



**NoVo
Foundation**



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ROCKEFELLER
Philanthropy
Advisors

Regional Social and Emotional Learning Convenings Grants

Request for Letters of Intent (LOIs)

**Deadline to submit LOIs:
Friday, September 6, 2019 at 5:00 pm (PT)**

Table of Contents

1. [Overview](#)

- Why we do this work
- Why the focus on SEL through an equity lens?

2. [Grant information](#)

- Eligibility
- Roles and responsibilities of partners
 - Lead partner applicant roles and responsibilities
 - Partner responsibilities
- Key selection criteria
- Grant amount and budget
- Support offered by Education First
- Timeline
- Application process

3. [Letter of intent](#)

- Submission instructions
- Resources
- Reflection questions (*for internal reflection only*)
- Narrative (*for submission*)
 - Partners and contact information
 - Vision and purpose
 - Convening goals, objectives and participants
 - Demographics
- For more information

1. Overview

[NoVo Foundation](#) is committed to supporting the spread of innovative and research-based social and emotional learning (SEL) practices in schools and districts nationwide. Because we know practitioners have some of the most inspiring and effective ideas, NoVo Foundation, in partnership with [Education First](#) and [Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors](#), aims to support regional collaborative learning opportunities. This new grant program, the Regional SEL Convenings grants (“RSCs”), will provide funding and technical assistance to districts, charter networks and/or other organizational partners to design and host a convening of practitioners in their region.

The goal of the Regional SEL Convenings grants—an outgrowth of the [SEL Innovation Awards](#) and national SEL in Action Convenings hosted by the NoVo Foundation—is to **help district and school communities create a convening that builds educators’ and other adults’ capacity to meet students’ social, emotional and academic needs with an equity lens.**

Why we do this work

NoVo Foundation is dedicated to catalyzing a transformation in global society, moving from a culture of domination to one of equality and partnership. We support the development of capacities in people—individually and collectively—to help create a caring and balanced world. We envision a world that operates on the principles of mutual respect, collaboration and civic participation, thereby reversing the old paradigm predicated on hierarchy, violence and the subordination of girls and women.

We want to lift up, celebrate and learn from educators. At the same time, we want programs and systems to be able to build and foster much greater compassion, and to build skills in people and groups to be able to work through differences, problems and conflict and lessen incidents of violence and vulnerabilities to all forms of harm. We seek a change here because our present systems (families, schools, political and economic systems) do not, or cannot, presently emphasize, prioritize, teach or address these things. In addition to this fund, NoVo pursues multiple partnerships to help achieve these changes. Learn more at novofoundation.org.

Why the focus on SEL through an equity lens?

NoVo Foundation, Education First and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors are strongly committed to diversity, equity and inclusion for students, families, educators, and all school and district staff. We know social and emotional learning is the process of developing fundamental skills for life success within supportive, participatory learning environments. [Educators and districts nationwide](#) are implementing practices to support all students’ social, emotional and academic development. Still, there are barriers “that prevent many students of color and other marginalized youth from developing social and emotional competencies,” according to [recent studies](#), and that are within schools’ and districts’ power to address. These barriers include exclusionary discipline practices and policies, lack of trauma-informed school practices, lack of culturally affirming curriculum and environments, implicit bias in school staff, and educators’ stress and burnout.

We are challenging districts to demonstrate the excellent work they are already doing to transform their schools and classrooms—from policies to practices, mindsets to instructional materials. And we are driven by the recent research and thinking others have contributed on this topic, including, [Zaretta Hammond](#), the [National Equity Project](#), the [National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development](#) and others.

We believe that developing adults’ and students’ SEL using an equity lens will lead to positive outcomes for all. A broad group of leading education practitioners and scholars describe, in a recent [Aspen](#)

[Institute call to action](#), how “all students, and especially students of color, need to be in learning environments that reinforce their sense of academic belonging and send constant signals that they are valued for all their assets and deserving of investment and rigor. Improving learning environments by focusing on racial equity and integrating social, emotional, and academic development can improve individual academic and life outcomes and lead toward a more equitable society overall.” A single convening cannot and should not be the only action to address these needs. However, we are hopeful that by providing grant funding for regional SEL convenings, we can catalyze and help sustain the larger work districts, charter organizations and communities are doing to meet every child and adult’s social, emotional and academic needs.

