



To create a just and equitable society and the diverse leadership to sustain it

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Public Allies, Inc. is seeking proposals from external qualified firms or individuals for a mixed-methods evaluation of what women, particularly those who are low-income and/or non-degreed, need to advance in the workforce and successfully assume leadership roles.

The deadline for receipt is October 26 at 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time); proposals must be submitted via email to Erin Guest ([ering@publicallies.org](mailto:ering@publicallies.org)). Applicants will be notified by email by November 9, 2018.

Questions should be submitted by email to Erin Guest ([ering@publicallies.org](mailto:ering@publicallies.org)); please allow up to two business days for a response.

## **I. Overview and Background**

### Overview

Since our founding 25 years ago, Public Allies has provided leadership and career pipelines for more than 5,000 diverse young women from under-represented communities in 25 cities across the United States. While we have conducted external evaluations examining issues such as our participants' growth in 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills and their educational and career outcomes, we have not had the opportunity to conduct a focused study to help us understand more deeply what women, including those who are low-income and/or disconnected, need to advance in the workforce and successfully assume leadership roles. This includes support for individual leadership development as well as institutional-level policies and practices that create greater opportunities for women to thrive.

To that end, Public Allies seeks a third-party evaluator to conduct a qualitative and quantitative study of women's leadership, employment, and education trajectories post-public Allies. The study would enable us to learn from alumnae how our program helped them acquire skills, establish mentor relationships, and build professional networks; it would also provide data about program supports and services we need to develop, implement, or expand. In addition, the study should offer recommendations for how institutions can more effectively support the advancement of women. We will widely disseminate the findings to provide concrete recommendations for the larger debate around effective practices for supporting leadership and economic empowerment for low-income women and mothers.

### Background

During our signature ten-month AmeriCorps Apprenticeship, Public Allies provides a powerful experience that interweaves hands-on service with rigorous training, opportunity for reflection, and a supportive learning cohort. Public Allies' leadership curriculum focuses on skills needed for participants' capacity building positions and our 10+1 Leadership Actions. The curriculum is delivered during half- or full-day trainings delivered on a weekly basis throughout the service term, and pushes each Member to engage with theoretical frameworks, peer problem-solve, and learn new skills essential to their work in communities. Individuals from all backgrounds learn new ways of responding to problems and initiating solutions that encourage shared responsibility, alliance-building, and using existing resources. In addition, the Apprenticeship includes programmatic elements that focus on our Members' future plans: participation in a mentorship program; using coaching and an individual development plan to identify steps towards post-service employment; participating in workshops on how to design resumes, leverage social networking platforms, and interview; and participating in key networking and job search opportunities.

Public Allies recently expanded our program to provide an extra year of supports and services to participants after they complete the apprenticeship, to ensure their successful transition to career or higher education. Through this Pathways program, Allies are supported in pursuing either an Education Pathway or a Career Pathway. Approximately 40% of our participants have

not achieved a college degree, and the Education Pathway is designed to provide a seamless transition to higher education and to facilitate college access, affordability, and retention/completion.

Our internal data suggests that women who choose the Education Pathway have largely had to combine education and work, given their financial realities and caregiving responsibilities. On average, 15% to 20% of the women in our program are mothers; most of them are single mothers. We know that obtaining a four-year degree is critical to women's career advancement, and yet there is much about our higher education system that is not designed for adult learners with families. We seek to improve the supports offered on our Education Pathway so that women, particularly single mothers, can more quickly and affordably attain their degree, while balancing the nearly impossible burden of what essentially amounts to three jobs: parent, employee, and student.

## **II. Scope of Work**

*Proposals should present an outline of the research and analysis to be conducted, a work plan, and a schedule for reports and deliverables. The following issues should be incorporated into or addressed in the design of proposals for this research project:*

Participants and alumnae from the following 6 cities will constitute the focus of this project: New York, Washington, DC, Chicago, Miami, Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area. The evaluation will focus on those who identify as women, particularly those who are low-income, women of color, from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and who are facing multiple barriers to higher education and family-sustaining employment.

While the evaluation's focus will be to better understand how to better support the development of women's authentic and empowered individual leadership, it should also surface implications for organizations and policy such that the root causes of inequities are addressed. To this end, the evaluation should address how organizational structures and policies can more effectively support women in sustaining and advancing to positions of greater influence. In addition, the study should identify implications of the findings on policy and advocacy priorities.

Relevant questions for the evaluation include, but are not limited to:

- Which aspects of Public Allies' core leadership development model, and in particular, the 10+1 Leadership Actions, are most effective in supporting women, and how can they be deepened or improved?
- Which aspects of the ten-month apprenticeship program are most useful to women's leadership development? What new approaches should be considered?
- What are the experiences of women in pursuing higher education during or after the apprenticeship, and how we can better support their degree attainment?

- What are the organizational policies and practices that contribute to women's success in the apprenticeship and advancing into roles of greater influence? What are the policy implications of those recommendations?

Proposed evaluation methodology should incorporate all of Public Allies' relevant internal data collected in the Leadership Journal, our proprietary database, which includes participant demographics, satisfaction surveys during the apprenticeship, and information about post-program career and higher education trajectories.

In addition, the evaluation should include additional quantitative and qualitative data collection (including, but not limited to, surveys, interviews and focus groups) that specifically address the research questions and evaluation goals.

### **III. Deliverables**

The final report is due in August, 2019. The report should be written for a non-technical audience and in a format conducive to wide distribution.

### **IV. Proposal Submission and Evaluation**

Proposals can be submitted to Erin Guest at [ering@publicallies.org](mailto:ering@publicallies.org).

The deadline for receipt is October 26 at 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time). Applicants will be notified by email by November 9, 2018.

Each proposal must contain all cost information, including travel, surveys, interviews and transcription.

### **V. Evaluator Requirements**

Evaluators must have at least three years of evaluation experience; a demonstrated track record in quantitative and qualitative evaluation; education and training in evaluation; and a demonstrated capacity to produce a product that can be disseminated widely. In addition, the ideal evaluator will have awareness of promising practices in leadership development, higher education attainment, and/or women's issues.

### **VI. Budget**

Public Allies will consider cost proposals up to \$60,000.

## **VII. RFP Completion Checklist**

This checklist is a summary of the required minimum components of the proposal submission:

- Cover letter
- Organizational capacity/researcher qualifications
- Proposal for timeline and approach
- Related project experience
- Cost proposal