Charter School Research Collaborative
Proposal Development Application Guide

Contact information, grant basics, and the project team will be carried over from the LOI. If you need to update this information, please email chartercollab@mitblueprintlabs.org.

Full Proposal

- Grant Type
  - Confirm the grant type you are applying for. We understand you may change types between the time of letter of inquiry (LOI) submission and full proposal submission.

- Project Team
  - Please list the full names and organizations of all project team members.

Narrative
- Narrative Upload
  - See here for additional guidance and example projects.
  - In a 4-6 double-spaced page PDF include:
    - A description of the project and the project's significance. A brief timeline of key project events and milestones.
    - A clear plan to determine whether a full research project would be feasible.
      - How will this proposal be used to assess the feasibility of the project?
    - A description of the data needed to complete this project and your plans to secure data access.
    - A description of other funding in-hand and pending for this project.
    - A description of the relationship with your research partner(s).
    - A demonstration of policy relevance and research agenda alignment

- Narrative FAQs
  - This narrative may not exceed 6 double-spaced pages. Your reference list should follow your narrative in the same PDF file and will not count toward the 6-page limit. Footnotes will also not count towards the word limit.
  - The text should be double-spaced and in 12-point font. APA style is preferred.
  - Tables and other figures can be included in the text of your proposal, where appropriate, provided they are used sparingly. Tables and figures do not count toward the 6-page 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.

Budget
- Detailed Budget Upload
  - Proposal development: $10,000 (direct costs only)
  - Template – You are required to use this template
  - If you are applying in partnership with another organization or researcher, please note that we require the organization receiving the majority of the funding to submit the application and house the grant at their institution/organization.

- o If you plan to pay personnel that are not employees of the primary organization using grant funds, please list these costs in your budget as a subaward or subcontract. Subawards/subcontracts must make up less than 50% of the total direct costs of the award.
- o Allowable expenses
  - Salaries (PI, Co-PI, Postdoctoral Research Assistant, Graduate Student, Researcher, Undergraduate Researcher, Other Research Staff, Other Staff) - personnel of primary organization only
  - Benefits (PI Benefits, Co-PI Benefits, Researcher Benefits, Other Staff Benefits, Tuition/Fees) - personnel of primary organization only
  - Other Collaborator (Independent Consultant, Advisor) - list all subawards/subcontract costs here
  - Travel (Project Travel, Conference, or Dissemination Travel)
  - Equipment and Software (Equipment, Software)
  - Project Expenses (Supplies, Participant Stipends/Costs, Data, Communication, Transcription)
  - Other (This should only be used for expenses not covered in the choices above)
  - Indirect costs
    - Applicants may request indirect costs of up to 10% of total direct costs. If your organization's approved indirect cost rate is lower than 10%, you must use the lower rate.
    - Indirect costs will be added on top of the requested direct costs and will not count toward the maximum direct cost amount.
    - For proposal development, you may request up to $10,000 in direct costs, for a total budget of up to $11,000 including indirect costs.
- o Budget justification for each line-item must be included in the detailed budget.

- What current and pending financial support do you have for this project? Include the funder name(s) and dollar amount(s) received/requested, if applicable. Otherwise, write N/A.

Supporting Documentation
- What is the status of all necessary data use agreements (DUAs) required for this project? (write in)

- IRB Approval or Exemption Letter (optional file upload)
  - o Proof of Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is not required at the time of proposal submission. If IRB approval is needed for this project based on your research scope and it is chosen for funding, your organization will be responsible for obtaining IRB review and approval in accordance with both your institutional and MIT policies and applicable law. MIT Blueprint Labs may be able to support IRB approval for non-profits without their own IRB. Per MIT policy, for-profits are ineligible to receive MIT IRB support.

- Other Supporting Documentation (optional file upload(s))
  - o Use this optional section to upload additional relevant documentation such as graduate student letters of faculty support, letters of collaboration, data use agreements, project team bios, or interview protocols.

Proposal Development Criteria

Proposal development grants are intended to be used for early-stage research activities. See here for additional guidance and example projects.

Proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria.
- **Project viability:** Proposals should demonstrate a clear plan to determine whether a pilot or full research project is feasible (e.g., in regard to data access).
- **Policy relevance:** The proposed work should help foster a relationship between the researcher and the research partner. Proposals should answer questions of pressing interest to policymakers and practitioners.
- **Research agenda alignment:** Proposals should align with at least one of the questions in the Collaborative's research agenda (see here). All projects should focus on US charter schools.

