THE RAISING STEAM FOUNDATION *Private Foundation* *"Going further, faster — together."* https://raisingstmfdn.org **Profile prepared for:** Awesome State University	

Total Assets: $385M (2024) | **Grants Paid (2023):** $18,400,000 | **Avg Grant:** $296,000 | **Geographic Focus:** National

WORTH PURSUING?

✅ Pursue with Strategy

Mission Alignment	**Medium** — Workforce equity and first-generation economic mobility are strong mission fits. The foundation is explicitly skeptical of traditional 4-year institutions — but its grant history includes three awards to institution-housed workforce centers. Awesome State qualifies if the pitch is the program, not the university.
Accessibility	**Open** — Open LOI process with quarterly deadlines. No invitation required to apply. One of the more accessible large foundations in the workforce equity space — though competition is substantial.
Relationship Status	**Cold** — No prior relationship identified. No board overlap. Cold outreach to Harry King (Director of Workforce Pathways) is the starting point.
Ask Size Fit	**Strong Fit** — A target ask of $200,000–$250,000 sits comfortably within the foundation's $50K–$500K band and is appropriate for a first-time institutional applicant.
Geographic Fit	**Partial** — National funder. Earlier grant cycles showed Pacific/Mountain West preference, but recent grants show increasing national reach. Geography is not a barrier.
Competitive Landscape	**Crowded** — Workforce development is among the most competitive grant categories nationally. Universities face additional skepticism at Raising Steam — purpose-built intermediaries and community colleges are the preferred grantee type. Awesome State needs a specific, data-backed program pitch to stand out.

Bottom Line: The Raising Steam Foundation does not fund universities — but it does fund workforce intermediaries. Awesome State's Career Launch co-op program qualifies on those terms. The LOI needs to lead with first-generation outcomes, employer partnerships, and wage data — not credit hours, degrees, or academic programming. Cold outreach to Harry King with a specific program pitch is the right entry point.

PART 2 — RESEARCH DETAIL

Three years of grants reviewed — $18M annually across employer-education pipelines, workforce technology credentials, and first-generation career acceleration. Three prior grants to institution-housed workforce centers confirm this door is open, but competition from purpose-built intermediaries is stiff.

GIVING SNAPSHOT

2023 Grants Paid: $18,400,000 (62 grants)

2022 Grants Paid: $17,900,000 (58 grants)

2021 Grants Paid: $16,200,000 (51 grants)

Average Grant: $296,000

Median Grant: $165,000

Largest Grant on Record: $2,000,000 — National Workforce Innovation Network (2023); Capacity building: multi-year systems-change infrastructure grant

Multi-Year Grants: Yes — Multi-year grants (up to 3 years) are available for capacity-building awards above $500,000. Standard program grants are single-year with a renewal option. Renewal requires outcomes reporting — job placement rates and wage comparisons are the primary metrics.

GRANT TYPES

- ✗ **General Operating Support** — Not a current program area. The foundation believes unrestricted operating support is best provided by community foundations and local donors.
- ✓ **Program / Project Grants** — Primary grant type. Must be tied to measurable workforce outcomes — job placement rates and wage gains are the benchmark metrics.
- ✓ **Capacity Building** — Available for proven intermediaries with established track records. Grants up to $2M for multi-year organizational infrastructure.
- ✗ **Capital / Facilities**
- ✓ **Planning Grants** — Small planning grants ($25,000–$50,000) are available in the first quarter of each year for new program development. Recommended for first-time applicants without two years of outcomes data.
- ✗ **Challenge / Matching Grants**
- ✗ **Seed / Startup** — Prefer organizations with at least two years of measurable workforce outcomes.
- ✗ **Emergency / Rapid Response**
- ✗ **Fellowship / Individual Awards**

Program grants require a clear outcomes measurement plan at the LOI stage. Applicants without existing job placement or wage data should apply for a planning grant first — submitting without data is the most common reason first-time applications are declined.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

Stated Priorities

- Workforce pathways for first-generation and low-income workers
- Employer-education partnerships that create direct pipelines from training to employment
- Technology skills and credentialing for workers navigating economic transitions
- Data-driven workforce development — evidence-based programs with measurable outcomes

Actual Priorities (from public grant records)

- Employer-education pipeline programs — approximately 41% of grantmaking by dollar
- Workforce technology and digital credentials (The Clacks Initiative grants) — approximately 29%
- First-generation career acceleration — approximately 18%
- Research and data infrastructure — approximately 12%

⚠ The Clacks Initiative — the foundation's signature workforce technology credentialing program — accounts for nearly 30% of all grantmaking. This is more prominent in the 990-PF history than on the foundation's website, where it appears as one of four equal priorities. Grantees that incorporate technology and digital skills alongside traditional workforce programming tend to score better in competitive reviews.

