



MacArthur
Foundation

DOUGLAS B. MARSHALL, JR.
FAMILY FOUNDATION

Wellspring
Advisors

Strengthening Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education

2012 Call for Proposals

Application deadline 5 July 2012

Background

In recent decades, there has been significant progress toward the goal of universal primary education, even while improvements in access have not necessarily been matched by quality of learning. More children completing primary education has increased demand by students and families for secondary education worldwide, but participation rates are much lower at secondary levels, especially in developing countries and particularly for girls and disadvantaged groups.

There is clear evidence that a high-quality, relevant secondary school education is measurably associated with positive effects on young people's health, improved child mortality rates, reduced population growth, and greater economic growth. Likewise, more education for girls brings well demonstrated benefits for them and is correlated with related benefits for the whole society. Girls with higher levels of education marry later, have smaller families, survive childbirth at higher rates, experience reduced incidences of HIV/AIDS, have children more likely to survive to age five, earn more, and live in societies with higher rates of economic growth at the national level.

Governments in developing countries are, as a result, thinking seriously about how to build on primary education gains to provide secondary education on a larger scale. But primary education success yields little insight about a) the barriers to accessing secondary education, b) which intervention strategies are best for keeping girls and boys in secondary school and improving learning outcomes, and c) cost-effectively delivering relevant secondary education at scale, suggesting an urgent need for new research and development in this field.

The developing country context of this new focus on secondary education is also changing. In the early 1990s when Education For All pushed for accelerated enrollment in primary schooling, most existing schools were concentrated in towns and cities and most children out of school were girls and/or in rural areas. Today, primary schools are widespread, and they reflect gender parity in participation, while it is secondary schools that are scarce and mostly in central towns and urban areas. The majority of children, including girls and vulnerable children, now live in varied environments, including rural areas, large urban slums, informal settlements, villages, towns or

cities; many are on the move seeking work and learning opportunities, and others remain isolated in rural areas. Moreover, the world of work in developing countries is also changing from a focus on widespread subsistence agriculture and small-scale industrial sector work to a much more complex mix of formal and informal economic activities in local as well as globally-connected economies, surrounding secondary schools with new kinds of labor markets and skill training needs. This makes targeting and calibrating the scale-up of secondary education even more challenging.

Purpose

The aim, therefore, of this Call for Proposals is to accelerate secondary education research and development in selected countries. The intent of this group of private donors and donor advisors, including The MasterCard Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, Douglas B. Marshall, Jr. Family Foundation, and Wellspring Advisors, is to encourage a new wave of innovation and learning that can help inform the imminent expansion and transformation of secondary education in a new phase of Education For All. This should result in better transitions, access, teaching, and learning outcomes for specific children in specific projects and schools in the selected countries, and a wealth of new insights about addressing the challenges of expanding secondary education across many countries. Funded initiatives and the insights they generate will address the key goals of the Global Compact on Learning, an agenda developed by stakeholders in the field of education and published in 2011 by the Brookings Institution's Center for Universal Education that lays out challenges, priorities, and key strategies in education for the developing world.

Strategic Approach

Proposed projects should be of the kind that will raise the profile of fresh thinking and new possibilities as secondary education becomes more central to the education agenda. We invite potential partners to push the boundaries of creativity, consider new and innovative solutions, and re-think the content, instructional methods, delivery systems and partnerships common in secondary education. Projects should yield insights that can expand the policy horizons of government planners, other large scale implementers, and technical experts alike and inform later stages of educational investment by various donors.

The funders have allocated up to \$5 million for the Call for Proposals subject to the quality of proposals received, and will consider funding levels between \$50,000 and \$500,000 over a period of one to three years for projects in the three categories described below.

The geographic focus for this Call for Proposals is East Africa, Nigeria, and India (see additional information about geography below). The Call is open to organizations (not to individuals) working on specific education issues in these places.

In order to advance the action learning and evidence building agenda of this Call for Proposals organizations wishing to apply are requested to:

1. Select from one of the three listed project types (research, pilot projects, or scale up),

2. Locate your application within a demand, supply or learner characteristic approach to a problem, as described below (some projects may comprise multiple approaches), and
3. Select from among the substantive issues and geographic areas specified below as foci for the application.

