Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education

2013 Call for Proposals

Background

Secondary school education is measurably associated with positive effects on health, well-being, and productivity (Alvarez 2003). For girls, research shows that those with more years of education marry later (Ozier 2010), have smaller families (Schultz 2002), and survive childbirth at higher rates (McAlister and Baskett 2006). They experience reduced incidences of HIV/AIDS (Hargreaves et al. 2008), earn more (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos 2004), and live in societies with higher national rates of economic growth.

Given this, governments in developing countries are working to provide secondary education on a larger scale and build on the primary education gains connected to the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All initiatives. However, while primary schools are widespread, with near equal numbers of boys and girls enrolled, secondary schools remain scarce, are mostly in central towns and urban areas, and enroll fewer girls than boys and too few poor and disadvantaged children. There are also large regional variations in the secondary education enrollment rate: while the global rate reached 70% in 2010, up from only 43% in 1970, enrollment is still below 40% in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO 2012). Evidence also shows that many children are leaving primary school without basic literacy and numeracy, and those who do make it to secondary school are often unprepared for the higher levels of learning required. Importantly, the world of work in developing countries is also changing from a focus on subsistence agriculture and small-scale industry to a more complex mix of formal and informal economic activities in local and globally-connected economies. Although secondary education is the level from which most youth will enter the labor force, it is still largely conceptualized as a route to tertiary education and has relatively high per student costs compared to primary education.

Questions about secondary education that need answers, include how to increase demand, improve teacher skills, promote employment-relevant skills, and support alternative models of learning for learners in low-income settings. There is therefore an urgent need to support and build the evidence base for new models that deliver quality, relevant, and accessible secondary learning to often-neglected populations, including the poor, girls, those living with disabilities, those in areas affected by conflict, and other disadvantaged groups. This includes scaling-up

approaches that have proven successful, testing innovative pilots, and increasing our knowledge of how to close the gaps that continue to constrain marginalized populations from accessing secondary education.

Purpose
The aim of the *Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education*
(PSIPSE) is to accelerate innovation in secondary education programming, research, and development in selected countries. It is led by a group of private donors and donor advisors, including ELMA Philanthropies Services, Human Dignity Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, MasterCard Foundation, and Wellspring Advisors, who have come together to encourage a new wave of innovation and learning in secondary education. This collaboration was born from the principles of the *Global Compact on Learning,* which underscores the importance of collaborative action to achieve quality learning outcomes, and supports goals of the UN Secretary General's *Global Education First* initiative. Participating donors not only work with each other, but also actively aim to enrich the knowledge base of the wider secondary education field.

The PSIPSE began in early 2012, when a Call for Proposals was issued to solicit projects that could help inform the imminent expansion and transformation of secondary education. The 2012 Call yielded over 500 letters of inquiry and, ultimately, 19 projects were selected for over $8 million in support. The 2013 Call for Proposals builds on this momentum and channels attention to critical gaps research has identified in the delivery of more widespread and quality secondary education. Donors have allocated $10 million for the 2013 Call subject to the quality of proposals received.

Strategic Focus
The PSIPSE's focus is both upper and lower secondary education. Where schooling at the upper level is further divided between traditional general secondary education and vocational education, PSIPSE is focused on increasing the relevance of general secondary education learning. PSIPSE supports programs and projects targeted to the formal education system and informal programs that help students transition to or re-enter the formal system. PSIPSE is interested in four thematic areas: demand, improving teacher effectiveness, promoting employment-relevant skills and alternative educational models for learning (see 'Thematic Areas of Interest' section below).

All proposed projects should incorporate fresh thinking and raise new possibilities that address challenges in the secondary education agenda. The PSIPSE invites potential partners to push the boundaries of creativity; consider cost-efficient, innovative solutions; and re-think the content, instructional methods, delivery systems, and partnerships common in secondary education. Projects should be context-relevant and evidence-driven, and should yield insights that can expand the policy horizons of government planners, other large scale implementers, and technical experts. The PSIPSE hopes projects can also inform future educational investment by various donors.

