

JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING PRACTICES: INVESTIGATING THE OUTCOMES FOR UNDERSERVED STUDENT POPULATIONS

LETTER OF INTENT DUE MAY 8, 2018, BY 11:59 P.M. (ET)

PROPOSALS DUE JUNE 4, 2018, BY 5:00 P.M. (ET)

DECISIONS ANNOUNCED JULY 2018

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I. INTRODUCTION

The goal of this grant opportunity is to investigate the extent to which student-centered learning practices can be used to advance equity in public education. Research proposals should be directed at building the knowledge base related to the impact of specific student-centered learning approaches on marginalized populations of students, the supports that may be needed to ensure realization of positive outcomes for those populations, and the contextual conditions needed to sustain equity-enhancing forms of implementation. The subgroups of particular concern include students who identify as Latinx, African American, and/or Native American; students from low-income families; those who qualify for special education services; emerging bilingual students; and recent immigrants and refugees (other definitions of “underserved” may be applied in proposed studies). Our intention is for this research to influence educational practice, policy, and public awareness. Grantees will be expected to join the Student-Centered Learning Research Collaborative and contribute to its ongoing efforts to build the evidence base, inform policy and practice, and scale effective approaches.

Researchers from grant-eligible research institutions, universities, and colleges are encouraged to apply. Thanks to the generosity of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation and other Research Collaborative supporters, we expect to make up to three grants of approximately \$400,000 each to be conducted over two years. Detailed requirements and criteria are described in Sections IV, V, and VI below. **The deadline for receipt of proposals is 5:00 p.m. (ET) on June 4, 2018. We anticipate announcing the recipients by the end of July.**

II. BACKGROUND

JFF is a national nonprofit that drives transformation in the American workforce and education systems. For 35 years, JFF has led the way in designing innovative and scalable solutions that create access to economic advancement for all.

The Nellie Mae Education Foundation (NMEF) is the largest philanthropic organization in New England that focuses exclusively on education. The foundation supports the promotion and integration of student-centered approaches to learning at the middle and high school levels across New England where learning is personalized; learning is competency-based; learning takes place anytime, anywhere; and students take ownership of their learning. To elevate student-centered approaches, the foundation leverages a four-part strategy focused on building educator ownership, leadership, and capacity; advancing quality and rigor of student-centered learning practices; developing effective systems designs; and building public understanding and demand.

THE STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

In partnership with NMEF, the Students at the Center initiative at JFF has, for almost eight years, led the way in building the evidence base for student-centered learning. Among its many accomplishments, the initiative has: established a powerful organizing framework for a field previously dispersed across a wide array of disciplines; collected, developed, and tested a variety of research-grounded, high-quality tools and resources necessary to implement student-centered approaches to learning; curated and disseminated research in a series of compelling white papers; cultivated and supported a broad range of stakeholders in a variety of settings; designed and maintained the Students at the Center Hub (www.studentsatthecenterhub.org), which engages multiple audiences in using and adding to what we know about student-centered learning; produced two well-regarded books with Harvard Education Press ([Anytime, Anywhere](#) and [Rethinking Readiness](#)); and helped to bridge the research, organizational, legislative, philanthropic, and practice worlds by identifying the student-centered approaches (the “how”) and deeper learning outcomes (the “what”) with the greatest potential to enhance students’ college, career, and civic readiness.

With these efforts and more, Students at the Center has not only captured the current knowledge and future possibilities of student-centered learning, but also increased its visibility and uptake in education. The work, however, is far from complete. The field has now matured to the point where knowledge development and scaled implementation are the key levers required to capture and catalyze changes in systems, policies, and practices. With the support

of NMEF, JFF and the Students at the Center team are extending their commitment to deepen the evidence for, enhance the understanding of, and expand access to student-centered learning approaches in the years to come.

In 2016, Students at the Center, with thought leadership and anchor funding from the NMEF, launched the Student-Centered Learning Research Collaborative. The Research Collaborative clarifies, focuses, and consolidates the rapidly evolving domains of research, practice, and policy related to student-centered learning. The Research Collaborative accomplishes this via three overarching goals:

1. **CATALYZE:** Support groundbreaking research that builds the evidence base for student-centered learning, advances equity, and moves the field forward.
2. **COMMUNICATE:** Curate and disseminate for cross-sector audiences the best scholarship, practices, and policies that will help bring student-centered approaches to scale.
3. **CONNECT:** Bring together leaders from research, practice, policy, and funding to reduce redundancy, promote smart field growth, and accelerate innovation.