The table below maps the elements involved in constructing an application for consideration under this Call for Proposals.

| APPROACHES PROJECT TYPES | Demand-side barriers, challenges and options | Supply-side constraints, and possible solutions | Learner characteristics, relevance and learning outcomes |
|-------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Research | | | |
| Pilot Projects | Substantive Issues and Geographic Areas | | |
| Scale-up of successful models | | | |

Types of Projects

We invite applications for the following types of projects.

- **Research** – including descriptive studies of the nature of problems and rigorous evaluations of promising programs that help build an evidence base that informs programming, experimentation and policy planning, as well as building research capacity.
- **Pilot projects testing innovations** – testing approaches to particular problems such as tailoring courses of study/curriculum to varied and changing labor market needs for “21st Century skills”, exploring the use of technology to deliver and to enrich instruction and learning, reducing barriers and facilitating transition and completion of secondary education for vulnerable groups, achieving and sustaining gender equity, and ensuring improved and relevant learning outcomes.
- **Scale-up of successful models** – scoping activities to examine models of public-private partnership; explore the cost-effectiveness, relevance, strategic fit and scalability of different service delivery models; and build relationships among government, industry and private actors to develop collaborative strategies to implement first phase efforts to expand proven interventions.

Approaches to the Problem

Applications under the Call for Proposals should be made with reference to one or more of the three categories of approaches described below.

Demand-side barriers, challenges and options, for example:

- To what degree do the motivations of children, parents and supporters of primary education translate into motivations to continue into secondary education?
- Under what conditions are parents and youth willing to pay for and overcome opportunity costs to continue secondary education?
- How do we test our assumptions about these drivers of motivation and demand?

Supply-side constraints and possible solutions, for example:

- What conditions and considerations could accelerate investment by government and industry in secondary education, and what types of problems might constrain such investment?
- What mix of types of secondary education – across the range of formal academic courses, non-formal vocational training, informal apprenticeship/mentoring – is desirable, optimal, and feasible for government and other providers to supply?

Learner characteristics, relevance and learning outcomes, for example:

- What are the characteristics by student type and geography of those leaving primary school and what do children know when they enter and leave secondary school?
- How do learning needs vary and how can this diversity be addressed - boys and girls, ethnic and language differences, wealth quintiles, etc.?

Substantive Issues

Applications may focus on any of the following substantive issues.

- **Supporting transition to and retention in secondary education** for girls and other disadvantaged groups. Examples include:
 - Building community engagement in and accountability for schooling
 - Emerging public-private and public-faith based models for the delivery of education
 - Supporting after school or school holiday programs
 - Providing remedial or mentoring support for learners
 - Expanding access, retention and re-entry in formal and non-formal education for adolescent and pregnant teens
- Innovative approaches to secondary education, both formal and non-formal, that seek to provide girls and boys with **real, measurable 21st Century skills that are relevant to life and labor markets**. Examples include but are not limited to:
 - Determining what are relevant learning outcomes, courses of study, and training programs within given local and national contexts labor markets
 - Integrating 21st Century skills in the curriculum
 - Integrating sexual and reproductive health education into school curricula
 - Exploring experiential learning in formal and non-formal education models
 - Integrating entrepreneurship within schooling

Supply-side, Research → This will inform policy decisions services to the gov.

Implications for Policy
- What is the research efforts of govts?

- Private sector provision and associated regulatory frameworks to improve access and relevance of learning
- **Use of education technologies and open educational resources** that improve access and quality of learning in the face of growing demand for education and limited funds. Examples include:
 - Possibilities for cost-effective design and delivery of secondary education via new technologies and more creative use of existing technology such as radio
 - Flexible models that address youth living in remote areas, working youth or adolescent mothers and pregnant teens
 - Strengthening information technology skills of teachers and youth
- **Reforms to teaching** in the formal classroom and non-formal equivalents that respond to high pupil teacher ratios, reduce teacher absenteeism, address gender and skills gaps in the teaching force at secondary level and teachers' influence on access, completion and overall achievement levels. Examples include:
 - Initiatives that encourage training and hiring of locally-based teachers
 - Integrating active learning, critical thinking and problem solving in the classroom
 - Increasing content knowledge and specialization of secondary teachers in 21st Century skill areas
 - Models that could be deployed at scale at a feasible cost for retention of skilled teachers in the face of demand for their skills in other industries

Geographic Areas

Applicants may propose work in the following geographic areas.

