

Strong Start to Finish Webinar

Overview

Framing goal: Achieve a significant, quantifiable increase in the number of students completing degrees, licenses and certificates with labor market value.

Grant goal: Dramatically improve the number and proportion of low-income students, students of color and returning adults completing college math and English courses and entering a program of study in their first academic year.

Funding partners: The Kresge Foundation, Great Lakes, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Three streams of work:

1. Scaling Sites: Student success strategies and system change
2. Knowledge Management and Development: measure and support ROI
3. Active Network: collaboratively solve challenges and share learning

Selecting Scaling Sites

September 22 – LOIs due

Mid-October – Six sites invited to submit full proposals

November 30 – Proposals due

Late January – Announce 3-5 selected sites

March – Network convening

LOI Key Elements

Project Lead

- Entity that submits the LOI and would be grantee (e.g., institution leading consortia)
- State how the project lead will work with and across the leadership team to achieve desired results

Grant Manager

- Fiscal agent or designated 501(c)(3) organization that will receive and manage funds.

Leadership Team

- Has final authority over the project
- Sets direction of the project and goals
- Clear articulation of leadership team membership and why they are the right individuals to move the work forward
- Comprised of individuals with appropriate authority to execute work plans across participating institutions
- Chart/listing with titles is fine at this stage; no need for full bios or lengthy articulation of specific roles; this information will come in the full proposal, if invited

Goals for Student Achievement and System Transformation

- Quantifiable, disaggregated (low-income students, students of color, returning adults) outcome goals that will be achieved by students completing college math and English courses and entering a program of study in their first academic year
- Understand overarching project goal
- Scope and breadth is important – how many students anticipated to be reached in both number and proportion – size does matter (because goal is scalability)
- What system changes may be needed to achieve goal; what momentum is being built on that supports future success?

How Goals Will Be Achieved

- How will you accomplish your outcome goals?
- What practices grounded in core principles will be leveraged; what actions will be taken?
- How will the work build on momentum and positive trends?
- Inspired by breakthroughs in student learning and system design principles

Technical Assistance Provider(s)

- Identify local, state, or national technical assistance organizations that may be engaged to support execution of the project and goal achievement
- Example: XXX partner will support system-level policy change

Common Metrics

- Capacity to report and collect: credit accumulation, credit completion ratio, retention rate, gateway course completion, program of study selection, number and timing of gateway math and English courses, locally-defined student- and institution/system-level equity metrics
- Not looking for data in the LOI, just evidence of capacity to track and report on this data

Network Activity

Looking for early indication of willingness to bring project leadership team to March 2018 convening

Key activities of SSTF network

- Core site-based partners, other non-profit partners in policy, practice, etc.
- One annual in-person convening
- No annual dues

Budget

Single-figure estimating total expenditures for the three-year period (March 2018 to February 2021)

Up to \$2.25 million over three years

Funding at minimum to support three sites at full amount

Submission Process

Due 6:00 p.m. MT on 9/22

Submit form electronically

Will receive automatic confirmation that upload was successful

Frequent Questions

What does Strong Start to Finish mean by “scale”?

- Reaching vast majority of students within defined scope of proposed project
- **Large numbers** of students
- Unlikely that an individual campus will be able to compete with a state or large region because numbers is a focus of impact

Who are appropriate applicants?

- Flexibility in primary applicants – would need to be a regional consortium at a minimum
- Most important is who will serve on the leadership team
- Coherence across college of institutions/campuses who would be doing the work
- Demonstrated track record of successful partnership implementing developmental education reforms targeting the populations of interest to SSTF

How will ECS decide on who to invite to the full proposal round?

- Basic compliance check
- Examine the scale of impact proposed – literally the number of students to be served and feasibility of meeting those goals
- Confer with chairs of the funders and advisory boards
- Plan to invite approximately 6 sites to submit a full proposal

What assumed costs should be placed in the budget for the LOI? Is the budget a total project budget or just the request from STTF?

- Single topline anticipated budget REQUEST for the proposed line of work
- No additional breakdown of leveraged resources, but this information will be requested in a full proposal

Webinar Participant Questions

Is there an overall project evaluation or will each site be required to complete an evaluation? Will ECS match researchers to project sites or will sites identify their own evaluator?

- Reporting requirements but not formal outsourced evaluation for each site
- Shared problem-solving, rather than a summative evaluation
- ECS is currently raising funds for overall evaluation
- Would be good to include technical assistance providers in

Should proposals focus on all of the targeted groups or choose one (i.e., low income, students of color, returning adults)?

- In striving to meet the vast majority of students, it would be best to serve all three groups rather than focus on one of these targeted populations.

Are there any restrictions regarding how the money may be spent (e.g., student scholarships, overhead)?

- At time of inviting full proposals, parameters will be defined. Do not be concerned with this question for the LOI.

Is there a specific amount of local funding required for the overall project budget?

- No dollar amount requirement, but they would like to see leveraged resources during the final application

Will multiple entities from a single state be invited to submit a full proposal or only one from each state?

- Would be surprised if more than one proposal were invited from a specific geographic location because they want to see a nationwide network.
- Review process will determine this for sure though.

Is an institution limited in the number of consortia it may belong (e.g., multiple applications)?

- No, but most appropriate for institutional leadership to pick ONE consortium to be a part of in responding to the LOI.

How will regional consortia be evaluated relative to state-level networks (i.e., regional consortia having smaller student population than a statewide system)?

- Looking at proportionality too – vast majority of students in a consortium. And how realistic is this plan?
- Will not simply just choose the proposals serving the largest numbers overall. Proportion matters too.

Can organizations just beginning with a first cohort apply for funding?

- The initiative should build on momentum for efforts already underway.
- Not for start-up activities.

What does “system-level investment” mean?

- Funds that have already been appropriated to support developmental education reforms or will be coming on line during the STTF project period?

How would you view a proposal including a consortium of colleges in which some colleges are further along than others?

- Would want to have a higher proportion of leading institutions and fewer that are just beginning.