

Institutional Challenge Grant

2018 APPLICATION GUIDE

Updated April 2018

Online Application Opens:

June 15, 2018

Application Deadline:

September 7, 2018, 3:00 PM EST

Finalist Interviews:

February 1, 2019

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Overview

The Institutional Challenge Grant encourages university-based research institutes, schools, and centers to build sustained research-practice partnerships with public agencies or nonprofit organizations in order to reduce inequality in youth outcomes.

To do so, research institutions will need to shift their policies and practices to value collaborative research. They will also need to build the capacity of researchers to produce relevant work and the capacity of agency and nonprofit partners to use research.

Applications are welcome from partnerships in youth-serving areas such as education, justice, child welfare, mental health, immigration, and workforce development. We especially encourage proposals from teams with African American, Latino, Native American, and Asian American members in leadership roles. The partnership leadership team should include the principal investigator from the research institution and the lead from the public agency or nonprofit organization.

Background

Policymakers and practitioners need rigorous research evidence that is relevant to their work. But too often the evidence produced by research institutions is shaped by the traditional values of the academy—the work is rigorous, but it speaks most clearly to the research community. Compounded by limited resources and capacity, this misalignment contributes to stubborn gaps between research, policy, and practice.

Research-practice partnerships—long-term, mutually beneficial collaborations that promote the production and use of rigorous and relevant research evidence—are a promising strategy for better aligning these communities in their efforts to reduce inequality. Researchers who partner with practitioners or policymakers are more equipped to understand local contexts, address pressing questions, and produce informative and actionable findings. They also gain access to policy insights and data that can facilitate rigorous and groundbreaking research. Policymakers and practitioners, meanwhile, can more easily access, interpret, and use research evidence when they collaborate with researchers and help define research agendas. Partnerships, then, equip public agencies and nonprofit organizations with new knowledge and tools to better serve youth.

Building sustained research-practice partnerships requires significant investments. It takes time to develop the trusted relationships that form the foundation of the partnership. Establishing the infrastructure to grow and sustain a partnership requires significant resources. And although we suspect that research-practice partnerships are most robust when they are built at the institutional level, research produced by partnerships is not always valued by institutions. It can therefore be difficult to recruit experienced researchers to participate in research-practice partnerships or to sustain their involvement beyond a single project.

The Institutional Challenge Grant is a direct response to these obstacles. The program challenges research institutions to consider ways to remove barriers to partnership success. This may include the careful scrutiny and redesign of internal policies, practices, or incentives that limit the longevity of partnerships or discourage exceptional researchers from taking part.

While institutional change is an ambitious goal, it is necessary to support the production and use of evidence that will make an impact.

Goals

The award supports research institutions to build sustained research-practice partnerships with public agencies or nonprofit organizations in order to reduce inequality in youth outcomes.

Research institutions will need to address four important goals:

- Build a sustained institutional partnership with a public agency or nonprofit organization that serves young people ages 5-25 in the United States.
- Pursue a joint research agenda to reduce inequality in youth outcomes.
- Create institutional change within the research institution to value the partnership and its work.
- Develop the capacity of the partners to collaborate on producing and using research evidence.

Build a sustained institutional partnership with a public agency or nonprofit organization.

The research-practice partnership should have clearly defined goals, roles, and agreements, and be built for the long term. The partnership should be mutually beneficial and enable the partners to jointly pursue research of relevance to the public agency or nonprofit organization over an extended period of time. Additionally, the partnership should be able to articulate how they envision the research will be used (Tseng, 2017).

Pursue a joint research agenda to reduce inequality in youth outcomes.

The Foundation supports research to build, test, and increase understanding of approaches to reducing inequality in youth outcomes, particularly on the basis of race, ethnicity, economic standing, or immigrant origin status. We are interested in research to reduce inequality in academic, social, behavioral, and economic outcomes.

