

Conference Grants

The Conference Grant Program provides support to scholars to organize small research conferences, focused symposia, or other forms of convenings around important issues in education research. This program is intended to bring together researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and other important collaborators whose expertise, substantive knowledge and practice, theoretical insight, or methodological expertise can be engaged in ways that help to build upon and advance education research. We encourage applicants to think creatively about how convenings can expand the substantive work and impact of educational research on advancing racial equity. This grant program supports proposals with budgets of \$50,000 or less.

The Foundation rotates the area of focus for this program annually to generate fresh ideas and perspectives on pressing educational challenges. For this funding cycle Spencer will support conferences related to the topic of critical issues in advancing racial equity in education research.

Program Statement

The Conference Grant program provides support for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to develop small research conferences, focused symposia, or other convenings to explore **critical issues in advancing racial equity in education research** with budgets up to \$50,000. We intend for applicants to bring together researchers, practitioners, policymakers, or other important collaborators whose expertise, substantive knowledge and practice, theoretical insight, or methodological expertise can be engaged in ways that help to build upon and advance racial equity in education research. We invite proposals that aim to grow the current scope of research on racial equity, develop new knowledge through interdisciplinary scholarly engagement, or as a way to collaborate to increase the impact of educational research on

practice, or policy. Importantly, we welcome proposals that advance conceptualizations of strength-based and systems transformation perspectives. Finally, we encourage applicants to carefully and innovatively think about the format and pedagogy of their proposed conference or convenings. Our conference program is not restricted to traditional formats, so for example, you might consider a series of smaller convenings that are in-person or on-line, or some combination of both. All applications should consider how their convening will (a) bring together a diverse group of educational scholars and/or stakeholders, and (b) influence the public discourse, practice, or policy of education.

For this funding cycle Spencer will support conferences and convenings that explore and advance racial equity in education research. While the field of education has focused on issues of inequality and its growth in the United States, we are in a time of increased urgency given the current intersections of the COVID-19 public health crisis, rapid shifts in educational systems, economic challenges and growing civil resistance to systemic racism and anti-blackness. There is a pressing need for robust approaches to scholarship that can consequentially contribute to achieving racial equity in education.

We are especially interested in proposals that include a focus on methodological needs and advancements in the service of education research that advances racial equity. Rigorous research methods are at the heart of knowledge-building efforts and are essential to how we create evidence that is not only usable and reliable but also helps to imaginatively pursue racial equity. We encourage conferences that aim to engage and explore the intersections of racial equity and innovative research methods by deepening focus and practices within a discipline and tradition or bringing together expertise and traditions that may not be routinely engaged with each other. We also encourage conferences that reach beyond deficit assumptions and documentation of educational inequality. For example, conferences could explore intersections of theoretical and multidisciplinary perspectives with a consideration of methods like measurement development; the reimagining of key domains in the field, such as educator learning, with robust understandings of racialization and systemic inequalities; or the refinement of participatory methods engagement with

multiple forms of data and analytical processes. In both quantitative and qualitative traditions there are opportunities for development that will strengthen the quality of the data and evidence in education research that can contribute to advancing racial equity. We recognize there may also be the need for substantive reflection, rethinking, and expansion of the foundational methods themselves, while also continuing to ensure research is conducted in adherence to a set of rigorous practices and standards of evidence. We anticipate that there is a wide range of relevant work for the field to do and encourage proposals that make a case for approaches that could meet pressing needs and have significant impacts.

Proposals focused exclusively on professional development for teachers, faculty, or other education practitioners are not eligible for this grant program unless there is a clear and compelling research focus articulated by the principal investigator. Conferences in which scholars, practitioners, and/or policymakers engage in mutualistic knowledge exchange and development are eligible. For example, this may include co-creating research agendas with practitioner groups or policymakers, partnerships (like RPPs (Research Practice Partnerships)) or research projects that involve participatory designs.

The Spencer Foundation recognizes that the dynamics of inequality have important differences across national contexts in their cultural and semantic formations. Central to this Conference Program initiative is the significant need to encourage a wide range of perspectives to creatively and ambitiously engage in approaches to advancing equity for racially and ethnically marginalized populations. We support conference applicants from outside of the United States that address the need for advancing equity in their respective contexts.

