Research Grants on Education: Large
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The Large Research Grants on Education Program supports education research projects that will contribute to the improvement of education, broadly conceived, with budgets ranging from $125,000 to $500,000 for projects ranging from one to five years. We anticipate awarding grants with budgets across each of the following funding tiers -- $125,000 to 250,000; $250,001 to $375,000; and $375,001 to $500,000. We accept Intent to Apply forms twice a year.

This program is “field-initiated” in that proposal submissions are not in response to a specific request for a particular research topic, discipline, design, method, or location. Our goal for this program is to support rigorous, intellectually ambitious and technically sound research that is relevant to the most pressing questions and compelling opportunities in education.

Program Statement

The Large Research Grants on Education Program supports education research projects that will contribute to the improvement of education, broadly conceived, with budgets ranging from $125,000 up through $500,000 for projects ranging from one to five years. We accept applications twice a year.

This program is “field-initiated” in that proposal submissions are not in response to a specific request for a particular research topic, discipline, design, or method. Our goal for this program is to support rigorous, intellectually ambitious and technically sound research that is relevant to the most pressing questions and compelling opportunities in education. We seek to support scholarship that develops new foundational knowledge that may have a lasting impact on educational discourse.
We recognize that learning occurs across the life course as well as across settings—from the classroom to the workplace, to family and community contexts and even onto the playing field—any of which may, in the right circumstance, provide the basis for rewarding study that makes significant contributions to the field. We value work that fosters creative and open-minded scholarship, engages in deep inquiry, and examines robust questions related to education. To this end, this program supports proposals from multiple disciplinary and methodological perspectives, both domestically and internationally, from scholars at various stages in their career. We anticipate that proposals will span a wide range of topics and disciplines that innovatively investigate questions central to education, including for example education, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, sociology, law, economics, history, or neuroscience, amongst others.

Moreover, we expect and welcome methodological diversity in answering pressing questions; thus, we are open to projects that utilize a wide array of research methods including quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods, ethnographies, design-based research, participatory methods, historical research, to name a few. We are open to projects that might incorporate data from multiple and varied sources, span a sufficient length of time as to achieve a depth of understanding, or work closely with practitioners or community members over the life of the project. In addition, we welcome proposals submitted by multidisciplinary and multigenerational teams who are positioned to both contribute to the project as well as contribute to the teaching and learning of fellow team members.

Finally, we encourage teams to thoughtfully consider and describe plans regarding the trajectories of their project’s findings, implications, and potential effects, especially how the knowledge may be shared and utilized across the field in practice, policy making, or with broader publics.

Eligibility and Restrictions
Eligibility

Proposals to the Research Grants on Education program must be for academic research projects that aim to study education. Proposals for activities other than research are not eligible (e.g., program evaluations, professional development, curriculum development, scholarships, capital projects). Additionally, proposals for research studies focused on areas other than education, are not eligible.

Principal Investigators (PIs) and Co-PIs applying for a Large Research Grant on Education must have an earned doctorate in an academic discipline or professional field, or appropriate experience in an education research-related profession. While graduate students may be part of the research team, they may not be named the PI or Co-PI on the proposal.

The PI must be affiliated with a non-profit organization or public/governmental institution that is willing to serve as the administering organization if the grant is awarded. The Spencer Foundation does not award grants directly to individuals. Examples include non-profit or public colleges, universities, school districts, and research facilities, as well as other non-profit organizations with a 501(c)(3) determination from the IRS (or equivalent non-profit status if the organization is outside of the United States).

Proposals are accepted from the U.S. and internationally, however all proposals must be submitted in English and budgets must be proposed in U.S. Dollars.

Restrictions

Large Research Grant budget totals should be between $125,000 and $500,000, including up to 15% indirect cost charges. We anticipate funding proposals in the following funding tiers: $125,000 to 250,000; $250,001 to $375,000; and $375,001 to $500,000. We will distribute our grant awards across these three tiers. We encourage applicants to carefully consider this when constructing their project budgets and not only reach for the highest budget category.

Projects proposed may not be longer than 5 years in duration.
PIs and Co-PIs may only hold one active research grant from the Spencer Foundation at a time. (This restriction does not apply to the administering organization; organizations may submit as many proposals as they like as long as they are for different projects and have different research teams.)

PIs and Co-PIs may not submit more than one research proposal to the Spencer Foundation at a time. This restriction applies to the Small Grants Program, Large Grants Program, and Research-Practice Partnership Program. If the PI or any of the Co-PIs currently have a research proposal under consideration in any of these programs, they are required to wait until a final decision has been made on the pending proposal before they can submit a new proposal.