The Research Collaborative contributes to and expands the evidence-based resources already available at the [Students at the Center Hub](#) and www.jff.org/studentsatthecenter both by supporting new studies initiated by the Collaborative and by highlighting student-centered, learning-related research conducted elsewhere (see the [full concept paper describing the Research Collaborative](#)).

THE PRINCIPLES OF STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING

Multiple strands of research now identify an increasingly coherent set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions students need to succeed in the 21st century. Alongside NMEF since 2010, and joined in 2013 by the Hewlett Foundation, Students at the Center has been working with academics and researchers to compile, synthesize, and analyze hundreds of research articles to develop a grounded definition of student-centered learning and its relationship to deeper

learning.ⁱ The four key principles of student-centered learning—drawn from the mind/brain sciences, learning theory, and research on youth development, among other fields—are overlapping and complementary.ⁱⁱ They are:

- **Learning is personalized.** Opportunities to learn are customized and differentiated to match each individual student’s needs, interests, background, and skills.
- **Learning is competency based.** Students move ahead based primarily on their demonstration of key learning milestones along the path to mastery.
- **Learning takes place anytime, anywhere.** Equitable opportunities to learn extend beyond the school day and the school building, and take advantage of community and technological resources.
- **Students have agency and ownership of their learning.** Students understand how to improve by applying effort strategically. They are given frequent opportunities to direct and reflect on their learning.

In combination, and when guided by a coherent and rigorous set of educational goals, these principles provide a strong foundation for the pursuit of deeper learning—the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to prepare every student for college, career, and civic life. A small but growing group of studies following the release of the Students at the Center framework further substantiates this vision.ⁱⁱⁱ

Student-centered learning moves the emphasis from the teaching side of the equation to the perspective and experience of the learner. This shift, while not novel, is being explored in a

ⁱ Collected research syntheses and linked resources and tools can be found at: <http://www.jff.org/initiatives/students-center>.

ⁱⁱ An interactive version of the student-centered learning framework can be found at: <http://studentsatthecenterhub.org/interactive-framework/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Zeiser, Taylor, Rickles, Gareth, & Segeritz 2014; Pellegrino & Hilton 2012; Rory & Chris 2016; Barron & Hulleman 2014; Yeager et al. 2016; Hulleman et al. 2017; Kizilcec & Cohen 2017; Bettinger et al. 2018; Saunders et al. 2017; Quay 2017; Nagaoka et al. 2015; Farrington 2013; Ferguson et al. 2015; Romero 2015a; Romero 2015b; see also the studies cited at: “Resources,” Nellie Mae Education Foundation, n.d., www.nmefoundation.org/resources/student-centered-learning/centered-on-results; Wolfe, Steinberg, & Hoffman 2013; Heller, Wolfe, & Steinberg 2017.

context of renewed urgency, as the United States confronts longstanding and consistently glaring inequities in educational outcomes that collectively comprise what Ladson-Billings calls our “educational debt.” These educational inequities reflect and reinforce forms of social injustice known to produce disproportional outcomes based on race, ethnicity, income, linguistic heritage, disability, and immigration status. At the same time, several bodies of research—including brain science, research on motivation, and other learning sciences—point to the potential for more personalized, responsive, rigorous, and meaningful educational approaches that will engage and inspire those learners who may have found traditional approaches alienating.^{iv}

As our nation turns away from standardized, one-size-fits-all approaches to education, public sentiment is turning toward more personalized and student-centered forms of instruction. More than ever before, classroom-based educators, afterschool learning professionals, district and state-level policymakers, and university- or nonprofit-based researchers are eager to understand and apply the scholarship that informs student-centered learning and the techniques that comprise it. This scholarship includes a deep and growing understanding of how students learn and which forms of instruction are most likely to promote positive academic and social outcomes for each student.

