

# Request for Planning Proposals Students at the Center Challenge

A Joint Initiative of the Coalition for Community Schools,  
Communities In Schools, and StriveTogether

*With the Generous Support of the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative and Ford Foundation*

## Application

***Deadline: Planning grant applications are due March 16 at 11:59 PM PST. The Aligned Network Partners (Coalition for Community Schools, Communities In Schools, and StriveTogether) anticipate awarding planning grants to approximately 10 communities for up to \$150,000 each, with an announcement no later than Friday, May 4, 2018.***

### Background

The purpose of the Students at the Center Challenge (SATC Challenge) is to create aligned, student-centered systems across sectors to achieve better, more equitable outcomes for students. Working together, local partners (e.g., school districts, nonprofits, businesses, organizing groups, and institutions of higher education) will identify their shared vision for student-centered learning and build a Blueprint for realizing that vision.

As equity focused organizations, our local partners focus on those students, families, and neighborhoods who need our support the most.

A number of organizations have developed definitions of what student-centered learning means. The *Aligned Network Partners'* definition is purposefully comprehensive, reflecting all the dimension of a young person's learning and development:

*Every student will have at their fingertips the high-quality opportunities and supports they need to learn and thrive – from a robust engaging curriculum, to health and wellness services; from strong family support to high-quality mentoring and enrichment opportunities; from work-based learning experiences to college readiness activities; and from decent housing and safe communities to transportation and employment. With public schools as the focal point, families, educators, and community partners work together to ensure that the situation of every individual student is carefully considered and addressed.*

### Student-centered learning has the following characteristics:

- *The voices of students and families are present, and their hopes, aspirations, and needs are fully incorporated in the design and oversight of schools.*
- *Students and families are fully informed about what they can and should expect from the school and all the partners that will be involved in providing learning and developmental opportunities and supports.*
- *Motivating and engaging learning experiences are in place – in school, and in workplace and community settings – that are responsive to student voice, and connect students with their history, their community and their world, and prepare them for college, careers, and citizenship.*
- *All aspects of a student's learning and development are addressed, including growing social and emotional competencies and addressing physical, mental, and emotional challenges, in a school climate that is safe, supportive, and respectful.*

- *Community partners and educators align their assets and expertise into a student-centered learning system.*
- *Technology is used as appropriate to support each student, and is embedded in a web of personal relationships that support the whole child.*

For this planning proposal, what is most important is that local partners demonstrate the will and capacity to do the hard work of defining what student-centered learning means in your community and how you plan to get there. We are not asking communities to start over with all brand-new ideas. Rather, we want to strengthen the good work already taking place, facilitate alignment of that work in our public schools, and embed innovations that help move the needle. The focus of the SATC Challenge is what works best for all students, particularly those with the greatest need.

The SATC Challenge seeks to create meaningful and lasting community change at scale. Such change is well-defined by four elements:<sup>1</sup>

1. Shared Ownership
2. Depth
3. Spread
4. Sustainability

It is expected that planning proposals will capture how your community intends to develop shared ownership among all partners for student learning and development; create deep changes in attitudes and expectations about students, as well as shifts in practice within partner organizations; spread approaches across neighborhoods and feeder patterns; and sustain efforts financially, organizationally, and through leadership transitions. Ultimately, systems alignment must benefit students and families and create noticeable change that leads to better outcomes for their lives.

The **goal** of this planning grant is for communities to develop an actionable Students at the Center Blueprint that specifies how local partners will plan for the creation of a sustainable and aligned student-centered learning system.

The Students at the Center Blueprint (the Blueprint) will:

- be a joint document that represents the perspectives of a wide range of highly-engaged educators, other community institutions, members of the community, students, and family members
- guide the implementation of a student-centered learning system where local partners align their strategies to improve student outcomes
- describe the local partners' vision for student-centered learning, how they will align existing and possible new strategies, and how they will work to expand, deepen and sustain implementation of a student-centered approach to drive better outcomes for students
- describe how the experience of an individual student or family will shift as a result of this work

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<sup>1</sup> These elements are adapted from Cynthia E. Coburn. "Rethinking Scale: Moving Beyond Numbers to Deep and Lasting Change." In *Educational Researcher*, vol. 32, no.6, pp 1-12 and used in the Coalition's guide: *Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships: The Community Schools Strategy* ([http://www.communityschools.org//resources/part\\_two\\_effective\\_characteristics.aspx](http://www.communityschools.org//resources/part_two_effective_characteristics.aspx)).

## FORM

### Applicant Information

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#### **Managing Fiscal Partner Organization** (will receive and distribute funding)

Please provide fiscal contact name, organization, title, e-mail, and phone number

Managing Agency Type

**Choices**

Public

Private

Non-profit

**School District Partner(s):** Include contact name(s), title, email address, and phone number

\*Please **upload** a Memorandum of Agreement or Letter of Support from each school district that is involved in your community plan.

