

De Wet, Tashwell, Mr [tashwell@sun.ac.za]

From: Brodovcky, T, Dr [taniab@sun.ac.za]
Sent: Monday, 06 October 2025 08:56
To: De Wet, Tashwell, Mr [tashwell@sun.ac.za]
Cc: Gey van Pittius, NC, Prof [researchfhs@sun.ac.za]; Rodrigues, E, Mev [erodrigues@sun.ac.za]; Hendricks, Lauren, Mrs [laurenv@sun.ac.za]
Subject: CALL: Spencer Foundation Research-Practice Partnerships - Preproposal Deadlines: SU Internal Submission: Monday 31 October 2025 (16:00 - SAST) | Final Submission: Friday 14 November 2025 (12 noon CDT - 19:00 SAST)
Attachments: RPP_RFP_-_March_2026_Cycle.pdf; RPP_Writing_Guide_updated_September_2023.pdf

This notice has been sent to all SU academic staff and Postdoctoral Fellows, where relevant, on the DRD “listserv”, as well as the secretaries and research coordinators of FMHS Divisions/Departments/Centres to further distribute as deemed appropriate. | Hierdie kennisgewing is aan alle US akademiese personeel en Nadoktorale Genote, waar toepaslik, op die ANO-verspreidingslys (“listserv”) gestuur asook aan sekretaresses en navorsingskoördineerders van FGGW Departemente/Afdelings/Sentra vir verdere verspreiding na goeddunke.



Stellenbosch
UNIVERSITY
IYUNIVESITHI
UNIVERSITEIT

Research Funding Opportunities
Navorsingsbefondsingsgeleenthede

**RESEARCH FOR
IMPACT**

<i>Please note that this information is sent to a distribution list of all SU researchers. It may, therefore, be possible that this specific call is not applicable to your specific research field. We trust that future calls will be relevant.</i>	<i>Let asb daarop dat hierdie inligting aan ‘n verspreidingslys van alle US-navorsers gestuur word. Dit mag dus wees dat hierdie spesifieke oproep nie van toepassing is op u studieveld nie. Ons vertrou dat toekomstige oproepe wel relevant mag wees.</i>
Subscribe Unsubscribe	Sit my by Haal my af van

TO: ALL SU RESEARCHERS // AAN: ALLE US NAVORSERS

Dear colleagues // Beste kollegas

Applications for the Spencer Foundation Research-Practice Partnerships: Collaborative Research for Educational Change are now open.

The Spencer Foundation invites proposals for the Research-Practice Partnership (RPP) Grants Program, supporting education research projects that foster collaborative and participatory partnerships. This program provides up to \$400,000 in funding over three years

The RPP program is designed to strengthen long-term, equity-focused partnerships between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers that address pressing problems of practice and/or policy in education. Partnerships may span schools, universities, community organizations, museums, and other learning environments.

Activities that May be Funded

- Research Activities
- Research Infrastructure
- Outreach, Communications, and Relationship Building
- Capacity Development

Please see attached the Research-Practice Partnerships Call guide for more detailed information. **Kindly refer to page 12 for the review process and the aspects the panel will be assessing.**

Attached is also the Guide to Writing Successful Research-Practice Partnerships Grant Proposals to assist with writing the project proposal.

Funding Opportunity	Disciplines	Categories to be funded	Eligibility / Special Conditions	Funding	How to apply
---------------------	-------------	-------------------------	-------------------------------------	---------	--------------

SPENCER FOUNDATION'S RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIPS: COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH FOR EDUCATIONAL CHANGE	All Disciplines (Partnerships that will foreground issues connected to inequality in education)	Salaries (PI, Co-PI, Postdoctoral Research Assistant, Graduate Student Researcher, Undergraduate Researcher, Other Research Staff, Other Staff, Supplemental PI Course Release, Supplemental Co-PI Course Release) Benefits (PI Benefits, Co-PI Benefits, Researcher Benefits, Other Staff Benefits, Tuition/Fees, Supplemental Course Release Benefits) Other Collaborator (Independent Consultant, Advisor) Travel (Project Travel, Conference or Dissemination Travel) Equipment and Software (Equipment, Software) Project Expenses (Supplies, Participant Stipends/Costs, Communication, Transcription) Learning and Professional Development (Trainings, Team Building and Co-Learning Opportunities) Other (If you have other costs not associated with the line items above, detail them in this category.)	Proposals to the Research-Practice Partnership program must be for research and other activities aimed to support collaborative partnerships between academic researcher(s) and a broad array of practitioner(s) of education. Principal Investigators (PIs) and Co-PIs applying for a Research-Practice Partnership Grant are expected to have an earned doctorate in an academic discipline or professional field, or demonstrated professional experience appropriate for this program. If the PI or Co-PI from the practice/policy side of the partnership does not have an earned doctorate, they are expected to have appropriate professional experience to serve in this role in the partnership. While graduate students may be part of the team, they may not be named the PI or Co-PI on the proposal.	Proposed budgets for this program are limited to \$400 000. Indirect Cost Charges (IDC): <i>Budgets in this program may include 15% IDC (also known as overhead).</i> <i>Subcontract budgets may also include the 15% IDC, but should not be included in the main budget total when calculating the overall IDC for the project.</i>	Apply here: https://spencer.smartsimple.org
--	--	---	--	--	---

Subcontracts (Information is pulled from the subcontract budget forms – see below)

Each expense for the project should be added, and the budget narrative field should be completed, providing a description of that specific expense. Detailed guidelines are available within the application form.

Subcontracts: If your project will have subcontracts, a separate subcontract budget form will need to be completed for each. The subcontract form has the same categories and line item choices listed above.

SU Internal Contact
Person

Lever@sun.ac.za

Please contact Melisha Munsamy (melisham@sun.ac.za) or Zenkosi Nonzinzi (zenkosinonzinzi@sun.ac.za) with regards to completing the budget for the Spencer Foundation Research-Practice Partnerships: Collaborative Research for Educational Change Program.

