



## 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 seek to eliminate educational inequities for students of color. To learn more about College Spark Washington, please visit [collegespark.org](https://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:** 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.
- **Inclusive and Affirming Student Services:** Changes to current policy and practice in student services designed to eliminate opportunity gaps and for students enrolling in two-year colleges. Eligible projects include changes to onboarding practices, advising, placement, campus life, and student support programs that are designed to address an identified racial disparity in student experience and outcomes.
- **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 identify the ways racism is impacting students and to lead reform efforts to 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. Organizations with a mission defined by advancing one or more of the defined Education Equity Fund areas of focus may initiate a discussion with Rachel Clements, [rachel@collegespark.org](mailto:rachel@collegespark.org) to explore whether an invitation to apply for general operating funds is possible.

College Spark Washington expects to award approximately \$2 million annually through the Education Equity Fund. 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.

- 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.
- At the time of submission, grant applicants will be notified of the anticipated date of approval or denial, which will typically be within one quarter of application (approximately 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](mailto: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](mailto: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

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.

## Funding Requirements

The criteria used to assess grant applications includes

- **Primary Focus on Middle/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 district-wide projects may also serve students in elementary school, but College Spark does not typically fund projects focused only on elementary school.
- **Improved Outcomes:** Projects must be designed to improve the racial equity of student

outcomes and/or student experiences 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 at least 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 listening, learning, and modeling openness and transparency. Your feedback on our funding process is always welcome and valued.