



request for proposals

Education: Closing the Middle School Achievement Gap in Mathematics through an In-School Strategy

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Introduction

Silicon Valley Community Foundation advances innovative philanthropic solutions to challenging problems. One of these problems — the achievement gap in middle school mathematics that divides English learners, students of color and low-income students from their peers — is addressed through our education strategy. The goal of this strategy is that all students will be prepared to take and successfully complete college-track high school mathematics courses. To better understand our objectives for this strategy, we encourage you to read the community foundation’s research paper on the topic at www.siliconvalleycf.org/education.

The education strategy has a two-pronged approach:

- 1) in-school strategy, which seeks to increase the effectiveness of instruction during school hours; and
- 2) an out-of-school strategy, which seeks to increase the number and effectiveness of extended learning opportunities for students.

This request for proposals, or RFP, focuses specifically on the in-school strategy. By using an RFP approach, SVCF aims to solicit the best thinking of public school districts and other public agencies, nonprofit organizations, professional and research institutions and other entities serving San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

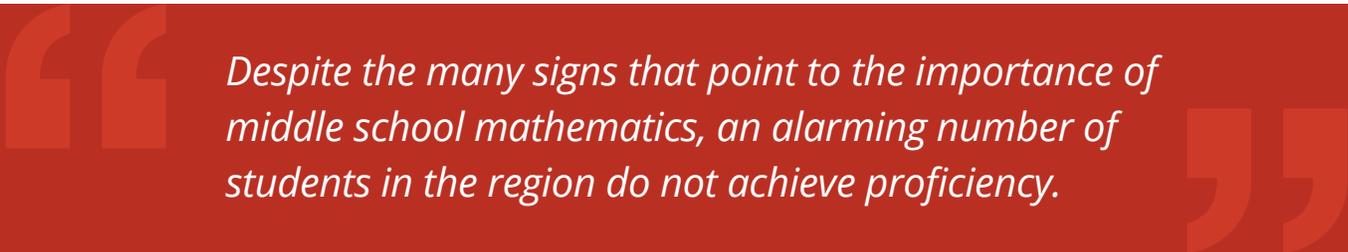
Grant Application Deadline

Responses to this RFP must be submitted through our online application system, [applySVCF](#), by **5 p.m. on Friday, November 14, 2014**.

Problem Statement

Competence in mathematics is essential for functioning in everyday life as well as for success in our increasingly knowledge-based economy. Students who are not proficient in mathematics coursework in middle school are far less likely to take four courses of college-track mathematics in high school and pursue higher education. Despite the many signs that point to the importance of middle school mathematics, an alarming number of students in the region do not achieve proficiency. The numbers are particularly high for English learners, students of color and low-income students.

Disparities in the quality of education contribute to gaps in student achievement. Teachers are central to improving student outcomes, yet in schools with high percentages of English learners, students of color and low-income students, teachers tend to be less experienced, are more likely to lack full credentials and have less access to professional development and opportunities to learn from other teachers. Research also supports the importance of rigorous curricula and high expectations as a means to improving students' academic achievement. However, schools serving a high percentage of English learners, low-income students and students of color are less likely to offer rigorous, high-quality mathematics curricula, and staff are more likely to have lower expectations around student performance.



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Program Goal

It is critical to invest in programs that improve mathematics instruction in our classrooms. SVCF funding will focus on increasing teacher efficacy so all students are prepared to take and successfully complete middle school mathematics coursework. SVCF grants will support programs that improve teachers':

- Content knowledge in Common Core State Standards for mathematics; and,
- Ability to teach the Standards for Mathematical Practice.

SVCF will fund organizations that:

- Provide rigorous professional development to teachers based on research-based best practices. These may include use of assessments to drive instruction and methods for building a culture of high academic achievement for all students.
- Are metrics-driven.
- Assure that systems are in place to sustain improvements in practice. This may include the creation and support of professional learning communities for teachers by allocating time so peer teacher learning becomes an established part of the school day and a regular part of school life.
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of how the proposed project advances existing school district goals and a clear strategy to scale.

SVCF will gauge success according to these indicators: increases in student mathematics proficiencies in middle school and enrollment in college-track mathematics high school coursework; and gains in teacher mathematics content knowledge and pedagogy, as measured by pre/post surveys and/or assessments.

Proposal Eligibility Criteria

- San Mateo and/or Santa Clara County-serving organizations. Organizations headquartered outside the two-county region must demonstrate significant service to the area.
- Organizations with a 501(c)(3) designation, those that have a fiscal sponsor with a 501(c)(3) designation, public institutions or other entities that have a designated charitable purpose.
- Organizations that do not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, citizenship status, creed, religion, religious affiliation, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, veteran status or any other protected status under applicable law. If an organization only serves a specific population, e.g., women, SVCF will consider the proposal on a case-by-case basis.
- Organizations with religious affiliations will be considered for funding only if the project for which they seek support attempts to address the needs of the wider community without regard to religious beliefs.

