

Community skills program



Investing in Black and African American communities and the organizations that serve them

The challenge

COVID-19 has created an economic crisis, forcing millions of Americans out of work. Many of the jobs lost won't come back, and those that do come back will require more digital skills.

Black and African American communities have been disproportionately affected by this crisis. On top of the sobering health impacts, these communities are bearing the brunt of the economic burden. Black and African American workers in the US are the mostly likely to have been laid off due to COVID, and they and many other marginalized communities have been more susceptible to shift reductions and lost income¹. COVID-19 is exacerbating historical inequities in our communities.

To address the acute, longstanding inequities in the US and provide pathways to improved economic opportunity for Black and African American communities, we must invest in programs to help them gain access to the digital skills needed for in-demand roles in a changing economy.

The opportunity

Community-based nonprofits are trusted partners in providing resources, supports, and services to meet the unique needs of the Black and African American community. Yet data show disparities in the funding available to Black- and African American-led nonprofits².

That's why Microsoft is investing \$15 million over three years in Black- and African American-led organizations—to accelerate their work providing skills development and economic opportunities in their communities.

We recognize that this is a small part of the long overdue investment needed to address the historical inequities in our society, but know that now is the time to use our voice and resources to advocate for change.

Learn more about our overall commitment to address racial injustice: aka.ms/address-racial-injustice

Together, we can support economic opportunity for everyone.

Our approach

With help from a steering committee of community leaders, we've developed a program to provide up to 50 selected nonprofits who serve the Black and African American community with:

 **Funding:** Three-year unrestricted cash grants of up to \$100,000 per year for up to 50 eligible US nonprofit organizations

 **Leadership development:** Led by an industry expert, we'll convene a community of practice to share learnings, strengthen networks, and offer professional development to the leaders of grantee organizations

 **Technology enablement:** To help grantees build capacity and advance their digital transformation, they'll have access to digital concierge and consulting services and to donated software and services from Microsoft

Who is eligible?

Program applications are open to US-based, 501(C)3 nonprofit organizations, or organizations supported by a 501(C)3 fiduciary organization that:

- ✓ Focus their work on and are led by members of the Black and African American community
- ✓ Provide digital and professional skills development leading to increased employment opportunities in tech or tech-enabled roles for opportunity youth (16-24 years old) and adult job seekers

See the full [eligibility requirements](#) before applying.



Partnership in action: i.c.stars

We partner with i.c.stars, a community-based nonprofit in Chicago, to support their work preparing people from non-technical backgrounds for jobs in IT and cybersecurity. Participants receive training in both digital and professional skills and have access to mentorship and wraparound services to help them complete the rigorous, four-month program.

i.c.stars maintains a 90% employment rate for its graduates. The average earning increase for a graduate is between 300-400% within six months of completing the program.



"i.c.stars makes you see another side of yourself that gives you the power to keep on going."

— Britne, i.c.stars graduate

Apply by September 30th, 2020

Submit a preliminary grant application at aka.ms/community-skills-application.

Questions? Review our [Frequently Asked Questions](#). Organizations will be notified on or before October 30, 2020 if they are being invited to submit a formal grant application.

¹ Public Viewpoint: COVID-19 Work and Education Survey: Strada Center for Consumer Insights. stradaeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Public-Viewpoint-Report-Week-4.pdf

² "Racial Equity and Philanthropy: Disparities in Funding for Leaders of Color Leave Impact on the Table" by Cheryl Dorsey, Jeff Bradach, Peter Kim. Study by Bridgespan and Echoing Green, May 2020