



Request for Proposals (Updated 12/16/2019)

Woodward Hines Education Foundation

Initiative: IMPACT (Improving Mississippi's Persistence and Completion Together)

Background/Introduction

The [Woodward Hines Education Foundation](#) (WHEF) is an endowed Mississippi non-profit organization that has focused its efforts upon promoting greater postsecondary access for nearly 25 years, and more recently, expanded its mission to also support improved persistence and completion outcomes for all Mississippi college students. As a statewide foundation, it is our privilege to provide trusted college access guidance to approximately 40,000 clients and partners each year through our signature program, [Get2College](#). Yet, WHEF recognizes that there are many more students, families and education professionals throughout the state that are in need of these resources. To that end, we are exploring technologies and growing partnerships that will allow us to share more of this information with Mississippians, particularly those who have been historically underrepresented (rural, low-income, first-generation, racial minorities, etc.) in higher education enrollment.

According to Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, [65% of all U.S. jobs](#) will require some training and education beyond high school. In 2019, Mississippi residents ages 25 to 64 have achieved a collective postsecondary attainment rate of 40.9%, as reported by the Lumina Foundation's [Stronger Nation](#) report. To prepare Mississippians for the workforce of the future and have us remain competitive in a global economy, there is a critical need to not only have more students enroll in college, but for them to successfully complete necessary credentials. Academic, financial and social barriers to degree completion are ever-present with students - as WHEF advances its mission into the college persistence and completion space, we are committed to extending support to the non-profit public higher education institutions that serve our students. While there are certainly unique challenges and opportunities for education in a state like Mississippi, systemic alignment of tools and strategic investment of resources can assist our colleges and universities in uncovering and removing these barriers for students.

Eligibility

We are seeking proposals from Mississippi public higher education institutions (awarding baccalaureate degrees) that provide data-informed solutions aimed at improving student retention, persistence and/or completion of credentials. As a first step, please carefully review our funding priorities [here](#). Should you have any question regarding the eligibility of your institution or alignment of the proposed project with WHEF's priorities, please email swatson@woodwardhines.org.



Benefits to IMPACT Participation

All institutions awarded funding through this RFP process will be included in the inaugural class of Improving Mississippi's Persistence and Completion Together (IMPACT). The purpose of IMPACT is to create a state-specific, facilitated community of practice for the exchange of findings, insights and ideas, as well as providing coordinated access to high-quality professional development opportunities for institutional faculty/staff, innovations in institutional data collection/usage and platforms for peer learning.

Requirements: All IMPACT grantees must agree to participate in regular convenings, designating at least one person at the institution to participate in each convening's design subcommittee. In addition, grantees agree to participate in a minimum of 2 site visits conducted by WHEF program staff and IMPACT project evaluator. Every effort will be made to coordinate site visits at times that are mutually convenient for program staff and the grantee. Also, grantees will plan and execute an evaluation of proposed projects, as well as participate in WHEF's overall cluster evaluation of the IMPACT initiative. Cluster evaluation activities will be ongoing from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2025. All grantees will participate in up to 5 IMPACT learning events, both virtually and in-person, with specific timelines announced in 2020.

IMPACT Funding Opportunities

We are interested in partnering with higher education institutions to produce innovative solutions for retention, persistence and completion issues along the postsecondary pipeline. To achieve this goal, WHEF is offering **one** of the following opportunities to eligible organizations:

- *Innovation grants* – up to \$50,000 per year – for new and small-scale student success projects (or a new addition to an existing program) within institutions. Innovation grants allow universities to pilot best practices or establish baseline data for future expansion.
- *Verification grants* - up to \$75,000 per year – for existing projects that have been piloted on a small scale and demonstrated measurable impact. Verification grants allow the underlying assumptions and outcomes to be tested in a multi-year framework on larger segments or different at-risk student populations.
- *Institutionalization grants* – up to \$100,000 per year – for proven projects and practices that have demonstrated meaningful impact upon underrepresented populations and can be scaled across the institution.

All ranges represent potential annual awards for each selected institution, and we will consider multi-year proposals (not to exceed 4 years). Grants may be awarded for a two-, three, or four-year duration, depending upon the scale and scope of the work. The maximum grant period will extend from July 1, 2020

through June 30, 2024. Continuation of multi-year grants will be contingent upon a satisfactory annual report review.

IMPACT funding **will not** support salaries or positions for **new** program personnel (**important:** see modification [here](#)) or indirect program costs exceeding 15%.

Examples of proposals that could be supported by WHEF funding might be:

Retention

- Creation or expansion of communications or technologies aimed at mitigating “summer melt;”
- Creation or scaling of summer bridge or first-year experience programs, targeting populations identified as having retention risk;
- Corequisite remediation practices that demonstrate ability to preserve student financial aid or accelerate time to degree.

Persistence

- Guided pathways for declared, or career pathways for undeclared, degree programs;
- Scalable methods to improve or disseminate student data to campus stakeholders (faculty, advisors, success practitioners, etc.) for real-time or early-alert interventions;
- Supplemental instruction or peer support for successful students to serve as tutors in gateway coursework.

