

Employer Funding Guide

How to Get Your Company to Sponsor Your Participation

This guide walks you through the process of securing company sponsorship for the Transformation Lab—from identifying the right funding sources to making the business case to your manager, HRBP, or L&D leader.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE RIGHT FUNDING SOURCE

Most participants secure sponsorship by tapping into existing leadership development budgets. Here are the most common sources:

Leadership Development & Executive Education

What it covers: Leadership programs, executive coaching, cohort-based learning, and high-potential development

Who approves: Your manager, HR Business Partner, or L&D/Talent Development leader

Annual allocation: Many companies budget \$5K–\$15K per senior leader for external development

Your ask: *“I’d like to use my leadership development allocation for the Transformation Lab.”*

Leadership Advancement or Talent Development Budgets

What it covers: Programs that accelerate the progression of high-potential leaders into senior and executive roles

Who approves: Head of Talent/Leadership Development, HR leader, or executive sponsor for leadership programs

Your ask: *“This program directly supports the company’s goals to build a strong pipeline of future executives.”*

Executive Coaching Budgets

What it covers: 1:1 coaching, leadership advisors, and executive development with a coaching component

Who approves: Your manager, HR, or Talent Development

Your ask: *“The Lab includes executive coaching as part of the cohort experience, so this would replace or supplement my current coaching allocation.”*

High-Potential or Succession Planning Budgets

What it covers: Development for leaders identified as ready for promotion or expanded scope

Who approves: Your manager, HRBP, or Talent/Succession Planning leader

Your ask: *“I’m on the succession plan for [role], and this program will accelerate my readiness.”*

Departmental or Business Unit Professional Development

What it covers: Team-level or department-level learning budgets

Who approves: Your direct manager or department head

Your ask: *“I’d like to use part of our team’s professional development budget to participate in this program.”*

Conference or Training Reallocation

What it covers: Shifting budget from conferences, workshops, or other one-off events

Who approves: Your manager

Your ask: *“Instead of attending [conference], I’d like to reallocate that budget to the Transformation Lab, which will have more direct impact on my current work.”*

STEP 2: BUILD YOUR BUSINESS CASE

Your company will sponsor you if they see clear alignment between the program and your role, their strategic priorities, and your development trajectory. Here's how to frame it:

Connect to Your Current Work

Don't say:

This would be good for my career.

Do say:

I'm currently leading [specific transformation initiative], and this program will give me frameworks and peer insights to navigate the cross-functional complexity and stakeholder politics I'm managing right now.

Examples:

- "I'm leading our digital transformation roadmap, and the Lab focuses specifically on enterprise-level transformation leadership—something I'm doing every day."
- "I'm managing a \$50M change portfolio with 12 stakeholders across 4 business units. The program includes stakeholder strategy workshops and peer councils with leaders managing similar complexity."

Tie to Company Priorities

What companies care about:

- Leadership bench strength and succession planning
- Retaining high-potential diverse talent
- Building transformation and change leadership capabilities
- Developing executive presence and strategic influence

Frame your ask around their language:

- "This supports our goal of building a stronger leadership pipeline for women of color."
- "This directly maps to the leadership competencies we've identified as critical for VP-level roles."
- "Transformation leadership is a key capability gap we've noted in our talent reviews—this program addresses that."

Highlight ROI

- Immediate application: "I'll apply what I learn to [current initiative], which means the company sees value within the first month."
- Retention signal: "Investing in my development shows the company is committed to my growth here—which matters when I'm getting recruited elsewhere."
- Transferable value: "I'll bring back frameworks and strategies I can share with my team and other emerging leaders."

STEP 3: CHOOSE YOUR APPROACH

Option A: Direct Ask to Your Manager

Best for: Leaders with strong manager relationships and clear development conversations already in place.

Sample language:

"I want to talk about a development opportunity I'm considering. I've been accepted into the Transformation Lab, a cohort for senior women of color leading enterprise transformation work. It's a [duration] program focused on executive influence, stakeholder strategy, and navigating the complexity I'm managing with [current initiative].

The investment is [cost], and I'd like to use my leadership development budget to cover it. It's designed for working leaders—sessions are [time commitment]—so it won't impact my deliverables. I'll bring back insights and frameworks that apply directly to [specific project or team challenge].

Can we move forward with approving this?"

