

## **National Research Collaborative on Competency-Based Education & Learning**

Request for Proposals Supplemental Document: Frequently Asked Questions

*Updated November 21, 2018*

Thank you for submitting questions about our RFP for the National Research Collaborative on Competency-Based Education & Learning, hosted by the American Institutes for Research. This document contains responses to our frequently asked questions. The deadline for proposal submission is at 5:00 p.m. ET on December 7, 2018 and finalists will be notified by January 23, 2019. Of course, if you need additional details following review of this document and the RFP, please reach out to us at [postseccebe@air.org](mailto:postseccebe@air.org) as soon as possible. Thank you for your interest, and we look forward to reviewing your proposals.

### **Partners and Review Process**

#### **What are the expectations of partners?**

All NRC partners will be expected to participate actively in this community of researchers, including virtual attendance at a minimum of two events per year (e.g., webinars, research presentations), sharing progress and findings with other members of the collaborative, and helping build connections through personal and/or professional networks whenever possible. In-person meeting and travel opportunities are optional, but not required.

#### **What are the benefits to partners?**

Benefits available to all partners include:

- Connections with a community of other researchers to facilitate collaborative research, idea refinement, and support for addressing research challenges;
- Connections to institutions who may be ideal subjects of study (or have available data);
- Technical assistance with research methods; and
- Amplification of any research findings or products.

For funded partners only, the additional benefit is financial support.

#### **What if I'm not ready to be a full partner?**

Potential partners who are interested, but not yet ready to conduct research (as determined by the potential partner or the reviewers), are encouraged to reach out to us at [postseccebe@air.org](mailto:postseccebe@air.org). Based on early questions, we are considering creating an "interest group" for those interested in refining their questions and approaches if there is sufficient demand.

#### **What does the review process entail? Is it the same for all projects?**

All potential partner proposals will be review by representatives of the National Advisory Board on CBE/L Research and will evaluated on the thoroughness of the proposal, feasibility of the activities, and potential contribution to the goals of the NRC.

Proposals seeking funding will be evaluated on a competitive basis. Those proposals will be evaluated on the following questions in addition to aforementioned criteria:

1. What aspect(s) of the research agenda priorities does this project address?
2. To what depth does this project go in addressing the research agenda priorities?
3. Do the outcomes of this project address/support equity in postsecondary education?
4. Does this project include cross-case and/or comparative analysis (when appropriate)?
5. Does this project implement rigorous research design to contribute high quality research to the field?
6. Does this project explore the research agenda priorities in new, creative, or innovative ways?

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Partner proposals not selected to receive funding may still be invited to join the Collaborative if they choose to continue to pursue the project without funding.

Proposals not seeking funding will be reviewed for fit and relevance to the NRC, but this review is not competitive.

### **Project Timelines**

#### **Is there a required timeline for projects?**

This answer is distinct for funded projects. In general, there is no required timeline for projects. For funded projects, all funded project leaders must submit final project (and financial) reports to AIR by October 31, 2020. For all other projects, there is no required timeline; however, there is a preference for projects with shorter-term timelines when possible and appropriate.

#### **Will there be checkpoints or initial report outs for extended projects (i.e. longitudinal studies)?**

There are no pre-set checkpoints, however, there should be periodic updates built into the proposed timeline, and project leaders will have the opportunity to share their in-progress research and lessons through NRC activities.

### **Funding Restrictions**

#### **What is the allowance for Indirect costs?**

The limit for indirect costs is 20% of staff salaries and benefits, in line with Lumina Foundation's grant requirements. Please contact us if you have questions or concerns about this restriction.

#### **What constitutes allowable or unallowable expenses?**

Allowable expenses may include salaries, benefits, materials and supplies, equipment rental/purchase, travel, meeting/conferences, consultants, evaluation, and communication.

#### **Can funding be used to "buy out" course time for instructors/faculty at institutions?**

Yes, funding may be used to "buy out" course time if justified in the proposal narrative and budget.

#### **Is there a minimum and/or maximum of funding that will be considered?**

The average funding will be around \$25,000, but there is not a pre-determined minimum and maximum. We strongly encourage potential partners to apply for smaller grants when appropriate for the proposed project. If the proposed amount is substantially above the average and cannot be funded fully, we may contact you about an opportunity to fund a portion of the full amount.

### **Proposal Contents**

#### **Do proposals involving multiple sites need letters of support from each those sites? What do those letters need to entail?**

Brief letters of support stating willingness to participate in the specified way would strengthen a proposal, particularly for projects seeking funding. If, however, the project partner hopes to use NRC to help identify appropriate sites, please indicate that in the proposal and we will be happy to support connections.

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### **Availability of Data from the 2018 National Survey of Competency-Based Education**

**Are data from the National Survey on Postsecondary Competency-Based Research available for partners to use? If so, what restrictions apply?**

There are opportunities for partners to engage with the data, but it will be on a case-by-base basis. Please email us at [postseccbe@air.org](mailto:postseccbe@air.org) if your proposal includes utilizing the survey data set, and we will share the survey contents and discuss with you whether the data can fit your needs.

### **Miscellaneous**

**Can researchers use an international context as the primary basis of their project?**

Our priority for funded projects is competency-based education in the United States, so we strongly encourage projects seeking funding to be focused on the U.S. Comparative studies that may be relevant to the U.S. are welcome; please use the proposal narrative to build a case for relevance. For projects not seeking funding, international contexts are more than welcome.

**I'm interested in learning more about CBE/L. What resource are available to me?**

There are plenty of resources available to help you build your own background about CBE/L and understand the research field to which your project might contribute. One place to start is the [Competency-Based Education Network's \(C-BEN\) Resource Library](#), a broad and ranging collection of resources and information.