

Request for Proposal: Bridging Gaps in Postsecondary Research

In September 2017, the Institute of Education Sciences hosted a Technical Working Group on Career and Technical Education. During this session, leading experts on career and technical education (CTE) [agreed more research on postsecondary CTE is needed](#). The group pointed out that topics such as academic rigor, stackable credentials, student demographics, teacher efficacy, and career pathways broadly, to name a few, need more attention in order to improve outcomes and better understand the students who enroll in CTE programs.

The need for more postsecondary CTE research is also apparent at conferences run by leading education associations. Recent convenings of the [Association for the Study of Higher Education](#) and the [American Educational Research Association](#) offered very few sessions about postsecondary CTE.

This absence of critical CTE research can be detrimental to the field as it often leaves practitioners with anecdotal evidence on the efficacy of certain components of postsecondary CTE programs (e.g., curriculum design, teaching methods). Greater access to research will help both ECMC Foundation and the postsecondary sector better understand the current state of today's CTE programs, opportunities for growth, and gaps in the field.

The aforementioned issues present a need for not only more research but also a new class of innovative researchers committed to studying CTE.

Background

[ECMC Foundation](#) is a Los Angeles-based, nationally-focused foundation whose mission is to inspire and to facilitate improvements that affect educational outcomes—especially among underserved populations—through evidence-based innovation. It is one of several affiliates under the [ECMC Group](#) enterprise based in Minneapolis, which together work to help students succeed.

The Foundation makes investments in two focus areas.

- College Success is focused on increasing the number of college students from historically underrepresented backgrounds, including low-income and first-generation populations, who pursue and attain bachelor's degrees.
- Career Readiness is committed to connecting adults with limited or no education beyond high school to industry-informed, transferable, and accredited postsecondary CTE programs that are part of career pathways that lead to portable certificates or degrees.

Request

ECMC Foundation (ECMCF) is looking for a partner to select and support graduate students and postdoctoral researchers who are committed to advancing career and technical education (CTE) through research. The selected partner must be able to establish selection criteria, assemble a review committee and provide ongoing support for researchers seeking to advance in their career.

An ideal partner will administer fellowships funded by ECMCF to incoming MA or PhD students, graduate students in the dissertation stage, and postdoctoral scholars committed to CTE.

ECMC Foundation requests that award recipients be titled “ECMC Fellows,” but co-branding the title with the selected partner organization is negotiable.

In addition to program support for the operating organization, ECMC Foundation will provide funding for approximately 15-20 ECMC Fellows made to graduate students or postdoctoral researchers.

The organizational partner selected will also work to ensure that ECMC Fellows meet the following ECMC Foundation expectations:

- Write blog posts to share research, data, and best practices which will be posted on ECMC Foundation’s website and included in a yearly ECMC Foundation publication
- Share research, data, and best practices with ECMC Foundation and the greater community of Fellows
- Make research, data, and best practices open access¹
- Attend a yearly ECMC Foundation convening
- Apply to present research, data, and best practices at a minimum of one conference annually

ECMC Foundation expects that two fellowship cohorts are selected over the two years of this grant. There may an opportunity to extend program into the future pending the outcomes of the first two years.

Requirements

In order to be considered for this opportunity, interested organizations must submit a Letter of Inquiry to ECMC Foundation by May 15, 2018 using the guiding questions below.

All submitted Letters of Inquiry will be considered for this opportunity and one organization will be selected to administer the program. The selected organization will be contacted no later than May 25, 2018 and asked to submit a full grant proposal (including a more concrete action plan and budget) to ECMC Foundation by June 10, 2018.

Eligibility + Selection Criteria

Any organization with a commitment to education and background in talent development is eligible to submit a Letter of Inquiry. A small team from the Foundation will evaluate all submitted Letters of Inquiry. The team will select the organization with the strongest mission alignment and ability to accomplish the expectations established by ECMC Foundation.

Process + Timeline

Letter of Inquiry Deadline	May 15, 2018
Winner Announced	May 25, 2018
Full Proposal Deadline	June 10, 2018
Funding Notification	July 20, 2018
Project Start Date	August 1, 2018

Contact

Questions may be directed to Patrick Bourke (pbourke@ecmc.org). All final Letters of Inquiry must be submitted to Patrick by email no later than 5:00 PM (PT) on May 15, 2018.

¹ ECMC Foundation will pay necessary fees

Bridging Gaps in Postsecondary Research Letters of Inquiry

Please prepare a brief (up to three page) Letter of Inquiry addressing the following questions.

Organization Name

What is the name of the organization requesting funding and who will serve as the project leader(s) if funding is received?

Organization

Provide an overview of the organization's purpose, relevant history, and data on its effectiveness. Does the organization have experience facilitating similar programs and how successful have those initiatives been?

Program Summary

Provide a summary of the activities for which you are requesting support. How do you envision the design of this program? In addition to allocating the awards, what support can you offer to the Fellows?

Program Timeline and Action Plan

Provide the approximate start date and duration of the proposed activities up to two years. What actions will you take over the course of the grant period to identify and support ECMC Fellows? How will you be sure they are meeting ECMC Foundation expectations regarding writing, publishing, presenting, and convening?

Measurements of Success

How will you evaluate the success of the project?

Budget Narrative

What funds are needed for ECMC Fellow awards, staff time, Fellow support, and other costs over the grant period?