

The Institutional Challenge Grant: Round 10

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Today's Webinar

PART I

- Brief Background: The Foundation's Funding Interests
- The Institutional Challenge Grant: Overview of the Goals
- Questions?

PART II

- Application and Review Process
- Resources
- Questions?

Focus Areas:

Reduce Inequality

We fund studies that examine programs, policies, or practices to reduce inequality in academic, social, behavioral, or economic outcomes of young people ages 5-25 in the United States.

Use of Research Evidence

We fund studies that examine ways to improve the use of research evidence by policymakers, agency leaders, organizational managers, intermediaries, and other decision-makers that shape youth-serving systems.



Our Current Y-PAR Project

Our current Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) project focuses on uplifting youth voice and decision-making throughout Santa Cruz County. In collaboration with Friday Night Live (FNL), Jóvenes Sanos (JS), and COE's Youth Led Leadership Alliance (YLLA), youth participants explore community needs and create solutions that amplify their perspectives and drive positive change.

Take a sneak peak into one of our sessions!!





RESPONSIVE

ROUTINIZED

RELATIONAL

Institutional Challenge Grant



Partnership

Strengthen an existing institutional partnership



Research

Pursue a joint research agenda to reduce youth inequality



Institutional Change

Create institutional change to value partnership research



Capacity

Enhance both partners' capacity to collaborate in producing and using research

Research Practice Partnerships

Research-practice partnerships are long-term, mutually beneficial collaborations that promote the production and use of rigorous and relevant research evidence

Long-term view

Persist beyond a single
project



Relationship is between
organizations

Benefit both parties

Research to Reduce Inequality

01.

Identify an inequality in youth outcomes

02.

Specify dimension of inequality study(-ies) will address

03.

Examine programs, policies, and/or practices to reduce inequality

04.

Explain how research may improve community partner's work

Examples

Johns Hopkins University and the Fort Belknap Indian Community

- Mixed methods research to develop a culturally-responsive intervention for preventing suicide among Indigenous adolescents and young adults

Vanderbilt University and Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

- Mixed methods research to examine practices and policies to reduce inequalities in post-secondary course-taking in high school for Black and Latinx youth, English Learners, students with disabilities, and students from low-income families

The University of Michigan and Focus:HOPE

- Community-based participatory action research to develop a mental health-enhanced workforce development program and a randomized controlled trial to test its impact





Institutional Change

Shift policies and practices to encourage, incentivize, and reward faculty engagement in partnership research

- Revise tenure and promotion policies
- Reform IRB and budget processes
- Build engaged research centers
- Develop research infrastructure
- Provide teaching releases
- Launch seed funding competitions
- Create endowed professorships
- Integrate into strategic plan



Building Capacity to Produce and Use Research

- Build skills to co-produce and use research evidence
- Strengthen data collection to support solving problems of practice
- Develop skills to write policy-relevant briefs and other forms of communication
- Embed research-focused positions into community partner organization

Mid-Career Fellows

The capacity building work of the partnership will be largely carried out by mid-career fellows, a required component of the grant.

The plan for research fellows in the grant must significantly extend their skills to be effective partners.

The plan to enhance public agency or nonprofits use of research in decision making must be feasible.



Mid-Career Fellows: Time and Budgeting

- The grant provides funding for two years of a full-time equivalent fellowship.
- The university provides funding for one additional year of a full-time equivalent fellowship.
- Fellowships may be allocated in different ways. The minimum appointment level is half-time for half of one year.
 - Appoint one research fellow for 3 years of grant.
 - Appoint two research fellows and one practice fellow for half-time appointments for 3 years of grant.
- **NEW RESOURCE!**

Questions?

Institutional Challenge Grant: Awards & Competition

- 3-year grant of \$650,000 with possible 2-year renewal
 - Up to a 9-month planning period and up to \$60,000 budget to refine plans
 - Funds for research activities
 - Mid-career fellows: 2 grant-funded FTEs, 1 university-funded FTE (e.g., course buy-outs or other grant funding)
 - Support activities to develop capacities
 - Indirect cost allowance up to 15%

Review Process

Applications are due **SEPTEMBER 9** at
3pm ET, including institutional sign-off.



- **Application:** proposal narrative, 4-page structured abstract, all agreements
- **Review process:**
 1. Senior staff review structured abstract
 2. Two selection committee members review full proposal
 3. Committee meets to select finalists: *abstract critical!*
 4. Finalist interviews with committee



Aspirations for ICG Grantees

- Established set of policies and practices *at the university* that facilitate sustained partnerships with public agencies or nonprofits
- The public agency or nonprofit has increased its capacity to use research evidence
- Researchers have improved their partnership skills
- The research generated has been used in decision making and is likely to lead to improve outcomes for youth

Applicant Resources

[Guidelines](#) | [Applicant Resources](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Selection Committee](#) | [Awarded Grants](#)

Applicant Guidance

CONTENTS:

- Applicant Guidance
- Research-Practice Partnerships
- Reducing Inequality

- [2026 Application Guidelines \(Updated March 2026\)](#)
- [April 2025 Webinar: An Overview of the Institutional Challenge Grant Program and How to Apply](#)
- [Annotated Excerpts from a Plan for Institutional Change: Cornell University and the Cornell Cooperative Extension-Tompkins County \(CCE\)](#)
- [Annotated Excerpts from a Plan for Institutional Change: University of Delaware and the Delaware State Department of Education \(DDOE\)](#)
- [Annotated Excerpts from a Plan for Institutional Change: Northeastern University and the City of Boston's Office of Youth Engagement and Employment \(OYEO\)](#)
- [Annotated Excerpts from a Research Plan: University of California – Santa Cruz and United Way Santa Cruz County](#)
- [Annotated Excerpts from a Research Plan: University of Toronto and Puerto Rico Department of Education](#)



Questions?
