TRIVIUM CONSULTING:
FUNDING OPPORTUNITY BRIEF

Department of Education
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
Education Innovation and Research (EIR) Program - Early-Phase Grants
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Summary 2023

Notice of Intent to Apply Deadline (Strongly Encouraged but Not Required): June 22, 2023
Application Deadline: August 1, 2023
Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: October 2, 2023

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Program Basics
The goal of the Department of Education's (Department's) EIR program is to create, develop, implement, replicate, or take to scale entrepreneurial, evidence-based, field-initiated innovations to improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students and to rigorously evaluate such innovations. EIR is designed to generate and validate solutions to persistent education challenges and to support the expansion of those solutions to serve substantially more students.

Early-phase grants provide funding for the development, implementation, and feasibility testing of a program, which prior research suggests has promise, for the purpose of determining whether the program can successfully improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students.

This year's NOFO includes one new Absolute Priority funding category, in addition to retaining those from last year. This year's NOFO also includes new Competitive Preference Priorities.

Eligible Recipients
    a. A Local Education Agency (LEA);
    b. A State Education Agency (SEA);
    c. The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)
    d. A consortium of SEAs or LEAs;
    e. A nonprofit organization; and
    f. An LEA, an SEA, the BIE, or a consortium described in clause (d), in partnership with—
            i.   A nonprofit organization;
            ii. A business;
            iii. An educational service agency; or
            iv. An Institution of Higher Education (IHE).

Award Duration
    ● Up to 60 months (5 project years)

Award Amount
    ● *Estimated Award Ceiling:* $4,000,000.
    ● *Estimated Available Funds for the program:* $273,000,000.
    Entities may submit applications for different projects for more than one competition
    (Early-phase, Mid-phase, and Expansion). The maximum new award amount a grantee may
    receive under these three competitions, taken together, is $15,000,000.

Matching Requirement
    ● Recipients must provide, from Federal, State, local, or private sources an amount equal to
        10 percent of funds provided under the grant to carry out activities supported by the
        grant.
    ● These funds may be provided in cash or through in-kind contributions.
    ● Grantees must include a budget showing their matching contributions to the budget
    amount of EIR grant funds and must provide evidence of their matching contributions for
    the first year of the grant in their grant applications.
    ● The matching requirement may be waived on on a case-by-case basis, upon a showing of
    exceptional circumstances, such as:
        (i) The difficulty of raising matching funds for a program to serve a rural area;
        (ii) The difficulty of raising matching funds in areas with a concentration of LEAs or
        schools with a high percentage of students aged 5 through 17 who are:
                (A) In poverty, as counted in the most recent census data, or;
                (B) Eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch.
                (C) Whose families receive assistance under the State program funded under part
                A of title IV of the Social Security Act; or
                (D) Who are eligible to receive medical assistance under the Medicaid program;
                and
        (iii) The difficulty of raising funds on Tribal land.

Absolute Priorities: Rationale Requirement and 4 Funding Categories
- ● The program has five Absolute Priorities.
- ● Early-phase Grants *must* address the first of these priorities (Demonstrates a Rationale), *as well as one of the other four*, each of which constitute their own funding categories ("General," "Promoting Equity, in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: STEM", "Meeting Student Social, Emotional, and Academic Needs," and "Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Educator Recruitment and Retention").

The Absolute Priorities are
1. *Demonstrates a Rational:*
   a. Early-phase applicants must submit prior evidence of effectiveness that "demonstrates a rationale."
   b. This means that a key project component is informed by research or evaluation findings that suggest the project component is likely to improve relevant outcomes.

2. *Field-Initiated Innovations –General.* This is the first of four funding categories. Activities include:
   a. Projects that align with the general purpose of the EIR program: To create and take to scale entrepreneurial, evidence-based, field-initiated innovations to improve student achievement and attainment.