Kind regards

Mr Levert Louw | B Administration (Hons)

Administrative Officer: Research Grants

Research Development | Navorsingsontwikkeling, 2048 Krotoa Building, Ryneveld Street, Stellenbosch

+27 21 808 2271 | South Africa | Suid-Afrika

www.sun.ac.za | [Find us on social media](#) | [Vind ons op sosiale media](#)



The integrity and confidentiality of this email are governed by these terms. [Disclaimer](#)

Die integriteit en vertroulikheid van hierdie e-pos word deur die volgende bepalinge bereël. [Vrywaringsklousule](#)

Research-Practice Partnerships: Collaborative Research for Educational Change

The Research-Practice Partnership (RPP) Grants Program is intended to support education research projects that engage in collaborative and participatory partnerships with project budgets up to \$400,000 and durations of up to three years. We accept preproposals once a year in this program.

We view partnerships as an important approach to knowledge generation and the improvement of education, broadly construed. Over the long term, we anticipate that research conducted by RPPs will result in new insights into the processes, practices, and policies that improve education for learners, educators, families, communities, and institutions where learning and teaching happen (e.g., schools, universities, community centers, parks, museums, other workplaces).

Details about the program and application process can be found below. In addition, you may wish to read the "RPP Writing Guide" found on your Workbench in SmartSimple. Various details discussed in this request for proposals document are elaborated on in the writing guide. We also offer "A Guide to Writing Proposals that Engage Research with Youth, Families, and Community-Based Organizations," found on your Workbench in SmartSimple. This guide offers grounding ideas and suggestions for centering a strengths-based approach when working in partnership with communities.

Program Statement

The Research-Practice Partnership (RPP) Grants Program is intended to support education research projects that engage in collaborative and participatory partnerships with project budgets of up to \$400,000 and durations of up to three years. We accept preproposals once a year in this program.

We view partnerships as an important approach to knowledge generation and the improvement of education, broadly construed. Rigorous partnership work is intentionally organized to engage diverse forms of expertise and perspectives, across practitioners, scholars, policymakers, and organizations, as well as disciplines and methods, in knowledge generation around pressing problems of practice and/or policy. Further, RPPs can facilitate the long-term accumulation of knowledge in new ways as researchers and practitioners work together to ask practitioner- and policy-relevant questions on key topics in specific settings over time. Many key problems of practice and policy are historically saturated and require multiple perspectives and long-term engagement if sustainable and systemic change is to occur. Over the long term, we anticipate that research conducted by RPPs will result in new insights into the processes, practices, routines, and policies that improve education for learners, educators, families, communities, and institutions where learning

and teaching happen (e.g., schools, universities, community centers, parks, museums, other workplaces).

This grant program is open to existing partnerships between researchers and a broad array of practitioners and policymakers. For example, practice and/or policy partners might work in school districts, county offices of education, state educational organizations, universities, community-based organizations, and other social sectors that significantly impact learners' lives. As such, we define practitioners broadly; they might be policymakers, out-of-school-time providers and other informal educators, K-12 teachers and leaders, or families and other community members. We are open to applications from design-based research teams, networked improvement communities, place-based research alliances, and a wealth of other partnership arrangements.

We expect the partners in the RPPs we fund to have engaged in fruitful long-term collaborations. How this history is evidenced can vary. For example, teams might have a record of accomplishment as demonstrated by in-process or completed research studies, solutions-in-progress, established trusting relationships, or data-sharing agreements, amongst other possibilities. *This grant program is specifically intended to build the capacity of partnerships to make educational change.* Effective governance is a key aspect of successful partnerships, and as such, all proposals should specify their governance structures and how the work is jointly developed, as well as how power is shared, across all partners. As noted, while this grant program is open to all partnership configurations across a range of learning contexts, in addition to PreK-12 school systems, we especially encourage applications from partnerships that include scholars and institutions of higher education, rural geographic locations, and in locations outside of the United States, as well as partnerships that deeply engage community-based organizations and families.

Educational Equity

Importantly, we expect that partnerships will foreground issues connected to inequality in education and articulate how their project aims to disrupt the reproduction and deepening of inequities.

Activities that May be Funded

Research is fundamental to every research-practice partnership, and we expect research activities to be the central element of every proposal. In addition to detailing a plan for research, applicants should also prioritize plans for communicating and disseminating key findings and other important partnership activities that have the potential to foster positive educational changes. The following categories of activities are meant to be illustrative, but not exclusive, of activities in addition to the research that could be funded under this program. We expect proposed activities will be highly related to partnership type and context but will also, at their core, have the potential to make a contribution to improved educational practice and/or policy beyond the specific context in which scholars and practitioners are working.

Research Activities

Each proposal should describe new research that would be launched or existing research activities that would be expanded with the grant. Examples might include randomized trials of new curricula, participatory studies with learner and family coresearchers; design-based research focused on teacher classroom practice; policy advocacy or implementation; needs mapping with community partners; or deep descriptive work focused on a range of learner outcomes. We encourage a wide range of research methods and approaches.

Research Infrastructure

Funds may be used for building and sustaining infrastructure needs for the research activities of the partnership. These infrastructure needs may apply to the full range of methodological approaches. Examples may include the development of surveys, assessment tools, and other instruments; the development of co-designed protocols; and the upkeep of data archives and matching systems. Additionally, administrative activities concerning data may be supported by this grant. These may include developing IRB and review protocols, creating standard data definitions, co-designing consent forms, and developing data security and privacy protocols.

Outreach, Communications, and Relationship Building

Activities that strengthen the working relationship between partners and other stakeholders are also a possible component of the projects. Successful research-practice partnerships devote a great deal of time and attention to building and maintaining trust across stakeholder groups and within their partnership. Potential activities may include convening researchers, educators, learners, families, and other participants to co-design a research agenda; hiring a communication specialist and/or developing a strategy for communicating research findings to important constituents; supporting staff in the partner organizations to manage partnership relations; and preparing research reports and other publications to present the work of the partnership to the public.

Capacity Development

Many research-practice partnerships seek to assist the practice partner in developing capacity to use research evidence and data in their daily decision-making. Funds could be used to learn how to better engage others in research, conduct better practice or policy-driven research, or to be better equipped to communicate complex research findings to practitioners, families, communities, or policy makers that were not primary partners.