Project Proposal Characteristics

We are receptive to concrete, practical and impactful program proposals that:

- Take a system-wide approach, ensuring that the project's outcomes support implementation of the Common Core State Standards at target districts.
- Include both well-tested models that can be scaled up or expanded regionally while maintaining local relevance, and new pilots that, if successful, can be grown and replicated.
- Benefit from collaborative work and bring public and private partners together with nonprofit organizations.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the sector and its trends.
- Identify the target population and provide justification for that focus.
- Provide clear benchmarks for measuring progress.

We expect most of the proposals funded will focus on capacity-building and implementation, but we may also consider requests for planning grants as stand-alone endeavors, if applicants make a compelling case for such grants. For these types of grants, SVCF is interested in projects that have potential for significant impact in the RFP priority area, and in which planning activities are necessary to move an issue forward. Some examples may include collaborative undertakings, consideration of innovative new programs and service areas, and other promising opportunities that require additional exploration or research. SVCF will not fund planning that is part of an organization's or a program's ongoing activities. Note that successful planning grant recipients are not guaranteed to receive additional grants for project or program implementation.

Key Dates

October 14, 2014

Release RFP

October 16, 2014

RFP information session
(register through our online
calendar)

November 14, 2014 – 5 p.m.

Proposal submission
deadline

February 2015

Announcement of grant
awards

Application Process

- 1) Review of reference materials. These may be found at siliconvalleycf.org/education
 - Research paper on our Education grantmaking strategy
 - RFP for Education: Closing the Middle School Achievement Gap in Mathematics through an In-School Strategy
- 2) Participate in the information session. This is highly encouraged for those interested in responding to this RFP. Information sessions provide an opportunity for applicants to review in more depth the RFP's content and ask questions. To register for this session, please visit our [website's calendar](#).
- 3) **Submission of grant application**, including required attachments, through [applySVCF](#). Applications must be submitted by **5 p.m. on Friday, November 14**.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Proposals for grants should include a narrative that responds to the questions found at [applySVCF](#). Grant proposals will be evaluated, on a competitive basis, using the following criteria:

- Clarity of project description and project activities regarding steps to be taken to achieve desired outcomes.
- Achievable timeline that corresponds to the key activities.
- Meaningful benchmarks and indicators of success.
- Innovative and effective strategy with potential for systems change.
- Organizational capacity to implement project – including staffing and leadership, and operational and fiscal management.
- Established track record in specific program content area or potential to achieve needed content expertise.
- Ability to leverage financial, human and technical resources leading to greater impact.
- Ability to contribute content area knowledge to the field.

Total Awards

Successful applicants will receive grants in the range of \$50,000 to \$100,000 for a one-year period. Budget requests will be closely analyzed, and applicants should include a budget narrative that makes clear the necessity of the project's specific line-items.

Please note that project proposal narratives may be posted publicly on our website to reflect our value of transparency and encourage learning among grantees, future applicants and the community at large.

Review and Selection Process

An advisory committee with issue expertise for this strategy will help staff to review all proposals recommended for funding to SVCF's board of directors. Applicants may receive a site visit, telephone call and/or other type of communication from SVCF staff as part of the proposal review process.

Applicants will be informed of grant decisions in February 2015.

Evaluation, Monitoring and Grantee Learning Activities

- Grantees will be expected to meet SVCF's requirements for a final financial and narrative report, as well as a presentation to SVCF staff and donors if requested.
- In an effort to further the overall program goals of this RFP, inform future RFPs related to this topic and contribute to larger field-building objectives, grantees will be asked to participate in periodic meetings to share information on project activities and best practices, as well as participate in evaluations.

Thank you very much for your interest in responding to this RFP and in making our region a better place. We look forward to reviewing your proposal.



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About Silicon Valley Community Foundation

Silicon Valley Community Foundation makes all forms of philanthropy more powerful. We serve as a catalyst and leader for innovative solutions to our region's most challenging problems and give more money to charities than any other community foundation in the United States. SVCF has more than \$4.7 billion in assets under management. As Silicon Valley's center of philanthropy, we provide thousands of individuals, families and corporations with simple and effective ways to give locally and around the world.

Find out more at www.siliconvalleycf.org.

More Information

If you have questions, please contact us at grants@siliconvalleycf.org or call 650.450.5557

To get all the latest grantmaking information, follow us on Facebook and subscribe to our community e-newsletter at www.siliconvalleycf.org/enewsletters.

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