



a program of the Southern Education Foundation

## **Racial Equity Leadership Network Frequently Asked Questions**

### **When is the deadline?**

Applications for RELN Cohort Four will be due **October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021**. Extensions may be granted in special circumstances. Please contact Kenita Williams, Chief of Staff and Director, Racial Equity Leadership Network, at [KWilliams@southerneducation.org](mailto:KWilliams@southerneducation.org) with extension requests.

### **What kind of experience should fellows expect to gain through their participation?**

Fellows should walk away from this experience with a more nuanced understanding of existing and potential equity challenges their districts face and could encounter in the future. They will be provided with a cadre of tangible tools and resources in the form of critical time and space to strategize, peer networking, access to experts, coaching, and technical assistance. Fellows may also earn a chance to assert themselves as experts in the discipline through possibilities for shared publication and peer-to-peer learning. Finally, fellows will receive a host of suggestions for ways to utilize their current team and resources more efficiently and promote buy-in for future initiatives so that they might scale their efforts moving forward. See the [RELN Benefits](#) web page for a more detailed description of benefits.

### **How will I ever make time to participate in an initiative like this?**

This program subscribes to a collaborative leadership orientation like few others of its kind. We strongly encourage you to live out this approach by sharing the work involved in this program with your in-district design team. We also share tools and recommendations to help you and your team capitalize on efficiencies. The time invested will be well worth the potential outcome and will likely help you accomplish objectives for which you are already responsible.

### **How much does it cost to participate?**

Program participation is offered at no cost to the candidate or the district. This includes travel, lodging, and meals provided during convenings. We only ask candidates to come prepared to invest their best thinking in addressing their most pressing equity concerns. Attendance at every session is mandatory.

### **What is the 2022-2023 RELN timeline? Timeframes for traveling?**

Convenings will be held either Monday-Wednesday or Wednesday-Friday, with two and a half days of programming beginning at 9:00 am on the first day (Monday or Wednesday) and ending around 1:00 pm on the third day (Wednesday or Friday). All travel arrangements must accommodate these timeframes, with most fellows choosing to arrive on the evening preceding the first day.

Tentative Convening Framework:

Evening Preceding Day One| Fellows arrive at hotel (Possible group dinner during first convening)

Day One | Learning Session | 9am-5pm & Dinner | 6pm- TBD

Day Two | Learning Session | 9am-5pm & Dinner On Your Own| 6pm -

TBDDay Three | Learning Session | 9am-1pm

Tentative Fellowship Timeline:

CONVENING 1 JAN 2022	CONVENING 2 APR/MAY 2022	CONVENING 3 AUG/SEPT 2022	CONVENING 4 JAN/FEB 2023	IN-DISTRICT	CONVENING 5 JUN 2023
Fellowship Launch Taking Leadership for Equity in Complex Systems	Diagnosing and Designing New Approaches to Advance Racial Equity in Your District	Partnering with Families & Community to Advance Racial Equity	Leveraging Policy to Interrupt and Address Systemic Inequities	Dedicated Coaching & Technical Assistance	Sharing Lessons & Results of Racial Equity-In-Action Cycles

**When will selected candidates be informed?**

Selected candidates will be notified no less than 45 days prior to the start of the first convening.

**How far in advance will specific dates be determined for all convenings?**

All future dates will be determined shortly following the initial convening to allow ample notice for planning and travel arrangements. Fellows will co-design the schedule.

**What are ways you would suggest I gain buy-in for participation from my design team or others whosesupport I will need to participate in this program?**

Being explicit about the benefits the program offers and how they could translate into significant savings in time, effort, money, and other resources is key. Illustrating how this initiative could shed light on the equity-based challenges that exist in your district and ultimately help accomplish objectives that are rooted in broaderequity issues is important. Finally, sharing with design team members, the school board, and other key stakeholders how this effort could result in benefits for the students you serve is highly recommended.

**What type of leadership development experience does SEF have?**

The Southern Education Foundation has a 156-year history of supporting leadership in school districts rangingfrom superintendents to principals, teachers, and future leaders. Our work dates back to the Jeanes Teachers Program following Reconstruction and continues now through the Southern Education Leadership Initiative, which demonstrates our commitment to this work and the importance we place on preparing and supporting this and the next generation of education leaders. The Racial Equity Leadership Network is also supported by our partners, the Learning Policy Institute and the National Equity Project, along with a plethora of education experts and coaches that advise and support districts like yours nationally.