2. Grant information

We are looking for proposals from applicants seeking to design and host a convening that brings together educators, other SEL experts and other stakeholders to build capacity to equitably meet students’ social, emotional and academic needs. Applicants should also set their own goals and objectives aligned to their local context and needs. Selected proposals should include grant activities that would occur during the 2020 calendar year. Selected applicants will also receive technical assistance from Education First during the design phase of their grant. This assistance will leverage Education First’s experience and resources designing and executing convenings for educators and other audiences—although the convening priorities and decision-making will at all times remain the grantees’.

Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for a maximum \$100,000 Regional SEL Convening grant, you must:

- Be a partnership between two or more organizations, where one organization is a school district/local education agency (LEA) or charter network/charter management organization (CMO).
 - Examples of possible non-LEA partners could be a public education fund, a local community-based organization such as a community foundation, a higher education partner or another youth-serving nonprofit with experience supporting students’ and adults’ social and emotional learning.
- Be planning a convening that is “regional” and not confined to participants in a single school district or charter network.
- Consider SEL implementation and equitable and culturally affirming environments significant strategies for improving student outcomes.

Please note:

- Current NoVo Educator Practice Community (EPC) grantees are not eligible to apply for the RSC grants.
- These RSC grants are not intended to be used exclusively or primarily to purchase professional development, trainings or materials from a single provider or vendor.

Roles and responsibilities of partners

The partners will consist of a “lead partner” who will assume responsibility for managing grant funds and ensuring partner organizations meet the grant’s goals and objectives. This role should be thought of as the partner with the most capacity to coordinate all participating partner organizations, manage the grant budget, and facilitate convening planning and execution. The other partners, known as

“partners,” will contribute to the convening design and execution, based on their expertise. The lead may be a district/LEA, charter network/CMO or a non-LEA.

Lead partner applicant roles and responsibilities

The lead partner is responsible for managing all aspects of the RSC grant’s success. The lead partner can—but does not need to—be an LEA. It can be a local, regional or national 501(c)(3). Lead partner duties include, but may not be limited to:

- **Grants management:**
 - Fulfill grant requirements, including signing a grant agreement with Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors that details the grant activities, outcomes, budget and reporting requirements
 - Hold monthly check-in calls with the grant managers, Education First, to update on progress
 - Articulate technical assistance wants and needs through monthly calls and other means
- **Knowledge sharing:**
 - Document convening planning activities to be able to share lessons with NoVo Foundation, Education First, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors and other districts/networks
- **Management of operations:**
 - Manage the budget for the grant in accordance with the grant agreement
 - Maintain timely and effective communication between the partners to ensure the partners’ participation and satisfaction, and coordinate participation in Education First-provided technical assistance opportunities
 - Coordinate and ensure the participation of partners in managing the relationships with any other non-partner vendors or partners, including convening support partners (such as event planners)

Partner responsibilities

- Manage the budget for any funds received from the lead partner via grant or contract related to the regional SEL convening
- Participate in the RSC grant activities faithfully and contribute to its success through:
 - Attending events, both those directly required by the award and otherwise agreed to in the grant agreement. Events will include, but may not be limited to, monthly planning calls and the convening itself
 - Participate in the implementation of the grant throughout the grant period, as agreed to in the grant agreement
 - Articulate any challenges in implementing the grant to the lead partner and/or Education First support staff

Key selection criteria

We will give priority to applicants that:

- Enroll 25,000 students or more (collectively)
- Serve a critical mass of students farthest from opportunity—for example, at least 60 percent of students served by the lead partner organization support one or more of these student populations:
 - Students from low-income families
 - Students of color
 - Students from indigenous communities
 - New arrivals (such as refugees) or immigrants
 - English learners
 - LGBTQIA+ students
 - Students disproportionately affected by suspensions or the juvenile justice system

- Students with learning disabilities
- Propose to design and host a regional SEL convening that focuses on building capacity for educators and other adults to meet students’ social, emotional and academic needs through equitable, inclusive, and culturally affirming practices and environments
- Articulate a vision of how this regional SEL convening is part of the partners’ larger, ongoing SEL and equity strategy
- Demonstrate capacity to design and implement the convening during the 2020 calendar year
- Are seeking to catalyze teacher-to-teacher relationships and build local capacity for equitable SEL implementation
- Demonstrate district and/or charter leader support for the effort

Grant amount and budget

We will fund two to four grants for this initial grant cycle. We will consider requests for grants of \$50,000 to \$100,000 each. The grant will require a single budget managed by a single lead organization, such as a school district, charter network or non-profit organization. The lead organization will be allowed to make sub-grants to and enter into contracts with other organizations to help successfully design and host the convening.