Option B: Partner with HR or L&D

Best for: Leaders in organizations with formal development planning processes or where HR drives sponsorship decisions.

Sample language:

"I'm working on my development plan for this year, and I'd like to include the Transformation Lab as my primary leadership development investment. It aligns with the competencies we've identified in my IDP around [executive presence/stakeholder management/transformation leadership], and it's designed specifically for women of color at the senior level.

Can you help me navigate the approval process and identify the right budget to pull from?"

Option C: Use the Sponsorship Request Template

Best for: Leaders in larger organizations, formal approval processes, or when you need to make a written business case.

What to do:

1. Download the Sponsorship Request Template (available on the Transformation Lab website)
2. Customize it with your specific role, initiatives, and company priorities
3. Submit to your manager, HRBP, or L&D leader as part of your development plan or budget request

STEP 4: ADDRESS COMMON OBJECTIONS

“We don't have budget right now.”

"I understand budget is tight. A few options: (1) Can we reallocate from my conference or training budget? (2) Can we split the cost across two fiscal periods? (3) Can we pull from DEI or high-potential development budgets instead of my department allocation?"

“How do I know this will be worth it?”

"The program is built for leaders doing the exact work I'm doing—enterprise transformation in complex, matrixed environments. I'll be in a cohort with other senior leaders from Fortune 500 and high-growth companies, and I'll bring my real cases into the room. I'm happy to provide a mid-program update and a post-program summary of what I've applied."

“Can't you just do this on your own time?”

"I could, but this is directly related to my current role and responsibilities. Investing in my ability to lead transformation work more effectively benefits the company immediately. It's also a retention signal—when the company invests in my development, it shows commitment to my growth here."

“Why this program and not something else?”

"I've reviewed several executive leadership programs, and this is the only one built specifically for women of color leading enterprise transformation. It's not generic leadership theory—it's designed around the real complexity and identity dynamics I navigate every day. The peer group, the coaching, and the content are all tailored to where I am and what I'm managing."

“What if you leave after we invest in you?”

"I'm asking for this investment because I'm committed to growing here. If the company doesn't invest in my development, that's actually when I'm more likely to leave. This is about setting me up to take on more scope and bigger roles within [Company Name]."

STEP 5: FOLLOW THROUGH

Confirm the Details

- Get written approval or a PO number if your company requires it
- Clarify which budget the funds are coming from
- Confirm the approval covers the full program cost

Communicate Expectations

- Let your manager or sponsor know the program schedule and time commitment
- Offer to provide a mid-program update or insight share
- Clarify what kind of post-program deliverable they'd like (summary, presentation, team share-out)

Show the Value

- Apply what you learn to current work in real time
- Share relevant frameworks, insights, or strategies with your team or leadership
- Document your outcomes: promotions, scope expansion, stakeholder wins, confidence shifts

SAMPLE EMAIL TEMPLATE

Subject: Development Investment Request: Transformation Lab

Hi [Manager/HRBP Name],

I want to discuss a leadership development opportunity that aligns closely with my current work and growth trajectory.

I've been accepted into the Transformation Lab, a cohort-based program for senior women of color leading enterprise transformation initiatives. The program runs [dates] and is designed specifically for leaders managing the kind of cross-functional, high-stakes work I'm doing with [current initiative/portfolio].

Why this program:

- It's built for leaders doing transformation work at scale—exactly what I'm managing now
- It includes executive coaching, peer councils, and practical frameworks I can apply immediately
- It addresses the intersection of identity and leadership in a way that's directly relevant to my experience

Investment: [Cost]

Time commitment: [Details]

Recommended funding source: [Leadership development/DEI/coaching budget]

I'd like to move forward with this as my primary development investment for [year]. I'm happy to provide more details, share the sponsorship request template, or connect you with the program team.

Let me know if you have questions or need additional information.

Thanks, [Your Name]

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Sponsorship Request Template: A customizable Word document you can submit to your manager or HR
- Program Overview: Visit www.continuumtransformation.com/transformation-lab for full program details
- Questions? Email employerfunding@continuumtransformation.com

You are not asking for a favor. You are asking for an investment in leadership capability that benefits both you and the company.

Most participants secure full sponsorship. Use this guide, be clear about the value, and advocate for the development you've earned.

Ready to Get Started?

Apply now or contact us with questions.

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