## **How should I select my 5-7 member In-District Design Team?**

This should be seen as a collaborative and iterative process. As a result, you should select parties who are committed to and have a stake in addressing equity challenges, possess influence, and have the time and energy to support you in this effort. You may include Deputy Superintendents, Chief Academic Officers, a key school board member or principal, a rising star in the district, or other relevant parties of your choosing. Work toward including as many decision makers as possible, as this initiative will require influencers to encourage buy-in, especially at the outset. Don't shy away from including at least one rising star or teacher mentor that has direct contact with or experience "on the ground" with teachers and students who could offer genuine feedback about how certain strategies may fare in the classroom. The key ingredient for any member of your design team will be ambitious optimism that they believe it is possible to forge authentic change in your district. You do not want to spend the majority of your time convincing your team members that change is possible. Selecting the right design team will be key to your ability to scale your efforts in the future.

If you are concerned about not having 5-7 members that meet these criteria, we strongly encourage you to challenge yourself in knowing that "no change rests on a single set of shoulders" and to ask for recommendations from others you trust. Challenge yourself to include individuals who may make a significant contribution and who are not already significantly overburdened.

## **Do fellows get to choose their own technical assistance or financial resources to support their selected equity initiative?**

Assignments of specific types of resources are provided on a case-by-case basis and determined collaboratively by the Southern Education Foundation and the fellow.

## **How are RELN selections made?**

RELN fellows will be selected based on a combination of need (supported by data), the presence of a significant equity challenge (that may change over the course of your participation in the program), and a demonstrated ambition to address an equity challenge as well as support to do so.

## **Am I expected to have expert level knowledge on racial equity to apply to this program?**

No, we understand our cohort will be comprised of varying levels of awareness in racial equity. The guiding purpose of the program is to support those who have already taken strides to address inequities and to work toward defining racial equity for others. Knowing that disparities exist in your district, having a strong commitment to giving this work your best thinking and an open mind, and identifying a team to address these needs is all you must come equipped with to participate.

## **What states are considered the South for the purposes of applying to this fellowship?**

Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, & West Virginia

Special consideration may be given to candidates from states outside the South on a case-by-case basis.

## **Why do we request candidate demographics?**

Candidate demographics are tracked to determine who our candidate pool consists of and to help ensure our promotional efforts are reaching a diverse pool of candidates.

### **Is this program ONLY for candidates of color?**

No, this program is open to any and all district leaders located in the South whose districts have existing equity challenges and who need support in addressing them. A candidate's ethnicity does not disqualify or qualify them to be selected for this initiative.

### **If I have specific questions about the eligibility of a candidate or district, who may I contact?**

We encourage you to email Kenita Williams, Chief of Staff and Director, Racial Equity Leadership Network, with any clarifying questions regarding your eligibility at [kwilliams@southerneducation.org](mailto:kwilliams@southerneducation.org).

### **Who should I engage in filling out this application?**

We strongly encourage candidates to share the responsibility of filling out this application with your relevant design team members that you expect to support you in this work should you be selected. Their insight will be integral in completing sections that require data or a supporting narrative that speaks to your district's orientation toward equity. We recommend that you set the tone from the outset that the responsibilities and the benefits will be shared. We encourage you to thoroughly review the application from start to finish right away to promote efficient planning.

### **What is the purpose of sections B (Candidate's District Description & Data), C (District Goals, Priorities, and Equity Orientation), and D (District Racial Equity Leadership Design Team)?**

It gives us your best thinking on how we can build a significant level of relevance and specificity into the program in hopes of best serving you, your students, and your team from the outset. Consider this your first contribution to the co-design process.

### **What level of detail is necessary when crafting the data responses?**

The review team should be provided with enough detail to offer a sense of the racial and economic composition of the district's student body and teaching force. Additionally, the district's student achievement and other specific data points that adequately share the story of your districts' learning outcomes, and especially your selected equity challenge, should be substantiated through the data.

### **What format should the data attachments follow?**

A .pdf or Excel spreadsheet highlighting key items that will be most useful to ensure a streamlined review of your documentation. Please ensure that all data is clearly labeled and organized so that the review team may see which data aligns with which question and that only the most pertinent data is provided.

Feel free to forward any questions concerning data, as needed, to [racialequity@southerneducation.org](mailto:racialequity@southerneducation.org).

### **Will our district data be shared with others? Who will have access to my district's data?**

The Racial Equity Leadership Network selection committee will be the only party who has access to your district data during the candidate review process and convening design process. It will not be shared with any other parties unless written consent is given.

**What are the eligibility requirements and generally desired attributes of a fellow?**

See the [Apply to RELN](#) web page for a more detailed description of eligibility criteria.

**We encourage you to review additional information on the [RELN webpages](#) and to reach out to us with any inquiries you may have at [racialequity@southerneducation.org](mailto:racialequity@southerneducation.org).**