We also see the importance of developing the next generation of scholars and practitioners who are prepared to collaborate in partnerships to improve practice, policy, and research. We encourage proposals that include funds dedicated to the development of skills and expertise in conducting research in partnership for graduate students and early-career professionals and researchers. While we expect that most proposals will include funds to support graduate students as part of the partnership, proposals could include plans for

training and education beyond that. Examples might include the development of a research methods course focused on research partnerships, the production of online training modules, the development of workshops to increase the capacity of researchers and other partners to engage in public scholarship, or the integration of research-practice partnerships in teacher or principal preparation courses.

Eligibility and Restrictions

Eligibility

Proposals to the Research-Practice Partnership program must be for research and other activities aimed to support collaborative partnerships between academic researcher(s) and a broad array of practitioner(s) of education.

Principal Investigators (PIs) and Co-PIs applying for a Research-Practice Partnership Grant are expected to have an earned doctorate in an academic discipline or professional field, or demonstrated professional experience appropriate for this program. Note: If the PI or Co-PI from the practice/policy side of the partnership does not have an earned doctorate, they are expected to have appropriate professional experience to serve in this role in the partnership. While graduate students may be part of the team, they may not be named the PI or Co-PI on the proposal.

The PI must be affiliated with a non-profit organization or public/governmental institution that is willing to serve as the administering organization if the grant is awarded. The Spencer Foundation does not award grants directly to individuals. Examples include non-profit or public colleges, universities, school districts, and research facilities, as well as other non-profit organizations with a 501(c)(3) determination from the IRS (or equivalent non-profit status if the organization is outside of the United States).

The PI associated with the administering organization for this grant could be either the practitioner/policymaker or researcher of the partnership. At least one Co-PI should be from the other member organization(s).

Proposals are accepted from the U.S. and internationally. All proposals must be submitted in English and budgets must be proposed in U.S. Dollars.

Restrictions

Research-Practice Partnership budget totals are limited to \$400,000 including up to [15% indirect cost charges](#).

The proposed duration of the grant may not be longer than 3 years.

PIs and Co-PIs may only hold one active research grant from the Spencer Foundation at a time. (This restriction does not apply to the administering organization; organizations may

submit as many proposals as they like as long as they are for different projects with different project teams.)

PIs and Co-PIs may not submit more than one research proposal to the Spencer Foundation at a time. This restriction applies to the Small Grants Program, Large Grants Program, Racial Equity Research Grants Program, and this Research-Practice Partnership Grants Program. If the PI or any of the Co-PIs currently have a research proposal under consideration in any of these programs, they are required to wait until a final decision has been made on the pending proposal before they can submit a new proposal.

Note that an exception to both of these restrictions is the Spencer Vision Grants program. PIs and Co-PIs may apply for a Vision Grant if they have another active research grant from the Spencer Foundation or if they have another Spencer grant proposal in review. However, the projects proposed in a Vision Grant proposal and in another Spencer grant program proposal must be distinct.

How to Apply

The application process begins with a preproposal. This will be reviewed to determine if the PI will be invited to submit a Full Proposal.

Preproposal Guidelines

The preproposal must be submitted through an online application form following the guidelines below.

Step 1 - Registration

Note: This application is configured for the Principal Investigator (PI) on the project to register and submit the form. If someone other than the PI will be completing the online application (e.g., an administrative assistant), the PI should register as described in Step 1 below, then provide the username and password to the person assisting them with the application.

If you (the PI) have never accessed the Spencer Foundation online portal, you must register and create a profile by going to <https://spencer.smartsimple.us> and clicking the “Register Here” button. Follow the guidelines on the registration page to create your profile. If you already have an account, log on to update your profile and access the Intent to Apply form.

Step 2 - My Profile

After logging in, follow the directions to complete the information requested on the My Profile page and upload your current CV (10-page limit). The My Profile page is your online account with the Spencer Foundation whether you are applying for a grant, reviewing a proposal, or submitting a grantee report.

Step 3 – Preproposal

To fill out the preproposal, go to your Workbench and click the Apply button for the Research-Practice Partnerships.

Your draft form can be saved and returned to at any time prior to the preproposal deadline so that you may continue to work on it. Your draft form will be available on your Draft Proposals list on your Workbench.

Preproposal Elements

Within the online form, there are detailed guidelines for each section. Below is an overview of the application elements you will be expected to complete.

Project Personnel - As the person creating the draft application, you will automatically be assigned to the proposal as the Principal Investigator. If there are Co-PIs on the proposal, you are asked to provide their names and organizations in this section.

The preproposal narrative should all be contained in **one single PDF** and be **no more than 1250 words**. Text should be double-spaced and no smaller than 12-point font.

We are asking you to address the following elements, not necessarily in this order (and we have provided recommended word counts for each section):

- Project Title, PI Last Name, Request ID Number (text will not count towards your word count).
- A description of the problem or issue, its significance (including how it is situated in the extant literature), and how the partnership foregrounds issues of equity. [250 words]
- A description of the partners and partnership history (you do not need governance agreements or letters of support at the preproposal stage) as well as an explanation for why the proposed research and partnership activities are important next steps given the history of the partnership. [400 words]
- Your research question(s). [100 words]
- A summary description of your proposed research and partnership activities (e.g., resource sharing, capacity building, collaborative project development, program and/or research design, target communities/participants, data collection methods, data analysis). Please include the theories of change and the theoretical and/or conceptual framings that inform the proposed project's research and partnership activities. [400 words]
- Respond to the following questions: What is the contribution of this project to 1) the field's theoretical and empirical understanding of your phenomenon/a; and 2) the field's understanding of equity-oriented research-practice partnerships? [100 words]

At the end of the preproposal narrative, please provide a word count in parentheses.

Provide a table with a draft budget that includes budget justifications (you may use whatever format you wish.) **The budget, together with the justifications, should be no more than two pages.** Please note that The Spencer Foundation does not require official university sign-off for your budget at the preproposal stage.

