

Racial Equity Research Grants

The Racial Equity Research Grants program supports education research projects that will contribute to understanding and ameliorating racial inequality in education. We are interested in funding studies that aim to understand and disrupt the reproduction and deepening of inequality in education, and which seek to (re)imagine and make new forms of equitable education. Thus, we are interested in research projects that seek to envision educational opportunities in a multiplicity of education systems, levels, settings, and developmental ranges and that reach beyond documenting conditions and paradigms that contribute to persistent racial inequalities.

Our goal for this program is to support rigorous, intellectually ambitious, and technically sound research that is relevant to the most pressing questions and compelling opportunities in relation to racial equity in education. In this cycle of funding, we will continue to fund scholarship focused on a range of communities and issues with respect to equity. We encourage proposals from across the methodological spectrum, including qualitative methods, mixed-methods, and quantitative methods. We want to especially encourage Racial Equity proposals that focus on the following areas: (1) youth and educator mental health that explores possibilities that promote resilience, center healing, and foster well-being; (2) current political challenges in Pre-K-12 and higher education around diversity, equity, and inclusion; and (3) youth civic education and engagement across learning contexts. [Additionally, and as part of The Spencer Foundation's Initiative on AI and Education, we will fund an additional set of Racial Equity grants specifically focused on AI and racial equity.](#)

As with other Spencer grant programs, this program is “field-initiated” in that proposal submissions are not required to be developed around a particular research topic, discipline, design, method, or geographic location. We accept Intent to Apply forms once a year. We will be accepting applications for projects ranging from one to five years with budgets up to \$75,000.

Program Statement

The Racial Equity Research Grants program supports education research projects that will contribute to understanding and disrupting racial inequality in education and work to reimagine generative possibilities to advance educational equity, with budgets up to \$75,000 for projects ranging from one to five years. We believe that educational research can play an important role in developing new forms of education that are humane, equitable, and just. As such, there is a pressing need for robust approaches to scholarship that can contribute consequentially to achieving equity in education. We encourage a wide range of methodological approaches to creatively and ambitiously engage in advancing racial equity.

This program is “field-initiated” in that proposal submissions are not required to focus on a particular research topic, discipline, design, or method. We hope that scholars will identify the most compelling and needed areas of research. For instance, scholars might focus on: instructional challenges and innovations; current political challenges and the anti-DEI policy landscape; racial and geographic disparities and promising directions for engaging and supporting children, families, and communities; the implications of mass deportations on families, communities, and schools; informal learning environments and informal educators; assessment challenges and opportunities; climate change and equity; social- emotional learning and well-being; educator and leader development; digital learning environments; systems change and policy making; and intersections between housing, health, and education.

We are interested in proposals at all levels and in all settings of learning, including early childhood, higher education, and in schools, families, and communities across the world. We are also interested in studies that seek to understand the situated experiences of minoritized groups including, but not limited to, Black; Middle Eastern or Northern African; Latinx/Latino/Latina, Hispanic, or Spanish origin; Asian or Asian American; and Native/Tribal/Indigenous communities. In addition, we are interested in studies that focus on those learners who are multiply marginalized, including intersections with English language learners, immigrants, students with disabilities, highly mobile and institutionalized youth (e.g., foster youth or those in youth prisons), LGBTQIA+ youth, and those in rural communities. Finally, we encourage proposals that are reflective of other international, national, and local contexts. We recognize that the experiences of inequality, as well as the histories and structures producing it, will vary. Thus, we expect to fund proposals that explore meanings and possibilities of equity, as well as explanations of inequality, in a variety of ways. For example, engaging and understanding issues of coloniality may be central to scholarship focused on and with Native/Tribal/Indigenous communities. We see wrestling with these complexities as necessary to cultivating educational equity. Finally, we especially welcome proposals that advance strength-based perspectives and push beyond solely documenting current paradigms.