Conference Structure and Participants

The proposal should be explicit in describing the structure of the convening, the pedagogical or facilitative approaches, and the rationale for how these components work towards achieving the stated goals. By structure, we mean a description of how and why the convening is organized in a particular way, including the specific framework(s) to be used. By a pedagogical approach, we mean a clear plan for participation structures that has considered how

participants will be engaged. We see conference formats that aim to foster a learning environment which is collaborative, dialogic, and focused on problem-solving.

Successful proposals will bring together researchers, practitioners, and/or policymakers to approach the proposed topic from multiple perspectives. We encourage applicants to consider ways of bridging the substantive, theoretical, and methodological expertise of participants. While not a requirement, successful proposals in previous rounds have also included attendees outside of the academy such as teachers, policymakers, families, artists, or journalists if the convening called for such expertise.

Eligibility and Restrictions

Eligibility

Proposals to the Conference Grant program must be for small research conferences, focused symposia, or convenings that will explore critical issues in advancing racial equity in education research as specified in the Program Statement.

Principal Investigators (PIs) and Co-PIs applying for a Conference grant must have an earned doctorate in an academic discipline or professional field, or appropriate experience in an education research-related profession. While graduate students may be part of the proposal, they may not be named the PI or Co-PI.

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).

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

Restrictions

Proposals to support annual ongoing conferences or meetings are not eligible for this program. Relatedly, requests to fund travel to existing annual conferences or meetings are also not eligible.

Proposed budgets for this program are limited to \$50,000 total and may not include indirect cost charges per [Spencer's policy](#).

PIs and Co-PIs may not submit more than one application for a given deadline in this program.

Deadlines

Fall 2021 Cycle

Applications Open

July 6, 2021

Full Proposal Deadline

October 13, 2021 12:00 PM NOON Central Time

How to Apply

The application process begins with a full proposal; there is no requirement to submit a letter of intent or intent to apply form. Full proposals for are due by 12:00 pm noon central time on the deadline date.

Full Proposal Guidelines

Conference Grant proposals 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 their 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.

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.

Note: If you will have Co-PIs on your project, they must also register and complete their profile information if they wish to be included in the application.

Step 3 – Start a Proposal

To fill out the application, go to your Workbench and click the Apply button for the Conference Grants program. Your draft application can be saved and returned to so that you may continue work on it at a later time and can be found on your Draft Proposals list on your Workbench.

Conference Grant Proposal Elements

Within the online application, there are detailed guidelines for each section.

Below is an overview of the 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, they can be added to the application in this section. They must first follow Steps 1 and 2 above before being added to the application.

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 project summary.

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 (Speaker/Participant Honoraria, Independent Consultant, Advisor)
- Travel (Conference)
- Equipment and Software (Equipment, Software)
- Project Expenses (Conference Space Rental, Conference Meals, Supplies, 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 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.

Accommodations for people with disabilities: Please include a plan for how you will accommodate people with disabilities who attend your conference in the planning phase of your project. When budgeting for your convening you may include costs associated with accommodating people with disabilities. For example, you might need to allot funds for a sign language interpreter, assistive listening devices, video captioning, or printed media in an alternate format. The Spencer Foundation will consider such accommodations an allowable conference expense.

Proposal Narrative – You are expected to upload a proposal narrative pdf that includes the following:

- **Purpose and significance:** Here the applicant should make explicit the need for and benefits of the conference. We encourage a clear and concise explanation of how the conference topic will expand the current scope of research and develop new knowledge of racial equity. While applicants should provide a rationale that is grounded in what is known in the topic, applicants should focus on describing how their proposed meeting is related to critical issues in advancing racial equity in education research and how the meeting might lead to new and productive research agendas.
- **Research interests and expertise of invited conference participants:** The proposal should include a brief description of the types of participants you plan to invite, (e.g., sociologists, learning scientists, environmental scientists, anthropologists, teachers, artists, or community organizers) and a justification for their inclusion. An actual list of potential named participants and their expected contributions should be uploaded as an appendix. These participants need not be confirmed at the time your proposal is submitted, but the conference organizers should have a reasonable expectation that they would attend if invited.
- **Detailed structure and pedagogical approach:** The proposal should be explicit in describing the structure of the convening, the pedagogical or

facilitative approaches, and the rationale for how these components work towards achieving the stated goals. By structure, we mean a description of how and why the convening is organized in a particular way, including the specific framework(s) to be used. By pedagogical (or curricular approach), we mean a clear plan for participation that goes beyond a general meeting overview or basic conference agenda. Applicants should provide evidence that their proposed meeting will reimagine traditional academic conference formats and foster a learning environment that is collaborative, dialogic, and focused on problem-solving. We request a plan for facilitation and activities during the meeting and details about any assignments for participants before or after the meeting.