Our focus on *reducing* inequality grew out of our view that research can do more than help us understand problems—it can point us towards effective program, policy, and practice responses. There is mounting research evidence about the scope, causes, and consequences of inequality in the United States, but we believe that it is time to build stronger bodies of knowledge on how to reduce inequality.

The partnership must increase the utility and strength of the evidence available to inform responses to inequality. The questions and methods pursued as part of the research agenda must be both relevant and rigorous (Tseng and Gamoran, 2017).

Create institutional change to value research-practice partnerships.

A unique and important requirement of this grant competition is institutional change. Research conducted within research-practice partnerships is too infrequently valued by research institutions. This makes it difficult to attract skilled, mid-career researchers to address questions that are relevant to policy and practice. We encourage research institutions to think critically about the incentives needed to encourage researchers experienced with building theory and empirical evidence to more effectively conduct joint work with policymakers and practitioners. Thought should be given to the structures and relationships required to facilitate high quality research and to support its use by partnerships.

Develop the capacity of both partners to collaborate on producing and using research evidence.

The success of the partnership and the research is also dependent on the capacity of the partners to collaborate.

Human capital investments are needed to develop partnership skills. The grant provides funds to support mid-career fellows for the equivalent of one full-time or two half-time fellows per year for two years. *The research institution also needs to contribute a match of a mid-career research fellow for the equivalent of a one-year, full-time term.*

On the research side, we expect that the grant program will impact the professional development and careers of researchers. The fellowship should equip mid-career researchers with new experiences that foster a deeper understanding

of a policy or practice context and the skills required to serve as effective partners. Institutions must propose a plan for selecting and developing the skills of mid-career researchers to conduct and support the use of relevant and rigorous research in collaboration with the partner. This might involve training or mentoring to help researchers become valued partners to policymakers and practitioners.

On the public or nonprofit agency side, human capital and infrastructure investments are needed to create the culture and capacity for research use. The grant includes resources to invest in the youth-serving organizations to build skills and knowledge, to embed new tools, and to establish new routines that will enhance research use. Funds from the award might support technical assistance, infrastructure improvements, or staff training to bolster the organization's capacity to understand and use research. One of the mid-career fellow positions might also be used to aid such efforts. We expect these types of investments will lead to increased access to research in the short term; higher valuation and use of research in the mid-term; and, ultimately, improvements to policy, resource allocation, or service delivery to enhance youth outcomes.

Our hope is that the Institutional Challenge Grant will encourage research institutions to cultivate the relationships, skills, and incentives necessary to make partnerships more productive, more respected, and more commonplace. In turn, if this approach for producing and using research is more valued, we expect that it will better align the research, policy, and practice communities in ways that will help to reduce inequality in youth outcomes.

THE FIRST RECIPIENT OF THE INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGE GRANT - MARCH 2018

The College of Human Ecology at Cornell and the Cornell Cooperative Extension-Tompkins County

The College of Human Ecology at Cornell and the Cornell Cooperative Extension-Tompkins County (CCE-Tompkins) will partner to respond to increasing rates of opioid abuse and child maltreatment in low income, rural communities in upstate New York. They will use a mixed-methods approach to: 1) understand the association between opioid use and child maltreatment rates, 2) examine the role of family drug treatment courts in mitigating child maltreatment among families struggling with treatment, and 3) evaluate an evidence-based intervention that may reduce the risk of opioid abuse for low-income youth and families. The partners will elicit stakeholder views to understand the nature of the problem and potential responses and leverage national data sets to examine external shocks to the opioid supply and how these track to the incidence of child abuse. They will use a quasi-experimental design and in-depth case studies to examine national trends in child maltreatment following the initiation of Family Treatment Courts. They will also test the local effectiveness of a community-based family support program with the potential to reduce substance abuse treatment needs. The partners will use findings from each study to increase understanding about the opioid epidemic and its consequences for families and to improve local practice and programs.

