



## Organizations to Spread Student-Centered Learning

### **Purpose**

We are seeking four to six organizations to support schools and stakeholders in our region to implement more student-centered learning practices in schools.

### **About the Bush Foundation**

The Bush Foundation invests in great ideas and the people who power them in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and the 23 Native nations that share the same geography. Established in 1953 by 3M Executive Archibald Bush and his wife Edyth, the Foundation supports organizations and people to think bigger and think differently about what is possible in their communities. We work to inspire and support creative problem solving — within and across sectors — to make our region better for everyone.

### **Overview of the Education Initiative**

For every student in the region to succeed we need an education system that works for all students. This requires a more personal, more relevant approach to education. The guiding goal for the Bush Foundation's education initiative is to make our region the national leader in providing student-centered learning that meets the needs and ambitions of all students.

We invest in efforts to make education more relevant for all students in terms of:

- **WHO THEY ARE:** Create learning environments that welcome and support students from all cultures and backgrounds.
- **HOW THEY LEARN:** Customize learning to help students learn in a manner and at a pace that meets their individual needs.
- **WHERE THEY WANT TO GO:** Help students imagine their future and provide them with supports tailored to get them where they want to go.

We also describe these points as the three dimensions of student-centered learning – cultural relevance, instructional relevance, and future relevance.

Furthermore, we see student-centered learning as an effective approach to achieve greater equity in education. When students experience school in ways that addresses their unique needs and aspirations, while honoring who they are and the communities from which they come, they are more likely to be engaged and thrive. You can learn more about the education initiative [here](#).

While, we have chosen to use the term student-centered learning to describe this model of more relevant education, we realize that many organizations use different terminology. Other closely aligned terms include personalized learning, customized learning, competency-based learning, self-directed learning, and learner-centric education, to name a few.

## **Background**

Since 2015, a major component of our education initiative has been grants with intermediary organizations that are working to build the capacity of more schools in the region to do student-centered learning. These organizations were sourced through open grant processes.

We are currently working with seven organizations who are accomplishing this objective utilizing varying methods and models, including collaborative school redesign planning, direct coaching to classroom teachers, fellowships, and school-wide professional development. They are supporting approximately 85 schools and districts across the Bush Foundation region including district, charter, tribal, and private schools. Those schools are located in a mix of urban, suburban, rural, and tribal community settings. In the current portfolio of school intermediaries, most organizations support five to ten schools.

For the past three years, we have been working with Social Policy Research Associates on a learning and evaluation project. The project documented how the current intermediaries have been engaging with schools and building their capacity to implement more student-centered learning, as well as captured successes, challenges and lessons learned through their work. An executive summary of that report can be found [here](#).

The diversity of the models used by the current intermediaries and the variety of types of schools being served have been two of the strongest assets of our work. We have learned immensely from the wide variety of options employed to bring about transformation in schools in our region. Based on this experience, we are open to an even greater variety of approaches in our next portfolio of organizations.

## **Opportunity**

We believe student-centered learning can be a transformational practice in our region, leading to more equitable and relevant education. To make it available to more learners, we believe we must help build the capacity of K-12 schools and educators to design, deliver and systematize student-centered learning approaches. With this RFP, we are looking for organizations with expertise in working with schools, educators, and communities to bring student-centered learning to more learners in our region.

We anticipate funding four to six organizations with a proven track record of enabling more student-center learning in schools using a specific approach or model. The approach must be something the organization can demonstrate their expertise in delivery and demand for in the Bush Foundation region.

By specific approach or model, we mean that it has at least these characteristics: 1) It already exists and is currently being used in the region or in the country; 2) It consists of clearly defined principles, strategies and technical supports that can be used or adapted to bring about change in multiple communities; and 3) works directly with practitioners to support them in changes towards student-centered learning. Therefore, organizations that do not provide direct support and assistance to practitioners are not eligible. This includes related activity like working towards policy change, data gathering, coalition building, etc. We encourage organizations that are not a good fit for this particular opportunity to learn more about Bush Foundation's [ecosystem](#) and [community innovation](#) grant programs to see if they may be better alignment with those programs.

These organizations should intend to support multiple school communities. Therefore, organizations that are seeking to start-up a single new school or program also are not eligible for this grant funding.

For this opportunity, we are seeking organizations that work in a variety of ways to enable more student-centered learning in schools. In most cases, we believe this will continue to be organizations working directly with schools; however, we are also open to proposals that may focus their work at a different level of change, such as working with individual educators, or other innovative and proven approaches, so long as they result in more students receiving relevant education that honors who they are, how they learn, and where they want to go.

### **Scope of Work**

A variety of models and approaches may fit into this opportunity. We have generally thought of this change happening at the school level. However, we are open to the idea of interventions at other organizational levels -- like districts or directly with groups of teachers. To be flexible, we are using the term "partner" to refer to the schools or other groups the organizations would be supporting."

The list below provides the Foundation's expectations for the work these organizations will provide.

- **Work towards overall objective** – Deliver capacity-building support models to partners so that they can be effective in providing more relevant education to students in terms of who they are, how they learn, and where they want to go. The models should incorporate aspects that lead to greater education equity in the schools that ultimately benefit from the support.
- **Establish partners** - Spend up to four months establishing and formalizing relationships and share the list of partners with the Foundation. Each organization must conduct work that will impact at least four school communities.
- **Develop work plans** - Develop and execute detailed work plans for each partner which includes providing overall leadership, coordination, oversight, and communication to ensure progress is made toward project outcomes and overall implementation of more student-centered learning practices. Plans should consider how the partners will be prepared for long-term sustainability of practices, even after the direct support from the organization has concluded.
- **Deliver ongoing support** - Provide regular and timely technical assistance to partners. Ensure the perspectives, ideas, and needs of each unique partner are being considered, rather than employing a one-size-fits-all approach.
- **Monitor and share results** - Document progress, impact, and learning from the work with partners. Meet with the Foundation for at least three check-in meetings each year. Also, complete interim grantee reports each year and a final report at the conclusion of the grant term. The Foundation may convene all the organizations for meetings together as well.

