

## Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation / Postsecondary Success

### Glossary: Request for Proposals Intermediaries for Scale (2019)

Some applicants may not be familiar with some of the language found in our request for proposal. To clarify key terms, we have defined the following words and phrases, providing examples where relevant.

Please read this glossary before deciding whether to apply for funding. If you would like clarification on a term not listed below, please email [IntermediariesForScaleRFP@gatesfoundation.org](mailto:IntermediariesForScaleRFP@gatesfoundation.org). We will update the glossary weekly on Friday as new terms are identified.

**Continuous Improvement.** Continuous improvement is a process for addressing a specific problem of practice by developing, testing, and refining promising solutions. Teams who engage in continuous improvement are made up of people with the time, expertise, and will to tackle a shared problem of practice. Teams use multiple and varied data to: (a) deeply understand a problem and the system that produces it; (b) set a clear and specific aim related to improving the percentage of students of color and low-income students completing postsecondary (c) develop a theory (informed by research and practice) of the highest-leverage changes to make to reach their improvement aim; and (d) engage in inquiry cycles to test the effectiveness of multiple evidence-based solutions to address the problem and the system that produces it, and reach their aim.

Intermediaries for Scale will determine which continuous improvement methodology they will use to guide their work. All methodologies must meet the criteria outlined in this glossary.

**Equity.** The Postsecondary Success Team operationally defines “equity” as follows: Educational equity is achieved when social determinants, such as race and socioeconomic, are no longer entrenched and reliable predictors of student attainment outcomes.

To achieve this, we are committed to engaging the partnership of intermediaries equipped with the equity-related knowledge sets and skills needed to foster transformation that results in greater attainment and success for students from historically marginalized and underserved communities.

Some of the organizational characteristics and capabilities we seek are:

- Commitment to equity as demonstrated by organizational make up and equity competencies required of leadership and staff at all levels
- Commitment to transforming individual and organizational processes and practices to interrupt disparity dynamics and promote equitable outcomes as demonstrated by areas of programming and research focus, policies and practices
- Knowledge of how root causes of systemic inequities have become embedded and play out in higher education systems
- Operational understanding of the aspirations, challenges and life contexts that students from targeted populations bring to their higher education experiences
- Ability to operationalize knowledge of historical and contemporary relationships targeted communities experience with higher education systems and potential impacts of those experiences
- Demonstrated ability to build effective relationships with members of targeted communities and include their perspectives/voices in decision-making and program/policy development processes
- Ability to design and implement equity-minded measurement, learning and evaluation processes to guide implementation and refinement of transformative strategies

**The Frontier Set.** The [Frontier Set](#) is a select group of high-performing, high-potential colleges and universities, state systems, and supporting organizations that are all committed to dramatically increasing student success and erasing attainment gaps by transforming how they operate. The 29 colleges and universities and two state systems (all referred to as “sites”) that make up the Frontier Set stand as a diverse cross-section of higher education, encompassing research universities, state systems, regional comprehensive institutions, community colleges, urban-serving universities, and minority-serving institutions including Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

**Intermediaries for Scale.** Intermediaries for scale are organizations (or coalitions of organizations) that will perform four basic functions:

1. Increase awareness of successful and promising transformation strategies among campus leaders and communities.
2. Inform key campus-level decisions about change options and strategies and supporting decision-makers.
3. Support transformation by providing guidance and resources for adapting, implementing, evaluating, and sustaining changes in policy and practice.
4. Build connections across colleges and universities and other supporting organizations to accelerate and streamline learning and sharing of promising practices.

**Intermediary Organization Type.** We acknowledge that the definitions below are not mutually exclusive or collectively exhaustive of all “types” of intermediaries. Your organization may fall into none, one, or multiple “types,” but please choose the one that most closely describes your organization.

