

Request for Proposals

Research Partner for Solutions Learning Implementation Grant

The Postsecondary Success (PS) team is issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to engage a research partner that will collect data on the implementation of evidence-based solutions in digital learning, advising and developmental education reform. The partner will collect information that helps funders, service providers, and institutions better understand the barriers and opportunities to implementing and scaling evidence-based solutions. Specifically, the partner will collect data to illustrate the opportunities and challenges for each strategy in providing equitable value and success for Black, Latino, and Indigenous students and students from low-income backgrounds in higher education.

Overview

The Postsecondary Success strategy at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is committed to increasing student success in education after high school and eliminating race and income as predictors of student success. For over a decade, we and our partners have been working closely with a diverse set of colleges and universities seeking to transform themselves to dramatically improve outcomes for today's students – especially Black, Latino, and Indigenous students and students from low-income backgrounds.

The Postsecondary Success strategy is specifically interested in illustrating the potential for partners, institutions and other networks to both develop and deliver strategies for Black, Latino, and Indigenous students and students from low-income backgrounds to be successful. This focus involves the development and refinement of affordable and evidence-based solutions that institutions can adopt as well as the study of solution providers' capacity to enable institutions to implement and scale these solutions.

Over the next four years, the research partner will collaborate with relevant stakeholders to develop and execute an annual research agenda and to share these findings with foundation staff, service providers and institutions. This research will identify opportunities for scaling these solutions as well as challenges that require further interrogation and investment.

Our Process and Timeline:

We will identify the research partner through an open request for concepts (RFP). The RFP will be released on **May 16, 2022**; the deadline for proposal submission will be **May 30, 2022 at 5pm ET**. Promising applicants will be invited to submit a full application on **June 16, 2022**, with full applications due by **July 1, 2022 at 5pm ET**. The selected organization/partnership will be named in **August 2022**. The selected partner will begin a four-year grant engagement starting in **October 1, 2022**.

Scope of Work for Research Partner

The PS team has articulated the goal that hundreds more colleges help millions more students obtain high value degrees or credentials while closing gaps in student success by income and race. To achieve this goal, the PS team is committed to working with partners to support institutional transformation at scale. BMGF has made investments to build an environment where diverse colleges and universities are supported to work together to learn and implement changes faster. To support this work, BMGF has also invested in Solution Networks Intermediaries (SNIs) to promote the dissemination, implementation and improvement of solutions associated with increased student success. The Foundation has chosen to focus on Developmental Education Reform, Advising and Digital Learning, as these 3 solutions play complementary roles and involve deep institutional capacity-building that spans the student journey from matriculation to graduation.

BMGF's PS team is looking for an entity to conduct research that facilitates learning amongst key stakeholders, including: Solution Network Intermediaries (SNIs), BMGF Solutions Program Officers, institutions and service providers.

The selected entity would serve as a research and thought partner for the SNIs, Solutions Program Officers, institutions and service providers to better understand the implementation of these solutions. In this role, the entity will be responsible for co-creating an annual research agenda with the key stakeholders, executing the research agenda, and disseminating findings. This includes providing the functions listed below, in addition to being comfortable and flexible with ambiguity as we continue to refine our approach to supporting institutional transformation at scale. The research partner will prioritize racial and socioeconomic equity in all efforts to guide the research vision and strategy, and to ensure that all key stakeholders keep racial equity at the center of their strategies and actions. Potential research partners must be able to build relationships with and facilitate data collection in priority institutions (Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Primarily Black Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institution and other Minority Serving Institutions).

Qualifications and RFP Responses

- 1. Work with key stakeholders to develop an annual research agenda**
- 2. Enable regular and active engagement of all key stakeholders**
- 3. Collect data to assess implementation variation of the solution for Black, Latinx, Indigenous students and students experiencing poverty**
- 4. Disseminate insights that inform grant making, provision of services and that augment the field's knowledge of Solution implementation**

Please make sure that your **2-3 page concept paper** addresses the following qualifications and questions. The "Assessment Criteria" section provides additional context on how applicants will be assessed.

Required Qualifications

1. Deep understanding of the U.S. higher education landscape. A focus on developmental education, digital learning and advising is helpful.
2. Racial and socioeconomic equity expertise within the context of U.S. higher education landscape.
3. Demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion as evidenced by representative leadership, project staffing, and other organizational leadership (i.e., board or an advisory group).
4. Comfort with ambiguity and ability to be agile as the solutions continues to evolve.
5. An understanding of market measurement data.
6. Experience collecting qualitative and survey data.
7. Experience with probability and non-probability sampling.
8. The ability to create a culture of, and structures to support, continuous learning for solutions providers and Foundation staff.
9. Facilitation in support of productive and learning-forward dialogue.
10. Experience developing a learning agenda.
11. Ability to build insights that inform grantmaking.
12. Highly effective skills as a communicator, listener, negotiator, problem solver, advocator, and relationship and consensus builder.

Questions to Address Within Proposals. Please:

1. Describe why you want to partner with the key stakeholders to develop and execute a research agenda
2. Describe how you would approach this work, providing details that align with the outlined scope of work
3. Describe your prior experience working on racial and socioeconomic equity-related issues in higher education, with specific reference to supporting institutional transformation process
4. Identify the specific focus population(s) your work has addressed (e.g., Black, Latino/a/x, Indigenous), the number of years served, and how your success and challenges in supporting those populations inform the activities in this proposal. Provide details on how you have supported racial outcomes (e.g., antiracist approaches to community building)
6. Describe your prior experience facilitating, scoping, and planning a research agenda
7. Describe your experience using data to facilitate learning amongst relevant stakeholders
8. Describe how you would staff this effort, and how the perspectives of proposed staff and organizational leadership will support the goals of racial and socioeconomic equity and represent the perspectives of those you are serving
9. Describe your prior experience working with higher education institutions, associations, organizations, or initiatives at the state and national level

10. Describe your prior work experience, if any, with any of the Solution Network members, and/or describe your prior work experience, if any, with, or grants from, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation or other philanthropic organizations.

11. Share any known risks, issues, concerns, or conflicts your organization may have related to this work

Assessment Criteria

Rubrics Categories

Racial & Socioeconomic Equity Expertise – Applicant demonstrates experience studying equitable success and value outcomes for Black, Latino/a/x, Indigenous students, and students from low-income backgrounds in higher education

Research Agenda
Ability to identify shared learning goals and articulate a research agenda

Facilitation
Ability to facilitate active engagement of the key stakeholders

Inclusive Culture
Ability to build a culture that fosters relationships, trust, and respect across members and that supports aligned action

Research Expertise
Ability to conduct actionable and equity-focused research in a timely manner using methodologies that meet the needs of key stakeholders

Institutional Transformation
Understanding of how to center racial and socioeconomic equity in the institutional transformation process

Selection Committee

The research partner will be selected by a committee of 13 internal and external stakeholders who represent the perspectives of key stakeholders. All reviewers will have a chance to recuse themselves from the selection process if there is a conflict of interest.

Learn More

The foundation hosted an informational webinar on May 12, 2022 and we will be hosting three office hours to provide information and answer questions about this opportunity and the selection process.

Webinar information: View the webinar presentation and Download the webinar slides [here](#)

[Office Hours 1](#): Tuesday, May 17, 2022 at 3pm ET

[Office Hours 2](#): Wednesday, May 18, 2022 at 12pm ET

[Office Hours 3](#): Thursday, May 19, 2022 at 3pm ET

For more information, contact us at solutions.measurement@gatesfoundation.org with any questions.