Proposals submitted may be for pilots, for research, or for scale-up (see 'Types of Projects' section below). Regardless of their nature, the PSIPSE encourages projects with replication and scale-up potential. Across the four themes, the PSIPSE looks for projects that (i) target

marginalized populations, such as girls; (ii) use technology in innovative, cross-cutting ways[1]; or (iii) do both. The PSIPSE is also concerned with the delivery of secondary education to conflict-affected populations in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and in Uganda.

The geographic focus for this Call for Proposals is East Africa, Nigeria, and India (see 'Geography' section below). The Call is open to organizations (but not to individuals), including private sector entities proposing projects with charitable purposes and working on specific education challenges in these places. The PSIPSIE is particularly interested in collaborations between non-profit or public stakeholders and private sector entities.

Target Populations
Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals for projects that benefit the following marginalized populations:
- Learners living in low-resource or poverty-affected areas
- Girls and young women
- Learners with physical, intellectual and/or developmental disabilities

Geography
Applicants may propose work in the following geographic areas:

East Africa*
- Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo
- Ethiopia
- Kenya
- Rwanda
- Tanzania
- Uganda

*: Note, projects targeting conflict-affected populations are welcomed only in the Eastern DRC (North Kivu, South Kivu, Province Orientale, Maniema) and in Uganda (Northern Uganda, West Nile Sub-region, and Western Uganda). Funding in Uganda is not restricted, however, to conflict-affected populations, nor to any particular parts of the country.

Nigeria (particularly the states of Kano, Sokoto, Jigawa, Lagos, Rivers, and Cross Rivers)

India (particularly the states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh and the cities of Chennai, Delhi, and Mumbai)

These regions and countries have been selected based on secondary education needs, as well as strategic and geographic priorities of donor and donor advisor partners. Projects that take a regional focus may also apply.

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[1] Technology innovations must consider the context in which the work is proposed and should ensure that it corresponds to local realities. Projects that use technology as one of several tools to enhance learning or teaching are preferred to stand-alone endeavors.

Types of Projects

Donor partners invite organizations to submit projects in one of the following three categories (all projects must be within the core Thematic Areas of Interest listed in the next Section):

Pilot: Projects that test new models or approaches to identified problems, integrate proven strategies/approaches into a more holistic model, and/or build collaboration among partners with proven models and approaches will be considered in scope. Pilot projects can be funded up to US$500,000 over 2-3 years. Priority will be given to projects that:

- Define the innovation being explored within the pilot and its relevance nationally, regionally, or globally while being grounded in local context.
- Include a strong focus on impact assessment and rigorous evaluation so that the usefulness of funded pilot projects is well understood and effective projects are positioned for replication and/or future scale up.
- Identify specific pathways, actors, and steps necessary for achieving desired outcomes and for scaling up successful educational interventions in a future project phase.

Research: Projects that address critical questions that have the capacity to advance innovation and practice in secondary education or examine solutions to commonly identified barriers to secondary education will be considered in scope. Research projects can be funded up to US$500,000 over 1-3 years. Priority will be given to research projects that:

- Build upon the existing evidence base on secondary education.
- Meaningfully engage local research partners, young people, and other stakeholders.
- Employ a rigorous research methodology.
- Are solutions-oriented and are likely to influence policy and be policy-relevant.
- Demonstrate linkages with policymakers and illustrate pathways for influencing education policy
- Have a clear dissemination plan for sharing research results.

Scale-up: Projects that expand, adapt and sustain successful programs and reach large numbers of children and youth will be considered. These projects will have already been piloted and proven effective and be ready to be taken to the next level either nationally or regionally. Scale-up projects can be funded up to $5 million over up to 5 years. Priority will be given to projects with:

- Demonstrated evidence that the proposed project is effective.
- Demand for the project by one or more key education stakeholders (i.e. government, teachers, communities, parents, or youth).
- Support for the project by key champions or networks.
- Simplicity in program design and approach.
- Proven cost-effectiveness of the proposed project in relation to comparable programs and/or within government per capita expenditure on education, including cost per participant of the individuals reached.