To foreground equity in these inquiries and implementations, it will be crucial to capture precisely which student populations are being most and least served by certain approaches, and to recognize and account for societal, institutional, interpersonal, and epistemological factors that drive those outcomes. Though student-centered learning approaches appear to have tremendous potential to accelerate achievement and enhance equity, important unanswered questions remain.^v Furthermore, concerns about cultural responsiveness, educator facility, and systemic fidelity continuously arise whenever educators attempt to bring student-centered learning to scale. So while it is clear that elements of student-centered

^{iv} Hinton, Fischer, & Glennon 2013; Immordino-Yang & Damasio 2007; Lupien, McEwen, Gunnar, & Heim 2009; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan 1991; Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly 2007; Toshalis & Nakkula 2013; Yonezawa, Jones, & Joselowsky 2009; Farrington et al. 2012; Harter 1992; National Research Council 2012; Sawyer 2008; Steinberg 2010; Tobias & Everson 2009; Benner, Crosnoe, & Eccles 2014; Belmi et al. 2015; Browman et al. 2017; Brady, Germano, & Fryberg 2017; Dittmann & Stephens 2017; Warren et al. 2018; Gutiérrez & Penuel 2014; Gutiérrez 2013;

^v See, for example, the implications and further research recommended in titles such as these: K. L. Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson 2007; P. Alexander & Murphy 2000; Bransford, Brown, & Cocking 2002; Darling-Hammond 2010a; Downey, Von Hippel, & Broh 2004; Durlak & Weissberg 2007; Hake 1998; Halpern 2009; Hattie 2009; Haystead 2010; Johnston 2011; Lambert & McCombs 2000; McClure, Yonezawa, & Jones 2010; Michael 2006; Miller 2007; National Academy of Education 2009; National Research Council 2012; Niemiec & Ryan 2009; Peterson, Woessmann, Hanushek, & Lastra-Anadón 2011; Resnick & Zurawsky 2005; Shear, Novais, & Moorthy 2010; Stern & Stearns 2008; Sturgis & Patrick 2010; Wolfe, Steinberg, & Hoffman 2013.

learning weave throughout many important issues in education and offer resources for achieving more equitable outcomes, we need to continue to explore, define, and refine what we know about best practices if we are to repay the education debt owed to our most marginalized students—the ultimate stakeholders in this line of inquiry.

III. REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

This RFP represents part of JFF's ongoing commitment to supply needed clarity regarding the influencing factors and eventual outcomes of student-centered approaches in secondary school settings, particularly where/when those approaches may enhance outcomes for students historically underserved by our public educational system.

PRIMARY GOALS

The primary goal of this grant opportunity is to reveal contexts, components, techniques, and impacts of specific student-centered learning approaches on marginalized student populations. We are seeking to understand the effectiveness of student-centered learning practices, the conditions that support (and undermine) these practices, who most (and least) benefits and why, and the extent to which specific approaches positively (and negatively) impact the achievement and college/career/civic readiness of students from historically underserved groups and communities. Our intention is for practitioners to use this research to influence their choices in schools so that equity is prioritized and outcomes for marginalized populations are maximized; for policymakers to factor research findings into how they allocate resources and design procedures so that achievement is enhanced for underserved groups; for researchers to build upon new knowledge and design subsequent studies that advance our understanding of student-centered practices as drivers of equity; and for the greater public to better recognize the potential for student-centered learning to elevate all students' achievement, particularly those who are most marginalized by traditional approaches. As such, any Research Collaborative undertaking will need to consider the extent to which the inquiries, findings, and implications are made accessible and useful to stakeholders and those charged with scaling implementation.

BASIC PARAMETERS

This RFP is soliciting grant proposals that detail an investigation of student-centered approaches as described below. The RFP contains the following basic parameters:

- The project must be an original study. We expect to make up to three grants of up to \$400,000 over two years (\$200,000/year for two years).
- The lead organization in the proposal must be a research institution, college, or university with proven capacity to conduct high-quality research related to student-centered learning.