Geographic priority areas

Projects that examine unexplored topics in one of the Collaborative's geographic areas of interest may be given priority over similarly evaluated projects. However, projects will first and foremost be judged based on the evaluation criteria, regardless of location.

- Baton Rouge, LA
- Camden, NJ
- Colorado state
- Connecticut state
- Georgia state
- Indianapolis, IN
- Kansas City, MO
- New Orleans, LA
- New York City, NY
- Newark, NJ
- Oakland, CA
- St. Louis, MO
- Stockton, CA
- Tennessee state
- Texas state
- Washington, DC
- Washington state

Review Process

The Blueprint Labs team will review each letter of inquiry to assess alignment with the Collaborative's priorities and research agenda, as well as project viability. Invited full proposals will be evaluated by the Collaborative's Executive Committee. The Committee is composed of leading charter school researchers, practitioners, and policymakers and will review all full proposals. The review process will take two months from the full application deadline date. The committee will be divided into two subcommittees: a research subcommittee and a policy/practice subcommittee. The committees will be asked to review proposals on the following indicators:
1. Project viability
2. Policy relevance
3. Research agenda alignment

Each full proposal will be peer-reviewed by at least one member of the research subcommittee and one member of the policy/practice subcommittee. The Executive Committee will then meet to discuss the proposals, and final funding decisions will be made by Blueprint's Directors.

The current Executive Committee members are: Carycruz Bueno (Wesleyan University), Christopher Campos (University of Chicago Booth School of Business), Sarah Cohodes (University of Michigan), Drew Jacobs (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools), Constance Jones (Noble Schools), Lauren Morando Rhim (Center for Learner Equity), Jack Mountjoy

(University of Chicago Booth School of Business), and Karega Rausch (National Association of Charter School Authorizers).

Applicants who receive a grant will be subject to the following requirements:
1. IRB approval or exemption before MIT can establish a subaward agreement to setup funding.
2. MIT requires an official acceptance of the proposal and budget by your institution to set up the subaward. Applicants are encouraged to submit the proposal to their office of sponsored programs or contracts department prior to the award decision to avoid delays and ensure that your institute will accept your proposal and proposal budget.
3. Once all materials have been received, it can take up to 60 days to establish the subaward. The award is paid on a cost reimbursable basis, and spending can usually be backdated through the date of the Blueprint award letter or date of IRB approval (whichever comes later). Funds are to be used for the purposes described in the proposal narrative and proposal budget. Significant changes to the project scope, design, or budget must be pre-approved by Blueprint Labs.
4. The terms of the award will be further specified in the award letter and in any subaward established with MIT. Acceptance of funding from Blueprint Labs signals your consent to these requirements. Non-compliance with these requirements could affect your eligibility for future funding from any Blueprint Labs Collaborative.
5. Grantees will typically be required to submit several reports, including a brief annual progress report and a final report, both including financial data.

Eligibility Criteria

Emerging and established researchers from a range of disciplines are invited to apply. Teams should be led by principal investigators who have some demonstrated success in conducting research, as demonstrated by their educational training (e.g., in economics, public policy, political science, education policy) or publications. They should also have an interest in education policy, broadly conceived, and they should be affiliated with an eligible nonprofit organization, such as an academic institution, public entity, or state or local government agency. We do not award grants to individuals.

See below for more details about eligibility for specific groups:

1. **Graduate students**
   Graduate students in economics, public policy, and related fields are also encouraged to apply for funding and should include a letter of support from a faculty sponsor if invited to submit a full proposal. The total amount of funding for graduate students is capped at $75,000.

2. **Funders**

   Funders may be part of a team applying for funding, but their engagement in the partnership must be to exclusively support the research. The project must be researcher-led, meaning that the researcher leads the development of the research questions and methodology. Funders are defined as any organization that provides direct or indirect financial support to charter schools, charter management organizations, and related work, including but not limited to: private foundations (e.g., independent, family, and operating), community foundations, and donor-advised funds (i.e., this includes both private foundations and grantmaking public charities).

3. **Lobbying**
    Individuals or organizations are not permitted to use any funds received through this grant for lobbying purposes.