- **Deliverables and expected outcomes:** We intend these conferences to be productive and move the field of education research forward. Ideally, the expected outcomes would be something that can be shared with the broader research community as a way of influencing the field. At a minimum, there should be some discussion in the proposal about the next steps following the meeting that speaks to how the scholarly exchange might spur continued discussion and learning with the broader field once the conference is completed. While many proposals discuss plans for proposing edited volumes, special journal issues, or planning symposia for AERA or other national conferences to highlight work that has developed from the meeting, we encourage applicants to be creative in their consideration of deliverables and consider a variety of potential audiences.
- **Accommodations for people with disabilities:** Please include a plan for how you will accommodate people with disabilities who attend your conference in the planning phase of your project. In this section, please describe how you intend to accommodate these participants. When budgeting for your convening you may include costs associated with accommodating people with disabilities. For example, you might need to allot funds for a sign language interpreter, assistive listening devices, video captioning, or printed media in an alternate format. The Spencer Foundation will consider such accommodations an allowable conference expense.

This narrative may not exceed 2000 words and at the 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 2000-word limit.

The text should be double-spaced and in 12-point font. 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 towards 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.

Project Timeline – An uploaded timeline should indicate the proposed start and end dates of the funding as well as the planned dates for the proposed conference (even if tentative). The timeline should list the schedule of the major activities leading up to and, if appropriate, after the conference. The project timeline may not exceed 1 page and the text should be in 12-point font.

Draft Agenda – A document providing a draft agenda for your proposed conference should be uploaded. This is different than the detailed curriculum as part of the proposal narrative.

Potential Participants – A list of the potential participants and their expected contributions should be uploaded as a pdf file. We encourage gatherings that are multidisciplinary and strongly encourage applicants to consider an intergenerational roster of participants. These participants need not be confirmed at the time when your proposal is submitted, but you should have a reasonable expectation that they would attend if invited.

Conference Organizers – This document should identify the roles, responsibility and knowledge base of the Conference Organizer(s) and any supporting personnel as appropriate. Additionally, it should articulate how the team will work together to organize the conference, highlighting what each team member will contribute to the conference. This document should be no longer than 250 words and the text should be double-spaced in 12-point font.

Optional Appendices A – If you have additional documents focused on data collections tools, instruments, or protocols relevant to the conference, they can be included in this section of the application as supplemental information.

Optional Appendices B – If you have other supporting documents, such as letters of agreement or collaboration, they can be uploaded to this section of the application. Please see the guidelines in the online application for more information about these types of appendices.

Project Data – Within the form, we ask you to check off the appropriate options with regard to your research conference 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. You are required to provide the Signatory's name, title, and email address; this is normally an administrative or financial person that 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 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 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 Conference Grants Program in Education uses a peer review process for all eligible submissions. Each proposal will be reviewed by both external panel reviewers and internal staff. The review process for this program takes approximately 5-6 months from the deadline date.

The review panel for this program is made up of scholars in the field of education research with expertise across many disciplines and methodological areas. Panelists are asked to rate and comment on the following aspects of your proposal:

- **Significance of the Conference:** Reviewers will evaluate the importance and timeliness of the topic and its alignment to the program statement.
- **Adequacy of Conference Curriculum:** Reviewers will comment on the overall adequacy of the conference curriculum.
- **Background of the Conference Organizers and Participants:** Reviewers will comment on how well the backgrounds of the conference organizers and potential participants are appropriate, comprehensive of the relevant areas in the field, and provide an overall goodness-of-fit for the convening's goals.
- **Deliverables of the Proposed Convening:** Reviewers will evaluate the appropriateness of the deliverables discussed in the proposal and their alignment to the conference goals.
- **Budget and Timeline:** Reviewers will evaluate the adequacy of the budget and timeline.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Will the Foundation entertain proposals that fall outside the thematic area of focus for each cycle?