There is substantial engagement by both partners. Within Cornell, both a private university and a land grant college, the College of Human Ecology is a leading center for child abuse research. The university's principal investigator has been a member of the Cornell faculty for 16 years and is the college's interim dean. CCE-Tompkins is an independent nonprofit entity that responds to local needs with research-based programming. Their principal investigator has served for 17 years as program coordinator for family and community development. While the affiliation between the two institutions is long-standing, institutionalized connections between CCE-Tompkins and Cornell's social sciences faculty have been limited.

Both partners are committed to advancing institutional change at Cornell to support research-practice partnerships. First, a committee of university faculty and CCE-Tompkins staff will select highly skilled, well-recognized faculty members to serve as fellows and receive mentoring from the partnership leads. One goal is to change the image of the "successful researcher" to include those who conduct policy-relevant scholarship in collaboration with practitioners. Second, in addition to the required match for a mid-career fellow, Cornell has committed a post-doctoral fellow for the first half of the award, and an undergraduate intern to assist with activities at CCE-Tompkins. Third, Cornell leadership is committed to reviewing current support for research-practice partnerships campus-wide and initiating conversations about alternative tenure and promotion criteria for faculty. Finally, the partnership will build the capacity of CCE-Tompkins staff to facilitate high-quality evaluation work.

The Award

The award will provide \$650,000 over three years, in support of:

- Up to \$50,000 for 6-9 months of joint planning activities (e.g., refining protocols for partnering, selecting fellows, finalizing partnership agreements, etc.).
- Fellowship support for the equivalent of one full-time or two half-time fellows per year for two years. In addition, the research institution must contribute the equivalent of one full-time fellow for the equivalent of a one-year term. All fellows must be mid-career (as described below).
- Up to three years of support for the partnership to conduct and use research to reduce inequality in youth outcomes.
- Resources to advance the proposed institutional shift and capacities of both partners.
- Indirect cost allowance of up to 15 percent of total direct costs.

Recipients of the award will have the opportunity to apply for a funded two-year continuation grant in order to solidify the partnership and institutional changes. At the end of the five-years, we expect the following results:

- The research institution has established a set of strategies that facilitate sustained research collaborations with public agencies or private nonprofit organizations.
- The public agency or private nonprofit organization has increased its capacity to use research evidence.
- Participating researchers have improved partnership skills.
- The research generated has been used in decision making and is likely to lead to improved outcomes for youth.

We anticipate running the competition for five years (2017-2022), with one award made each year. Applicants not funded in a prior year are welcome to reapply. We plan to gather grantees and fellows to learn from one another, and we also hope that lessons from these grants radiate beyond the funded institutions and fellows.

Eligibility

Eligible research institutions

The award will be made to an organization, not to an individual. Organizations can include university-based research institutes, schools, or centers. Grants are limited without exception to tax-exempt organizations.

Please note that research organizations, think tanks, and other institutions that sit outside of the academy are no longer eligible to apply.

Eligible principal investigators

The principal investigator should be a leader at the research institution. S/he should have visibility, influence on institutional policies and practices, and access to the resources needed to optimize and implement the award. S/he should also possess the skills needed to cultivate trusting relationships with leaders from the partner public agency or nonprofit organization.

Eligible public agencies or nonprofit organizations

Eligible public agencies include state or local agencies and their departments and divisions. Nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations are eligible if they are open to the general public and provide services for youth ages 5 to 25 in the United States. Eligible agencies and organizations engage in work relevant to youth in the areas of education, justice, child welfare, mental health, immigration, or workforce development and have the resources needed to implement and optimize the award.

Eligible leaders from the public agency or nonprofit organization

Leaders from the public agency or nonprofit organization should have the authority and influence required to successfully institutionalize the partnership and the use of research evidence in the agency or organization's work.

Eligible partnerships

Research-practice partnerships are defined as long-term, mutually beneficial collaborations that promote the production and use of rigorous and relevant research evidence. These partnerships take a long view and should extend beyond the life of any one grant, project, or leader. While the competition is open to partnerships at different stages of maturity, applicants will need to convince reviewers that the grant adds significant value to what already exists. We anticipate that it will be difficult for a well-established partnership with strong institutional support to make a convincing case that the award adds value. For younger partnerships, reviewers will seek promising initial evidence that the partners have successfully worked together in the past and have the potential to sustain a long-term collaboration.