Completion

- Implementing or scaling capstone projects or intensive research programming to support student scholastic development;
- Creation or expansion of internship opportunities to connect graduating students with impactful career experiences;
- One-time completion grants for students nearing the end of degree requirements, on-track for graduation and exhibit small financial need.

The above items are not intended to be an exhaustive list, nor do they represent issues of greater significance to WHEF. Additionally, the categorization of projects by student progress are provided merely as a guide. We strongly encourage applying institutions to consider their own data and students’ needs to identify momentum points for student success along any portion of the pipeline, particularly as it relates to eliminating/reducing achievement gaps for underserved students.

Evaluation

Each grantee will be required to actively participate in evaluation. The goals of this evaluation effort include:

- gaining insights to improve projects as they’re created, implemented, and evolved;
- assessing the impact of the grantee projects on the campus and its students;
- providing learning opportunities for the Mississippi IHL system.

Grantee Evaluation

Each applicant must submit a one-page evaluation plan that demonstrates how the institution will gather and use data for learning with its campus team. Grantees are encouraged to identify evaluation support from among the faculty/staff or local evaluation community who can join their teams. This person would play a role in identifying, gathering and analyzing whatever data is most useful for the site to actively learn from the implementation process and to determine how to improve the proposed effort as it matures. Technical assistance will be provided by WHEF to the grantee sites, as needed, to encourage the collection, analysis and use of both quantitative and qualitative data. Estimated costs for grantee-level evaluation are allowable in the applicant's proposed budget.

Evaluation plans should include quantitative and qualitative data collection, such as:

- Description of the interim outputs and final outcomes to be measured for this work;
- Specifics of the information that will be gathered and analyzed to determine how the proposed program is working (qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, feedback sessions or quantitative methods, such as surveys or secondary data analysis).
- Indicate how data will be used to explore differences for underserved populations. For example:
 - Institutional baselines or regional/national benchmarking of vulnerable student populations;
 - Year-over-year comparison of student population performance;
 - Changes in achievements gaps or overall retention/persistence rates of underserved students.

Cluster Evaluation

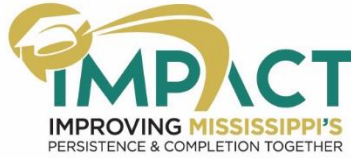
WHEF requires that each grantee campus will participate in the overall cluster evaluation of the IMPACT initiative. This cluster evaluation is designed to identify key lessons that can be learned and shared with IMPACT participants and the larger higher education community, from implementation through the end of the grant term. Specifically, each grantee will be asked to collaborate with the evaluators partnering with WHEF in the following ways:

- Participate in and assist with annual or biennial coordination of site visits;
- Participate in bi-annual phone interviews;
- Provide documents and reports as needed.

Expenses associated with technical assistance, cluster evaluation, IMPACT convening participation and site visits will be incurred directly by WHEF.

Disclaimer:

Woodward Hines Education Foundation reserves the right where it may serve the Foundation's best interests, to request additional information or clarification from applying institutions or to allow corrections for errors or omissions. There is no expressed or implied obligation for Woodward Hines Education Foundation to reimburse responding entities for any expenses incurred in preparing submissions in response to this request.



Key Dates for IMPACT Timeline

Release of RFP application:	Thursday, November 14, 2019 (8:00 a.m. CST). Apply here .
RFP informational webinar:	Wednesday, December 4, 2019 (10:00 a.m. CST) Recording will be made publicly available post-event.
RFP application due date:	Friday, January 31, 2020 (midnight CST)
Application review site calls:	February 2020 . If your institution requires a site call during application review, WHEF will notify and coordinate timing with project leads.
Decisions and funding announcement:	April 2020
IMPACT convenings:	Inaugural event in June/July 2021, with biennial convenings through June/July 2025.
Required reporting schedule, dependent upon duration of grant award:	
Annual, 1 st year:	July 31, 2021 (for grant period ending June 30, 2021)
Annual, 2 nd year:	July 31, 2022 (for grant period ending June 30, 2022)
Annual, 3 rd year:	July 31, 2023 (for grant period ending June 30, 2023)
Annual, 4 th year:	July 31, 2024 (for grant period ending June 30, 2024)

Technical assistance:

For questions about eligibility, the application process, or project/budgetary components, contact:

Shanell Watson, Program Officer

swatson@woodwardhines.org

Special note of thanks:

WHEF would like to express its appreciation to the six higher education institutions that were able to participate in the precursor to this RFP, through the University Success Program Scan (USPS) research project. Through USPS' quantitative and qualitative findings in spring and summer 2019, the WHEF team was able to gain valuable insights into the challenges and needs of our universities and students. We are sincerely grateful for your time and consider the project the beginning of a longer-term, generative feedback loop between philanthropy and higher education in Mississippi.