A: Each cycle, the Foundation will issue a thematic conference grant call focused on advancing educational research. While there may be some very

compelling conference grant proposals on a range of topics within education, the funding priorities for this program will regularly change to smaller subtopics within the field of education. If proposals are submitted on topics outside of the named focus area in a given cycle, they will not be competitive.

Q: What qualifies as a “small” research meeting?

A: We leave this up to the team to decide how many people they need. However, the program is not designed to host large conferences to support annual or reoccurring meetings to present papers that would not allow participants to work closely on the research area or focus identified by the PI. Smaller convenings are better able to foster collaborative work among attendees.

Q: Can I use Spencer Conference Grant funding to fund or supplement existing conferences

A: The Foundation's conference grant program on research is meant to support scholars for new one-time meetings. Spencer Conference Grants may not be used to support ongoing conferences or meetings that are already in existence.

Q: Does this conference grant program provide support for travel to existing conferences, such as AERA or the annual meeting of a specific group?

A: No, the current program is not designed to provide funding for individuals to travel to existing conferences to present their research. This conference grant program has been established to provide support for a group of scholars to hold an original convening on a research topic in the field of education.

Q: Does the conference grant program provide support for scholars to convene practitioners for professional development?

A: The submission of proposals focused exclusively on professional development for teachers or faculty would not be competitive for this grant program unless there was a clear and compelling research focus articulated by the principal investigator.

Q: Can we charge a registration fee for participants?

A: No. Our intent for the grant is to allow you to invite specific participants

and to pay for their involvement.

Q: Do you accept conference proposals from outside the United States?

A: Yes, we accept proposals from outside the U.S. Application materials must be submitted in English and project budgets must be in U.S. dollars.

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

A: Yes, for this competition, we are open to grantees holding a conference grant as well as an active research grant at the same time.

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

A: Yes, as long as the proposals are for different conferences and the organizers (PIs and Co-PIs) are different, it is fine for an organization to submit multiple applications at one time.

Q: May I apply for a Spencer Conference Grant and combine it with funding from another agency?

A: The Spencer Foundation occasionally receives requests for work that would, if funded, be part of larger projects that might ultimately include multiple funding sources. The conference proposed to Spencer ideally would be able to stand alone. In this case, additional resources from another funder might allow for a larger meeting or perhaps a follow up meeting. What we want to avoid is funding only part of a meeting that cannot reach its goals without additional resources.

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: If I am turned down, is it possible to revise my proposal and reapply in a later cycle?

A: Spencer does not have a policy against accepting uninvited revised

proposals. However, you should know that many factors go into the final decision on each proposal, including our limited budget. Even if you are able to address the concerns mentioned in the feedback in your revised submission, we can offer no guarantees as to the likelihood of funding. Additionally, the conference grant focus areas will change annually, so depending on the timing of your submission, a revision may not be appropriate for the current call for proposals. Please note, resubmissions are considered among all of the other newly submitted proposals and are not given special status or consideration in the review process.

Q: I have an idea for a research conference and would like feedback. Is it possible to contact someone?

A: If you have reviewed our program statement and application guidelines and still have questions about where your idea for a conference falls within the focus of the call, feel free to email us at conferences@spencer.org for guidance. While we are not able to provide feedback on proposal drafts, we are happy to answer questions by email.

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 7 months after the proposal deadline. The review process for this program takes approximately 5-6 months and once notified of the funding decision, it can take an additional 2 months 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 not be issued.

Recent Awardees

Below is a list of the Conference Grants most recently awarded. These were funded under our first call for proposals focused on

Critical Issues in Advancing Racial Equity and Innovative Methods.

"Colloquium on College Sport (In)Equity: Working within and beyond the law to achieve intersectional racial justice praxis"

Siduri Haslerig and Kirsten Hextrum
University of Oklahoma

"Translating Critical Race Research for Evidenced-Based Policymaking"

Francesca Lopez, Royel Johnson, Ashley Patterson, and LaWanda Ward
The Pennsylvania State University

"Other Suns: Designing for Racial Equity through Speculative Education"

Nicole Mirra and Antero Garcia
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
