Funding Opportunity:
Advancing Student Transportation Solutions
APRIL 2019
The Kresge Foundation

Request for Letters of Inquiry

Release Date: May 1st, 2019

Due Date: May 31st, 2019
The Kresge Foundation’s Education Program

Based in metropolitan Detroit, The Kresge Foundation is a $3.6 billion private foundation dedicated to expanding opportunities in cities through its support of organizations working in six program areas: Arts & Culture, Detroit, Environment, Health, Human Services, and Education.

Kresge’s Education Program focuses on expanding postsecondary access and success in cities for low-income, first-generation, underrepresented students and other populations traditionally underserved by higher education systems. The Kresge Education Team leads with equity, working to eliminate gaps in graduation rates that persist for African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans.

One of Education’s core strategies is Strengthening and Aligning the Urban Higher Education Ecosystem. This ecosystem refers to a network of interconnected higher education institutions, nonprofit organizations, K-12 school districts, government agencies, and urban systems of employment, housing, food and childcare that play a role in students’ higher education experiences. The strategy hypothesizes that when that ecosystem is strong, aligned and centered on student needs, low-income students and students of color are more likely to graduate.

For more information on Kresge’s education grantmaking, please visit www.kresge.org, follow @kresgedu on twitter, or subscribe the bimonthly Education newsletter here: http://kresge.org/subscribe.

Overview of the Funding Opportunity

The Kresge Foundation’s Education Program invites partnerships between research organizations, transit agencies or mobility companies, higher education institutions, and/or other entities to submit a letter of inquiry for projects that address transportation barriers to student success. Respondents can propose to the Foundation one of four project types: planning grants,
implementation grants, research grants, and hybrid grants that qualify as both an implementation and research grant. These are described in more detail below.

The Foundation will award planning grants up to one year in length, and implementation or research grants up to three years in length. Approximately up to $1.3 million in total is available, and the Foundation anticipates making a maximum of five grants. The likely maximum planning grant size is $50,000 for one year, and the likely maximum implementation or research grants is $375,000, disbursed over two or three years. The Foundation will consider other funding amounts and grant periods.

Planning Grants: Developing Cross-Sector Partnerships for Student Transportation Solutions
Emerging partnerships in select geographies can apply for a planning grant to develop transportation solutions that meet students’ transits needs. Planning grants will provide funds to support cross-sector meetings, documentation of demand and use of existing transportation options, data collection on students’ transportation needs, and other early activities to plan for future projects. Planning grants are limited to partnerships in Kresge priority geographies (New Orleans, Detroit, Memphs and cities in California, Michigan, Florida, Texas and South Africa). While an implementation grants will be considered at the end of successful planning grant, an award of a planning grant does not guarantee award of a future implementation grant.

Implementation Grants: Supporting Demonstration Projects of Student Transportation Solutions
Established transportation/higher education partnerships can apply for an implementation grant to launch or grow solutions that meet students’ transportation needs. Building on prior cross-sector planning efforts, implementation grants will support replication of existing solutions (e.g., discounted or free transit passes for college students) in new cities and/or implementation of more innovative approaches for meeting students’ transportation needs.

Research Grants: Building the Evidence-base of Student Transportation Solutions
Very little evidence exists that shows the impact of transportation solutions on student enrollment, persistence, and/or completion. This type of grant can be in any U.S. or South African city and must include evaluations, using quasi-experimental or experimental designs, of existing solutions.
Highly competitive applicants will propose a core evaluation that meets the What Works Clearinghouse’s standards (more here) and/or Laura and John Arnold Foundation’s standards for low-cost randomized controlled trials (more info here).

The Problem and Urgency

Degree completion rates, while improving, are not rising quickly or equitably enough. More people are entering college, and graduation rates have improved in recent years, but entrenched racial, ethnic, and socio-economic equity gaps remain among those who graduate. Today, 63% of White students graduate within six years of college enrollment, compared with 54% of Latinos and just 39% of African Americans. Plus, recent research shows that even with an eight-year time horizon, only 15% of students from the lowest income quartile complete a bachelor’s degree, compared to 22% in the second income quartile, 27% in the third income quartile, and 60% in the top income quartile.

Transportation, a key aspect of the Urban Higher Education Ecosystem, represents a significant component of student’s cost of college attendance and a potential barrier to their success. The College Board estimates transportation costs account for 18% of student living expenses. Plus, most college students are commuters, and low-income students are even more likely to attend college close to home and to commute to school. The high cost of transit passes; misalignment of transit and personal, school or work schedules; inadequate transit lines; and the geographic proximity of transit to students’ housing are all barriers that can make commuting to and from college -- and achieving academic success -- challenging. Addressing transit barriers may help increase students’ ability to obtain a degree.