Eligible fellows

All fellows must be mid-career. For researchers, we define mid-career as having received the terminal degree within 8 to 20 years of the date that the application is submitted. (This should be calculated by adding 8 and 20 years to the date the doctoral degree was conferred. For medicine, an institution should use the date from the completion of the first residency.) The fellow does not need to be an employee of the research institution, and can be recruited from another institution.

Applicants may choose to appoint one mid-career fellow from the public agency or nonprofit organization. This should be a mid-career professional at the agency or organization who will be called on to facilitate the use of research. A mid-career professional has 8 to 20 years of cumulative experience in his/her current role.

Application Materials

Applications must include the following:

Budget and Budget Justification

Provide budget information for three years using the budget grid in the online application. Also complete the Foundation's budget justification form, which can be downloaded from the uploads section of the online application. The budget justification should map tightly to the activities and staffing described in the narrative. The total budget can be up to \$650,000. This total includes the planning period costs and an indirect cost allowance of up to 15 percent of all direct costs.

Funds for the planning period may not exceed \$50,000. At least half of the planning budget should be allocated to the public agency or nonprofit organization(s).

The remainder of funds may be used to support the fellows, capacity building activities, and research-related work. (The Foundation pays expenses for the research and practice or policy leaders of the partnership to participate in Foundation-sponsored meetings. Do not include funds for those expenses in the budget.)

If funds to the public agency or nonprofit organization exceed \$50,000, complete a separate subcontract budget and budget justification. (The forms can be downloaded from the uploads section of the online application.) Subcontract funds \$50,000 or less do not require separate forms, but must be explained in detail in the primary budget justification.

Short CV/Resume of PI (5 page maximum)

Include education; position history; recent and relevant publications; grants, roles and products related to work with policymakers and practitioners; and leadership roles within the institution.

Short CV/Resume for lead from the public agency or nonprofit organization (5 page maximum)

Include education, position history, key roles and responsibilities at the current agency or organization, positions or products related to work with researchers.

Short CV of any identified Fellows (optional; 5 page maximum each)

Include education; position history; recent and relevant publications; grants, roles and products related to work with policymakers or practitioners (for research fellows) or with researchers (for policy or practice fellows); awards; grants.

IRS Tax-Exempt Status Determination Letter (for the applying research institution)

You will be required to submit a copy of your institution's IRS tax-exempt status determination letter.

Structured Abstract (maximum of 4 pages and formatted as follows: 12-point font, single-spaced text with a line space between each paragraph, and 1-inch margins on all sides)

Abstracts are a critical part of the application. Foundation staff will use them to screen applications for further review. In addition, Selection Committee members will review the abstracts of all finalists; they will not necessarily read all the full applications. Reviewers will need to be assured that the partnership, research, institutional change, and capacity development plans are strong.

Include sufficient details about the (i) partnership, (ii) joint research agenda and research plans, (iii) shifts in organizational practices to elevate the status of partnership work, and (iv) criteria for selecting mid-career fellows and activities to build fellows' and public agency or nonprofit organization's capacity.

Narrative (maximum of 25 pages and formatted as follows: 12-point font, single-spaced text with a line space between each paragraph, and 1-inch margins on all sides)

The narrative should describe the planning period, institutional partnership, joint research agenda and research plan, capacity building activities, and changes in institutional policies and practices. Tables and appendices are not included in the 25-page limit.

- **Planning Period**

Through our work with research-practice partnerships, a common frustration is the lack of time and resources available to develop the relationships and agreements needed to build a strong foundation for the partnership. The Institutional Challenge Grant includes up to \$50,000 to support as long as a nine-month planning period during the first year. At least half of the planning budget should be allocated to the public agency or nonprofit organization(s).