Support offered by Education First

The purpose of the grant program is to help districts, charter organizations and other regional partners develop the local momentum and capacity that will help them implement effective SEL practices. Education First’s support will be based on the interests and needs of grantees and guided by its experience and resources in convening design and SEL. Support will include:

- **Technical assistance** supporting convening design via monthly planning calls. Grantees will participate in remote (via video and phone conference) technical assistance during the grant period to help them develop their convening plan and communications and outreach plans. Education First team members will, as needed, help engage experts, support session design and facilitator training, and help develop a knowledge-sharing strategy that uses local resources.
- **Access to the Regional SEL Convenings Toolkit.** Education First has developed a suite of tools and resources to guide the design and execution of high-quality convenings for various audiences. Grantees will be able to draw on this toolkit during the grant period.
- **Convening attendance.** Each grantee will be invited to bring three people to the [SEL in Action](#) convening in April 2020.

Timeline

Events	Milestones	Dates
Request for LOIs	Request for letter of intents publicly released	July 15, 2019
Conference call (<i>optional</i>)	With interested potential applicants	July 29 and 30, 2019
Weekly office hours (<i>optional</i>)	With interested potential applications	Thursdays in August (August 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29, 2019)
Letter of intent due	Letter of intent to apply due	By September 6, 2019 at 5:00 pm (PT)
Request for proposals	Invitations sent to select applicants, based on letters of intent, to submit a full proposal	September 30, 2019
Full proposals due	Invited applicants only submit full proposals	By October 28, 2019 at 5:00 pm (PT)
Applicant interviews	Phone/video interviews with select applicants	November 18-22, 2019

Events	Milestones	Dates
Grantees selected	All applicants notified	By December 16, 2019
Technical assistance	Education First provides support for convening design	December 2019 - until one month after convening in 2020
Regional convening	Grantees host their convenings	By end of the 2020 calendar year
Final report due	Final report to Education First, NoVo Foundation and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors	TBD end of grant period

Application process

The full application process has three steps:

Step 1: By Friday, September 6, 2019 at 5:00 pm (PT), submit a letter of intent to apply (see detailed requirements at the end of this document).

- Submit all required information, including the names of the lead applicant and partner organizations, via Google Forms.
- All applications must include at least two total partner organizations, with at least one being a school district/LEA or charter network/CMO.

Step 2: By Monday, September 30, 2019, Education First and NoVo Foundation will review all letters of intent and invite select applicants to submit a full proposal. Education First will notify all applicants who submitted a letter of intent of their status by this same date. The full proposal will ask applicants to describe:

- Each partner’s roles and responsibilities;
- Their detailed convening design and implementation timeline and activities;
- Their initial communications and outreach plan for including convening participants and presenters;
- How they will assess their convening goals and objectives;
- Their plan for what will come next after the convening;
- How they will communicate their learning to Education First, NoVo Foundation, and other districts and networks; and
- Their detailed budget, including how they will use funds for facilities, materials, staff, speakers, presenters and other expenses, as applicable.

Step 3: During the week of November 18, 2019, organizations that are selected as finalists will participate in a virtual interview designed to review and discuss their proposal in advance of the award decision.

3. Letter of intent

Submission instructions

- **Submission:** Please submit your letter of intent via [Google Forms](#). Please note, we advise you to think through and type up your responses in a Word document first, because you will not be able to save your work online, or edit your responses once they are submitted.
- **Deadline:** Friday, September 6, 2019 at 5:00 pm (PT)

Resources

Education First will provide the following resources and support to applicants interested in submitting a letter of intent to apply for a Regional SEL Convening grant:

- **Frequently asked questions (FAQ) document:** We will provide ongoing updates to this [FAQ document](#) as we receive questions during the request for LOIs window (July 15-September 6, 2019).
- **Conference calls (optional):** We will host two optional, hour-long conference calls—one on July 29 and the other on July 30—where interested parties can submit questions in advance of the call to be answered. We will record the calls and post them [here](#) for those who are unable to join the calls.
 - **Monday, July 29 at 2:00-3:00 pm ET/1:00-2:00 pm CT/12:00-1:00 pm MT/11:00 am-12:00 pm PT**
 - Join Zoom meeting online: <https://education-first.zoom.us/j/136438068>
 - Dial in by phone: 1-646-876-9923; Meeting ID: 136 438 068
 - **Tuesday, July 30 at 12:00-1:00 pm ET/11:00 am-12:00 pm CT/10:00-11:00 am MT/9:00-10:00 am PT**
 - Join Zoom meeting online: <https://education-first.zoom.us/j/261575891>
 - Dial in by phone: 1-646-876-9923; Meeting ID: 261 575 891
- **Weekly office hours (optional):** We will offer weekly office hours for interested parties to “drop in” and ask questions as they prepare their LOIs. The office hours will be “open” for two hours each week.
 - **Thursdays in August (August 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29) from 3:00-5:00 pm ET/2:00-4:00 pm CT/1:00-3:00 pm MT/12:00-2:00 pm PT**
 - Join Zoom meeting online: <https://education-first.zoom.us/j/250041062>
 - Dial in by phone: 1-646-876-9923; Meeting ID: 250 041 062

Reflection questions (for internal reflection only)

As you develop your letter of intent, please consider the following questions. You are not required to respond to these questions directly in your LOI. They are meant to help you reflect on your readiness to apply for and implement this grant.

- How does our system define equity?
- What are the ways that equity and SEL work coherently in our system?
- How does our system create safe and culturally responsive and affirming environments?
- What are the ways in which they work at cross purposes?
- What are the current SEL practices across our systems that advance equity?
- What are the practices that we might add, such as integrating it into classroom practice, changing discipline strategies, or reframing who benefits from SEL?

Narrative (for submission)

Please include your responses to each of the prompts below in your letter of intent.

1. Partners and contact information

We would like to announce our intent to apply for the Regional SEL Convening grant. We understand the roles of the RSC participants as described in the program description. We also understand that one partner will serve as the grantee for this award, and disbursements of funds to all partners will be provided by that partner.

Lead partner. The lead partner, by submitting this letter of intent to apply for the Regional SEL Convening grant, verifies that they have been authorized by the partners to submit their names for this application.

- Lead partner organization name
- Lead partner mailing address (street, city, state, zip)
- Lead partner main point of contact name for application
- Main point of contact title/role
- Email
- Phone

Partner(s): At least one additional partner is required, and at least one partner overall (including the lead partner) must be a school district or charter network/CMO. Provide the following information for each partner organization:

- Partner organization name
- Contact name
- Contact email

2. Vision and purpose (max 250 words for each prompt below)

Wherever applicable, respond to the prompt on behalf of the lead partner and other partner organizations.

- a. Does your district or organization have a vision for social and emotional learning? If so, what is that vision, and what progress have you made recently in fulfilling that vision?
- b. Briefly describe the strategies, approaches and practices each partner organization currently uses to meet students' social and emotional needs. How do they advance equity?
- c. Do you currently use one or more SEL frameworks? If so, describe which one(s) and how you use it.
 - For more information, see the Harvard Graduate School of Education's recent [exploration of multiple SEL frameworks and skills](#)
- d. Describe the resources your district and/or charter organization currently uses to advance SEL, including curricular and other materials and dedicated staff.
- e. How will this regional SEL convening fit into your vision and strategy for SEL in your district(s) and/or charter organization(s)?

3. Convening goals, objectives and participants (max 250 words for each prompt below)

- a. What is your motivation for applying for this grant?
- b. What are your goals and objectives for this regional SEL convening?
- c. How will this convening address relevant issues of SEL and equity in your district(s) and/or charter organization(s)?
- d. Who are the primary audiences for this convening? Who are any secondary audiences? Why are you targeting these audiences?
- e. Describe how the partners (lead and other partners) have worked together previously and/or are currently working together. How might you involve people from across your organizations in planning and hosting the convening?

4. Demographics

Wherever applicable, respond to the prompt on behalf of the lead partner and other partner organizations.

- a. Please provide a summary of your district and/or charter organizations' student and staff/teacher (if available) demographics, including:
 - Race/ethnicity

- Percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced-priced lunch
 - Percentage of students classified as English learners
 - Percentage of students with Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) or 504 Plans
 - Other relevant information, if applicable
- b. Number of schools, by elementary, middle and high school, or by types/grade bands that make sense for your district or charter organization

For more information

Please review the Resources listed above first, including the [FAQ document](#). If you still have a question, please contact us at novorsc@educationfirstconsulting.com.