- *Community partnerships* may tackle education and/or other community concerns simultaneously and typically feature a “backbone organization” to help coordinate the work.
- *For-Profit Professional Services Firms* provide intermediary services to institutions for a fee and are not certified non-profits.
- *Non-Profit Research and Technical Assistance Organizations* emphasize their research and data capacities, and their core business typically includes evaluation and research services for institutions.
- *Non-Profit Technical Assistance Providers* provide assistance to institutions. They typically have deep in-house technical knowledge of their chosen content areas.
- *Non-Profit Policy Organizations* focus primarily on advocating for specific student success
- *Non-Profit Organizational Hybrid/Other* are non-profits that perform a mix of the non-profit intermediary functions described above.
- *University-Affiliated Centers* provide research and technical assistance and are affiliated with universities.

**Institutional Transformation.** Colleges and universities committed to transforming themselves continually build their capacity to achieve equitable student outcomes at scale. Institutions engaged in transformation can speak to and demonstrate efforts on the following themes: a student-centered mission; data-informed decision making; a collaborative, empowered environment; commitment to continual improvement, and goals and accountability.

**Institutional Transformation Assessment (ITA).** The ITA (Institutional Transformation Assessment) is an inquiry and learning tool that has two components: an online self-assessment (based on field-created content), and a group discussion (i.e., the consensus conversation). The goal of the ITA is to help institutions better understand their strengths and areas for improvement to prioritize transformation efforts. Additionally, it provides information for intermediaries about their institutions’ needs.

**Minority-Led Organization.** Throughout this process, we aim to find a diverse set of partners. Diversity may come in different forms, but we aim to work with partners whose leadership team and staff represent

the community that we and they are trying to serve. Our strategy is investing in intermediary organizations that are positioned to provide institutions with the resources to improve outcomes for students of color and/or low-income students across the United States. To achieve the strategy's goal of improving these outcomes, we are committed to increasing the presence of minority-led organizations (MLOs) in our investment portfolio. We believe that organizations that draw on diversity in their leadership and staffing structures are well-equipped to serve high education institutions that continue to become more ethnically and racially diverse.

Here, we define minority-led organizations as those that meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. An organizational leader (i.e., Executive Director, President, or Chief Executive Officer) that identifies as a person of color
2. An executive leadership team (e.g., center directors, CFO) in which at least 40% of the members identify as a person of color
3. A Board of Directors in which at least 40% of the members identify as a person of color
4. An organization with programmatic staff (i.e., full-time staff members that make programmatic design and implementation decisions) of which at least 40% identify as a person of color.

**Pathways.** Pathways are an evidence-based, integrated approach to institutional transformation. With student success at the center, Pathways are based on intentionally-designed, clear, coherent and structured educational experiences that guide each student effectively and efficiently from her/his point of entry through to completion of high-quality postsecondary credentials and careers with value in the labor market. The four dimensions of the framework are: (1) help students define their path, (2) help students get on a path, (3) keep students on a path, and (4) ensure that students are learning along their path.

**Solution.** An evidence-based intervention or set of interventions, including practices, products, policy changes, and the institutional improvement process to effectively implement them, that address key loss points for low-income students and students of color in their higher education journey.

- **Development Education (DevEd) Solution.** Codification of best practices in DevEd reform that enable students who enter college requiring remedial education to proceed efficiently to and through credit bearing math and English courses in their first academic year, substantially improving their graduation rates. Those practices include: Placement, Acceleration, Courseware, and Early Access.
- **Digital Learning Solution.** A digital product that is Courseware in Context-aligned (1. is scoped and sequenced to support delivery of entire courses, 2. includes assessment to inform personalization of instruction, 3. is equipped for adoption across a range of institutional types and learning environments). It enables delivery of general and developmental education courses; lowers student, instructional, and institutional costs; and improves student outcomes.
- **Advising Solution.** A digital product integrating institutional systems to enable and improve all four core IPASS functionalities (1. analytics & reporting, 2. caseload management, 3. course planning & degree audit and 4. identification of at-risk students).

**Solutions Networks.** A connected and multifaceted group of organizations that collectively maintain and advance the development and/or delivery of a solution among institutions of higher education to support student success and institutional transformation. Example: Strong Start to Finish for Developmental Education and Every Learner Everywhere for Digital Learning