The planning period activities are intended to advance the partnership and its work. The narrative should include a description of the length, objectives, and activities proposed for the planning period. This includes details about the process for refining protocols for partnering, readying the organizations for the joint work, and advancing the research agenda and selection of fellows. Also describe the value of these planning activities for the rest of the grant.

- **Institutional Partnership**

The grant should establish the supports and capacities necessary to facilitate a long-term partnership. The application should include a rationale for the selection and inclusion of the public agency or nonprofit organization, and the nature of their current relationship with the research institution. We encourage partners that are situated in close geographic proximity, with a demonstrated commitment to the local/regional setting.

The applicant should also describe the collaboration and relationship-building process. Joint work is challenging, time intensive, and requires intention and formal structure (Coburn, Penuel, & Geil, 2013; Dugery & Knowles, 2003; Trotter, Laurila, Alberts, & Huenneke, 2014). There should be a clear plan for

working together, including the type and frequency of activities that will cultivate trust and deepen relationships, strategies for communicating, and processes for using the research. It should be evident that the public agency or nonprofit organization is significantly invested in and co-defines the proposed work, will interact regularly with the fellows, will provide input on the interpretation of the findings, and have plans for using the research.

The plan for joint work needs to demonstrate mastery of the literature on the challenges and strategies of collaborative work to promote the use of research evidence (Oliver, Innvar, Lorenc, Woodman, & Thomas, 2014; DuMont, 2015; Hunter, 2017; Tseng, 2017). The narrative should provide a strong justification for how the proposed plan will offset differences in institutional cultures and reward systems, ensure equal voice in the agenda setting, as well as overcome operational barriers. Prior work on the use of research evidence offers helpful suggestions for initiating and advancing meaningful partnerships and establishing long-term collaborations (Coburn, Penuel, & Geil, 2013; Henrick, Cobb, Penuel, Jackson, & Clark, 2017; Palinkas, Short, & Wong, 2015). Further, there should be a theory of action and clear articulation for how the evidence produced by the partnership will be used (Tseng, 2017).

Competitive applications will include memoranda of understanding and/or other documents that articulate the partnership goals, roles, governance, principles for working together, and timelines. It may also be appropriate to reference data sharing agreements. These documents may be refined during the planning period, but we anticipate that successful applicants will have worked out the initial agreements before submitting the proposal.

- **Joint Research Agenda to Reduce Youth Inequality**

The partnership must conduct research to build, test, and increase understanding of programs, policies, or practices to reduce inequality in the outcomes of young people ages 5-25 in the United States. The research questions must be relevant to the local organization, while also informing theory and extending prior and concurrent research.

The research must:

- Identify a specific inequality in youth outcomes, and show that the outcomes are currently unequal. We are interested in youth’s academic, social, behavioral, or economic outcomes.
- Clearly identify the basis on which these outcomes are unequal, and articulate its importance. We are especially interested in research to reduce inequality on the basis of race, ethnicity, economic standing, or immigrant origin status. Proposals for research on reducing inequality on a basis not listed here must make a compelling case that this research will improve youth outcomes.
- Articulate how findings from your research will help build, test, or increase understanding of a specific program, policy, or practice to reduce the inequality that you have identified.

In sum, proposals should make a compelling case that the inequality exists, why the inequality exists, and how the study’s findings will influence a future policy, program, or practice to reduce it.

Applicants must provide enough details about the proposed research for reviewers to assess the rigor, relevance, and feasibility of the research plan. The narrative should articulate the specific hypotheses and/or research questions to be addressed and describe the methods. The research methods description should attend to the sample/case definition and selection procedures; the research design; key constructs, measures and data sources; and procedures for data collection. Applications should also include a summary of the data analysis plan for addressing the hypotheses and/or research questions.

The Foundation supports research from a range of disciplines and using a variety of methods. We welcome descriptive studies that clarify mechanisms for reducing inequality or elucidate how or why a specific program, policy, or practice operates to reduce inequality. We also welcome intervention studies that examine attempts to reduce inequality. In addition, we seek studies that improve the measurement of inequality in ways that can enhance the work of researchers, practitioners, or policymakers. The common thread across all of

this work, however, is a distinct and explicit focus on reducing inequality—one that goes beyond describing the causes or consequences of unequal outcomes and, instead, aims to build, test, or understand policy, program, or practice responses.