### Other pertinent information

- **Annual Budget:** The estimated annual budget for the work of each organization is approximately \$100,000 - 250,000, but that figure can be adjusted to fit the work planned by each organization.
- **Timing:** The length of time an organization works with their partners may vary; however, the workplan must be scheduled to be completed by December 2025 or earlier.

- **Work in our region:** Grants must be used by the organizations to support partners located in our region.
- **Diversity of school communities:** We seek to reach a variety of schools and communities through the portfolio of selected organizations. We would like to incorporate a mix of types of schools served (district, charter, tribal, independent, etc.), communities served (urban, rural, suburban, and tribal), and socio-economic and racial demographics of the students impacted.
- **Values:** All work must be completed in alignment with the Bush Foundation's [operating values](#) and [equity statement](#).

### **Request for Proposal**

Please respond to this RFP by preparing a three- to seven-page proposal that addresses the topics listed below.

*As a reminder, A variety of models and approaches may fit into this opportunity. We have generally thought of this change happening at the school level. However, we are open to the idea of interventions at other organizational levels – like districts or directly with groups of teachers. To be flexible, we are using the term "partner" to refer to the schools or other groups the organizations would be supporting."*

- *Organization*
  - Provide information about your organization including its history, mission, and values.
- *Student-centered learning approach*
  - Describe the specific approach your organization takes implement more to student-centered learning. What do you call your approach? What is the unit of change of your approach (e.g. schools, educators, school communities, etc.?)
  - What are some characteristics of the approach? What is the unique value of your approach?
  - How does your approach address each of the Foundation's three areas of relevance (cultural relevance, instructional relevance and career relevance) as defined above.
- *Promising or proven approach*
  - Tell us about your work to support the implementation of more student-centered learning in schools to date. How has your approach led to students receiving more relevant education? Consider: *How have you defined and assessed success for students?*
- *Demand for Your Approach*
  - Describe the partners and communities that you'll work with if awarded a grant. In your response, please include:
    - Where will your work take place (Minnesota, Native Nations, North Dakota, and/or South Dakota?)

- What types of communities you would plan to work with (rural, urban, suburban, tribal communities?)
  - What are the types of schools/partners you'll be working with (district, charter, tribal, and/or private?)
  - Is there a demand for your approach from these partners? Do you already have partners in mind? If so, who? If not, how will you establish the partnerships?
- *Education Equity*
    - How does your approach advance education equity? How does your organization help infuse equitable practices in the schools/partners you work with?
    - How does your approach address the unique needs and ambitions of students? How does your approach recognize and honor the communities and cultures of students?
- *References*
    - Please share three references for your work, including their name, title, organization, phone number and email address. Among these references, we ask you to include:
      - One reference from a partner that has used your approach to student-centered learning.
      - One reference from a school in the Bush Foundation region that is interested in working with your organization and applying your approach.
      - One additional reference of your choice

### **Eligibility**

Applicants must be 501(c)(3) public charities or government entities (including schools). Coalitions or collaboratives are eligible to apply, but only one organization may receive the grant.

We will accept applications from fiscal sponsors. The fiscal sponsor organization must submit the grant application and, if the grant is approved, it becomes the grantee and receives the funds. Our [fiscal sponsor overview](#) provides additional information.

While it's not required, special consideration will be given to organizations located in the Bush Foundation region - Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota or one of the 23 Native nations that share the same geography.

### **Selection Criteria**

Grants will be awarded based on how well applicants meet the following criteria. To what degree does the proposal demonstrate:

1. Alignment with our definition of student-centered learning, as defined by the three dimensions of relevance.
2. The specific student-centered learning approach is a promising or proven approach, including evidence that the approach leads to greater equity in education.

3. Demand from K-12 school communities in our region for this approach.
4. Capability and capacity of the organization to support more partners in making change using their proposed approach or model.
  - Alignment to Bush Foundation [operating values](#) and [equity statement](#).

Additional considerations:

5. Given the education equity focus of our work, special consideration will be given to organizations who intend to work with partners that serve students from traditionally marginalized and underserved communities.
6. We also have special interest in organizations that will work with educators and leaders who identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of color.
7. While experience working in the Bush Foundation region is not a requirement, special consideration will be given to organizations that have experience in our region.

### How to Apply

- Your proposal must be submitted through our [web portal](#).
- Proposals should be no more than seven pages.
- Proposals are due by Thursday, June 30, 2022 at noon Central Time. We encourage you to submit before the deadline in case there are technical difficulties or internet disruptions.
- We encourage interested organizations to sign up for a 1:1 inquiry meeting with Jackie Statum Allen, Grantmaking Director, using the following link <https://calendly.com/jallen-bf/inquiry-meeting-scl-rfp>.

### Selection and Timing

- July: Bush Foundation staff will review all proposals and select finalists.
- Mid-July: All applicants will be notified by email whether they are moving forward in the process.
- Mid-July – Mid-August: Bush Foundation staff will schedule calls with finalists to learn more about their proposal, conduct reference calls, complete financial review and conduct additional due diligence.
- Late August: Finalists will be notified whether they have been selected as a partner.
- It is anticipated in October agreements will be signed and initial payments made.

If you have any questions, please contact us at [jallen@bushfoundation.org](mailto:jallen@bushfoundation.org) or 651-379-2272.

Thank you for your interest in working with the Bush Foundation.