**Core Partners:** Include contact name, organization, title, email address, and phone number

### Community Need, Assets, and Shared Vision [50 total points]

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Please answer the following questions within the maximum word count requirement.

1. **Description of community need and assets:** Supporting neighborhoods and families that face systemic barriers to their success and tapping their assets – voluntary and organizational -- is a crucial element of this challenge. Describe the “community” you will focus on, including the geographic area, district(s), its key assets and disparities, and systemic challenges. For example, will you focus on one school district or multiple districts? A feeder pattern? You may choose to narrow your focus to a specific geographic area or neighborhood. Regardless of the geographic focus, your work needs to align systems, also seek to mobilize community talent and resources. What educational gaps exist in the community and how will this student-centered vision empower communities to realize their dreams for their children?

[  20  points]

Maximum word count: 250

2. **Community Initiatives Scan:** We want this challenge to strengthen and align, not compete with existing efforts. What initiatives currently exist in your community that are working to improve student learning and development? How do the partners propose to learn from, align, and

strengthen these efforts? How will a community's voluntary assets be engaged? [10 points]  
Maximum word count: 250

3. **Shared Vision for Student Centered Learning:** Describe your partnership's preliminary shared vision for student centered learning. How do you define student-centered learning? What does it look like at the school and system levels? How do you plan to empower communities to lead this alignment and agenda? What do you hope to achieve as part of the planning process to create and enhance student centered learning opportunities? [20 points]  
Maximum word count: 500

## Project Design [100 total points]

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4. **Principles for Alignment:** A critical element of this challenge is to align systems and structures that support student- centered learning opportunities for all children. Please use the following headings to describe your partnership's plan to address each of the following principles of aligned systems and structures to support student-centered learning opportunities for all children, both at the school and systems levels. A complete description of each principle can be found in the appendix. Where possible, please describe how this work will impact an individual student. Maximum word count: 500 [25 points]

- a. Trusting Relationships
- b. Cross Sector Partnerships
- c. Purposeful Engagement
- d. Actionable Data
- e. Shared Accountability

5. **Readiness:** Describe your community's readiness for such a challenge. What have been the opportunities to collaborate on educational reform thus far? What are the challenges to collaboration and how have you overcome them? What infrastructure or procedures support ongoing partnership alignment work? Characterize the commitment and capacity to support the Challenge from the school district and other key partners. [35 points]  
Maximum word count: 500

6. **Blueprint Development:** Describe what you hope to accomplish during the planning phase. How will you engage students, families, communities, and partner institutions? What are the outcomes you will achieve? How will you work with students and families to select activities that are research based and practice informed? Include a workplan/timeline that includes core activities. [40 points]  
Maximum word count: 500

**Attachment:** Workplan/Timeline- Please complete and upload

## Capacity and Budget [50 points]

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7. Describe the fiscal managing organization’s ability to manage this grant and coordinate work with partners. Include examples of prior leadership in collective efforts to support youth. Please attach this organization’s annual operating budget. [ 15 points]  
Maximum word count: 250

**Attachment:** Fiscal partner annual operational budget

8. Describe how you plan to build systems that enable scale – streamlining work and facilitating continuous improvement. This may involve technology, if so, please describe your technology plans. [ 20 points]  
Maximum word count: 250

9. Budget and budget narrative [ 15 points]

**Attachment:** Budget and Budget Narrative Template -Please complete and upload

### **Allowable Activities**

You will decide the right set of engagement and planning activities for your community to create the Blueprint. Funds may be used for existing staff and engagement strategies. Allowable or suggested activities that you may use grant funds include:

- Staff and consulting support to build the plan
- Building out the data infrastructure needed to report progress and tailor supports to individual students
- Convening and consulting necessary to bring partners together and formulate a timeline of activities to address both technical and adaptive challenges
- Developing a strategy for sustainable funding

### **What the Aligned Network Partners Will Offer**

In addition to the activities you propose, the Aligned Network Partners will provide facilitation support to communities involved in the planning process to enable them to think through the issues inherent in moving to a Student-Centered Learning approach. This will include:

- in-person meetings with teams from each community
- monthly coaching calls
- specialized support as necessary

Support from the Aligned Network Partners should NOT be included in the planning grant budget. There are separate funds to accommodate this support to communities. Please identify in your scope of work specifically what support you want from Aligned Network Partners.

### **Funding**

Communities are eligible for up to \$150,000 of funding for their planning grant over 6 months. Funds are anticipated to be released in a single payment at the start of the grant period.