- This grant supports 501(c)(3) organizations that include higher education institutions and other nonprofit organizations that fall under the tax designation 509(a)(1) or 509(a)(2) and have an education focus, as evidenced in their articles of incorporation. Only 501(c)(3) organizations with the further designation of 509(a)(1) or (2) are eligible to receive a Research Collaborative grant.
- Because the Research Collaborative focuses on student-centered learning approaches as they are manifested in real-life learning environments, we emphasize working with and serving practitioners and policymakers who are attempting to scale best practices. We therefore encourage applicants to build into their research design the kinds of active collaborations with practitioners and/or policymakers that not only inform data gathering and interpretation during the investigation but also accelerate implementation once the study is complete (*see the Capacity item in Section VI for more information*). Research teams that demonstrate pre-existing and productive collaborations with practitioners and systems-level leaders and/or provide evidence of active participation in networks will be well-positioned to receive funding. In addition, stronger applications will supply plans for how research findings will be shared, used, and eventually scaled. Note that research teams may collaborate with individual public schools, school districts, charter management organizations, community-based organizations, state education agencies, technical assistance providers, education intermediaries, and other research organizations. Such partners are not required to be eligible to receive a grant or to meet the criteria listed above for lead organizations. Letters of support will be required from all partners.
- In addition to the connections and collaborations encouraged above, participation in the Research Collaborative carries the expectation of active participation in a burgeoning learning community. Grantees will be expected to commit to at least two consistent leading team members to prepare for and attend biannual Research Collaborative gatherings. The first meeting of the Collaborative is scheduled for October 10-12, 2018, in Providence, Rhode Island. Grantees will also be expected to inform Research Collaborative staff and funders about the progress of the study through quarterly calls, interim and final reports, and informal updates. Lastly, JFF staff will work with grantees to agree upon a set of field-friendly deliverables associated with the study that communicate to cross-sector audiences the import of the investigation, what is learned, and what implications it has for various stakeholders. JFF staff will assist grantees with production and dissemination of these deliverables.
- **All studies should be concluded and reports submitted by August 31, 2020.**

AREAS OF FOCUS

Proposed projects should investigate student-centered learning approaches that fall into at least one of the following four areas:

- **How learning can be personalized:** the techniques employed to customize and differentiate instructional activities and curricula to match each individual student's needs, interests, background, and skills.
- **How learning can be competency-based:** the methods educators use to encourage and affect student achievement that can be assessed by valid and authentic measures of mastery, proficiency, and growth over time, decoupled from a preset pacing calendar.
- **How learning can occur anytime, anywhere:** the ways educators construct equitable opportunities to learn that extend beyond the school day and the school building, and take advantage of community and technological resources.
- **How students can be supported to take “ownership” of their learning:** the set of practices that allow or promote students to be agents of their learning and/or that enhance students' sense of belonging, motivation, academic efficacy, self-regulation, self-determination, or other related outcomes.

KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Regardless of which of the four areas are prioritized and combined, the proposed research study should address the following three questions:

1. What are the **measurable effects** of this approach on academic achievement, preparation for postsecondary education, and/or career and civic readiness of one or more marginalized populations?
2. What **contextual, institutional, cultural, interpersonal, epistemological, and/or procedural factors** contribute to these outcomes?
3. What are the **implications** of this study for the field writ large, and for marginalized students in particular?

IV. PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Please respond to each of the following questions in a narrative of 15 pages or less, using single-spaced 11-point (or larger) type with standard formatting. Submissions that adhere to the section-by-section structure below are preferred, but seamless narratives will also be accepted.

1. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

- a. Which **specific area(s) of student-centered learning** and/or which specific approach(es) will you be investigating? Why is this important?
- b. Where appropriate, how will this study **respond to each of the three key research questions**? What other questions will it address, if any?
- c. Which specific marginalized student populations will your study focus on? Why?
- d. What **existing scholarship** most informs and supports your project? How does your study leverage rather than duplicate similar inquiries? Summarize the literature *briefly* and cite minimally, using exemplar references only. Be sure to note how your project will build on existing knowledge to advance the field.
- e. Does your study consider **contextual factors** that can influence the eventual success or failure of student-centered approaches? For example, to what extent does your research design bring cognitive findings into conversation with sociocultural, sociopolitical, social-emotional, and critical discoveries, and/or how might it integrate learning science, instructional design, organizational sociology, developmental psychology, economics, systems theory, culturally responsive pedagogy, and other relevant fields? How might your study explore issues related to policy development, institutional change, teacher beliefs, and content instruction?

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

- a. Summarize the **overall research design**. Suggested components include conceptual model, methods to be used, sampling approach, data collection instruments (e.g., number and timing of assessments, method of observation, mode of collection, etc.), and data analysis methods. We encourage you to highlight the extent to which students, families, practitioners, and other stakeholders will be involved in the administration of the study and analyses of the data.
- b. Describe the anticipated **sample**, including both district/school and student-level information, as applicable, either in the narrative or as tables included as appendices. Potential school/district data: size, ages/grades served, demographics of the student

population, achievement outcomes (grades, test scores, course credits earned, etc.), attainment outcomes (dropout rates, graduation rates, and/or postsecondary enrollment), location (urban/rural/suburban/exurban), grade levels included, curriculum used (if applicable), and notable aspects of the school's history, community, or culture. Potential student data: ages/grades, demographics including race/ethnicity, English learner (EL) status, immigrant status, free or reduced lunch status, qualification for special education services, academic achievement, and credit/diploma attainment data. What specific subgroups of students will be the focus of your study, why are you choosing this group, and how will they be disaggregated? How will unplanned-for missing data be handled? If you are utilizing an existing data set, describe it and identify the variables related to student-centered learning that you intend to examine. And if you plan to recruit participants, please describe recruitment methods, incentives to be provided (if any), plans for obtaining informed assent/consent, and an IRB approval timeline.

