

## **Fund for Excellence and Innovation**

### **FAQs**

#### **Q: Must the lead institution be a public institution?**

A: A public institution must be the grantee and fiscal agent. That institution can subaward some or all of the money to another organization, including a private institution. Either institution can lead the activities.

#### **Q: Must the public institution be an institution of higher ed?**

A: The grantee and fiscal agent must be a public institution of higher education. After the required partners are established, other types of organizations can be included.

#### **Q: May a partner or partners be nonacademic, such as the local WIB and/or employers?**

A: Yes, once the required partnership of two institutions of higher education has been established, other types of organizations can be included.

#### **Q: If two institutions are required to partner for the pilot, must the grant funds be split between the two institutions over the grant period?**

A: Applicants may propose to use the funds in whatever way works best for the proposed activities, including subawarding some or all of the funds to partnering institution(s). When assessing the “nature of the collaborative activities between the two (or more) applicant institutions” (one of the review criteria mentioned in the Call for Proposals), review panel members likely will examine the budget.

#### **Q: Do ideal or presumed ratios exist regarding the percentages of an award designated for exploratory research vs. pilot implementation vs. pilot assessment?**

A: No.

#### **Q: Given that the list of activities in which grantees are expected to engage is ambitious, especially in relation to the amount of the maximum award, an applicant's construction of a budget prior to examining the data and designing an intervention may prove difficult. In such a situation, what advice is offered to potential applicants?**

A: In FY22, review panel members recognized the challenge: asking institutions to let the data drive the intervention, but then also asking them to budget for implementation and be able to report out within the grant period. SCHEV always recommends that grant applicants propose what they think will work for their institutions/students and what they confidently think they can deliver. Grantees will have to select an intervention that is both supported by the data analysis and designed/scaled to be done with the funding available. That might mean choosing a low-cost intervention over a more costly one or keeping the number of participants low. The decision-making process can be described in the reports and deliverables at the end of the grant period.

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**Q: Does an expectation exist that the pilot intervention will be identical across partner institutions?**

A: The concept underpinning these “Collaborative Equitable Attainment Grants” is a three-pronged commitment toward rapid experimentation, deep collaboration, and radical sharing of challenges, insights and data (see the Call for Proposals, page 4). Given that, along with the limited dollar amount of grant awards, the pilot intervention should be similar across the partner institutions, with the understanding that some variation might be required due to differences between the institutions.

**Q: Must the pilot intervention be launched for the first time in conjunction with the grant award? Would it be possible to assess an extant (yet relatively new) intervention?**

A: Applicants may propose whatever they think will bring the most value to the partnering institutions and have the most impact on the identified target population(s), while still complying with the instructions in the Call for Proposals. If an applicant can persuade reviewers that they have already completed the activities listed in the first five bullet points on page 5 of the Call for Proposals for all partnering institutions, then proposing to start grant activities with the assessment of an existing multi-institutional intervention might be feasible.

**Q: Does an expectation exist that the pilot intervention will be assessed with the initial award?**

A: Yes.

**Q: Why did SCHEV decide to increase the length of the grant period from 24 to 30 months for the FY23 competition?**

A: For two reasons. One is to allow additional time after the pilot intervention to analyze results and write up reports. The second reason is that FY22 grantees experienced delays in hiring grant-funded personnel and the outlook for hiring has only gotten more competitive.

**Q: Does an expectation exist for how applicants define "economically disadvantaged" students?**

A: Applicants may define "economically disadvantaged" in their proposals, including using any of the options below, depending on data availability:

1. Students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch;
2. Students receiving Pell;
3. Students whose income is equal to or less than 130% of federal poverty level, which is determined by enrollment year, federal poverty levels of the same year, family income, and family size;
4. Students whose income is equal to or less than 200% of federal poverty level, similar to the previous calculation; this expands the pool of disadvantaged students.

SCHEV uses both 3 and 4 in its own reports and analyses.

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**Q: Are “First Generation College Students” considered to be “economically disadvantaged”?**

A: While the two are linked from a research literature perspective, SCHEV has not used this definition in its own analyses because it has only had access to first gen status for a few years. Applicants may define these terms in their proposals, based on their best available student data.

**Q: Does an expectation exist for how applicants define "rural"?**

A: Applicants may propose any definition of “rural” they choose, including using the NCES/IPEDS definition of “rural”: <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/annualreports/topical-studies/locale/definitions>.

**Q: Are examples of successfully-funded applications available?**

A: Three awards were made in Spring 2022. Executive summaries are posted on the FFEI webpage. Prospective applicants may reach out to the successful partnering institutions and request that they share their proposal.