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**Deadlines**

**June 2021 Cycle**

**Applications Open**
Now Closed

**February 2022 Cycle**

**Applications Open**
December 1, 2021

**Intent to Apply**
January 26, 2022 12:00PM (Noon) CENTRAL

**Full Proposal Deadline**
February 23, 2022 12:00PM (Noon) CENTRAL
How to Apply

The application process begins with an Intent to Apply form. Once submitted, you will have access to the Full Proposal application in our online portal. Intent to Apply forms are due by 12:00pm Central Time on the deadline date.

Intent to Apply Guidelines

The Intent to Apply form must be submitted through an online application form following the guidelines below before you be given access to the full proposal application.

Step 1 – Registration

Note: This application is configured for the Principal Investigator (PI) on the project to register and submit the form. If someone other than the PI will be completing the online application (e.g., an administrative assistant), the PI should register and then provide their username and password to the person assisting them with the application.

If you (the PI) have never accessed the Spencer Foundation online portal, you must register and create a profile by going to https://spencer.smartsimple.us and clicking the “Register Here” button.

Follow the guidelines on the registration page to create your profile.

If you already have an account, log on to update your profile and access the Intent to Apply form.

Step 2 - My Profile

After logging in, follow the directions to complete the information requested on the My Profile page and upload your current CV (10 page limit). The My Profile page is your online account with the Spencer Foundation whether you are applying for a grant, reviewing a proposal, or submitting a grantee report.

Step 3 – Intent to Apply Form
To fill out the Intent to Apply form, go to your Workbench and click the Apply button for the Large Research Grants on Education.

Your draft form can be saved so that you may return to work on it at a later time if necessary. Your draft form will be available on your Draft Proposals list on your Workbench.

### Intent to Apply Form Elements

Within the online form, there are detailed guidelines for each section. Below is an overview of the application elements you’ll be expected to complete.

**Project Personnel** - As the person creating the draft application, you will automatically be assigned to the proposal as the Principal Investigator. If there are Co-PIs on the proposal, you are asked to provide their names and organizations in this section.

**Proposal Summary** – Information about the project is requested, such as a project title, estimated duration, estimated budget tier, the central research question(s), and a 200-word project summary.

**Project Data** – Within the online application, we ask you to choose the appropriate options with regard to your research project in the following categories: disciplinary perspective, methodologies, topics, geographical scope, contexts, and participants. This information is helpful in determining the appropriate reviewers for your eventual full proposal and for internal evaluations of our grant programs.

### Submit

Once you’ve completed the form, click the Submit button at the bottom of the page. You’ll now have access to the Full Proposal application form on your Workbench.

Note: You must complete an Intent to Apply form by noon on the deadline if you intend to submit a Full Proposal for the upcoming review cycle.

### Full Proposal Guidelines
We are currently revising the full proposal guidelines.

Review Process

Full proposals submitted under the Large Research Grant program will undergo a masked peer review* process. By this we mean that the identification of the Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigators will be concealed during the first stage of peer review. Applicants should ensure that the appropriate sections of their application are prepared in such a way that their identities cannot be easily determined. For specific details about how to mask your proposal submission, see the Full Proposal Guidelines in the How To Apply section above.

All full proposal submissions are reviewed by external panel reviewers and internal staff. Those chosen as semi-finalists will be reviewed by additional experts in the field and considered in the final decision meeting against the other semi-finalist proposals. The review process for this program takes approximately 11 months from the Intent to Apply deadline date.

The review panel for this program is made up of scholars in the field of education research with expertise across many disciplines and methodological areas. Panelists are asked to rate and comment on the following aspects of your proposal:

- **Significance of the Project**: Reviewers will evaluate the centrality of education in the research, the importance of the topic to its field, and the quality of the research question(s) and/or direction of inquiry.

- **Connection to Research and Theory**: Reviewers will evaluate the adequacy of the description of how other researchers have treated the same topic and how well the proposal responds to prior work and theory.

- **Research Design**: Reviewers will evaluate the overall quality,
sophistication, and appropriateness of the research design as well as its alignment with the research question(s) and/or conceptual framing.

**Dissemination Plans:** Reviewers will evaluate the proposed plans for sharing the results or other findings of the research project, which may include traditional submissions to conferences or publications as well as other efforts aimed at influencing research, policy, practice, or public discourse.

*We use the term “masked review” instead of the typical term “blind review” to avoid the use of ableist language.

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**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q:** Does this program support research in settings other than K-12 and higher education institutions?

**A:** Yes, the Foundation funds research projects that span the life course (i.e., from early childhood to adult learning) as well as those that focus on contexts outside of school.

