Request for Proposal: Fulfilling Basic Needs – Supporting the Whole Student

In four studies published between 2015 and 2019, the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice (previously the Wisconsin HOPE Lab) has uncovered that nine percent of students enrolled at four-campuses experience homelessness, with higher rates at community colleges. Additionally, 36% of students enrolled at four-year campuses and 42% of community college students experience food insecurity.

More than ever, students require support in a diverse range of areas, including childcare, mental health and wellness services, and housing and nutrition. Addressing these basic needs is essential if colleges and universities—especially those enrolling high numbers of students from underserved backgrounds—are committed to improving degree completion and safeguarding higher education as a public good.

ECMC Foundation's College Success focus area defines basic needs initiatives (BNI) as direct student supports/interventions that target **everyday needs affecting college students' wellbeing and academic performance.** These areas may include, but are not limited to housing, food insecurity, hygiene, financial assistance, and mental health. By addressing basic needs, students have a higher likelihood of persisting and completing their bachelor degrees. ECMC Foundation believes that high-quality supports and the programs that execute on them have the following characteristics:

- Address everyday basic needs of students;
- Incorporate student-centered approaches that alleviate stigma associated with utilizing these resources;
- Provide timely, accessible supports with clearly navigable systems and outcomes;
- Offer targeted counseling/case management to students;
- Employ evidence-based practices for student persistence;
- Use a consistent and/or standardized language to identify types of student need (e.g., the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of homelessness) in order to collect in-depth student data and demographics.

To increase students' persistence at two-year and four-year campuses, ECMC Foundation seeks to support a cohort of organizations and/or higher education institutions that further the research, development, and scaling of basic needs initiatives. This work may be carried out by either institutions, intermediaries, or cross-organizational networks and partnerships.

Representatives from each project will be convened at least once in-person in order to share and learn from each other's work and progress. The growth and lessons learned from the selected cohort members will be used to inform the strategic grantmaking of ECMC Foundation's College Success focus area. In recognizing that basic needs are an essential aspect of students' daily lives and directly related to their success, the College Success focus area will uplift the work of cohort members. Ultimately, it is our goal that the funded work will encourage more campuses/organizations in the adoption and advancement of best practices for basic needs initiatives.

As a national grantmaker, ECMC Foundation will give priority to programs and initiatives with a statewide or regional focus. In addition, applicants must demonstrate prior experience and knowledge on basic needs initiatives with postsecondary students.

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 grants 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, accredited, and transferable, postsecondary CTE programs that are part of career pathways that lead to portable certificates or degrees.

ECMCF recognizes that a postsecondary education, when attained in a timely and cost-effective manner, has the highest return on investment for students from traditionally underserved backgrounds to achieve opportunities for upward mobility and a family-sustaining wage. ECMCF's College Success focus area invests in direct student supports and initiatives focused on institutional change at two-year and four-year colleges to increase persistence and graduation rates for bachelor degree attainment.

ECMCF's College Success focus area supports this theory by investing in programs that:

- Improve and scale systemic reforms and supports to increase student success at postsecondary institutions.
- Increase currently enrolled students' persistence toward a degree.
- Support on-time transfer from two-year to four-year institutions.
- Enhance students' pathways to graduation with career-ready skills.
- Elevate new research that promotes student success outcomes.

Request

ECMC Foundation will offer up to $2 million across 4-6 organizations/cross-organizational partnerships to advance research and/or pilot or refine existing basic needs initiatives (BNI) in order increase student persistence at two-year and four-year institutions. Organizations selected are to conduct the funded work/projects over the course of one to two years.

Projects should prioritize BNI reaching students from traditionally undeserved backgrounds (e.g., first-generation, students of color, rural, parenting students). The cohort's overarching goal is to use data and practice to develop and disseminate scalable best practices for supporting students' basic needs.

Each applicant should strive to:
- Measure their BNI effectiveness and impact on students' engagement with the program and persistence rates;

- Assess the BNI structures in relation to student population(s) and geographies served;
- Advance/establish partnerships between campuses and Continuum of Care providers/government agencies;
- Adopt and/or integrate other BNI models or practices as best aligned to improve current initiative; and/or
- Determine programs' potential for scalability among other institutions/organizations.

Requirements

In order to be considered for this opportunity, applicants must submit a letter of inquiry (LOI) to the ECMC Foundation by June 7, 2019 using the guiding questions below.

All submitted LOIs will be considered for this opportunity and up to six organizations/institutions will be selected to submit a full proposal to be considered for participation in the cohort and further develop their BNI. The applicants selected for this grant opportunity will be asked to submit a full proposal (including a detailed action plan and budget) to ECMC Foundation by August 7, 2019.

If selected, applicants must be able to start executing on the project in the first quarter of 2020.

Eligibility + Selection Criteria

Any organization with a commitment to postsecondary education or nonprofit, accredited higher education institution is eligible to submit a LOI. A team from the Foundation will review submitted LOIs.

Current ECMC Foundation College Success grantees are not eligible to apply. Systems of higher education, regardless of grantee status, may apply.

If selected, cohort participants must be available to meet virtually on a quarterly basis and once in-person. Dates will be provided upon confirmation of participation.

Process + Timeline

The deadline to apply is 11:59 PM (PT) Friday, June 7, 2019. Final notifications will be issued no later than June 26, 2019. The applicants selected will be asked to submit a full proposal (including a detailed action plan and budget) to ECMC Foundation by August 7, 2019.

Contact

Questions may be directed to Angela Sanchez (asanchez@ecmc.org). All proposals must be submitted into ECMC Foundation's online portal no later than 11:59 PM (PT) on June 7, 2019.

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Please prepare a brief proposal addressing the following questions to be entered into the online portal.

<u>Organization (character limit: 2000)</u>
Provide an overview of your organization's mission, commitment to postsecondary education, and if applicable, similar projects completed.
- Why is your organization well-suited to do this work?
- What type of experience does your organization have in executing similar programs, how successful have those initiatives been and what have you learned from previous efforts?
- How does this program align with the overall mission of your organization?

<u>Project Approach (character limit: 4500)</u>
Articulate the basic needs initiative and/or study to be advanced: services provided, total number of students currently served, potential key partners, data that will be collected, and evaluation method (if any) employed.
- Who are the specific student populations (e.g., single parents, undocumented students, men of color), if any, to be targeted by this BNI? Why?
- What are the opportunities to scale for the BNI proposed? If proposing a study, describe dissemination pipelines and pathways for implementation.

<u>Timeline and Action Plan (character limit: 4500)</u>
Provide the approximate start and end dates and a summary of the activities for which support is requested. What actions will you take over the course of the grant period to further the work proposed? Please note any anticipated major milestones.

<u>Measurements of Success (character limit: 2250)</u>
Explain how you will evaluate the program's success and measure successful implementation and program effectiveness.

<u>Budget / Budget Narrative</u>
Include a detailed list of the expenses (e.g., staff time, technology, travel) that comprise the total amount requested. Up to 10% of requested funds may be allocated toward indirect costs.