- **Changing Institutional Policies and Practices**

Research institutions' policies and practices too often limit participation in research-practice partnerships and obstruct career advancement for those who engage in them. This is not necessarily intentional, nor is it incidental. Still, internal competition for resources and long-standing reward structures often create disincentives to participating in research-practice partnerships. Reward structures for hiring, tenure, and promotion, for example, often value publishing in academic outlets, publishing often, and publishing on a narrow range of topics. These requirements may be out of alignment with those of partnerships, where researchers must dedicate considerable time to develop trusting relationships, produce research that meets the local public agency or nonprofit organization's needs, and share the research in ways that meet their needs.

Applicants must carefully consider the alignment of their research institution's policies and practices with the nature and demands of the partnership and research agenda. For example, a university center might recognize that the contributions of researchers involved in partnerships need to be evaluated differently than those who primarily conduct investigations to influence the research community. This might result in greater flexibility or new criteria for judging the performance of researchers. Enacting these changes might involve including policymakers or practitioners in promotion and award committees, extending the promotion review timeline, developing alternative metrics to evaluate faculty contributions, and increasing recognition of investigators involved in partnerships during promotion decisions (Institute of Medicine, 2005; American Sociological Association, 2016).

The narrative must provide a compelling plan to offer incentives, introduce practices, or alter policies to encourage strong researchers to conduct joint work with public agencies or nonprofit organizations. Strategies might include course releases, reductions in service obligations, seed money to support

partnership work, forums that showcase the work, distinguished appointments, training to help researchers become more effective partners, or flexibility in promotion review policies. In a recent essay, Tseng and Gamoran (2017) also discussed ways universities might restructure how they evaluate the contributions of faculty who engage in policy or practice relevant research. We encourage applicants to engage deeply with this challenge and to propose plans that are both bold and feasible. The plan must convince reviewers of the institution's commitment to continue these efforts beyond the award period.

- **Developing the Capacity of the Partners to Collaborate and Use Research**

The mid-career fellows should play an instrumental role in carrying out the research agenda. Researchers at this career stage have established skills and expertise, influence, and job security. They also have ample time left in their careers to sustain long-term relationships. A mid-career professional from the public agency or nonprofit organization may also serve as a fellow to develop the capacity to be a critical consumer and user of research. The learning objectives and rationale for all fellows should be clearly delineated.

Applicants should provide the specific methods the partners will use to recruit fellows and the criteria by which fellows will be selected. The criteria for selecting fellows should be clear, rigorous, and well-suited for the research-practice partnership and its research projects. We want to know how applicants will ensure that fellows' expertise and scholarship are relevant to the proposed research, and how applicants will ensure that fellows have the requisite skills to engage in a successful partnership.

Applications need to include a plan for how the research institution will support the fellows in gaining a deep understanding of the policymakers' and practitioners' needs and systems. All fellows must commit to a minimum of half-time status for at least a six-month period. The arrangement should provide ample opportunity to establish meaningful relationships between the fellow and the public agency or nonprofit organization, and to conduct the research and support the use of the findings. Be sure to describe the amount of time allotted and specify whether fellows will be embedded in the

practitioner organization (Frisch, 2016; Petersilia, 2008) or maintain separate working spaces (Coburn, Penuel, Geil, 2013). Also include plans for orienting and training the fellows. Well-designed plans will reflect consideration of the burdens and benefits for both partners.

In addition, the research institution will invest in and develop the capacity of the public agency or nonprofit organization to use research evidence. Specify how the grant dollars will be used to advance the partner's access to, interpretation of, and use of research. This should include a description of specific strategies, mechanisms, and conditions that may increase routine and beneficial uses of research in deliberations and decisions relevant to youth. For example, funds may be used to support a research staff person, data infrastructure, or routine access to research expertise on agency priorities, or staff development to improve use of research (Frisch, 2016). These plans should be well justified and draw on what is already known about strategies for mobilizing research knowledge for use in practice or policy.