**Q:** Do you have a preference for certain research methodologies?

**A:** No, we are open to whatever qualitative and quantitative methods make sense for answering the questions at hand. Historically, the Foundation has supported research across a range of methods and academic disciplines, and we expect this to continue in this program.

**Q:** Do you have a preference for research teams vs. individual researchers?

**A:** No, we do not have a preference. The important thing is to plan the staffing around the aims of the project.

**Q:** Can a graduate student serve as a Co-PI on a proposal submission?

**A:** No, the PI and any Co-PIs named on the proposal are expected to have
earned doctorate degrees prior to proposal submission. While graduate students may be included in the budget as research assistants, this program is not meant to support student research projects.

Q: Do you accept proposals from outside the United States?
A: Yes, we accept proposals from outside the U.S. Application materials must be submitted in English and project budgets must be in U.S. dollars.

Q: Do you have a preference for regional, national, or international projects?
A: No, we do not have a preference.

Q: What is the expected duration of projects in this program?
A: We leave the duration of the project up to the PI/research team to determine, but limit it to no more than 5 years.

Q: Can my organization submit more than one proposal at a time?
A: Yes, as long as the proposals are for different projects and the research teams are different, it is fine for an organization to submit multiple applications at one time.

Q: If I have a current grant through Spencer, can I apply for a new grant?
A: You may not hold more than one active research grant at a time from the Spencer Foundation. You may apply for a new grant while you have an active grant at the Spencer Foundation if the active grant will end before the anticipated start date of the new project.

Q: What is your policy on indirect costs?
A: Research grant proposals with budgets over $75,000 may include 15% indirect cost charges (IDC) on the total direct costs. Subcontract budgets may include the 15% IDC, but should not be included in the main budget total when calculating the overall IDC for the project.

Q: Are budgets expected to include in-kind giving or cost sharing? If not expected, is it allowed?
A: In-kind giving or cost sharing is not expected or required as part of your proposal budget. However, if you plan to include in-kind giving or cost sharing as part of your project budget, you should indicate this in the online budget form in the narrative section. If your proposal is chosen for funding, the grant award may be contingent upon receiving documentation confirming the additional support.

Q: If I am turned down, is it possible to revise my proposal and reapply in a later cycle?

A: Spencer does not have a policy against accepting uninvited revised proposals. However, you should know that many factors go into the final decision on each proposal, including our limited budget. Even if you receive feedback on your proposal and are able to address all of the reviewer concerns in the submission, we can offer no guarantees as to the likelihood of funding due to the fact that we currently fund less than 10% of the submissions we receive. Please note, resubmissions are considered among all of the other newly submitted proposals and are not given special status or consideration in the review process.

Q: I have an idea for a project and would like feedback. Is it possible to contact someone?

A: If you have reviewed our program statement and application guidelines and still have questions about where your idea for a research project falls within the program, feel free to email us at largegrants@spencer.org.

Q: How do I determine my start date and when should I expect payment if my proposal is selected for funding?

A: We recommend proposing a start date that is at least 11 months after the deadline for the Intent to Apply form. The review process for this program takes approximately 10 months and once notified of the funding decision, it can take additional time for the official approval process, which entails reviewing the budget, processing award letters, and issuing the grant payment. NOTE: Grant payments are issued on the third week of each month. If Spencer has not received your signed award letters by your start date, your payment will not be issued.
Recent Awardees

How Changing Neighborhood and School Contexts Shape Mental Health and Educational Attainment from Childhood to Early Adulthood
Jennifer Candipan, Katrina M Walsemann, Nicole L. Hair
Brown University

Reclaiming Land and Languages Through Indigenous Community-Based Mobile Game Design
Mary R. Hermes, Elizabeth LaPensee
Grassroots Indigenous Multimedia

Reimagining Teaching/Learning Relations Alongside Improvisational and Ensemble Performers
Ananda Maria Marin
University of California, Los Angeles

Centering racialized pre-service teachers: A proleptic re-design of teacher education for leveraging linguistic diversity
Danny C. Martinez, P. Zitlali Morales, Ramon Antonio Martinez
University of California, Davis

Evaluation of a preschool socio-emotional curriculum: Testing effectiveness and drivers of change in a large, urban school district
Jelena Obradovic
Stanford University

Wrestling with reparations: A historical and ethnographic study of a Black community's struggle for educational justice
Kihana Miraya Ross
Northwestern University

Structure-Agency in Special Education: A multilevel qualitative study of the implementation of inclusion
Sarah L. Woulfin, Susannah Everett
The University of Texas at Austin