

Request for Proposals (RFP)

Disclaimer: Everything in this RFP is fictitious. No identification with actual RFPs or institutions is intended or should be inferred.

The National Backbone Foundation has issued this Request for Proposals to support new backbone functions in collective impact initiatives for computer science and other STEM education. We are taking a bold step by investing in the support infrastructure of collective impact to accelerate change – and hope that other institutions will do the same.

Deadline and timeline

You have two weeks to submit your draft proposal. Important: no extension may be granted.

Each proposal will then be submitted to three peer reviewers. Peer review will take one week. They will assign ratings reflecting the level of effort in your proposal for each Part. For each rating, they will have to provide an explanation that includes specific guidance on how to improve.

In the final week, you will receive the feedback from your peer reviewers. Your task will be to revise and finalize your proposal, using what you have learned.

Structure

Your proposal should include three parts:

- Part I – Context. Summarize your background. Describe your collective impact process, data, and assets.
- Part II – Result. Summarize and justify a result that you want to achieve.
- Part III – Funding. Describe and justify one backbone function that is needed to strengthen the initiative.

For Parts I and II, limit yourself to specific information that is directly relevant and necessary to understand and/or make a compelling case for what you are proposing in Part III.

Reviewers: Is the proposal clear and well-organized? Is there only relevant, specific information directly related to the proposal? If you find the narrative too long, please provide advice on how the author may shorten it. If it is incomplete, please say what is missing. Be specific in your feedback.

Guidance

Each Part includes many guiding questions. You do not need to answer all of the questions. They are intended to help you think through what is important and relevant. Ultimately, this is about making a compelling case for funding.

Part I – Context

Tip: Even though this is the first section of your proposal, you should spend most of your time on Part III.

Background

Some of your reviewers may not be familiar with collective impact. Explain in your own words what is collective impact. Why and how is it relevant? Explain what collective impact means in your context. What is unique about collective impact that is likely to make it useful in your context?

You, your organization, and your community

Summarize what we need to know about you and your organization to understand what you are proposing. What is your interest in collective impact and computer science or other STEM education? What is your background and expertise with organizational change, broadening participation, collective impact, or similar frameworks? What are your guiding principles, project goals, and objectives?

Once you have summarized background information, summarize the status and process of your collective impact initiative and present relevant data and assets about computer science education in your context.

1. Process

What is the status and progress of your community’s existing or proposed collective impact initiative for CS/STEM education? What gaps have been evidenced in the efforts currently carried out by your community? Who are the stakeholders? What is the process by which your stakeholders are coming together, engaging in discussion, and making decisions? What are the milestones in this process? How did you define strategic directions?

If your community does not have a collective impact initiative, what is currently happening that is relevant and important for your proposal toward the establishing or formalization of such an initiative?

2. Data

Where is your community at with computer science or other STEM resources? Why and how does this data matter to the initiative?

Example: Data about teachers, students, and outcomes.

3. Assets

What assets are already in place to support computer science education? You may list assets, use asset mapping, or otherwise describe leaders, networks and institutions.

Other aspects to consider

In addressing process, data, and assets, you may also wish to consider the following:

Part II – Your result

Result statement

What is the precise and meaningful result we want, for whom, by when? Describe and justify the result that you want to achieve. Describe what your main goal is and how will you track progress towards that goal.

Indicators

Based on the result, what are some indicators along the way (milestones) that show that you are making progress? You won't achieve the result for a certain amount of time, but how do we know that you are making progress toward that amazing result?

Data collection and management

Who is going to collect the data? Where are you going to store and manage this data?

If you don't have everything in place, you can describe the shared measurement process and system of your dreams, the one that everyone can use together. You know your context and community, so do whatever makes sense there!

Part III – Funding

What is the strength of your backbone organization now?

Where are you at now? Describe what backbone functions your effort already has in place or could have in place without additional resources. Of the different designs or structure possible for backbone organizations, which one is most relevant to your initiative and why?

What is the current structure of the backbone for your initiative? What are the backbone functions necessary to achieve your result? What are the backbone functions already in place? What are the gaps in the current functions? Who are the individuals or institutions currently involved in providing backbone functions for your initiative? (This is a small group). Do they share characteristics conducive to effective backbone leadership?

Your strategies

A-Summarize the strategies (or activities) that you are using (or would like to use) to achieve your result.

Analyze a single backbone function

B-You may need several backbone functions to support the selected strategy. List the ones you feel are most important. Pick one that you will analyze. (Note: This is limited to a single function for the purpose of this exercise. In a real-world proposal, you may be called on to fully describe the backbone functions needed.)

Examples of backbone functions: Leadership, facilitation, communication, coordination, data and research. These functions could be centralized by one institution or shared between several organizations.

Explain why you think this backbone function is critical to the success of your CS/STEM education initiative. Describe why and how this function could make a significant difference in your initiative achieving its goals.

