request for proposals

Accelerating Student Success in the Common Core
Accelerating Student Success in the Common Core

Introduction

Today, Forty-three states, including California, have adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in mathematics and English language arts. The CCSS were drafted by experts and teachers from across the country and have been shown to be more rigorous and effective in increasing student achievement than previous learning standards.¹ Specifically, the CCSS are designed to improve students’ chances of success in college and careers by setting uniform standards for what students should know in math and English language arts by the end of each school year and by the time they graduate from high school. The standards involve substantial increases in the amount of nonfiction reading and writing, a greater emphasis on collaborative activities and the expectation that mathematics students be able to not only solve problems but explain how they did so. California students took the Smarter Balanced assessments aligned with the standards for the first time in the spring of 2015.

After a review of initial statewide assessment data at the middle school level, as well as feedback from educators and extended learning providers, three things became clear.

• Focused support for educators and students needs to start earlier.
• Success in middle and high school mathematics requires strong literacy skills.²
• Mastery of both literacy and core mathematical concepts is a clear prerequisite to the transition to middle school.³

Silicon Valley Community Foundation advances innovative philanthropic solutions to the most challenging problems in Silicon Valley. One of these challenges is addressing stubborn achievement gaps, which have far-reaching implications for students’ future opportunities in college and career, especially for those students who are low-income, English learners or in the foster care system. This challenge is addressed through SVCF’s Accelerating Student Success in the Common Core strategy. To better understand our goals and objectives for this strategy, we encourage you to read SVCF’s research brief on the topic.

The Accelerating Student Success in the Common Core grantmaking strategy will make strategic investments in the professional development of teachers and school site instructional leaders using integrated content approaches to accelerate students’ academic performance in core subjects (reading, writing and mathematics) in grades four and five.

³ Ibid
This request for proposals, or RFP, focuses on accelerating student success in the common core. By using an RFP approach, SVCF aims to solicit the best thinking of local education agencies (LEAs), districts, schools, nonprofit service providers, public sector agencies, research institutions and other entities serving San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

Grant Application Deadline

The application process will open beginning Monday, March 26, 2018.

Grant applications must be submitted through our online application system, Apply SVCF, by 11:59 p.m. on Friday, April 20, 2018.

Problem Statement

Up until the end of third grade, most children are learning to read. Beginning in the fourth grade, however, they are reading to learn, using their skills to gain more information in subjects such as mathematics and science to solve problems and to think critically. Data from statewide assessments indicate that fewer than half of the region’s rising fourth grade students are reading at grade level—45 percent in San Mateo County and 44 percent in Santa Clara County. And fewer than one-third of the region’s low-income students are reading at grade level—26 percent in San Mateo County and 32 percent in Santa Clara County. Emerging best practices in the field indicate that integrated instructional approaches are critical to address students' need for continued literacy development as well as content exposure to mathematics in grades four and five. We also know that many students need additional support beyond what they receive during the school day. Therefore, after-school and summer learning opportunities, particularly for struggling students who are low-income, are important.

Program Goal

To address these issues, funding will be provided for LEA collaboratives that systematically accelerate students’ academic performance in core subjects (reading, writing and mathematics) in grades four and five. SVCF will fund best-in-class collaborative models that holistically align these important components:

• delivery of integrated literacy and mathematics instruction;
• professional development for teachers and instructional leaders;
• extended learning opportunities and;
• parent-family school partnerships

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More specifically, SVCF will fund intentional education efforts that formalize classroom instruction, school site leadership practice, and secure a matching district Local Control Funding Formula apportionment to support integrated literacy and mathematics curricula, data information sharing, academic extended learning opportunities, parent engagement and professional networking relationships across and within San Mateo and Santa Clara county LEAs.

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Of particular interest to SVCF is the use of new technology that helps providers of teacher professional development build capacity and share resources. SVCF is receptive to initial planning grants that allow possible collaborators to come together and explore a potential partnership.

SVCF also will provide implementation grants to established LEA-led partnerships that:

• Execute effective instructional approaches to accelerate students’ academic performance in core subjects (reading, writing and mathematics) in grades four and five, such as integrated literacy and mathematics curricula.
• Help teachers implement fresh instructional strategies, collaborate with other colleagues and measure how those practices affect students in the classroom.
• Utilize new and innovative approaches to providing teacher professional development, such as through MOOCs, social media and webinars.
• Complement in-school instruction with project-aligned after-school and summer extended learning opportunities for students who are low-income and have academic needs.
• Conduct research to determine teaching and learning impact as well as student- and school system-level outcomes.