- **East Africa** (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda)
- **Nigeria** (particularly the states of Kano, Sokoto, Jigawa, Lagos and Rivers)
- **India** (particularly the states of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra)

These regions and countries have been selected based on secondary education needs, as well as strategic and geographic priorities of donor and donor advisor partners.

While knowledge is limited about best practices in secondary education in developing countries, particular approaches may hold promise. We encourage applicants to consider the following in preparing their submissions:

- Promoting increased local accountability for schooling through community mobilization and engagement with schools and the education process.
- Planning and implementing interventions in consort with local actors and educational authorities, such as local education ministries, professional associations, and civil society groups.
- Inclusion in project design explicit monitoring designed to promote and document learning during and at the conclusion of project implementation.

- Identification of specific pathways, actors and steps necessary for achieving desired outcomes and for scaling up educational interventions in a future project phase.
- Leveraging existing capacity in local universities and research centers to understand and strengthen ongoing monitoring and evaluation of secondary education delivery.
- For non-formal education models, providing a bridge to formal schooling and/or accreditation of learning.
- (Research projects) Research agenda is relevant for government educational policy goals, raises awareness of specific education system deficiencies, and/or provides feedback to policymakers, government budgeting processes, and other education implementers.
- Project results, whether positive or negative, will be shared in the public domain.

Application Process

The application process will involve two successive review stages: *Letters of Inquiry* (LOI) and *Proposals*. Successful applications will be invited to advance to the second, *Proposal*, phase of the review process. Decisions about funding will be made between September 2012 and March 2013.

Application requirements will be strictly adhered to. At the Letter of Inquiry stage, we are unable to accommodate questions submitted in writing or by phone.

Applicants should observe the following guidelines:

- **Deadline for all Letters of Inquiry submissions is July 5, 2012 at 12:00pm CDT.** Please email electronic applications to Laura Young, Program Associate at the MacArthur Foundation: lyoung@macfound.org.
- **Electronic submissions are requested. Please do not send original hard copy applications.**
- When emailing your submission, please use this standard format in the **subject line of the email**: “Innovation and Practice application: [INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME]”
- Each applicant must include a *Letter of Inquiry Cover Page* (see below) to submit with the *Letter of Inquiry*.

All applications received will be pooled and reviewed, and a limited number of LOIs will be invited to submit a *Proposal*. Only the strongest applications will be funded. Reviewers’ evaluations will remain confidential and not be made available to applicants. If a *Proposal* is invited, the deadline for the full *Proposal* submission will be August 31, 2012. For funded *Proposals*, donors will endeavor to streamline reporting requirements, though some projects are likely to be asked to report to multiple donors.

Letter of Inquiry Guidelines

Applicants should submit a single document with three sections: Cover Sheet (maximum 1 page), Narrative Description (maximum 5 pages), and Project Budget Summary (maximum 1 page).

Cover Sheet Information - Please submit on your organization’s letterhead or stationery:

- Name of submitting organization
- Complete address and telephone number of submitting organization
- Website of submitting organization
- Tax status of your organization: 501c3 tax status or charitable equivalent; for profit; governmental organization
- Project title
- Name and email addresses of principal investigator(s)/organizational contact
- Names of partners or subcontractors (inclusive of contact information as outlined above)
- Amount requested and project duration
- Organization's annual operating budget for 2011

Narrative Description

The narrative may not exceed five pages. It should include the project objective and description, and provide the context and concrete detail for the proposed work. Please address the following points in your narrative:

- Overall goal (or goals) of the project
- Project rationale, including an explanation of how the project fits within a given local context and how it addresses the Criteria for support
- The evidence bases on which project expectations or assumptions are formed
- Major phases or activities involved in project implementation
- Processes that will be used to evaluate the project and provide feedback during implementation
- Anticipated outcomes
- Organizational experience in thematic/geographic areas
- Summary of evidence for scaling up successful models (as relevant)
- Brief one paragraph bios of management / study team

Project Budget Summary

- The *Project Budget Summary*, not to exceed one page, should be notional, indicating major categories of expenses for each year of the project. It is not necessary to submit a detailed, line itemized budget with Letters of Inquiry submissions.
- *Project Budget Summary* should be submitted in US dollars (US\$).

Your project will be assessed in part by: the match between financial resource allocation and project aims; cost-effectiveness of the proposed intervention; and the potential current and future complementary funding sources identified for purposes of scaling up of the proposed project.