3. *Field-Initiated Innovations—Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: STEM.* This is the second of four funding categories. Activities include:
   a. Innovations to improve student achievement and attainment in the science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) education field.
   b. Promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students in one or more of the following educational settings:
      i. Early learning programs.
      ii. Elementary school.
      iii. Middle school.
      iv. High school.
      v. Career and technical education programs.
      vi. Out-of-school-time settings.
      vii. Alternative schools and programs.
      viii. Juvenile justice system or correctional facilities.
   c. Examine the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, including rigorous, engaging, and well-rounded approaches to learning that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status and prepare students for college, career, and civic life, including STEM/computer science coursework.

4. *Field-Initiated Innovations—Meeting Student Social, Emotional, and Academic Needs.* This is the third of four funding categories. Activities include:
   a. Promoting high-quality social and emotional learning projects.
   b. Providing support for students' social and emotional needs,
      i. to benefit student wellbeing, and
      ii. to support their academic success.
5. *Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Educator Recruitment and Retention.* This is the fourth of four funding categories. Activities include:
   a. Elevating and strengthening the educator workforce in ways that prioritize innovation in recruiting and retaining educators in supporting high-need students.
   b. Addressing fundamental challenges schools face in recruiting and retaining qualified educators, including addressing the additional responsibilities, burdens, and challenges educators have faced throughout the pandemic and may persist beyond it.

Selection Criteria

An application may earn up to a total of 100 points based on the following factors. Descriptions of the activities constituting these factors are provided. An additional 5 to 7 points may be awarded for addressing Competitive Preference Priorities, which are discussed further below.

A. Significance (20 points).
   1. The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies
B. Quality of the Project Design (30 points).
   1. The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework. (10 points)
   2. The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. (5 points)
   3. The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs. (15 points)
C. Quality of Project Personnel (10 points).
   1. The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.
   2. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.
D. Quality of the Management Plan (10 points).
   1. Adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed

project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

E. Quality of the Project Evaluation (30 points).
1. The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook. (20 points)
2. The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (5 points)
3. The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. (5 points)

Competitive Preference Priorities:
- These are not required but are strongly encouraged.
- If an applicant chooses to address one or both competitive preference priorities, the applicant must explicitly identify, in the project narrative section of the application, the response to the competitive preference priorities it chooses to address.
- All applicants have the option of addressing Competitive Preference Priority 1
- Only applicants addressing Absolute Priority 5 have the option to address Competitive Preference Priority 2.
- Up to 7 additional points may be awarded depending on how well the following priorities are addressed.

1. *Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Implementers and Partners (5 points).* Projects responding to this competitive preference priority demonstrate how the project will be implemented by or in partnership with one or more of the following entities:
   a. Community colleges (CCs).
   b. Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs).
   c. Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs).
   d. Minority-serving institutions (MSIs).
2. *Supporting a Diverse Educator Workforce and Professional Growth to Strengthen Student Learning (up to 2 points) (Only available to applicants addressing Absolute Priority 5)*
   - Projects that are designed to increase the proportion of well-prepared, diverse, and effective educators, with a focus on serving underserved students.
   - This is achieved through building or expanding high-poverty school districts' capacity to hire, support, and retain an effective and diverse educator workforce, through adopting or expanding comprehensive, strategic career and compensation systems that provide competitive compensation and include opportunities for educators to serve as mentors and instructional coaches, or to take on additional leadership roles and responsibilities for which educators are compensated.

<u>Steps applicants can initiate now that NOFO is released:</u>
1. Engage in a meeting with Trivium to discuss project scope.
2. Decide on a key project component which demonstrates a rationale
   a. Gather evidence that suggests the project component is likely to improve relevant outcomes.
3. Register applicant organization in SAM.
4. Begin to sketch project design, emphasizing:
   a. Demonstrable rationale for key project components.
   b. Potential for focus on computer science education for underrepresented groups OR meeting student social, emotional, and academic needs OR strengthening the educator workforce .
   c. Partnerships with CCs, HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs.
   d. Funding needs, and availability of external funding.