Addressing Silicon Valley’s education challenges will require an intentional, multifaceted approach to ensure student success in the Common Core, so these programs should also engage parents and guardians as active partners.
Proposal Eligibility Criteria

Proposals from LEA collaboratives (county offices of education, school districts and charter school networks) that fulfill the following criteria will be considered:

- Project must serve students and teachers in grades four and five.
- Grantees are able to report on student improvements in reading and mathematics proficiency for all students and on quality improvement over the course of the program.
- Grantees have approved Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAP) in place with dedicated funding to support collaborative initiative activities including any of the following:
  1. Initiative-aligned academic supports for fourth and fifth grade students who are below grade level, English learners or at-risk, with the goal of making accelerated progress toward grade-level proficiency in reading and mathematics
  2. Initiative-aligned teacher professional development
  3. Initiative-aligned extended learning programs during the school year or summer
  4. Initiative-aligned parent or family engagement strategies

These matching funds must equal at least 50 percent of the amount requested in the proposal.

- Only organizations serving San Mateo and/or Santa Clara counties will be considered. Organizations headquartered outside the two-county region must demonstrate significant service to these areas, or must be partnered with another organization based within the core counties.
- Organizations must fall into one of the following categories: those with a 501(c)(3) designation, those that have a fiscal sponsor with a 501(c)(3) designation, public agencies, collaborations of nonprofit and public agencies, or other entities that have a designated charitable purpose.
- Organizations must 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.
- Organizations with religious affiliations will be considered for funding only if the project for which they seek support addresses the needs of the wider community without regard to religious beliefs.

Project Proposal Characteristics

Priority will be given to organizations that demonstrate a clear understanding of how the proposed activities advance SVCF’s programmatic goals, those that show a cohesive overall education strategy and those that best describe how their efforts will be coordinated and implemented, including key anticipated milestones, the timeframe for completion, and assessment of impact. SVCF is interested in partnering with organizations that are open to learning, sharing
and developing new solutions to challenging problems. We are receptive to concrete, practical and impactful project proposals that:

• 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.

Application Process

1) Review reference materials including:

• Research brief on Accelerating Student Success in the Common Core

• This RFP – Accelerating Student Success in the Common Core

2) Participate in the information session. This is highly encouraged for those interested in responding to this RFP. Because all grant applications are submitted online, this session provides an overview of SVCF's online application system, Apply SVCF.

Additionally, the information session will provide an opportunity for applicants to review in more depth the RFP's content and ask questions. Register for the session.

3) Submit grant application, including required attachments, through our new online application system, Apply SVCF, beginning March 26, 2018. Applications must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. (PST) Friday, April 20, 2018. A guide to the online application system can be found here.

More specific questions about program concepts, content, eligibility and evaluation can be addressed through phone calls and in-person meetings with the program officer, as time permits.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Proposals for grants should include a narrative that responds to the questions found on Apply SVCF. Grant proposals will be evaluated, on a competitive basis, using the following criteria:

• Innovative and effective strategy with potential for systems change.

• Clarity of project description and project activities regarding steps to be taken to achieve desired outcomes.
• Achievable timeline (12 months) that corresponds to the key activities.
• Meaningful benchmarks and indicators of success.
• Organizational capacity to implement project – including staffing, leadership and operational and fiscal management.
• Established track record in specific program content area or likelihood to achieve needed content expertise.
• Ability to leverage financial, human and technical resources from other partners leading to greater impact.
• Ability to contribute content area knowledge to the field.

Awards
Up to $200,000 will be awarded to a lead school district, charter school network or established elementary school collaborative.

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 June 2018.

Evaluation, Monitoring and Grantee Learning Activities
• Grantees will be expected to meet SVCF’s requirements for a final financial and narrative report and evaluation data, as well as be willing and available to talk with SVCF staff and donor advisors 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 requested to participate in periodic meetings to share information on project activities and best practices as well as respond to research-based evaluations annually.

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.
About Silicon Valley Community Foundation
Silicon Valley Community Foundation advances innovative philanthropic solutions to challenging problems. We engage donors and corporations from Silicon Valley, across the country and around the globe to make our region and world better for all. Our passion for helping people and organizations achieve their philanthropic dreams has created a global philanthropic enterprise committed to the belief that possibilities start here. Learn more at www.siliconvalleycf.org.

More Information
If you have questions, please contact us at grants@siliconvalleycf.org or call 650.930.9885

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