- c. What is the **unit of analysis**? How do your research question(s), sample, and research design inform your decision to choose this particular unit of analysis?
- d. What **measures** will you use (or, if necessary, develop) to examine the specific student-centered learning approach(es) at the core of your study and the extent to which they enhance outcomes for marginalized student populations? If applicable, what are the established instruments you plan to integrate and what are their psychometric properties? If you are proposing to develop a new instrument, supply a plan for the development of validity measures.^{vi} Also, please describe the extent to which the instruments to be used are culturally responsive (i.e., characterize how you expect they will highlight and/or account for participants' cultural differences). Lastly, will the intensity, fidelity, quality, or other characteristics of the student-centered learning approach(es) be measured? If so, how? If not, why is this not important?
- e. In what ways will you analyze your data to illuminate the extent to which underserved students experience (or do not experience) the benefits of the approach(es) being studied? Describe what instruments, observational techniques, or measures will be used to **highlight issues of equity** and your rationale for choosing them.
- f. If your study possesses a comparative component, what **effect sizes** do you expect and will your sample provide adequate power to detect the effects? If your study uses mixed methods or is solely qualitative, how will you assess the extent of impact, and will your sample provide sufficient breadth or saturation to make such claims?

^{vi} Though exceptions may be made based on the relative merits of the proposal, please note that preference will be given to proposals that use established instruments that have previously demonstrated high levels of validity and reliability.

- g. Research suggests that external conditions—from state policy to school culture—can powerfully influence the outcomes of particular educational approaches. How will we know that the outcomes are the result of the student-centered learning practices identified in your study and not the product of other contextual factors? In other words, how do you intend to establish **validity and reliability**? Will you use experimental or quasi-experimental methods? If so, describe your approach, including selection and measurement related to the control or comparison groups. If not, describe how results will be attributed to the intervention or approach. How will you address threats to validity, including selection bias?

3. PROJECTED OUTCOMES AND UTILITY

- a. What **new knowledge** do you expect to generate as a result of this study? How might that knowledge enhance our understanding of: (1) Student-centered approaches and their efficacy for marginalized students? (2) Contextual, institutional, cultural, interpersonal, epistemological, and/or procedural factors that may support or hinder positive outcomes? (3) Unintended consequences?
- b. What **implications** might the findings have for educational practices, policy, or public awareness? How might this project affect the way researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and/or the general public understand and use student-centered approaches? In particular, how will this study inform or bolster efforts to enhance equity in our schools?
- c. Address whether you expect your study to yield information about the **necessary conditions for successful implementation** of specific student-centered approaches on a broader scale. What might your findings suggest about what researchers, policymakers, and practitioners may need to do to bring student-centered approaches to scale? How do you define scale in this circumstance?
- d. Briefly, what **ideas for dissemination** of the findings do you have? Build into your budget and timeline adequate resources to work with editors and communications professionals to translate research findings for stakeholder audiences. Note that you will be expected to collaborate with other Research Collaborative members as you research the best outlets for and refine representations of your work. Also note that JFF staff will be available to assist you as you prepare such materials and with the wider release.

4. CAPACITY

- a. Briefly describe the **capacity of the lead organization and each of the partnering organizations/institutions** to carry out this research and any outreach, including a track record of similar efforts and partnerships. (Include in appendices letters of support from all partner and subcontracting organizations and, where appropriate, the places

where practitioners and/or policymakers will be involved in the administration of the study and analyses of the data.)