Complete the sentence: “If not for X backbone function, y and z will not happen in our community”.

Identify your possible role or contribution to the backbone function for which you are requesting funding. What are the resources needed to fund this function (personnel, materials, etc.)? What are the main activities that your backbone function will contribute? How will this backbone function contribute to accelerating progress toward your result? How will you measure that this backbone function is in fact contributing to the result?

Sustainability

The NBF requires grant recipients to identify potential sources of support for their backbone function in their own community. Please list community and other resources to support your backbone functions

What resources do you already have available? What resources are needed? What are the gaps in your existing backbone resources? How do you propose to address them?

Describe how you would sustain support for the backbone function you are proposing.

Rubric evaluation criteria

The National Backbone Foundation uses the following rubric (a coherent set of instructions, criteria, and guiding questions) to evaluate project proposals. This rubric is aligned to the RFP.

- Project authors are encouraged to use the rubric to self-assess their draft proposals before submission.
- Reviewers are required to use the rubric to assign and explain ratings for each criterion.

You will refer to the rubric to prepare the key elements of your project. As you develop your project, refer to the rubric to identify specific points that you should cover. The rubric is available in the Shares and may also be viewed by clicking Creator -> Feedback -> Reviews -> Criteria in Scholar.

Why is there a numerical scale for each criterion?

Reviewers will be asked to use a numerical scale (0-4) to assess the author's current level of work with the primary objective of outlining the amount of effort needed to improve their final version. This is not a grade or a judgement of the author. Reviewers need to explain the rating they have assigned by providing constructive, specific inputs and annotations.

Structure and presentation

Is the proposal clear, concise, and well-organized? Is the information relevant and specific to the RFP? If you find the narrative too long, please provide advice on how the author may shorten it. If it is incomplete, please say what is missing. Be specific in your feedback.

Current level of effort

0. The structure and presentation make it difficult to provide feedback.

1. Poor structure and presentation, requiring major improvements.
2. Adequate structure and presentation, requiring significant improvements.
3. Good structure and presentation that can be improved.
4. Excellent structure and presentation.

Part I. Context

Background: Has the author provided a clear, relevant explanation of collective impact in their context? Is there a concise summary to understand what is happening around computer science education? Is this summary clearly linked to the process, data, and assets described?

Process: Is there a clear, concise summary of the process by which stakeholders are coming together (or not), engaging in discussion (or not) and making decisions (or not)? Are gaps in the conditions for collective impact clearly identified? Is evidence of isolated impact included?

Data: Is relevant, specific data presented, explicitly related to the result (Part II) and funding (Part III)?

Current level of effort

0. No context provided.

1. Limited or inadequate context provided, requiring major improvements.
2. Some context provided, with some process, data, and assets but not aligned to other parts of the proposal.
3. Good context with process, data, and assets aligned to other parts of the proposal.
4. Excellent background, process and data aligned to other parts of the proposal.

Part II. Your result

Is the result (outcome) presented precise, specific, and meaningful? Is it clear what groups of people are the focus of the collective effort? Does it make sense given the context described (Part I)? Are the outcome indicators specific and measurable? Is it clear who will collect data and how it will be stored and managed? Is there an indication how long it will take to achieve the result?

Current level of effort

0. No result, outcome indicators, or data strategy.

1. Limited or inadequate result, outcome indicators, or data strategy, requiring major improvements.

2. A result is described, with some information about outcome indicators and data management, but it does not align with other parts of the proposal.

3. Good result, outcome indicators, and data management, linked to other parts of the proposal.

4. Excellent result, outcome indicators, and data management.

Part III. Funding

Is there a summary of what backbone functions are already in place (or could have) and which ones are needed? Is there a rationale for the backbone's structure? Who are the individuals or institutions and their characteristics currently involved in providing backbone functions?

Strategies: Are the strategies (or activities) used to achieve the result summarized? Do the strategies logically complement each other and do they clearly lead to the stated result? Is there any indication which strategy the main partners will likely play a leading role in implementing?

Backbone functions: Is there a list of backbone functions to support the strategies (or a specific one)? What is the compelling rationale for the selected backbone function? What is the strength of the case for the necessity of this function? Is it clear how the initiative will suffer without this backbone function? How will the effectiveness of the function be measured?

Sustainability: Does the proposal identify available and potential sources of support for the backbone function? Is the resource gap clearly stated in relation to the backbone function? Is the case for sustainability clearly, convincingly, and concisely stated?

Current level of effort

0. No information about strategies, backbone function, or sustainability.

1. Limited or inadequate strategies, backbone function, and/or sustainability.

2. A backbone function is described, with some information about strategies and sustainability, but they do not fit with the rest of the proposal.

3. Good backbone function aligned to the rest of the proposal.

4. Excellent, aligned backbone function, strategies, and sustainability. Only minor improvements needed.