NOTE: We highly recommend that you submit up to 2 pages of references (these two pages will not count toward your word count). We also highly recommend using citations throughout your preproposal narrative.

Please create **one PDF file** with all of these components, ensuring that you include the PI's last name and the project title at the top of the first page, name the file with the PI's last name and the request ID number, and upload it to SmartSimple.

Once you have uploaded your PDF file and responded to any required prompts that are part of the application, click the Submit button at the bottom of the page.

AI Agreement and Disclosure - The Spencer Foundation has developed a policy outlining the responsible and ethical use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) technologies across the Foundation's operations, programs, and activities. We have developed the policy guidelines to appropriately balance the potential benefits of artificial intelligence with the potential risks. While submitting your application to the Research-Practice Partnership program in SmartSimple, you will be asked to acknowledge that you have read, understood, and agree to comply with these guidelines. Please see the guidelines within the application.

Proposal Summary – Information about the proposal is requested, such as the project title, estimated duration, the central research question(s), and a 200-word project summary.

Resubmission – If this is a resubmission of a proposal previously submitted to the Spencer Foundation, you are asked to indicate this within the application.

Types of Organizations – Identify the types of organizations, including your own, that are involved in the Research-Practice Partnership in your proposal.

Project Data – Within the online application, we ask you to check off the appropriate options with regard to your research activities in the partnership in the following categories: disciplinary perspective, methodologies, topics, geographical scope, contexts, and participants. This information is helpful in determining the appropriate reviewers for your eventual full proposal and for internal evaluations of our grant programs.

Reminder: Preproposals will be reviewed in approximately 3 months (subject to change). We will notify you if you are invited to submit a Full Proposal.

Submit

Full Proposal Guidelines

If you are invited to submit a Full Proposal, you will have access to the Full Proposal application on your Workbench. Within the online application, there are detailed guidelines for each section. Below is an overview of the elements you will be expected to complete.

Administering and Partner Organizations: In this section you will confirm the Administering Organization for the proposal and enter the name(s) of the partnering organization(s).

Project Personnel: It is necessary for you to connect the profiles of the Co-PI(s) to the full proposal. Instruct your Co-PI(s) to create an account and update their profile following Steps 1 and 2 above. Once they have done so, follow the guidelines in this section to connect them to the proposal.

In this section you are also asked to confirm that neither the PI nor the Co-PIs currently have another research proposal under review at Spencer (see Restrictions).

Proposal Summary: Information about the project is requested, such as the project title, start and end dates, the central research question(s) and a 200-word summary. This information can be different from what you submitted for your preproposal.

Budget and Budget Justification: The budget form is divided into the following categories, and each category has a pulldown menu of the line-item choices listed in parentheses below:

- Salaries (PI, Co-PI, Postdoctoral Research Assistant, Graduate Student,
- Researcher, Undergraduate Researcher, Other Research Staff, Other Staff)
- Benefits (PI Benefits, Co-PI Benefits, Researcher Benefits, Other Staff Benefits, Tuition/Fees)
- Other Collaborator (Independent Consultant, Advisor)
- Travel (Project Travel, Conference or Dissemination Travel)
- Equipment and Software (Equipment, Software)
- Project Expenses (Supplies, Participant Stipends/Costs, Communication, Transcription)
- Other (This should only be used for expenses not covered in the choices above)
- Subcontracts (Information is pulled from the subcontract budget forms – see below)

Each expense for your project should be added and the budget narrative field should be completed, providing a description of that specific expense. Detailed guidelines are available within the application form.

Subcontracts: If your project has subcontracts, a separate subcontract budget form will need to be completed for each. The subcontract form has the same categories and line-item choices listed above.

Indirect Cost Charges (IDC): Budgets in this program may include up to [15% IDC](#) (also known as overhead). Subcontract budgets may also include up to 15% IDC but should not be included in the main budget total when calculating the overall IDC for the project.

Proposal Narrative: We are looking for applications that make a persuasive argument for the value of your partnership and for why the proposed research and research-related activities will strengthen the partnership and contribute to educational change. You are expected to upload a proposal narrative pdf that includes the following:

History, Background, and Context of Partnership

Describe the nature of your partnership, including but not limited to: who the key organizational players in the partnership are, the history of the partnership, its theory of change, central goals and achievements to date, how the partnership is governed, how educational equity is central to the partnership, and how you envision the partnership progressing over the next five to ten years or longer. We also expect the proposal to make a compelling argument for why your partnership is useful and how it adds value to (and also beyond) existing research in the field.

Proposed Activities

Research activities – Describe the activities you will undertake with support from the Foundation. A clear articulation of your research activities should be a central component of your proposal narrative. You may describe how funds will be used to strengthen ongoing research activities or enable you to launch new activities. Situate these research activities in one or more particular topic area(s) and explain how proposed activities will lead to knowledge generation that ultimately advances understanding of the issue(s) and leads to improved policy and/or practice. To make this argument, you may consider briefly describing existing research and gaps in that work, but we do not expect a full literature review.

Additional activities – In addition to research activities, you should describe how funds will support activities that fall under at least one of the three other categories: (1) research infrastructure; (2) outreach, communications, and relationship-building; or (3) capacity-building. We recognize that there may be activities that will advance your work that fall outside these categories. We will consider proposals that seek funds for other kinds of activities with a compelling rationale for their importance to your work.

When describing the research and other activities you seek support for, it is important to clearly specify what these activities are and explain why support for them is critical to advancing the work of the partnership and realizing its long-term potential. Also, describe how educational equity is central to the partnership's activities.

The proposal narrative may not exceed 4500 words and at its conclusion, should include the word count in parentheses. Your reference list should follow your narrative in the same pdf file and will not count toward the 4500-word limit. The text should be double-spaced and in 12-point font, and your pdf should have page numbers. APA style is preferred.

Note: Tables and other figures can be included in the text of your proposal, where appropriate, provided they are used sparingly. The text contained in any tables and figures will not count toward the word limit. However, it is important that you describe or explain any tables or figures in the narrative portion of your proposal, which will contribute to your word count. Do not assume that tables and other figures are self-explanatory.