Partnership Agreement

This document must be signed by both the principal investigator at the research institution and the partnership leader at the public agency or nonprofit organization. The document should articulate the partnership goals, key roles, governance, principles guiding joint work, and timelines. Resources on building partnerships and samples of memorandums of understanding and working agreements can be found on the Foundation's research-practice partnerships website: rpp.wtgrantfoundation.org.

Endorsement of the Application from the Research Institution

This document should come from the appropriate institutional office (e.g., university dean, provost, vice chancellor for research) and demonstrate support for the PI, partnership, research project(s), and changes in institutional policies and practices. The letter must also confirm the institution's commitment to provide a match of one full-time equivalent fellow for one year and the presence of sufficient resources to carry out the proposed work.

Endorsement of the Application from the Public Agency or Nonprofit Organization

This document should come from the appropriate institutional office (e.g., agency leader, director, or executive) and demonstrate support for the leader of the partnership within the agency or organization. The letter must also confirm that there are sufficient resources within the organization to carry out the proposed work. This attachment should be uploaded by the PI.

Submission Instructions

The Foundation accepts applications only through our online application system, which is accessible through our website at wtgrantfoundation.org. Applications are due by 3:00 pm EST on September 7, 2018.

We encourage applicants to begin the application as early as possible to allow sufficient time to develop a strong proposal and resolve any technical issues that may arise.

Step 1: Log in (or register if you are a new user).

- Go to wtgrantfoundation.org and click “LOG IN” at the top right of any page.
- If you are the principal investigator (PI), and do not have an account, register on our website to create one. If you are not the PI, obtain the account login information from that person or help the PI create an account.

Step 2: Select the Institutional Challenge Grants funding opportunity, and complete the eligibility quiz.

- Once you have completed the eligibility quiz, return to your Easygrants homepage and click on the “Application” link to enter the application.

Step 3: Enter PI contact information, PI demographic information (optional), and contact information for each additional Co-Principal Investigator.

Step 4: Provide project information.

Step 5: Enter and upload all required information.

- Refer to the application materials sections.

Step 6: Review and Submit.

- Review the application PDF to make sure that your materials are in order. Once the application is submitted, you will not be able to make any changes.

Selection Criteria

Applications should meet the selection criteria detailed below:

Planning Period

- Activities for the planning period will strengthen the partnership.
- Activities advance the research agenda, selection of fellows, and capacity building plans.
- The public agency or nonprofit organization will receive at least half of the dollars available for planning.

Institutional Partnership

- The rationale for partnering provides compelling evidence that the research institution and the public agency or nonprofit organization can build a sustained partnership that will work together effectively.
- The plan for partnering demonstrates mastery of the literature on the challenges and strategies for collaborative work to promote the use of research evidence.
- Activities for building the partnerships will cultivate trust and deepen relationships.
- There is evidence that the public agency or nonprofit organization is invested in the partnership, will interact regularly with the fellows, and has strong plans for using the research.
- The partnership is likely to be sustained after the award ends.

Joint Research Agenda to Reduce Inequality in Youth Outcomes

- The long-term research agenda (including one or more research projects) aligns with the Foundation's focus on building, testing, and improving programs, practices, and policies to reduce inequality in youth outcomes.

- The research questions and findings are likely to significantly advance the public agency or nonprofit organization's efforts to reduce inequality in youth outcomes.
- The research plan demonstrates mastery of related theory and empirical findings and builds upon that work.
- The research plan reflects rigorous methods that are appropriate for the proposal's goals.
- The research plan is feasible given the resources and time frame.
- Plans to interpret and use the research findings in policy or practice decisions are convincing and feasible given the resources and time frame.