Will Not Fund

- Traditional degree programs at four-year universities (explicit exclusion in grant guidelines)
- General operating support for any organization
- Healthcare workforce development (handled by a separate foundation program with a different cycle)
- Organizations without at least two years of measurable workforce outcomes

Typical Grantee: Purpose-built workforce intermediaries are the preferred grantee — employer consortia, sector-based training organizations, and community colleges with strong employer relationships. University-housed workforce centers are funded when they operate with clear independence from the academic degree structure and can show distinct outcomes data. Outcomes evidence (job placement rates, wage comparisons) is required at the LOI stage.

RECENT GRANT HISTORY

Source: 990-PF Schedule I (the required annual list of all grants paid), 2021–2023

- **King's Depot Workforce Training Center** (2023) — $185,000 | Oakland, CA

  Program grant — co-op partnership with Alameda Community College; first-generation student employer pipeline ★
- **National Workforce Innovation Network** (2023) — $2,000,000 | Washington, DC

  Capacity building — multi-year systems-change infrastructure
- **Eastside Career Launch** (2023) — $85,000 | Dallas, TX

  Program grant — first-generation career acceleration cohort
- **The Clacks Digital Skills Alliance** (2022) — $320,000 | Phoenix, AZ

  Program grant — workforce technology certification pipeline; 14 community organizations participating
- **Iron Girder Technical College** (2022) — $210,000 | Bakersfield, CA

  Capacity building — equipment modernization for advanced manufacturing workforce program ★
- **New Horizon Skills Institute** (2022) — $155,000 | Atlanta, GA

  Program grant — apprenticeship program expansion with employer partnership model
- **The Lipwig Center for Economic Mobility** (2021) — $340,000 | Chicago, IL

  Program grant — employer-education pipeline for justice-involved workers
- **Ankh Valley Workforce Collaborative** (2021) — $95,000 | Sacramento, CA

  Program grant — data-driven workforce intermediary; outcomes measurement infrastructure build
- **Pacific Workforce Partnership** (2021) — $290,000 | Portland, OR

  Program grant — employer consortium development; technology sector entry pathways ★

Comparable Orgs Funded: • **King's Depot Workforce Training Center** (Oakland) — most comparable: a co-op and employer pipeline serving first-generation students, housed within a college setting; the clearest signal that institution-based workforce programs can succeed here

- **Iron Girder Technical College** (Bakersfield) — educational institution funded for a workforce-specific capacity-building project; confirms the foundation will fund institutions when the program framing is correct
- **Pacific Workforce Partnership** (Portland) — employer consortium model; signals that employer engagement data matters more to reviewers than organizational type
- No four-year university appears in the 2021–2023 grant history — Awesome State would be a first. The King's Depot and Iron Girder grants are the evidence that institutional applicants can succeed.

Prior Giving to Client: No

★ = Organization comparable to Awesome State University

PART 3 — HOW TO PURSUE

Awesome State's application lives or dies on whether it can resist talking about degree programs. The pitch is the Career Launch co-op program only — frame it as a workforce intermediary that happens to be housed at a university, not a university asking for workforce funding.

GRANT STRATEGY

Probability Assessment: Medium

Recommended Program to Lead With: Awesome State's Career Launch co-op program — specifically the employer partnership pipeline serving first-generation students. Do not apply as a university. Apply as a workforce intermediary that runs an employer co-op program and happens to be housed at a university. The application should describe Career Launch as a standalone program with its own outcomes data, budget line, and employer relationships. The university affiliation is background, not the lead.

Recommended Ask Size: $225,000 — a program grant for Career Launch's employer partnership expansion. This is midrange for a first-time applicant and sized to deliver meaningful program reach without triggering the higher scrutiny that comes with requests above $300,000.

Timing: Target the September 15, 2026 LOI deadline — historically the strongest cycle for institutional applicants. This also allows Awesome State to compile a full two years of Career Launch outcomes data before submitting.

Relationship Entry Point: Cold LOI to Harry King (Director of Workforce Pathways) with a direct cover note. Reference the King's Depot grant as evidence of understanding the foundation's model. Open with outcomes data, not with the university's name.

LOI Emphasis: Open sentence: the number of first-generation students placed in jobs averaging $X above the regional median wage, through which employer partners. Then describe the program. The university affiliation belongs in paragraph three, not paragraph one.

Gaps to Address Before Applying

- Compile Career Launch job placement rates and wage outcome data for at least two cohorts before the September submission — this data is required and cannot be estimated
- Identify 3–5 employer partners willing to be named in the application — the foundation will likely want to call them
- Separate the Career Launch program budget from the broader university budget clearly — the application must demonstrate the program can be funded and tracked independently

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Red Flags

- ⚠ Any language suggesting the grant would support Awesome State's general academic programming
- ⚠ Framing Awesome State as a university throughout the LOI — it must read as a workforce

program application, not a higher education development ask

- ⚠ Missing outcomes data — if Career Launch doesn't have two full cohorts of placement and wage data, apply for a planning grant in the Q1 cycle instead

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→ Recommended Next Action: By August 15, 2026: compile Career Launch outcomes data (job placements, wage comparisons, employer partner list) and write a one-page plain-language program overview. Test it against Harry King's known priorities before drafting the full LOI. Target September 15 submission.