Partner Letter: A letter from the partner organization(s) to the administering organization submitting this application should be uploaded. This letter should describe the value of the partnership from the partner's perspective. If there are multiple partners, teams are able to upload multiple letters.

Project Timeline: The project timeline should indicate the proposed start and end dates of the partnership activities as well as key events and milestones. The major activities listed in the project timeline should be reflected in the proposal narrative. The project timeline may not exceed 1 page and the text should be in 12-point font. The proposed project duration can be up to 3 years.

Project Team: A document should be uploaded that identifies the roles, responsibilities and knowledge base of the key personnel involved in the partnership. The Principal Investigator should be associated with the administering organization for this grant, which could be either the practitioner or researcher of the partnership. At least one Co-PI should be from the other member organization(s). This document should articulate how the team will work together toward the goals of the partnership, highlighting what each team member will contribute to the work. When applicable, please discuss the learning opportunities team members may experience through their participation in this project. This document may not exceed 800 words and the text should be double-spaced and in 12-point font.

Optional Appendices A: If you have additional documents focused on scientific instrumentation relevant to the research activities, for example interview protocols or survey instruments, they can be uploaded in this section of the application.

Optional Appendices B: If you have other supporting documents, such as letters of agreement or collaboration, Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), data-sharing agreements, description of governance processes, and other relevant documents, they can be uploaded in this section of the application.

Optional Appendices C – We recognize that scholars and scholarship have continued to develop innovative approaches to conducting research in ethical and just ways. Scholars have raised that proposals attending to these issues in sophisticated ways often face choices in providing detail in their proposals. Thus, **if you choose**, you are invited to upload

a **one-page appendix** in your grant proposal to elaborate on the theoretical, methodological, and partnership structures, or other dimensions you deem relevant to conducting ethical and just research.

- For example, if your work engages youth, families, or community-based organizations, you may want to elaborate on how traditional power dynamics will be addressed.
- Or, if your work engages with Indigenous communities, you may want to elaborate on the project leadership's histories and engagement with Indigenous communities, any formal agreements (e.g., Tribal IRB or approvals), or the use of Indigenous methodologies in the project.
- Or, perhaps you are working on new quantitative measures or modeling approaches that would benefit from further explanation. We also recognize that scholars who are doing work outside of the US might be approaching equity related questions in specific ways that are also innovative and related to their local context of study. As a result, international education scholars might benefit from sharing more details about their context of study and how questions about educational equity are being explored in this context.

We anticipate and welcome a wide range of other possibilities.

A note about IRB Approval: Proof of Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is not required at the time of proposal submission. In the event that IRB approval is needed for this project and it is chosen for funding, the Administering Organization will be responsible for obtaining IRB review and approval in accordance with its institutional policies and applicable law.

Resubmission: If this is a resubmission of a proposal previously submitted to the Spencer Foundation, you are asked to indicate this within the application and upload a 1-page explanation of how the proposal was revised.

Project Data: Within the online application, we ask you to check off the appropriate options with regard to your research activities in the partnership in the following categories: disciplinary perspective, methodologies, topics, geographical scope, contexts, and participants. This information is helpful in determining the appropriate reviewers for your proposal and for internal evaluations of our grant programs

Signature from Authorized Representative of the Administering Organization: This section of the application details the steps necessary to obtain the authorized signature for your proposal through the Adobe E-sign process. You are required to provide the Signatory's name, title, and email address; this is normally an administrative or financial person who has the authority to sign the proposal on behalf of your organization. Note: The signature process must be completed by noon on the deadline date. You, as the applicant, are responsible for making sure your proposal is signed by Noon (Central) on the day of the deadline. Please account for the time it takes your organization's authorized signer to

review and sign proposal submissions. We recommend filling in the online application at least a week ahead of the deadline date. The Spencer Foundation is unable to accept late submissions.

Submit

Once you have completed all of the elements listed above, click the Submit button at the bottom of the application page and it will be routed to your Signatory for signature and final submission

Review Process

The Research-Practice Partnership program uses a peer review process for all eligible submissions. Each preproposal will be initially reviewed, and a selected subset of proposals will receive two additional reviews as part of Spencer's decision-making processes. The entire review process for this program takes approximately 9 months from the preproposal deadline date.

Reviewers for this program are both researchers and practitioners familiar with research-practice partnerships in the field of education research.

Panelists are asked to rate and comment on the following aspects of your proposal:

- **Suitability of the Partnership:** Reviewers will evaluate how well the partnership meets the tenets of a research-practice partnership as described in the program statement.
 - **Focus of Activities on Research to Improve Practice and Policy:** Reviewers will evaluate the overall quality and alignment of the partnership activities in contributing both to local practice or policy and the broader education research community.
 - **Focus of Activities on Development and Sustainability:** Reviewers will evaluate the potential of the partnership to develop during the grant and sustain and advance itself beyond the proposed timeline of the grant.
 - **Focus on Educational Equity across Activities and within Partnership:** Reviewers will be asked to comment on whether/how the partnership foregrounds issues connected to educational equity, as well as whether/how the partners discuss the structures and practices used to ensure that the work is jointly developed across all partners.
 - **Budget and Timeline:** Reviewers will comment on the adequacy of the budget and timeline.
 - **Project Team:** Reviewers will comment on the potential of the key personnel to do the work of the partnership as described in the proposal.
-

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Do you support the work of research-practice partnerships in sectors other than K12 and higher education?

A: Yes, partnerships between researchers and practitioners in educational settings that span the life course (i.e., from early childhood to adult learning) as well as those that focus on contexts outside of school are eligible.

Q: Do you support small-scale research-practice partnerships, for example a partnership between a researcher and a classroom teacher, or a partnership between the administrator of a small after-school program and a researcher?

A: We certainly see value in these partnerships, but this grant program is aimed at larger-scale partnerships that are likely to involve multiple schools or other educational sites. Because the program is intended to support long-term capacity building, we think that the larger scale is important for long-term viability. If you are interested in small-scale collaborations between a researcher and a practitioner, for example, you may wish to explore another one of our grant programs.

Q: Do you accept proposals for this grant program for partnerships outside of the U.S. or between U.S. and international agencies?