Changing Institutional Policies and Practices

- The application provides a thoughtful discussion of potential obstacles that limit researchers' participation in research-practice partnerships and offers a plan for overcoming those obstacles.
- Assurances are compelling that the research institution will provide the necessary funding, alter policies, and/or enact new practices to attract, support, and reward strong investigators to conduct partnership research.
- The plan for institutional change is feasible given the resources and time frame.
- The application demonstrates a commitment to sustain the institutional changes beyond the conclusion of the award.

Developing the Capacity of the Mid-Career Fellows and Partners

- The application includes written assurances that the research institution will provide support for the equivalent of one full-time mid-career fellow for one year.
- All fellows commit a minimum of half-time status for at least a six-month period.

- The criteria for selecting fellows ensures that the fellows possess the relevant expertise to carry out the proposed work and can effectively communicate what is learned to the broader research community and to change makers in other state or local settings.
- The capacity-building plan for the research fellows significantly extends the fellows' skills as effective partners to policymakers and practitioners.
- Capacity-building activities for the public agency or nonprofit organization leverage what is already known about strategies for mobilizing research for use in practice or policy.
- The capacity-building plan for the public agency or nonprofit organization significantly extends the organization's ability to access and integrate high-quality research evidence into their work.

Application Review Process

Review occurs in the following stages: Staff screen abstracts, brief CVs, and, if warranted, full applications to determine whether they fit with the primary objectives of the award and potentially meet other Selection Criteria. Next, the Institutional Challenge Grant Selection Committee reviews the remaining applications. Each application receives detailed reviews by at least two Committee members. The Committee then chooses finalists, and the PI and leader from the public agency or private nonprofit organization will be invited submit a written response and to New York City for an interview on February 1, 2019. During the interview, finalists have the opportunity to present their team and respond to Committee members' reviews. Following the interviews, the Selection Committee chooses one Institutional Challenge Grant recipient. The application is presented for approval by the Board of Trustees at its March meeting.

Selection Committee



Elaine Allensworth

Lewis-Sebring Director of the Consortium on School Research
University of Chicago

Marc Atkins

Professor of Psychiatry and Psychology and Director of the Institute for Juvenile Research
University of Illinois at Chicago

Allison Blake

Former Commissioner
New Jersey Department of Children and Families

Adam Gamoran

President
William T. Grant Foundation

Michael Gottfredson

Professor, Criminology, Law & Society
University of California Irvine

Ritu Khanna

Chief of Research, Planning, and Assessment
San Francisco Unified School District

Sumie Okazaki

Professor of Counseling Psychology
New York University

Pedro Reyes

Ashbel Smith Professor of Education Policy
University of Texas at Austin

Estelle Richman

Former Chief Operating Officer
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Robert Sellers

Vice Provost for Equity and Inclusion, Chief Diversity Officer, and Charles D. Moody Collegiate Professor of Psychology and Education
University of Michigan

Standing, L to R: Allison Blake, Mark Atkins, Michael Gottfredson, Estelle Richman, Sumi Okazaki,
Seated, L to R: Elaine Allensworth, Maria Cancion, Adam, Pedro Reyes, Ritu Khanna
Not pictured: Robert Sellers

Post-Award Review

A program report will be required from the principal investigator 30 days prior to the end of the planning period. This report should describe the progress of the planning period, announce identified fellows, update the partnership agreement(s) (if necessary), and confirm that the planning period funds were disbursed equally between the research institution and partner public agency or nonprofit organization.

Thereafter, annual program and financial reports are required from the principal investigator and their institutions. Final reports are due at the conclusion of the award. The lead from the public agency or nonprofit organization must also complete annual and final program reports.

Annual program reports describe work during the past year and facilitate the Foundation's grants management activities. Grants are assigned for post-award review to a member of the Foundation's Senior Program Team. Team members review program reports in order to: 1) find opportunities to link grantees to other scholars, policymakers, and practitioners working in relevant areas; 2) provide technical assistance, advice, or other resources to support the work; and 3) assist grantees with communication and engagement efforts.

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