HOW TO APPLY

Submission Type: Open

Unsolicited Proposals Accepted: Yes

Letter of Intent (LOI) Required: Yes — Letter of Intent (LOI) submitted through the online grants portal. Required sections: organization overview (one page maximum), program description with target population and geography, measurable outcomes (specifically projected job placements and wage comparisons), requested amount with budget summary, and two years of prior program outcomes data. Organizations without prior outcomes data should apply for a planning grant first.

Full Proposal: Full proposals are by invitation following LOI review. Harry King (Director of Workforce Pathways) or Adora Belle Marchetti (Executive Director) will contact invited applicants directly. Full proposal templates are sent at invitation — do not submit a full proposal without one.

Grants Portal: https://raisingstmfdn.org/apply

Required Attachments

- IRS determination letter (confirms tax-exempt status)
- Most recent two years of audited financial statements
- Program outcomes data from the prior two years (job placement rates, wage comparisons)
- Board list

Word/Page Limits: LOI: 5 pages maximum through the online portal

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The portal closes at 5:00 PM Mountain Time on the deadline date — late submissions are not accepted. Harry King reviews all university and college applicants personally. His questions are practical: what specifically distinguishes this program from standard academic work, and what does the outcomes data actually show.

GRANT CYCLE & TIMING

Current Status: **Open** · Quarterly Cycle

LOI Deadline: March 15, June 15, September 15, and December 15

Full Proposal Deadline: By invitation — approximately 8 weeks after LOI notification

Next Cycle Opens: Rolling

Decision Timeline: LOI submitted → invitation or decline within 6 weeks → full proposal (if invited) → grant decision within 10 weeks of full proposal submission

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The September cycle has historically been the strongest for institutional applicants — Adora Belle Marchetti has noted at public convenings that fall applications receive more staff review time than Q1. This is a pattern, not a stated policy.

KEY CONTACTS

Harry King Director of Workforce Pathways Focus: Employer-education partnerships, co-op programs, first-generation pathways, institutional applicants	**Email:** hking@raisingstmfdn.org **Phone:** (720) 555-0281 Reviews all university and institutional applicants personally. Blunt, results-focused, no patience for academic language. Responds well to outcomes data and plain sentences. If the application includes phrases like 'transformative pedagogical approach' or 'holistic student development,' it will not advance. Lead with job placement rates and employer names.
Adora Belle Marchetti Executive Director Focus: Strategic direction, major grants above $500K, systems-change investments	**Email:** amarchetti@raisingstmfdn.org **Phone:** (720) 555-0194 Former community college continuing education administrator for 18 years; co-founder Effie Simnel's first executive hire. Understands the difference between workforce programming that produces results and academic programming repackaged as workforce development. Gets to yes faster than Harry King — but her yes requires that Harry King has already said yes.

RELATIONSHIP INTELLIGENCE

Board Overlap: No board overlap identified between the Raising Steam Foundation board and Awesome State University's trustees or development advisory council.

Shared Grantees: • Iron Girder Technical College (a Raising Steam grantee) is a community college — comparable organization type to Awesome State's professional and continuing education division

- No confirmed direct grantee overlap with Awesome State's partner network

Warm Intro Potential: 1. Check whether any Awesome State faculty or administrators have presented at Raising Steam-sponsored workforce convenings — the foundation hosts two public convenings per year and attendance lists are sometimes public

2. Identify whether any employer partners in Awesome State's co-op program have existing relationships with the foundation

3. In the absence of a warm intro, a well-targeted cold LOI to Harry King is appropriate — he values directness and will respond faster to a clear outcomes summary than to relationship-building

Values Alignment: • The foundation was founded by a tech entrepreneur and a community college administrator — a pragmatic, evidence-focused pairing. No political giving history identified.

- The explicit skepticism of traditional higher education is a values position based on outcomes evidence, not ideology
- Awesome State's application should use pragmatic outcomes language — job placements, wage gains, employer names. Social justice framing is not wrong, but the foundation responds most quickly to numbers.

Known Deal-Breakers: • Application that positions Awesome State as a university seeking academic program support

- Missing outcomes data — job placement rates and wage comparisons are required; submitting without them is the most common reason first-time applications are declined
- Academic jargon anywhere in the LOI or program description
- Request for general operating support

Reputation in Sector: Regarded as the most practically-minded large foundation in the workforce equity space — high bar, data-driven, and unusually skeptical of credential inflation. Grantees describe Harry King as demanding but honest. Once in the portfolio, Raising Steam is a reliable multi-year partner with low administrative burden. Getting in requires real outcomes data and a pitch that sounds nothing like a university development ask.