A: Yes.

Q: Many professors and colleges of education partner with schools to provide professional development or pre-service and in-service training and would like to add a research component to their work. Are these partnerships suitable for this grant program?

A: Partnerships based on providing professional development or training would only meet the criteria for this grant program if they already had a history of conducting research jointly.

Q: Can the practice side of the partnership be the administering organization or principal investigator for the grant?

A: Yes. Given our emphasis on supporting partnerships where power is shared and the work of the partnership benefits research, as well as practice and/or policy, we can imagine a scenario where the principal investigator is the director of a practice-oriented organization, for example.

Q: If the practitioner is the lead PI for the grant, do they need an earned doctorate to be eligible?

A: Not necessarily. If the PI will be from the practice side of the partnership but does not have an earned doctorate, reviewers will expect them to have demonstrated professional experience appropriate for this RFP. However, we do expect the partners on the research

side of the partnership to have an earned doctorate in an academic discipline or professional field.

Q: Am I allowed to subcontract with my partnering organization?

A: Yes. In many cases, subcontracting with the partner organization might be appropriate. The details on how to create a budget with subcontracts are available in the application guidelines.

Q: Can my organization submit more than one proposal at a time?

A: Yes, as long as the proposals are for different partnerships and the teams are different, it is fine for an organization to submit multiple applications at one time.

Q: If I have a current grant through Spencer, can I apply for a new grant?

A: You may not hold more than one active research grant at a time from The Spencer Foundation (with the exception of a Vision Grant and another type of Spencer grant as long as the projects are different). You may apply for a new grant while you have an active grant at The Spencer Foundation if the active grant will end before the anticipated start date of the new project.

Q: What is your policy on indirect costs?

A: Research grant proposals with budgets over \$75,000 may include [15 % indirect cost charges \(IDC\)](#) on the total direct costs. Subcontract budgets may include the 15% IDC but should not be included in the main budget total when calculating the overall IDC for the project. To view the policy, please visit the Applicant information and Policies section of our website: <https://www.spencer.org/resources/Applicant-Information-and-Policies>

Q: Are budgets expected to include in-kind giving or cost sharing? If not expected, is it allowed?

A: In-kind giving or cost sharing is not expected or required as part of your proposal budget. However, if you plan to include in-kind giving or cost sharing as part of your project budget, you should indicate this in the online budget form in the narrative section. If your proposal is chosen for funding, the grant award may be contingent upon receiving documentation confirming the additional support.

Q: I would like to speak with someone about my partnership before submitting a proposal. Is this possible and whom should I contact?

A: If you have reviewed the program statement and are still uncertain as to whether your partnership falls within the Spencer Foundation's funding mission and request for proposals, feel free to email research-practice-partnership@spencer.org.

Q: How do I determine my start date and when should I expect payment if my proposal is selected for funding?

A: We recommend proposing a start date that is at least 11 months after the deadline for the Preproposal. The review process for this program takes approximately 9 months and once notified of the funding decision, it can take additional time for the official approval process which entails reviewing the budget, processing award letters, and issuing the grant payment. NOTE: Grant payments are issued on the third week of each month. If Spencer has not received your signed award letters by your start date, your payment will be delayed.

Q: What is the Spencer Foundation's policy on the use of assistive or generative AI in my research or in drafting my proposal?

A: To view the Spencer Foundation's policy on the use of assistive and generative AI, please visit the Applicant Information and Policies section of our website and read our policy.

September 2023

Research-Practice Partnerships Writing Guide



A Guide from
SPENCER
FOUNDATION

Contents

1.0 Overview	03
2.0 Defining Features of The Spencer Foundation's Research-Practice Partnership Grants Program	04
3.0 Common Missteps	07
4.0 Other Example Resources to Explore	09

1.0

Overview

Research-Practice Partnerships are long-term, intentionally organized, and mutually beneficial collaborations that seek to improve education across the lifespan, broadly defined. They involve the participation of a wide variety of practitioners and policy makers (e.g., educators in informal institutions, K-12 schools, and community-based organizations, higher education administrators, families) and researchers working in an assortment of configurations, contexts, and institutions. Research-Practice Partnerships involve local, mutually constructed goals, a focus on important problems of practice and/or policy identified by partnership stakeholders, and the co-generation of knowledge using a variety of research approaches in service of equitable education-related practice and/or policy.

This writing guide focuses on The Spencer Foundation's Research-Practice-Partnership (RPP) Grants Program. The guide serves several purposes. First, we provide details on the defining features of The Spencer Foundation's Research-Practice Partnership (RPP) Grants Program and what the Foundation seeks to accomplish with this program. Second, we articulate common missteps that we see in proposals. While we cannot guarantee that project teams using this guide to craft their proposals will receive funding, we hope that the information we provide is useful and helps project teams understand what reviewers are looking for in research-practice partnership grant proposals submitted to The Spencer Foundation.

As a reminder, the Request for Proposals is available on the Spencer Foundation's website: https://www.spencer.org/grant_types/research-practice-partnerships. Other writing guides are also available on our website: <https://www.spencer.org/for-applicants/category/how-to-guides>. These include Writing a Successful Research Grant Proposal, Communicating Your Qualitative Research Design, A Guide to Quantitative Research Proposals, and A Guide to Writing Proposals That Engage Research With Youth, Families, and Community-Based Organizations. Depending on the type of project articulated in the proposal, projects teams might consider consulting one or more of these available writing guides.

Lastly, for anyone interested in exploring The Spencer Foundation's annual reports, which overview what we have funded in any given year, as well as trends in our funding, please visit the Foundation's annual report page: <https://www.spencer.org/annual-reports>.