- Clear distribution network for scaling the project (i.e. schools, teacher training institutions, or third party providers).
- Sustainability strategy that identifies financing for the project over the long term (i.e. government, private sector, users, or a combination).
- Organizational resources and capacity to support a scale-up initiative, with a strategic plan in place.

Thematic Areas of Interest

Applications under the Call should fall under at least one of the four themes listed below. The PSIPSE is focused on innovations that address the issues highlighted in each theme.

1. Demand
Increasing demand for learning at the secondary level.

Education and skills have strong economic benefits for people. However, parents and youth may lack information or be misinformed about the returns to education, distorting their decision-making. In many cases, community engagement may also be weak, adding a further constraint. Providing information about such benefits to education has been demonstrated to be a highly cost effective method for increasing demand (Jensen 2010).

Projects are invited that address one or more of the following issues:
- Maximizing community, parent, and/or youth awareness of the benefits to different educational options and associated career pathways, thereby leading to greater participation in education.
- Non-cash based approaches to increase demand for learning at the secondary level, inside or outside the formal education system.
- Innovative ways to address the opportunity costs of enrolling in and completing secondary school.

2. Improving teacher effectiveness
Innovative use of resources to increase the quality of teaching and, in turn, enable teachers to better act as facilitators to learning.

Reforms to increase the relevance of the curricula to meet the needs of the 21st century have been attempted in many countries. Additionally, student-centered, active pedagogy has been introduced in many contexts, but outdated modes of teaching remain the key constraint (for instance, rote learning is prevalent and teachers are focused on solely imparting factual knowledge). A shift is needed to equip teachers with the skills and resources to enable quality learning that is relevant for life and labor markets. The resources may be technological tools, training, or other inputs, but most importantly, they must re-define the classroom model to enable deeper, relevant learning by students.

Projects are invited that address one or more of the following issues:
- Increasing and improving the quality and effectiveness of secondary school leaders, as well as promoting best practices in school leadership and management.

- Exploring innovative training programs specifically geared to teachers working with marginalized communities (see 'Target Populations' section) or in remediation programs, keeping in mind that many teachers often do not themselves have adequate education.
- Facilitating usage of low-cost technologies that bridge teacher skill gaps and improve student learning outcomes. This could include the application of free or open education resources or technologies for educator support.

3. Promoting employment-relevant skills
Improving learning outcomes and increasing the relevance of curricula.

The quality and relevance of learning at the secondary level is important given that this is the level from which many youth enter the labor force. The acquisition of employment-relevant skills, which comprise core subjects (e.g. basic literacy and numeracy), life and career skills, learning skills (e.g. critical thinking, communication, and creativity), financial literacy, a global language, and information technology skills, is crucial. The PSIPSE is focused on supporting non-cognitive (e.g. communication, creativity, and leadership) and cognitive skills (e.g. literacy, numeracy, critical thinking). These are also particularly crucial for workers in the informal economy, given that most of these workers are self-employed and need to work along the entire value chain.

Increasing employment-relevant skills acquisition at the secondary levels depends on supporting reform in teacher effectiveness (see Theme 2 above) and curricula; the latter are often outdated and not connected to the needs of employers. Out of school youth also need pathways back into secondary school or alternative, non-formal education opportunities closely aligned with labor market opportunities.

Projects are invited that address one or more of the following issues:
- Exploring how to effectively engage employers in reforming core secondary curricula to ensure that they are relevant to the labor market and are demand-driven. The PSIPSE is particularly interested in understanding how greater collaboration between industry and education institutions can be fostered beyond technical education.
- Understanding how a set of relevant, core entrepreneurial skills can be identified and incorporated into secondary education curriculum. Additionally, the PSIPSE is interested in the role of technology to support the acquisition of these skills.
- Understanding the life skills that are necessary to prepare youth for life and for labor markets, and exploring how these skills can be effectively incorporated into schooling. The PSIPSE is also interested in cost-effective ways that non-formal education providers or remedial learning centers can support the acquisition of these skills and provide links back to formal education.
- Facilitating the school-to-work transition through mentorship, career guidance and counseling, apprenticeships, or internships.