- b. In detailing your **capacity to undertake an investigation focused on equity** and to make meaning of diverse participants' experiences of student-centered learning, please characterize the extent to which your team possesses the necessary critical sophistication with various forms of marginalization and inequity in education, and the techniques used to overcome them. Among other attributes, relevant publications, evidence of leadership, and life experiences are all important here. In addition, please answer the following questions about researcher positionality in your proposal (adapted from Milner 2007):
 - i. In what ways do your team members' backgrounds influence your research approach and design? For instance, how do your racial/ethnic/cultural/linguistic/disability backgrounds influence the research questions you pose, the data collection tools you employ, and the way you interpret research findings?
 - ii. In what ways do you expect to encounter race, racism, ableism, discrimination, marginalization, and other forms of systemic oppression in your study, and what specific staffing and research design features prepare you to capture and interpret such phenomena with rigor and responsiveness?
- c. Briefly describe **key staff** (from the lead organization or any subcontractors), and their roles in and percentages of time allocated to the project. For research staff, list other past and current research projects that are directly relevant to this proposal. If there are staff members who will be hired, describe the qualifications for these positions. For each key staff person, append a current CV or resume of no more than three pages.
- d. Describe the **management plan** for this project including partnership cultivation, data agreement finalization, processes for writing and amending MOUs, informed consent/assent retrieval, communications strategies, tasking and monitoring partners, data gathering and analysis, and accountability.
- e. Describe your **access** to an appropriate sample of students, educators, school(s), and/or district(s) if not previously covered. If schools, a district or districts, or school networks are participating as partners, how will this shape your sample selection and methods? If the grantee will be recruiting schools, other organizations, or individuals, how will recruitment be conducted and on what timeline? What guarantees of participation do you currently have? And how will you guarantee a sufficient population of marginalized students to allow a broad and deep examination of equity issues?
- f. Describe two or three **key challenges** you anticipate in carrying out this project, and how you plan to overcome them.

5. EQUITY

- a. Explain how your **research framework** integrates issues of racial, ethnic, linguistic, socioeconomic, disability, and immigration status, and/or cultural inequity. In particular, describe how your study addresses gaps in resources and access, or how it attends to structural or systemic problems known to drive disproportionate outcomes.
- b. In your **research design**, how will underserved learners and their assets/needs be highlighted? In addition, how will the effects of student-centered approaches on those populations be examined?
- c. In the populations and subpopulations you **sample**, how will you ensure that a significant proportion of the students experiencing the intervention consists of underserved learners? And where specific subgroups are identified (e.g., emerging bilingual students, students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch, etc.), how will you guarantee that the sample size is sufficient for analysis?
- d. To what extent will the potential **implications** of the study inform efforts to enhance equity in schools? How will your study illuminate what practitioners, policymakers, and researchers need to do to improve outcomes for underserved students?
- e. How will **students, families, practitioners, and/or other stakeholders** be integrated into the decision-making process regarding the design of the study, the administration of data collecting mechanisms, and/or the analyses of the data? What strategies will you use to determine the extent to which your study aligns with or departs from the needs and interests of those closest to the problem or to the practice?

6. WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

- a. Include in an appendix to the proposal a **work plan** with key tasks and timelines across the two years of funding. If IRB approval is required, include your plan and timing for attaining approval.
- b. Supply a list of potential **field-friendly deliverables** derived from interim findings you would expect at the end of year 1 (or earlier), and from final findings and implications you would expect at the conclusion of the study. Please also characterize which audiences would most benefit from learning about those results, and any public-facing products (infographics, webinars, blogs, animations, op-eds, policy briefs, professional development modules, etc.) that you plan to generate to inform stakeholders. These deliverables should be evident in the work plan above. Note that grantees will work with JFF staff during contracting to refine this initial list of materials into specific deliverables with an associated production timeline.
- c. Include a **budget** ([template for download](#)) with a budget narrative for the full funding request. If applicable, please make sure that practitioners' time commitments are amply accounted for in your budgeting. We recognize that the resources available through this

RFP will not cover the full costs of some important research and evaluation projects. Therefore, if funds from other sources beyond those requested are needed, identify specific sources and current status in your budget narrative (e.g., already obtained, awaiting decision, not yet submitted for funding, etc.). The budget should include preparation for and attendance at each of the two Student-Centered Learning Research Collaborative two-and-a-half-day meetings per year (each with likely three overnights). Lodging and transportation for two members of the research team should be included in the proposal budget. The first meeting of the Research Collaborative will be October 10-12, 2018, in Providence, Rhode Island. Budget should also include production of all field-friendly deliverables, quarterly calls with JFF staff, interim and final reporting, and funder updating as detailed above.

V. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Please read this section carefully before submitting a proposal as it contains important information. Questions from prospective grantees will be answered at our Bidders Conference on April 26, 2018, and on our RFP FAQ, posted on the [Research Collaborative site](#) and updated regularly over the course of the submission period.

