



Education Equity Fund: Request-for-Proposals (RFP)

College Spark Washington supports the postsecondary dreams of students and their communities through grantmaking focused on dismantling racism in the education system. Our work is rooted in love for community and justice in creating educational opportunities that can transform our society. We show love by seeking to eliminate oppression and disrupting educational inequities for low income students and students of color. To learn more about College Spark Washington, please visit collegespark.org.

Invitation to Apply

College Spark is inviting education institutions and nonprofit organizations in Washington state to submit a [Letter-of-Interest \(LOI\)](#) for grant funding to support work designed to dismantle barriers to equity in education for students in high school and at community and technical colleges. Project funding is available for work that has one or more of the following areas of focus:

- **Alternatives to Exclusionary Discipline in High School:** Elimination or substantial reduction in the use of exclusionary discipline for all students and/or elimination or substantial reduction of the current racial disparity in rates of exclusionary discipline. Exclusionary discipline refers to expulsion, in-school suspension, and out-of-school suspension.
- **Placement at Community and Technical Colleges:** Changes to current course placement policy and practice designed to eliminate the opportunity gap in the rate of students who are placed directly into credit-bearing, college-level English and math classes rather than pre-college courses. We want students to have the opportunity to earn credit for the correct math course for their chosen program of study, whether or not that course is a transferable math course.
- **Community Centered Decision-Making:** Efforts to change policy and practice in schools, districts, and colleges that facilitate a full, equal, and equitable partnership among families, educators, and community partners to promote student learning and flourishing. A wide range of projects can advance this goal, including but not limited to participatory research, co-design processes, student-led equity audits of policy, and organizing student and parent/community advocacy efforts.
- **Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Pedagogy:** Developing, refining, and/or implementing anti-racist and/or multicultural curriculum into core subjects, developing and implementing stand-alone ethnic studies courses, or removing/revising curriculum that contributes to racist outcomes for students. Any professional development efforts to promote culturally responsive pedagogy must be sustained over time and tied to educator practice.

- **Anti-Racist Leadership Development:** Sustained efforts to build the knowledge and skills necessary for teachers, principals, district leadership, and college administrators to implement practical applications of anti-racist theory that identify and dismantle racism within their educational institutions.

Applicants are invited to propose work plans within these areas of focus that they believe are most likely to create the conditions necessary for students of color to flourish in their schools and colleges. Research projects that analyze local and national data, best practices, trends, and/or approaches to work within the Education Equity Fund areas of focus are also eligible for funding. It is helpful when applicants are able to provide research, examples, or other evidence to illustrate the likely efficacy of their proposed project. College Spark Washington expects to disburse approximately \$1.7 million in new grant funding under the Education Equity Fund annually. Grants typically range from \$50,000-\$180,000 total over a period of one to three years. Grant requests for single institutions outside this range cannot be considered. Collaborative, multi-institution projects may be eligible to apply for grants of up to \$360,000 with prior consultation and invitation from College Spark.

Application Process and Timeline

The application process begins by submitting 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 set deadlines for submission. The Board of Trustees meets and considers grant requests quarterly.
- All LOIs will be considered and applicants will be notified within 30 days of submission as to whether a full grant proposal is invited.
- We request that full grant proposals are submitted within 30 days of invitation to apply, unless an extension is requested by the applicant 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 both the applicant and College Spark finalize the project work plans and a signed grant agreement is returned to College Spark. This process typically takes about one month 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 how to provide the most helpful responses to each LOI question.

If you have questions, need technical assistance to complete your application, or would like to discuss project ideas, we encourage you to contact Rachel Clements, Program Officer, by email at rachel@collegespark.org to schedule a call or meeting at any time throughout the grant application process. We appreciate the opportunity to talk to applicants as they develop their project ideas, and it is never too early in the process to have a conversation about a potential partnership with College Spark.

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

The Education Equity Fund will not be able to provide support for requests that include

- Special event sponsorship or any other type of annual fundraising. If you are interested in event sponsorship, please contact Dr. Warren Brown at warren@collegespark.org.
- Endowments
- Buildings or capital campaigns
- Political campaigns or candidates
- Lobbying activities
 - Deficits or debt-retirement
 - Student scholarships, student tuition, or student fees
 - Organizations that violate College Spark Washington’s core values
 - One-time professional development events. Any professional development projects that are funded must include recurring, sustained training that is clearly tied to practical application and changes in educator and/or administrator practice.
 - 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.

The Education Equity Fund is primarily focused on project-based funding for the implementation of one- to three-year work plans. Applicants may include funding for administrative costs (“overhead”) associated with programs or projects eligible under the RFP to the extent that the costs are necessary to successfully implement the proposed project or services. Funding is not typically provided for on-going program or operation support, and general operating support is not eligible for consideration through the regular application process. Occasionally, general operating support will be available by invitation only. Organizations with a mission of advancing one or more of the defined Education Equity Fund areas of focus may initiate a discussion (with Rachel Clements, rachel@collegespark.org) to explore whether an invitation to apply for general operating funds is possible.

Funding Requirements

The criteria used to assess grant applications includes

- **Primary Focus on High School or Community and Technical Colleges:** The Education Equity Fund primarily serves students enrolled in high school and community and technical

colleges in Washington. Some projects may also serve other students if including them does not result in significant additional expenses.

- **Improved Outcomes:** Projects must be designed to improve the racial equity of student outcomes and/or student experiences over an existing and established baseline with efforts that are either 1) newly developed or 2) being substantially refined, reformed, or improved.
- **Community Wisdom:** Projects must be developed and implemented with substantial and meaningful student and/or community partnership.
- **System Change Focus:** Projects must be designed to improve education systems rather than fixing students and must demonstrate an asset-based approach to understanding and partnering with students and families.
- **Direct Connection to Education:** Projects must have a clear and direct connection to improving the equity of education outcomes and experiences. While critical and important, this Fund does not provide support for basic needs or projects that primarily target broader social change and advocacy outside of education systems.
- **Generate and Share Knowledge:** Projects must have strong potential produce knowledge and/or data that will be valuable to College Spark Washington, other education institutions, and/or policymakers pursuing education equity goals.
- **Scale:** Projects must be developed at scale to serve an entire institution and have automatic or unavoidable participation or impact for some defined group.
- **Sustainable Benefits:** Projects must show potential for sustainable, long-term benefits that persist after the grant period ends.
- **Replication:** Projects are more competitive for selection when they demonstrate strong potential for replication by additional organizations or institutions.

College Spark strives to forge authentic relationships with communities and allies, which requires us to be open to being challenged and responsive to our partners. We commit to listen, learn, and model openness and transparency. Your feedback on our funding process is always welcome and valued.