4. Alternative educational models for learning
Cost-effective models that address access barriers to quality secondary level learning.

The design and organization of secondary schools in many developing countries remains unduly influenced by the models used for decades in developed countries. The resulting geographic distribution of formal secondary schools and associated costs often pose access constraints for students, parents, and communities in rural and resource poor areas, as well as for other marginalized groups. Given this, it becomes imperative to support alternative, cost-effective models to improve the availability of secondary level learning in countries where enrollment remains low. These alternative models must be innovative in the structure and organization they employ to deliver a quality general secondary curriculum and reduce the unit cost per student of secondary learning.

Projects are invited to address the following issues:
- Approaches that challenge the conventional models of schooling and propose new ways to promote context-relevant and geographically accessible learning. For example, these may combine individual learning with regular tutoring, and/or draw upon low-cost learning materials and technologies.
- Solutions to the barriers and obstacles that prevent children, particularly girls, who complete primary school from enrolling into, attending, and/or completing secondary education.
- Supporting remote or distance learning in ways that respond to challenges faced by marginalized communities, and drawing upon context-appropriate educational technology as needed.

Out of scope proposals
While the four themes are distinct, we are open to projects that span multiple themes. However, the following types of projects will <u>not</u> be eligible for funding:
- Stand-alone, single schools looking to expand or replicate their model
- Projects focused exclusively on technical skills and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)
- Proposals focused exclusively on researching barriers to secondary education access
- Large scale, non-innovative infrastructure projects

Application Process
The application process will involve two successive review phases: 1) *Letters of Inquiry* (LOI); and 2) *Proposals*. Successful applications to the LOI phase will be invited by the last week of June 2013 to advance to the *Proposal* phase of the review process. Decisions about funding will be made between December 2013 and March 2014.

<u>Due to the potential volume of applicants and the competitive nature of the Call for Proposals, during the LOI phase we are unable to accommodate questions submitted in writing or by phone.</u>

Applicants should observe the following guidelines:
- **The deadline for all *Letters of Inquiry* submissions is <u>MAY 15, 2013 at 12:00pm CST</u>.**
- **Electronic submissions via the online web-based platform are required (see below). Hard copy or emailed applications will not be accepted or considered for funding.**
- **Applications will not be accepted after the deadline.**

- **Revisions to submitted LOIs cannot be accommodated.**

All applications received will be pooled and reviewed, and short-listed *LOIs* will be invited to submit a *Proposal* for a second more intensive phase of review. Only the strongest applications will be funded. **Reviewers' evaluations will be confidential and not be made available to applicants.** If a *Proposal* is invited, the deadline for the full *Proposal* submission will be August 2, 2013 at 5:00pm CST. For funded *Proposals*, donors will endeavor to streamline reporting requirements, though some projects may be asked to report to multiple donors. Applicants consent to donors sharing descriptions of the proposed projects with a limited number of third parties on a confidential basis.

Letter of Inquiry Guidelines:
Applicants are required to visit www.innovationsinsecondaryeducation.myreviewroom.com and create an account with a user name and password to begin the online application process. Please do not email a separate LOI document to any of the donor partners. Separately emailed LOIs to the donors will not be considered.

