

Richard
King
Mellon
Foundation

Educational Attainment and PreK through 12th Grade Attendance

Request for Proposals

Application Deadlines

Friday, September 9, 2022. Noon (12:00 PM). Eastern Standard Time.

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Introduction to the Richard King Mellon Foundation

The Richard King Mellon Foundation's (Foundation) mission is to improve the competitive position of the region; strengthen the vitality of southwestern Pennsylvania, particularly the City of Pittsburgh and its neighborhoods; and protect important habitats and amenities in western Pennsylvania and other key landscapes. Founded in 1947, the Foundation is the largest foundation in southwestern Pennsylvania, and one of the 50 largest in the world. The Foundation's 2020 year-end endowment was \$3.1 billion, and its Trustees in 2020 disbursed \$130 million in grants and program-related investments. The Foundation focuses its funding on six mutually reinforcing funding programs, delineated in [its 2021-2030 Strategic Plan](#). These funding programs are: Conservation; Economic Development; Economic Mobility; Health and Well-Being; Organizational Effectiveness; and Social-Impact Investments. All six programs invest in bold, evidence-informed solutions that align with the Foundation's mission and contribute to positive change.

Economic Mobility Funding Program

[Economic Mobility](#) is one of the six programs defined in the Foundation's 2021-2030 strategic plan. The Economic Mobility program serves children and youth ages 0-24 years old who reside in low-income households in Allegheny or Westmoreland counties in southwestern Pennsylvania. Through the Economic Mobility program, the Foundation invests in pathways to opportunity for vulnerable children and youth so that they can overcome obstacles to achieving prosperity in adulthood. The Foundation recognizes that investing in children and youth is imperative to achieve the Economic Mobility program's vision: that all children and youth living in Allegheny and Westmoreland counties will be able to access their most promising future.

The Foundation organizes its Economic Mobility program into four investment areas: Educational Attainment; Future of Work; Supportive Living Environments; and Places of Opportunity. Collectively, these four investment areas describe the Foundation's approach to addressing the problem of limited economic mobility for children who reside in low-income households. Each investment area contains priorities and outcomes that further describe the Foundation's funding interests and the changes that the Foundation hopes to create.

Background: Educational Attainment and School Attendance

School attendance is a necessary ingredient for educational attainment. When students of any age are chronically absent – missing approximately 10% or more of school days – they may have difficulty learning to read, transitioning between grades, or graduating high school. Chronic absenteeism can be related to truancy, which only accounts for unexcused absences. In Pennsylvania, a student is deemed truant when the student has three or more unexcused absences in a single year. When a school determines that a student is truant, the school is required to take action, which may include referral to a community-based intervention or filing a citation with the magistrate's court.

Factors such as mental and physical health concerns, economic hardship, and bullying or other issues associated with school climate can contribute to a student's becoming chronically absent or truant. According to Attendance Works, "Children living in poverty are two to three times more likely to be chronically absent—and face the most harm because their community lacks the resources to make up for the lost learning in school. Students from communities of color as well as those with disabilities are disproportionately affected" ([Attendance Works](#)).

Request for Proposals

The Richard King Mellon Foundation is issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) that aims to ensure that children who are enrolled in early childhood education or grades K-12 and who reside in low-income households in Allegheny and Westmoreland counties can achieve a 90% attendance record or greater. The Foundation will consider all submitted proposals that:

- focus on prevention and early intervention strategies
- account for the interrelated school, community, and family factors that affect children and young people’s school attendance
- conduct ongoing data collection and analysis to understand children’s and families’ needs and identify solutions most likely to meet those needs

Successful proposals may also address related objectives such as reducing the number of truancy-related citations filed in courts, reducing absences resulting from the use of exclusionary school discipline practices, or reducing tardiness that causes students regularly to miss certain classes or activities.

The Foundation also strongly encourages collaborative proposals that engage multiple partners in the proposed activities, including sharing missions and goals, co-creating and sharing programs and services, and partnering in systems change.

Examples

Examples of ideas that may be considered include, but are not limited to, the items noted in Table 1. These are solely illustrative and not proscriptive. Applications may include a variety of services, products, or technologies. The Foundation welcomes a range of ideas and encourages thoughtful experimentation.

Table 1

Economic Mobility Program Priority	Sample Ideas
Kindergarten Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• reciprocal family engagement programs that are responsive to families’ values, beliefs, and culture• pre-K to kindergarten or pre-K to third grade transition and alignment initiatives
K-12 Academic Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• use of data and analytics to identify students at-risk of chronic absenteeism and provide supports personalized to the child’s needs• wrap-around or community-school initiatives that address underlying factors contributing to absenteeism• positive behavioral interventions and supports• initiatives to create conditions resulting in increased student engagement• initiatives to provide alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices

Eligibility Criteria

The Foundation's general eligibility criteria apply to the RFP. Please review the Funding Policies on the [Apply](#) page of the Foundation's website and the [General FAQs](#) found on the Foundation's Nonprofit and Public Sector Partners webpage.

For the purposes of this RFP, the Foundation offers additional guidance about proposals from public sector and nonprofit organizations.

Public sector organizations:

- may serve as the lead agency submitting a proposal for Planning and Innovation grants. Public sector organizations may also participate as collaborating partners on both Planning and Innovation and Scalability grants submitted by nonprofit organizations
- include entities such as school districts, courts, or departments of health or human services

Nonprofit organizations:

- may serve as the lead agency submitting a proposal for Planning and Innovation grants or for Scalability grants. Nonprofit organizations may also participate as collaborating partners on both Planning and Innovation or Scalability grants

Funding Guidelines

The Foundation expects to provide two types of support through this RFP.

Planning and Innovation grants:

- focus on experimentation and the development of new ideas. Recipients might describe activities such as piloting services or completing a feasibility study. Any evaluation activities should focus on understanding successes, challenges, and future possibilities resulting from the grant
- will provide up to \$250,000 and funded activities should be completed within 12 to 18 months after the grant award

Scalability grants:

- sustain and expand promising, evidence-informed initiatives. Recipients might describe activities, projects, and ideas that have been tested within one population group or in one geographic area with promising success and require an infusion of funds to expand the reach of the program to other population groups or geographic areas
- will provide up to \$400,000 and funded activities should be completed within 18 to 24 months after the grant award

Grant funds awarded through this RFP may be used for a variety of expenses such as program and service delivery, consultant fees, evaluation, or "overhead" or administrative expenses. A limited amount of capital expenditures that are essential to accomplish the outcomes of the proposal may be included.

If an application is truly exceptional, the Foundation may consider providing more than \$250,000 for Planning and Innovation grants or \$400,000 for Scalability grants. Successful grants may be invited to apply for follow-on funding or additional capacity-building funding opportunities at the conclusion of the grant.

What the Foundation Will Not Fund

The Foundation will not fund the following items through this RFP:

- Endowments
- Advocacy, political causes or events
- Existing deficits or retroactive funding
- Event sponsorships

Application Timeline

Friday, September 9, 2022 Noon (12:00 PM) EST.	Applications submitted. https://www.grantrequest.com/SID_5499?SA=SNA&FID=35046
Wednesday, December 21, 2022	Funding Status Notification
Friday, December 23, 2022	Funds Issued for Awarded Grants

Inquiries

Please contact Lynne Ventress (lventress@rkmf.org) at the Foundation to discuss questions regarding this RFP. However, a discussion is discretionary and not a requirement.