Promising Practices

Recognizing these challenges, localities have implemented various solutions to student transportation needs. Some solutions tend to focus on programs such as subsidized or free student transit pass (commonly referred to as “U-PASS”) or shuttle and vanpooling services. For example, in Washington State, King County Metro Community Connections supports collaborations between communities, local higher education institutions, and the local transit agency to develop
shuttle and ride-share programs to serve student transportation needs. The City University of New York also struck an agreement with the Metropolitan Transit Authority to offer students in the Accelerated Study in Associates Program (ASAP) free universal transit passes that are good for an entire college semester rather than the typical monthly pass available to all riders.

While these practices seem to increase student success and increase ridership on public transit, there is a dearth of evidence documenting the relationship between college retention and completion with the availability and utilization of transportation programs. The ASAP program has, in fact, doubled graduation rates; however, because ASAP is a robust, multi-component program, the existing evaluation cannot isolate the impact of the transit support. Additional research is needed to determine the effectiveness of transit solutions on higher education outcomes.

To learn more about promising practices addressing student transit barriers and the existing evidence-base, read Overcoming Transit Barriers to Improve Postsecondary Student Success by Dr. Derek Price and Drew Curtis. Respondents are strongly encouraged to review this report.

**Eligible Applicants**

This funding opportunity is open to partnerships between research organizations, transit agencies or mobility companies, higher education institutions, and/or other entities. The lead applicant must be a higher education institution, transit agency, or other public or non-profit entity, and a qualifying partnership must include a higher education institution and at least one other community partner, ideally a transit agency or mobility company.

Specifically, eligible higher education institutions should meet all the following criteria:

- Located in a city
- Have at least one-third of its student population comprised of low-income students (defined as Pell recipients) or students of color.
- Have its student body significantly comprised of local students from the city in which the institution of higher education is located.
- Have clear institutional goals to increase student graduation rates.
The following proposals will not be funded:

- Proposed efforts that only involve a single organization or grouping of organizations within a single sector (e.g., 2+ higher education institutions, without a transportation partner).
- Capital costs for transit development with grant funding. This includes costs for constructing bus or light rail stops or financing vehicles. Grant dollars may be used to expand public transit services as related to proposal goals.
- Gas/petrol cards for individual students.

Selection Criteria:

Final selection will be based on the quality of the proposed projects. Preference will be given to applicants that:

- Are in Detroit, Memphis or New Orleans or are in cities in South Africa or in the following states: California, Texas, Michigan, Florida. Planning grants are restricted to these places.
- Have a well-articulated focus on equity and strong understanding of the lived experiences of their local students. The proposed partnerships will address transit needs of low-income students and students of color.
- Include match funds and in-kind support from participating higher education institutions, transportation partner or local funder.
- Consider the long-term sustainability of their partnership or potential project. For implementation and research grants, the transportation solutions will ideally have clear revenue streams to support future capital and operating costs.
- For planning grants, have secured support from local partners to engage in a planning process, as evidenced by letters of support or ideally with financial commitments from the partners.
- For implementation grants, have strong multi-sector partnership with a track record of collaboration and shared commitment to student success, as evidenced by letters of support, signed memoranda of understanding, and/or financial commitments from the partners.
- For research grants, have an independent research partner with a track record of conducting evaluations with experimental or quasi-experimental design that meet the What Work’s Clearinghouse’s standards and/or Laura and John Arnold Foundation’s standards for low-
cost randomized controlled trials. Designs that include mix methods will also be considered.

**Letter of Inquiry Submission**

To apply, submit a letter of inquiry through Kresge’s online grantee portal (Fluxx) **between May 1st, 2019 and no later than 11:59 PM (EST) on May 31st, 2019.**

If you are or have previously been a Kresge grantee, please use your existing Fluxx credentials to apply. If you are a new applicant, you will need to register for an account for your organization before applying. Please know that it can take 5 to 7 days to receive your Fluxx credentials. You can find a guide to using Fluxx here. If you experience any issues when creating a Fluxx account, please contact Annelise Huber at adphuber@kresge.org.

The online grantee portal will require respondents to complete/submit the following:

- **Narrative Questions.** Respondents will provide a narrative explanation of their request via the online grantee portal (Fluxx). For convenience, these questions—with the character count limits—are outlined in the appendix.

- **Project Budget.** Please use the budget template included with this release. Please include the full project budget, inclusive of the Kresge request, other funders, and any in-kind support from the partners. Please note the line items can be changed as needed, and the budget can include up to 15% of the total grant as indirect costs but then may not claim rent, utilities, or other costs typically bundled into overhead.

- **Budget Narrative.** Provide justification for budget items and how monetary amounts were determined. If matching grants are provided, please detail that here, including the name(s) of the donor(s).
• **Letter(s) of Support from Partners / Local Funder.** Partner organization(s) must submit a one-page summary that addresses the parameters and importance of the partnership. A letter of support from a local funder would strengthen the application.

**Overall Selection Timeline:**

• **May 20th, 11:59 PM (EST): Grantee Portal (Fluxx) Registration Deadline.** Respondents will need to register for an account for your organization on Kresge’s online grantee portal (Fluxx).

• **May 31th, 11:59 PM (EST): Letter of Inquiry Submission Deadline.** Respondents will need to submit a letter of inquiry and project budget via Kresge’s online grantee portal (Fluxx).

