COLLEGE ✳ SPARK

W A S H I N G T O N

Outcomes Acceleration Fund Request for Proposals

College Spark is inviting education institutions and nonprofit organizations in Washington state to submit a Letter-of-Interest (LOI) for grant funding to support improving the college readiness and degree completion rates of low-income high school and college students. Funded projects must be designed to improve one or more of the College Spark Outcomes Acceleration Fund outcome indicators:

- *Reduce* the percentage of low-income high school students who trigger Early Warning Indicators - attendance under 90%, course failure, and/or suspension/expulsion.

- *Increase* the percentage of low-income high school students who complete Algebra II with a grade of C or higher.

- *Increase* the rate of high school graduates (particularly those with a stated intention by spring of 12th grade of attending a two-year college) who directly enroll in college.

- *Increase* the rate of students at two-year colleges who are placed into initial English and math courses by measures that are alternatives to placement tests. Examples of alternative measures include placement based on high school GPA, Bridge Course completion, and directed-self placement tools.

- *Increase* the percentage of students who earn their first college-level credits in English or math within one year of college enrollment. Qualifying projects can work with high school or college students.

Applicants may propose any approach they believe is most likely to influence one or more of these outcomes. Applicants are expected to provide research or other evidence to support the likely efficacy of the proposed project. Research projects that analyze local and national data, best practices, trends, and/or approaches to improving Outcomes Acceleration Fund outcome indicators are also eligible for application. Projects designed to eliminate outcome disparities (particularly by race and ethnicity) will be given priority for funding. Only proposed projects that have the potential to generate knowledge that is useful to other organizations will be selected for funding. College Spark Washington expects to disburse approximately $1.4 million in new grant funding under the Outcomes Acceleration Fund annually. Grants typically range from $20,000-$150,000 total over one to three years. Grant requests for single institutions outside this range will not be considered. Collaborative, multi-institution projects may be eligible to apply for grants of up to $300,000 with prior approval from College Spark.

Some of the strategies that have shown promise at improving these outcomes for low-income students include:

- Reform to school discipline policy and practice, including alternatives to suspension

- Data-driven attendance campaigns
- Integrating trauma-informed instruction and discipline practices
- Improved supports for low-income students in dual credit courses
- Corequisite remediation replacing a prerequisite developmental education sequence
- Reform of college placement instruments and practices
- Professional development opportunities that are sustained and collaborative

Application Process and Timeline

Eligible applicants may indicate their interest in funding by completing a pre-application Letter-of-Interest (LOI). College Spark uses an on-line application system for both the LOI and the Full Grant Proposal. **The LOI is available at tinyurl.com/collegespark.**

- LOIs are accepted on a rolling basis. There are no deadlines for submission.
- LOIs will be considered and applicants will be notified within 30 days whether the request was declined or if a full grant proposal is invited.
- Full grant proposals are due within 30 days of invitation to apply, unless a deadline extension is requested and approved by College Spark.
- At the time of submission, grant applicants will be notified of the anticipated date of approval or denial, which will typically be within 12 weeks.
- Funds are disbursed after final work plans are approved and a signed grant agreement is returned to College Spark. This process typically takes three months after grant approval.
- Applicants are strongly encouraged to view a recorded informational webinar prior to submitting a LOI. This webinar includes an explanation of our giving guidelines, selection criteria, and helpful responses to each LOI question.

  If you have questions, need technical assistance to complete your application, or would like to discuss project proposals, we encourage you to contact Rachel Clements, Program Officer, (rachel@collegespark.org) to schedule a call at any time throughout the grant application process.

Multi-Year Requests

If you wish to be considered for a multi-year grant, your project must clearly demonstrate the need for multi-year implementation. You must also be able to identify and meet specific programmatic goals during each year of funding, up to and including three years. The release of grant funds for years two and/or three is contingent upon the applicant meeting performance targets. Total grant funds for all three years will not exceed $150,000 for single-institution projects.

Grants awarded under this Request for Proposals may be eligible for renewal funding in cases where additional funding would clearly enable grantees to achieve a dramatic increase in their impact or generate learning that is relevant to the field. Grant renewals will be awarded sparingly and will require submitting an application for renewal.

Eligibility for Funding Consideration

To be eligible to apply for College Spark funding, applicant organizations must have a staffed physical presence in Washington and be

- Organized and operated for purposes described in IRC Section 501(c)(3), but excluding Type III Supporting Organizations; OR
- A university, college, school or other educational organization described in IRC Section 170(c)(1); OR
- A Public agency, unit of government, tribal government, or tribal program under IRC Section 7871.

Funding Prohibitions

Funding will not be provided for

- Endowments
- Special event sponsorship or any other type of fundraising
- Political campaigns or candidates
- Lobbying activities
- Deficits or debt-retirement
- Student scholarships, student tuition, or student fees
- Geographic expansion of existing programs/services into new locations without other improvement/refinement of services
- Organizations that unfairly discriminate in any manner
- Organizations that would re-grant funding received from College Spark, unless to a partner organization that will support the College Spark-funded services as described in the project budget or unless with express permission from College Spark.

Because the College Spark Outcomes Acceleration Fund is focused on program refinement and improvement, funding is not provided for on-going program or operation support. However, applicants may include funding for administrative costs associated with programs or projects eligible under the RFP to the extent that the costs are necessary to implement the proposed project or services.

Funding Requirements

To be competitive for selection for funding, the following requirements must be satisfied.

- Projects must be designed to improve student outcomes over an existing and established baseline with services or systems that are either newly developed or substantially refined, reformed, or improved.
- Projects must include strategies that are supported by research and evidence or, if evidence is not available (e.g. this is a new method or strategy), are based on research-tested assumptions and include reliable methods of evaluation.
- Projects designed to eliminate outcome disparities (particularly by race and ethnicity) will be given priority for funding.
- Research projects that analyze local and national data, best practices, trends, and/or approaches to improving Outcomes Acceleration Fund outcome indicators are eligible for application.
- Projects must serve a significant number of low-income students. It is rare for College Spark Washington to fund projects in which less than 40% of the participating students are low-income and we prioritize projects in which 75% or more of students served are low-income. We define low-income students as being from families with incomes that qualify them for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program or for Pell Grants, Washington State Need Grants, or the College Bound Scholarship. Alternative measures of income must be approved by College Spark.

- Projects must produce knowledge and/or data that will be valuable to College Spark Washington, other institutions, or policymakers.
- Projects must have automatic, unavoidable, or mandatory participation for some defined group of students. Optional and out-of-school supports will not be funded.
- Projects must show potential for sustainable, long-term benefits that persist after the grant period ends.
- Projects are more competitive for selection when they are that are very likely to be replicated elsewhere or to create systemic impact.

Background of College Spark

College Spark Washington funds programs across Washington state that help low-income students become college-ready and earn their degrees. College Spark began supporting access to higher education in 1978 by managing student loan programs. In 2004, College Spark reorganized as an education grantmaker. For more information about College Spark Washington and our grants, please visit our website at www.collegespark.org.