1. The project must be an original research project.
2. The project may request up to \$400,000 over two years (\$200,000/year for two years to be distributed according to project milestones).
3. *All applicants must be eligible for grants.* This grant supports 501(c)(3) organizations that include higher education institutions and other nonprofit organizations that fall under the tax designation 509(a)(1) or 509(a)(2) and have an education focus, as evidenced in their articles of incorporation. Only 501(c)(3) organizations with the further designation of 509(a)(1) or (2) are eligible to receive a Research Collaborative grant.
4. Research organizations that meet the grant eligibility criteria described above are permitted to apply for this funding. The lead organization in the proposal must be a research institution, college, or university with proven capacity to conduct high-quality research related to student-centered learning. Collaborations among research organizations and K-12 educational entities or other organizations are encouraged, as long as the lead organization has primary responsibility for the research activities that will be undertaken as part of this project.
5. One key early deliverable will be a clear, field-friendly, conceptual model for the specific student-centered learning practices that are the focus of the proposed research project. This model should include a graphical component, a thorough description of the approach to be investigated, and a discussion of what parameters of high-quality implementation are considered to be important for positive and equitable results for marginalized populations of students. The project may adopt/adapt an existing model or models as long as rationale is provided for this choice.
6. Proposals of no more than 15 single-spaced pages with at least 6 points of space between paragraphs, one-inch margins, and 11-point type will be considered. Appendices are not counted toward this maximum. Please do not append peripheral materials such as reports from previous projects or publications previously authored by members of the research team.
7. Indirect costs are capped at 15 percent.
8. This funding opportunity currently focuses on secondary education. We therefore expect that all sampled schools and students in funded projects will be at the middle or high school level. Regardless of whether the study's subjects are in middle or high school, given the

importance of secondary education in the school-to-career transition, the proposed research design should promise to illuminate both the extent to which the studied student-centered learning practices support students' college/career/civic readiness, and the extent to which those practices yield equitable outcomes.

9. IRB approval is not required at the time of submission. **However, all grants requiring such approval will need to obtain IRB approval and submit proof to JFF prior to the collection of any data.**
10. In keeping with the field-building and communication goals of the project, grantees will be expected to permit requests to open their data for review, validation, and/or replication by outside researchers or other Research Collaborative members. Submission of a proposal is understood to be an acknowledgement of this provision.

VI. CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

In addition to meeting the qualifications described above, the following are the criteria evaluators will use to determine which proposal will be funded. Below, we have supplied weighting to indicate how the proposals will be scored by evaluators. Note that JFF reserves the right to revise these criteria prior to the review process.

Item	Weighting (of 100)	Description
<p>1. Research Framework</p>	<p>20</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates understanding of and relevance to the Students at the Center definition of student-centered learning and clearly addresses one or more of the student-centered learning principles • Substantively engages each of the three key research questions • Scans, characterizes, and builds on existing scholarship such that the new information generated by the study will effectively leverage rather than duplicate similar inquiries • Exhibits an awareness of the contextual factors, including various forms of marginalization, that influence the success or failure of student-centered approaches and attempts to synthesize insights and paradigms from multiple fields to make sense of those factors
<p>2. Research Design</p>	<p>20</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodology for project reflects state-of-the-art research design, including methods, measures, and analyses • Sample is appropriate, subgroups are of sufficient size to yield significant results, and plans are offered for how to handle missing data • Unit of analysis is identified and explanations are provided to make clear its appropriateness • Measures and instruments to be used are explained, psychometric properties are supplied, and, if new measurements are being developed, detailed plans for validation are provided • If applicable, effect sizes are specified as are the techniques to be used to establish adequate power to detect them • Research design includes and accounts for contextual influences by employing techniques appropriate to

