



## WILL Empower Program Backgrounder for the Emerging Leader Cohort

“We’ve been to the future, and we win” – with women!”

### Why focus on women’s leadership now?

There is a profound cultural shift happening with women and work. Women are at the epicenter of today’s evolving economy, representing the majority of service sector and “non-traditional” workers. In fact, women will soon be the majority of union members and currently represent much of the growth in traditional labor organizations.

Movements for worker justice are, however, under attack even as new formations in worker organization extend the reach into more communities of color, immigrant and U.S. born workers. We are in a new era of rights consciousness for racial justice, immigrant justice, and for ending sexual harassment/assault. Increasingly women – and specifically women of color – are leading today’s workers’ organizations. It is essential that we recruit, nurture, and retain the next generation of women leaders in labor so that we have greater and more inclusive gains in the future.

### What is WILL Empower?

[WILL Empower](#) (Women Innovating Labor Leadership) is a multi-pronged initiative designed to identify, nurture, and train a new generation of women leaders who work to improve workers’ wellbeing. It is a joint project of Rutgers University’s Center for Innovation in Working Organization and Georgetown University’s Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor and the Legacy Project of the Berger-Marks Foundation.

### What is the Emerging Leader Cohort Program?

The WILL Empower Emerging Leader Cohort Program convenes a **dynamic and diverse cohort** of approximately 16-20 women who experience and shape a leadership development program that **cultivates political voice, enhances organizer sensibilities, and provides mentoring**. This program connects an **intergenerational network of women leaders** in disparate areas of the workers’ movement including public/private sector unions, worker centers, and other forms of worker justice organizations.

Participants will range from elected/executive leaders, activists and staff with experience ranging from strategic campaigns, policy, communications, research, and of course organizing for worker justice. The cohort meets in person for **two retreats within a 12-month period**. The inaugural gathering will be held April 11 - 14, 2019, in the Washington, D.C. area. [Applications](#) are due **January 31, 2019**.

**Program Components:**

New Era of Women & Movement Building	Personal Leadership Planning
Race/Gender Analysis in Movement Work	Mentoring Program
Future of Work/Workers & Labor	Strategic Networking
	Resilience and Balance

**Eligibility Criteria:**

- Currently working in a worker justice organization, including traditional public and private sector unions, worker centers, and other racial and economic justice organizations where workers' well-being is central to the mission;
- Under 35 years in age and / or 1-5 years working in the movement;
- Demonstrated commitment to improving the conditions of women's working lives;
- Willing and able to meet the requirements of the program as listed below;

*\*The term "women" encompasses cisgender, transgender, gender non-conforming, those who self-identify as women and across a range of gender expression.*

**Program Commitments:**

First Retreat – April 11 – 14, 2019  
Second Retreat- September/October 2019 (TBD)  
3-4 Online Webinars  
Full Participation in Mentoring Program  
Personal Leadership Plan

**To Apply:**

Complete the [application form](#) and be sure to upload a signed leave request form indicating your supervisor's agreement to support your full participation in the program, if applicable.

**Tuition Costs:**

Full tuition costs for the program are **\$2500**.

**For additional information or to inquire about program subsidies, please send an email to [willempower.labor@gmail.com](mailto:willempower.labor@gmail.com).**