2.0

Defining Features of The Spencer Foundation's Research- Practice Partnership Grants Program



2.0 Defining Features of The Spencer Foundation's Research-Practice Partnership Grants Program

The Spencer Foundation's Research-Practice Partnership Grants Program is intended to support education research projects that engage in collaborative and participatory partnerships with project budgets up to \$400,000 and durations of up to three years. We view partnerships as an important approach to knowledge generation and the improvement of education, broadly construed. Rigorous partnership work is intentionally organized to engage diverse forms of expertise and perspectives, involving practitioners, families, policy makers, or community members as well as scholars and disciplines, in knowledge generation around pressing problems of practice. Further, Research-Practice Partnerships can facilitate the long-term accumulation of knowledge and practice in new ways as partners work together to ask practice-relevant questions on key topics in specific settings over time. Many key problems of practice are historically saturated and require multiple perspectives and long-term engagement if sustainable and systemic change is to occur.

PreK-12 schools and school systems are important sites for partnership work. With that said, we also encourage Research-Practice Partnerships from other contexts, like those partnerships situated in higher education, in governmental and non-governmental organizations, in communities, and in workplaces. Additionally, partners and partnerships do not have to be located in the United States.

Like our other research grant programs, The Spencer Foundation's Research-Practice Partnership Grants program is field-initiated. In the case of Research-Practice Partnerships this means that we do not specify the type of partnership and collaboration, the types of partners, the problem(s) of practice and/or policy on which to focus and the related research question(s), the research method(s) that the partnership will use to explore and investigate the stated problem of practice(s), etc. With this said, we do articulate defining features that we look for in any Research-Practice Partnership grant proposal that we fund. These include:

An Explicit Focus on Educational Equity

All Research-Practice Partnerships funded by The Spencer Foundation are explicitly focused on issues connected to educational equity. In other words, educational equity is central to partnerships and not an afterthought. How that focus manifests itself depends on the partnership's contexts, who the partners and other collaborators are, the focal problem(s) of practice, and the specifics of the proposed project. Successful proposals explicitly and clearly articulate this focus and why it is

important to the partnership itself and the proposed project discussed in the proposal. While we recognize the importance of documenting inequalities, we also recognize the critical need for partnership work that is focused on transforming inequitable systems, practices, and policies. Thus, we welcome projects that seek to disrupt inequities across a range of dimensions including (but not exclusive to) race, ethnicity, language, class, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, geography, political affiliations, religion, and (dis)ability.

Evidence of an Established Partnership

The Research-Practice Partnerships program does not provide funding for practitioners and scholars to start new partnerships. All partnerships funded through this program should already be established. Successful proposals detail histories of partnerships, and provide evidence of important achievements. What that evidence is depends on the partnership. Examples could include evidence of research projects that have been completed by the partnership, solutions that the partnership has helped develop, data sharing agreements, and/or details of long-standing relationships that have been developed. The partnerships do not have to be solely focused on research but there must be a history of relationship between the partners involved.

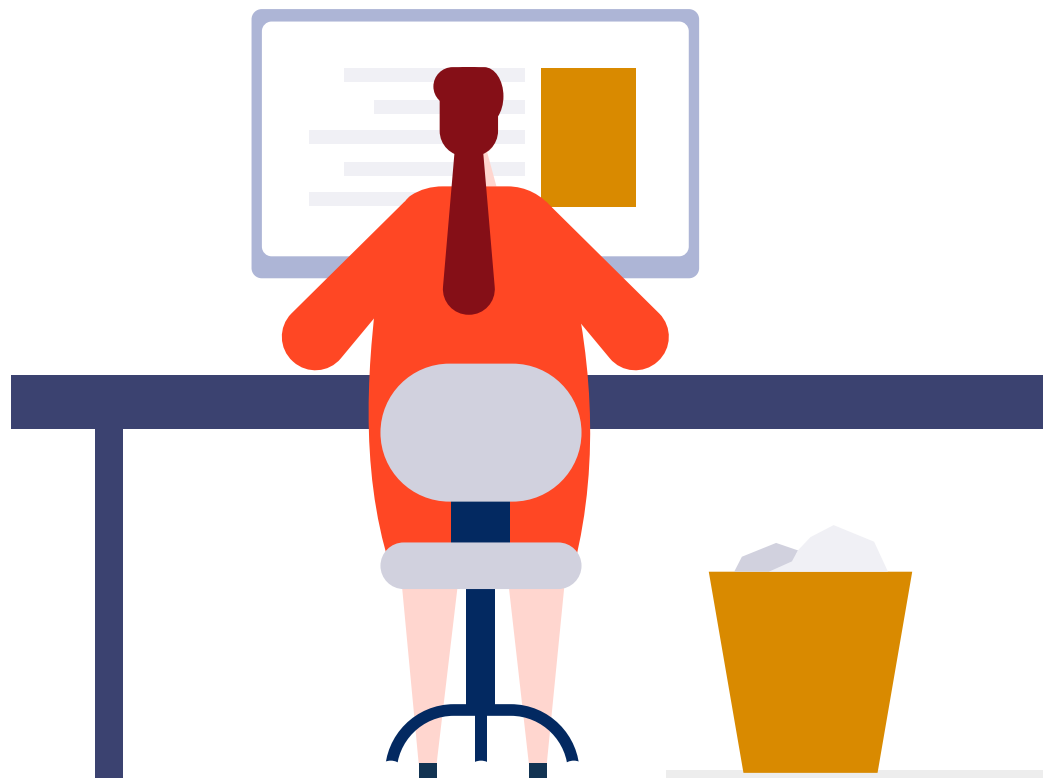
An Explicit Focus on Building the Capacity of the Partnership to Make Educational Change

The Spencer Foundation is interested in funding established Research-Practice Partnerships that are intent on building partnerships' capacity to create educational change and have the potential to transform existing educational systems. Again, what this looks like in practice will depend on the partnership and its goals, the context(s) in which the partnership is situated, and the partners and other collaborators involved. Successful proposals discuss capacity building explicitly and provide details of how the partners are thinking about this and what specific activities they will launch, continue, etc. Examples include how partners might be thinking about mentoring the next generation of practitioners and scholars. Examples could also include how partners are thinking about and working on building and/or expanding systems to support the use of research evidence and/or how they are thinking about and working on methods and practices for pushing the edges of what we know about how to conduct better practice-driven and policy research. Successful proposals are clear about how the partnership intends to grow and develop after the grant period has ended.