You will be asked to provide the following information in your online application form:
- Name of Submitting Organization
- Complete address, telephone number, and email address for submitting organization
- Website of submitting organization (if available)
- Tax status of organization (e.g. 501c3 tax status or charitable equivalent, private for profit entity, governmental organization)
- Project title
- Geographic focus
- Project type (pilot, research, or scale-up)
- Project description (through answering specific questions in the online application form and presented below)

Depending on the type of project being proposed, the following points will be addressed in your online application form. Please note that indicated word counts are maximums. Many applicants may not require the maximum allotted amount of text:

Pilot project:
- Overall goal (or goals) of your project. (150 words)
- Project rationale, including an explanation of how the project fits within a given local context and how it addresses the Thematic Areas of Interest. (200 words)
- What is innovative about your project? (300 words)
- What research or evidence is your organization using to inform the design and development of the project and its expected outcomes? (300 words)
- Describe the major phases or activities involved in project implementation. (500 words)
- How will you engage government and/or the private sector in the implementation and development of your project? (200 words)

- Provide relevant past examples of your organization's work with government or private sector. (150 words)
- Describe the anticipated outcomes. (300 words)
- Describe your organization's experience in relevant thematic and/or geographic areas. (200 words)
- Names and credentials of project management / study team. (100 words)
- Processes that will be used to monitor and evaluate the project: How will you document the impact of your project for purposes of project refinement and build a credible evidence base so that effective projects are positioned for replication and/or future scale up? (300 words)
- Identify specific pathways, actors, and steps necessary for achieving desired outcomes and for scaling up successful educational interventions in a future project phase. (200 words)

Research project:
- Overall goal (or goals) of your project. (150 words)
- Project rationale, including how the project addresses a critical gap(s) in knowledge. Additionally, indicate how the project relates to an aspect(s) of the described Thematic Areas of Interest. (250 words)
- What distinguishes this research from other research conducted on the topic? Why/how is this research more likely to impact secondary education practice than other research? (250 words)
- Highlight the existing evidence base on which your research builds. How does this evidence base inform the design of your project? (250 words)
- Describe the major phases or activities involved in project implementation. Note any partners involved in the research. (500 words)
- Describe the core elements of your research methodology. (200 words)
- How will you engage government and/or the private sector in the development and implementation of the research? (200 words)
- In what ways will your research impact policy and/or practice in secondary education and why is this likely? What other outcomes are expected from the project? (300 words)
- Describe your dissemination plan for sharing research results. (200 words)
- Relevant past examples of your organization's work with government or private sector. (150 words)
- Organizational experience in target thematic/geographic areas. (200 words)
- Names and credentials of project management / study team. (100 words)

Scale-up:
- Overall goal (or goals) of your project. (150 words)
- Project rationale, including an explanation of how the project fits within a given local context and how it addresses the Thematic Areas of Interest. (200 words)
- Describe the proof or evidence that the proposed project is effective, such as external evaluations, and why it is ready to be scaled. (300 word max)
- What is innovative about your project? (300 words)
- What is the projected reach of your project? (100 words)

- Describe the major phases or activities involved in project implementation. (500 words)
- Describe the anticipated outcomes of the project. (300 words)
- How will partners (i.e. government and/or the private sector) be engaged in the development and implementation and of your project? (200 words)
- What distribution mechanism will you use to scale the project (i.e. schools, teacher training institutions, third party providers). (300 words)
- Describe demand for the project by one or more key education stakeholders (i.e. government, teachers, communities, parents, or youth) or other champions. (300 words)
- Organizational experience in thematic/geographic areas. (200 words)
- Relevant past examples of your organizations work with government or private sector. (150 words)
- Names and credentials of project management / study team. (200 words)
- How will the recurrent costs be sustained after project completion? (200 words)

Project Budget Summary
- The *Project Budget Summary* should indicate the approximate amount requested by the applicant and list the principal categories of expenses,
- *Project Budget Summary* must be submitted in US dollars (US$).
- Indicate other sources of funding that are being sought to support this project, if applicable.

Applicant organizations may submit more than one proposal. In the case of multiple applications, one online application form should be completed for each project submitted in response to the Call for Proposals.

Should applicants experience any technical difficulties with the online application process, please email tech@myreviewroom.com for assistance. Personnel will provide direct assistance daily, between the hours of 8am-8pm CST. When sending an email to the technical support staff, please include the country where you are located so that the technical support staff will be aware of your time zone, the URL/webpage address of the application page you are having difficulty with, as well as the email address you use to log into the website. This information is necessary for the company to be able to look into your request.

References

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