• **June 28th, 11:59 PM (EST): Initial Notification.** Kresge will notify respondents if their proposed project has been selected to move forward. Kresge will invite a subset of applicants to submit full proposals via Fluxx.

• **July 31st, 11:59 PM (EST): Proposal Submission Deadline.** Respondents must submit a full proposal via Kresge’s online grantee portal.

• **Early September: Final Notification.** Kresge will notify respondents about the final funding discussions.
Appendix: Preview of Narrative Questions

As noted above, a letter of inquiry must be submitted through Kresge’s grantee portal, called Fluxx. These questions, with character limits, are provided here to facilitate the development of your letter.

- Please select project type: planning grant, implementation grant, research grant, or hybrid implementation-research grant.

Eligibility Questions:

- Please check the organization types that are partnering to submit this request. The partnership must include at least two cross-sector partners and must include at least one higher education institution.
  - ☐ higher education institution
  - ☐ transit agency or mobility company
  - ☐ research organization
  - ☐ other entity
    
    Please enter type of organization (e.g., community-based organization):

- Please check where the partnership(s) will occur. Requests in multiple locations are possible. Note, planning grants are restricted to foundation-focus cities (Detroit, Memphis, New Orleans) and cities in Education Team-focused states (California, Florida, Michigan, and Texas). Implementation and research grants in those locations will be given preferential treatment.
  - ☐ Detroit
  - ☐ Memphis
  - ☐ New Orleans
  - ☐ a city in California
Please indicate the city in California:
☐ a city in Florida

Please indicate the city in Florida:
☐ a city in Michigan

Please indicate the city in Michigan:
☐ a city in Texas

Please indicate the city in Texas
☐ a city in the South Africa.

Please indicate the city
☐ a city elsewhere in the USA.

Please indicate the city

- Please complete the following chart for the higher education institution(s) involved in this request. As described above, at least one higher education institution must have substantial percentage (>30%) of low-income students (defined as Pell recipients) and/or students of color, as well as primarily educate students from their home city.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(University/ College Name)</th>
<th>% Pell recipients AY 2017-2018</th>
<th>% Students of Color AY 2017-2018</th>
<th>% Local students AY 2017-2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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- Please provide an explanation of descriptive statistics included above (e.g., how did you define local students and calculate the number of local students).

Narrative Questions:

Each of these narrative questions are limited to 2,000 characters.

1. Describe the student transportation need your partnership / project will address and why it is important. What’s your current understanding of the transit barriers impacting low-income students and students of color in your city?
2. Tell us about your organization and your partners, as well as why you are best positioned to address the transit needs of colleges students.

3. For the higher education institution(s) in the partnership, what is your institution’s current overall attainment rates,¹ as well as those for low-income students and students of color? What goals have the institution(s) set to achieve more equitable outcomes for low-income students and students of color?

4. Briefly describe your proposed project to address the transit barriers, including goals, major activities, and current and anticipated partners.

   a. (Research Grants & Hybrid Grants Only), please briefly describe who will conduct the evaluation and their prior evaluation experience, the methodology to be used (including design, sample size, outcomes measured, timeframe), and the main audience(s) for the evaluation findings.

5. (Implementation, Research, Hybrid Grants Only). How many students will be directly affected by the transportation solution envisioned by your partnership?

6. (Implementation, Research, Hybrid Grants Only). Assuming a successful implementation and/or positive results from an impact evaluation, how do the partners envision financing and sustaining the transportation solution past the grant terms?

¹ For community colleges: 2- and 4-year graduation rates; for BA granting institutions, 4- and 6-year graduation rates.
# Kresge Foundation

## PROPOSAL BUDGET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Organization:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
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### SUGGESTED BUDGET CATEGORIES

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<tr>
<th>REQUESTED KRESGE FOUNDATION SUPPORT</th>
<th>TOTAL KRESGE FDN. SUPPORT REQUESTED</th>
<th>TOTAL NON-KRESGE FOUNDATION SUPPORT</th>
<th>TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
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1. **Direct Project Costs**
   - **Personnel Expenses**
     - Salaries* (list staff, title, salary, % of time) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
     - Benefits (list % rate) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
   - **SUBTOTAL: Personnel Expenses** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
   - **Other Direct Expenses**
     - Materials and Supplies* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
     - Equipment Rental/Purchase* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
     - Travel * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
     - Meetings/Conferences* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
     - Consultants* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
     - Evaluation* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
     - Communication* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
     - Subcontracts or subgrants | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
   - **SUBTOTAL: Other Direct Expenses** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

2. **Indirect Costs** (if requested)
   - **Indirect Expenses** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
   - **SUBTOTAL: Indirect Expenses** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

3. **GRAND TOTAL** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

**NOTE:** Please prepare your budget so that the total project budget is rounded to the nearest $100.

*Please attach an itemized list of all anticipated direct project expenses.
** Refer to Section IV in the grant proposal form.