Detailed Discussions of Outreach, Communications, and Relationship-Building

While we recognize that any Research-Practice Partnership is situated in a specific context with specific goals, collaborators, and activities, successful proposals articulate how partnerships plan to share what they are learning with the broader field. This includes learnings that are useful for the partnership related to the specific project proposed in the proposal and it also includes learnings about Research-Practice Partnerships themselves. Successful proposals explicitly discuss how they are innovatively thinking about and working on details of outreach, communications, and relationship-building. Thus, successful proposals go well beyond discussions of publishing articles in academic journals and presenting at academic conferences.

The Research-Practice Partnership grant proposal is a challenging proposal to write because partners must focus on elements of the partnership itself, as well as describe the proposed research-related project and activities that the grant will fund. As a reminder, please read and consult the Request for Proposals found on our website: https://www.spencer.org/grant_types/research-practice-partnerships. The Request for Proposals contains detailed information about the Research-Practice Partnership Grants program, including the various elements of the proposal, as well as frequently asked questions. There is also a dedicated email address for proposers to use should they have questions while they are conceptualizing and writing their proposal: research-practice-partnership@spencer.org. As is the case with any of our grant programs, Spencer Foundation staff are not able to read and provide feedback on proposals before they are submitted.



3.0

Common Missteps



3.0 Common Missteps

There are some common missteps that we tend to see in proposals submitted to The Spencer Foundation's Research-Practice Partnership Grants program. We articulate them here in hopes that they will provide additional information about the defining features of Spencer's Research-Practice Partnership Grants program.

- *Partnerships are not yet in existence.* As we have noted, this program does not provide money to launch new partnerships. Each proposal must contain strong evidence of an existing partnership.
- *There is no discernable focus on educational equity and/or discussions stem from deficit perspectives of practitioners, families, communities, learners, etc.* As we have noted, successful proposals articulate a specific, central focus on educational equity and provide rationale for why that focus is important given the partnership, its goals, its contexts, and the proposed project discussed in the proposal. In addition, successful proposals use strengths-based stances, frames, examples, and language related to practitioners, families, learners, communities, etc. (whatever the case may be depending on each partnership), as opposed to using deficit-based stances, frames, examples, and language. We recommend reading Spencer's Guide to Writing Proposals That Engage Research With Youth, Families, and Community-Based Organizations. This guide offers grounding ideas and suggestions for centering a strengths-based approach when working in partnership with communities.
- *The leadership of the Research-Practice Partnership does not reflect practitioners or families or community members as well as scholars and/or the leadership's collective expertise does not appear to align with the proposed project.* Sometimes we receive proposals that do not include practitioners as project leadership (Principal Investigator or Co-Principal Investigator[s]). As a reminder, the RPP Request for Proposals document states that the PI associated with the administering organization for this grant could be either the practitioner or the researcher of the partnership, and at least one Co-PI should be from the other member organization(s). Successful proposals include both practitioners and researchers as one way that partners seek to make a case that they are deeply thinking about and working on shared power with respect to governance, decision-making, research and capacity building. In addition, we are sometimes unclear if the leadership and other collaborators have the necessary experience and expertise to deeply engage with the proposed project outlined in the proposal. Successful proposals make that experience and expertise visible, for example, in the project team document, and showcase the alignment amongst the team's experience and expertise, and the proposed project and budget allocations.
- *The project proposed does not outline research activities.* Research is fundamental to any Research-Practice Partnership. The Spencer Foundation's Research-Practice Partnership Grants program is one of Spencer's research grant programs, and successful proposals center research activities that seek to generate new knowledge, systems, and/or practices in service of the improvement of education, broadly conceived. In addition, successful proposals outline a theory of action that guides the partnership's use of research in exploring the articulated problem of practice in the proposal toward educational improvement and/or systems transformation. In other words, partners should articulate how they plan to make use of research activities and evidence to make progress on the problem(s) of practice and/or policy they discuss in the proposal.
- *The proposal only articulates a research project.* Sometimes we receive proposals that only articulate a research project without also attending to the history of the partnership and its accomplishments to date, governance, capacity building, relational conditions, power sharing, innovative outreach and communication activities, etc. If partners are interested in a research-only proposal, we invite them to explore one of our other grants programs, such as Research Grants on Education: Small or Research Grants on Education: Large.
- *The project proposed is not well-situated in applicable, existing scholarship.* Because research activities are central to successful Research-Practice Partnerships, successful proposals are grounded in applicable, existing scholarship and it is clear how the partners are situating the proposed project in that scholarship and why they are doing so. The proposal must be clear that partners are knowledgeable about existing scholarship that is related to their proposed project.

4.0

Other Example Resources to Explore

4.0 Other Example Resources to Explore

The following are recent, example resources that outline more details about Research-Practice Partnerships and their histories.

Farrell, C.C., Penuel, W.R., Coburn, C.E., Daniel, J., & Steup, L. (2021). *Research-practice partnerships in education: The state of the field*. William T. Grant Foundation.
URL (downloadable for free): <http://wtgrantfoundation.org/research-practice-partnerships-in-education-the-state-of-the-field>

This report is an extension of, and an elaboration on, the white paper written by Coburn, Penuel, and Geil in 2013 titled Research-practice partnerships: A strategy for leveraging research for educational improvement in school districts.

The Farrell et al. report was released with three commentaries.

Diamond, J.B. (2021). *Racial equity and research practice partnerships 2.0: A critical reflection*. William T. Grant Foundation.
URL: <http://wtgrantfoundation.org/racial-equity-and-research-practice-partnerships-2-0-a-critical-reflection>

Easton, J., & Bates, M. (2021). *Partnerships in action: A new RPP highlights the field's evolution*. William T. Grant Foundation.
URL: <http://wtgrantfoundation.org/partnerships-in-action-a-new-rpp-highlights-the-fields-evolution>

Wilson, C.M. (2021). *Research-practice partnerships for racially just school communities*. William T. Grant Foundation.
URL: <http://wtgrantfoundation.org/research-practice-partnerships-for-racially-just-school-communities>

Spencer Foundation
625 North Michigan Avenue
Suite 1600, Chicago, IL 60611

spencer.org