		illuminate and ameliorate biases in the research process, and provides specific and rigorous methods to establish acceptable levels of validity and reliability
3. Focus on Equity	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research framework substantively incorporates issues of racial, ethnic, linguistic, socioeconomic, disability, immigrant, and/or cultural inequity in the purpose of the study • Throughout the research design, underserved learners are highlighted and the effects of student-centered approaches on those populations are examined, as are contextual factors that influence (in)equitable outcomes • A significant proportion of the sample consists of underserved learners, and if a specific subgroup is identified (e.g., EL students), the sample size is sufficient for analysis • Mechanisms for substantively integrating students, families, practitioners, and/or other stakeholders in the administration of the study and analyses of the data are clear • Implications promise to either inform or bolster efforts to enhance equity in schools
4. Projected Outcomes and Utility	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generates new knowledge that promises to enhance our understanding of student-centered approaches and their efficacy for marginalized student populations, and/or illuminates those factors that may impede positive outcomes • Suggests possible implications for practice, policy, and/or public awareness • Yields important information about the necessary conditions for the successful implementation of student-centered approaches and, if possible, suggests how those approaches might be brought to scale • Supplies tangible and achievable ideas for dissemination of the study's interim and final findings into field-friendly deliverables that are capable of influencing public perceptions of student-centered practices
5. Capacity	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The capacity of the lead organization is evident in its record of similar research in education, and each of the partnering organizations/institutions indicates its full support for the proposed study; tangible

		<p>evidence of robust collaboration is provided and evidence of viable pathways to scale are supplied</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key staff and investigators are experienced, well positioned, well prepared, and adequately supported to conduct the study • The research team possesses the requisite expertise in, experiences of, and/or sophistication with identifying and understanding issues of inequity and marginalization, and provides evidence of members' ability and willingness to appropriately name and account for researcher positionality • The management plan demonstrates strong partnership cultivation, communications strategies, processes for writing and amending memoranda of understanding (MOUs), tasking and monitoring partners, engaging stakeholders, and ensuring accountability • Sufficient access to data and research participants is assured, and/or recruitment methods are sound and timely • Key challenges are acknowledged and plans for overcoming them are advanced in a way that demonstrates the strength of the partnerships
<p>6. Work Plan and Budget</p>	<p>10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work plan is realistic and organized, and includes all major components associated with participant recruitment, data gathering, and data analysis, plus biannual meetings of the Research Collaborative, quarterly calls with JFF staff, project updates for funders, and the production of field-friendly deliverables • The list of potential deliverables, including interim findings, are useful, compelling, and promise to inform key stakeholders about the efficacy of student-centered approaches • Budget is within the required range, detailed, and reasonable in scope and allocations

VII. PROCEDURE

Interested parties should follow the following process to submit a proposal:

1. **BIDDERS CONFERENCE:** Attend the online Research Collaborative Bidders Conference on April 26, 2018, 2:30-3:30 p.m. (ET). [Register now or access the recording.](#)
2. **LETTER OF INTENT:** Complete the brief [letter of intent form](#) by 11:59 p.m. (ET) on May 8, 2018.
3. **SUBMISSION:** Submit the narrative and accompanying documents outlined below and in the RFP through [the online portal](#) by 5:00 p.m. (ET) on June 4, 2018.

BIDDERS CONFERENCE

On April 26, 2018, 2:30-3:30 p.m. ET, the Research Collaborative will hold an online bidders conference designed to give interested and eligible applicants a chance to ask questions regarding the RFP. The webinar is free and open to the public, and will be recorded and posted on the [the Research Collaborative website](#) as soon as possible afterwards. [Register now or access the recording.](#)

LETTER OF INTENT

To ensure that we have sufficient reviewers on hand to evaluate submitted proposals, we are requiring all applicants to **submit a simplified letter of intent** using [the online form](#) on the Research Collaborative RFP site **by 11:59 p.m. (ET) on May 8, 2018**. On that form, you will be asked to submit the following:

- Name of lead organization
- Names of principal investigators (PIs) and co-PIs, plus institutional affiliations
- Tentative topic of study (the phrasing/focus of which can change between the letter of intent and the final submission date)
- Expected sample/partners/sites/measures (e.g., populations and subpopulations of interest, region(s) from which samples are drawn, sites where data will be gathered, key indicators or measures to be used, etc.)

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

The narrative and all attachments must be submitted [via the online portal](#) on the Research Collaborative site by 5:00 p.m. (ET) on June 4, 2018.

Before awarding grants, we will reach out to finalists via the individual named as the main contact in your proposal submission to schedule a short call between June 25 and July 6 (except July 4) to discuss your proposal. Please ensure that at least one representative of the research team leadership will be available by phone and email during this span.

Documents to be submitted are as follows:

- Narrative
- Budget (please use the template available [here](#)) and budget narrative
- IRS Tax Status letter
- JFF Conflict of Interest Form (download [here](#))
- Supporting documents
 - Work plan
 - Resumes for lead staff and a summary of qualifications (limit of 3 pages per individual)
 - Letters of support from all identified partners

Questions regarding the RFP should be sent to rcsubmit@jff.org.

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