## Reporting and Deliverables

Chosen communities will be required to sign a sub-recipient agreement outlining the timeline, terms and reporting requirements of the grant. We anticipate regular, informal check-ins with each community. A final financial and brief narrative report will be required within 30 days of the completion of the grant period. Reporting templates will be provided to grantees.

The key deliverable of the grant will be the finalized Students at the Center Blueprint.

The submittal of this proposal indicates that all partners agree to work collaboratively with both local and national affiliates of the Aligned Network Partners; the Coalition for Community Schools, Communities In Schools, and StriveTogether.

## Appendix

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### Exhibit 1: Student-Centered Learning Operating Principles

These five principles, operating at the system and school levels, are fundamental to realizing the vision of a student-centered learning system. Each principle needs to lead to meaningful change for students and their families. The principles are not written in stone; they are our best hypotheses based on research and our joint experience.

**Principle One – Trusting Relationships:** Educators and staff of community partners have the trusting relationships and core competencies to work together to implement student-centered learning.

- **School Level:** Leadership and professional development opportunities ensure that principals, teachers, and other school staff, as well as personnel from community partners, have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to work together in teams to create opportunities for and meet the unique needs of an increasingly diverse student population. They have the capacity to align their strategies, resources, and experience to achieve results in schools and communities facing deep inequity.
- **System Level:** A leadership and professional development strategy is in place to build the competencies and skills of families, educators and community partners at all levels and across all relevant sectors to function effectively together in schools and communities. They have the know-how to address equity challenges, use data for improvement, manage complex change, and achieve results.

**Principle Two – Cross Sector Partnership:** Intermediary leadership and organizational support are in place to nurture new vision.

- **School Level:** A representative site-based leadership team guides collaborative planning, implementation, and oversight. A dedicated coordinator facilitates alignment of school, family, and community resources by conducting a community assessment focused on assets and needs, to determine what should happen in the school, incorporating district resources, community

providers, and natural community assets. School staff, personnel from community partners, and volunteers provide support across multiple domains including for example: academics, basic needs, behavioral interventions, college and career preparation, community/service learning, enrichment, family engagement, life skills, mental and physical health, and mentoring.

- **System Level:** A representative leadership group governs the entity and is responsible for overall vision, policy, and resource alignment. It addresses issues of equity and resources allocation across the community and uses data to identify racial disparities. A sustainable entity is identified with the credibility, capacity, and financing to support the leadership group and help guide educators and the community toward shared community goals. It supports data analytics to understand what is leading to better results, change management to act on what is being learned, and communication with the larger community. A community assessment is conducted to inventory community assets and resources, identify needs/gaps/duplication of services, and involve and inform others.

**Principle Three – Purposeful Engagement:** Youth and families have voice in growing a student-centered learning system; ownership is shared by students, their families, educators, and community partners.

- **School Level:** Youth and families have voice in school decision making. Every student has an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) developed with the student and their families with the support of educators and community partners. The plan is student-owned, accessible, potentially through technology, and regularly updated to ensure each student is on track to develop necessary academic, social, emotional, physical, and civic competencies. Opportunities and supports are provided to students in tiers – school-wide services geared towards specific school needs for the general student body and targeted and/or individualized interventions based on identified needs.
- **System Level:** Youth and families are represented on local leadership and governance groups, and have clear defined pathways to inform and influence the policy decision and the allocation of resources to create a student-centered system. Leadership development opportunities and technical assistance enhance the capacity of youth and families to participate in systems level decisions.

**Principle Four – Shared Accountability:** A mutually agreed upon results framework cuts across multiple domains (academic, social, emotional, physical, and civic) and drives the work of educators and community partners. Mechanisms are in place to ensure the partners follow through on commitments, including necessary changes in policy and resource allocation.

- **School Level:** School and community partners monitor progress against the school’s results framework. They communicate the value of their relationship to students and families. These communications reflect a clear and coherent set of practices and policies that guides both school staff and community partners and fosters integration between in-school and out-of-school activities.
- **Systems Level:** A communications strategy builds awareness of the shift to “learning ecosystem” from “education system.” This reinforces a shift from the traditional school day and emphasizes how educators, families, and partners are fully engaged in supporting the individual needs of students, as well as the implementation of governance/policies that support the alignment of

resources around individual student needs.

**Principle Five – Actionable Data:** Data are readily accessible to measure progress and feedback loops are in place for all aspects of student learning.

- School Level: A dashboard of key results/indicators related to all aspects of student learning and development (e.g., academic, social, emotional, and civic) is in place, regularly updated, and constantly reviewed to promote continuous improvement and inform practice consistent with individual student needs.
- System Level: School systems, local government, and other community partners have agreed on a results framework. Data sharing agreements are in place that facilitate access to data at the school level and enable ongoing data analytics to assess the impact of specific interventions and actions to inform decision making about strategy and equitable resource allocation.