to teams after the Institute concludes.*





## What is the financial cost?

The Institute is **free of charge**. Sponsoring Organizations will be given a monthly stipend of \$500/month for eight months for the individual they are sponsoring to cover a portion of their paid staff time. Stipends will be disbursed directly to the Sponsoring Organization, without exception. Sponsoring Organizations must use the stipend to support the fellow's participation in the Institute. Black to the Future Action Fund is not responsible for how organizations decide to use funds.

Participants will be required to participate in the program using a computer and internet access. If you do not have access to a computer/internet, we have a "loaner" program that will include equipment and internet access.

Increased organizational support may be offered for participants creating and engaging in policy campaigns expected to commence in 2025.

## What will I learn in the Institute?

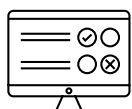
Fellows in the Institute will learn to build a policy campaign from the ground up. During the Institute, fellows develop their policy making skills including building and leveraging power within the policy process and increasing confidence to lead policy efforts. Each session is taught by top Black policymakers and thinkers in their fields. The content-rich sessions are taught in community—fellows learn and question together.

### Throughout, fellows will:

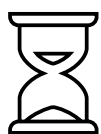
- Engage in research through a community and policy lens to develop and strengthen their policy ideas.
- Gain a deep understanding of the legislative process at the state and municipal level (including key timelines, the budget process, and identifying structural barriers that impede successful policy making).
- Explore target BFL issue areas in relation to their effect on Black communities—such as Democracy and Voting, the Economy, Public Health, Structural Barriers and the Criminal-Legal System.
- Develop the skills to build a policy campaign (engaging in power analysis, identifying targets, allies and opposition, strategic communication, and more).
- Learn from some of the most influential policy minds in Black communities.

# Attendance Requirements

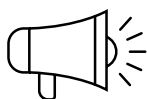
## PARTICIPATION IN EACH WEEKLY LIVE WEBINAR SESSION IS MANDATORY.



Participation in each weekly live webinar session is mandatory. We will be using Zoom for all virtual sessions. Webinars are “camera on” unless there are extenuating circumstances that are cleared by the Institute in advance. If fellows routinely face extenuating circumstances that interfere with their ability to attend or be on camera, the Institute will work with teams to identify accommodations.



If more than 3 sessions are missed, the Sponsoring Organization will forfeit at least one monthly stipend. It may also impact fellows ability to apply for post-Institute policy grants. Finally, fellows who miss more than 3 sessions may be asked to leave the program.



If a fellow is asked to leave the program, monthly stipends to the Sponsoring Organization will be reduced by \$500 per month. Sponsoring Organizations will continue to receive a monthly stipend for the team members that remain in the Institute.

### Accommodations

The Institute is committed to supporting all of our fellows in their learning. Fellows’ needs for reasonable accommodations and support services are handled on a case-by-case basis. If you need support of any kind to fully participate in online learning, you will have the opportunity to indicate in your application.



# Application Guidelines

**Applications must be submitted via our online application portal by June 5, 2024 at 8:00pm ET/5:00pm PT. Candidate interviews will take place from July 9 through July 11, 2024.**

You **MUST** apply to the Institute as part of a team. Only one application per team should be submitted. Below are all of the questions the team will be asked to submit responses to. You will be allowed to save your responses online as you work on your application. To assist in the application process, we recommend you prepare your responses together in advance, in a separate word document.

Use Button  
for Quick Apply:

**CLICK HERE TO APPLY**

Scan QR Code  
for Quick Apply:



## Contact Information:

You will be asked to provide the following information:

1. The primary point of contact for the team and application;
2. For each team member, your full legal name, email address, phone number, mailing address, title/position, and the state you work in;
3. Your Sponsoring Organization's name, website, and mailing address
4. The full legal name, email address, title/position and phone number of an authorized signatory at your Sponsoring Organization;
5. In the case that your Sponsoring Organization has a fiscal sponsor, this information will also be collected on behalf of the fiscal sponsor;
6. Can you confirm that you will be able to attend all or at least 90% of Institute trainings?

## Demographics:

Each individual team member will be asked the answer to the following demographic questions:

1. The Institute is for individuals who are from Black communities. What is your racial identity?
2. What is your gender identity(s)?
3. What are your gender pronouns?
4. Do you identify as a member of the transgender community?
5. What is your sexual orientation(s)?
6. What is your age?
7. What is your experience with the criminal justice system?
8. What kinds of learning accommodations or technical support will you need to be successful in the Institute?

# Narrative Questions:

The questions are listed below so that your team can prepare answers ahead of time and then cut and paste into the online application form. Please keep all answers to 2000 characters or less.

## TELL US ABOUT YOUR TEAM/COALITION BUILDING:

Describe your policy campaign team, including the various skills/experiences of team members, how long you have worked with each other as a team, and your experiences working with broader coalitions. If you have participated in policy and/or fellowship programs in the past, please describe how that experience has impacted you and/or your organization.

## ORGANIZATIONAL SPONSORSHIP AND SUPPORT:

All applicants must be sponsored by a Sponsoring Organization as defined on [page 5](#) of the Call for Applications. Describe the mission of your Sponsoring Organization. Please also explain the support you will receive from the Sponsoring Organization to successfully complete the fellowship.

## DEPTH OF ISSUE EXPERTISE:

Describe how your team and your Sponsoring Organization are currently engaged in ONE of the Institute's five policy areas as it relates to the policy campaign your team is interested in pursuing. The policy areas include: Democracy/Voting Rights, Public Health and Healthcare, Economy/Economic Security, Structural Barriers, and/or Criminal-Legal.

## POLICY CAMPAIGN:

**Describe, in-depth, the policy idea your team would like to pursue, including:**

- 1) the problem you are trying to solve
- 2) policy area and type (e.g. legislation, resolution, administrative action, regulation, budget request, etc.) and
- 3) potential timeline for your initiative. Please also include how far along you currently are in the development of this policy plan, the kinds of conversations you've had to-date, and obstacles you might be facing.

## MENTORS:

Applicants chosen for the Institute will be paired with a mentor who will act as a strategic advisor for their campaign. The mentor will provide practical guidance and technical assistance to the team. Please identify 1-2 experts in your community that you would be interested in working with for your policy campaign and why you think they would be a good fit for your team. Mentors must identify as Black and are required to live, work, or have tangible experience developing campaigns and/or advocating for policy in the state where teams are based. As you consider potential mentors, think about your team's potential strengths and weaknesses, and where a mentor's expertise could be leveraged. Please let us know if you have worked with them in the past and how. Note, you may not be matched with the mentor you suggest.

**For more information about the Institute's mentor program, please see [page 7](#) of the Call for Applications.**

## GOALS:

What skills, knowledge, or resources are you hoping to obtain from participating in the Institute?

**CLICK HERE TO APPLY**

For more information, please contact:  
**[blackpolicyinstitute@civitaspublicaffairs.com](mailto:blackpolicyinstitute@civitaspublicaffairs.com)**