Our goal for this program is to support rigorous, intellectually ambitious, and technically sound research that is relevant to the most pressing questions and compelling opportunities in relation to racial equity in education. We seek to support scholarship that develops new foundational knowledge that may have a significant impact on practice and policy. We value work that fosters creative and open-minded scholarship, engages in deep inquiry, and examines robust questions related to education and inequality. We also value work that is engaging emerging possibilities. We invite proposals that aim to grow the current scope of research on racial equity, develop new knowledge through interdisciplinary scholarly engagement, and include collaboration in the service of increasing the impact of educational research.

To this end, this program supports proposals from multiple disciplinary and methodological perspectives, both domestically and internationally, and from scholars at various stages in their careers. We anticipate that proposals will span a wide range of topics and disciplines. We expect and welcome methodological diversity in answering pressing questions; thus, we are open to projects that utilize a wide array of research methods including quantitative, experimental and quasi-experimental research, causal and correlational studies, qualitative, mixed-methods, ethnographies, design-based research, participatory methods, and historical research, to name a few. We are also interested in methodological research that can enable and support research on and with racialized communities that build capacity for equitable educational systems. This could include exploration of methods appropriate in small samples and populations, the development of new measures and indices, and studies regarding the impact of methods and algorithms on reducing or promoting inequality. We are open to projects that might incorporate data from multiple and varied sources or work closely with practitioners or community members over the life of the project.

We expect that projects will interrogate the systems and structures that are associated with racial inequities. We seek proposals that focus on a strengths-based, rather than a deficit-oriented, approach. A strengths-based perspective affirms and extends the knowledge, resources, goals, capacities, and interests of individuals, families, and communities, and identifies and builds upon existing assets and resources.

Eligibility and Restrictions

Eligibility

Proposals to the Racial Equity Research Grants program must be for academic research projects that will contribute to understanding and ameliorating racial inequality in education, broadly conceived. Proposals for activities other than research are not eligible (e.g., program evaluations, professional development, curriculum development, scholarships, capital projects). Additionally, proposals for research studies focused on areas other than education are not eligible.

Principal Investigators (PIs) and Co-PIs applying for a Racial Equity Research Grant must have an earned doctorate in an academic discipline or professional field. While graduate students may be part of the research team, they may not be named the PI or Co-PI on the proposal.

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. 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). The Spencer Foundation does not award grants directly to individuals.

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

Proposed budgets for this program are limited to \$75,000 total and may not include indirect cost charges [per Spencer's policy](#).

Projects proposed may not be longer than 5 years in duration.

PIs and Co-PIs may only hold one active research grant from the Spencer Foundation at a time. This restriction does not apply to the administering organization; organizations may submit as many proposals as they like as long as they are for different projects and have different research teams.

PIs and Co-PIs may not submit more than one research proposal to the Spencer Foundation at a time. This restriction applies to the Small Grants Program, Large Grants Program, Racial Equity Research Grants Program, and Research-Practice Partnership Program. If the PI or any of the Co-PIs currently have a research proposal under consideration in any of these programs, they are required to wait until a final decision has been made on the pending proposal before they can submit a new proposal.

Note that an exception to both of these restrictions is the Spencer Vision Grants program. PIs and Co-PIs may apply for a Vision Grant if they have another active research grant from the Spencer Foundation or if they have another Spencer grant proposal in review. However, the projects proposed in a Vision Grant proposal and in another Spencer grant program proposal must be distinct.

How to Apply

The application process begins with an Intent to Apply form. Once submitted, you will automatically have access to the Full Proposal application in our online portal. Intent to Apply forms are due by 12:00pm Noon Central time, North America on the deadline date.

Intent to Apply Guidelines

The Intent to Apply form must be submitted through an online application form following the guidelines below before you are given access to the full proposal

application.

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 the 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 and access the Intent to Apply form.

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.

Step 3 – Intent to Apply Form

To fill out the Intent to Apply form, go to your Workbench and click the Apply button for the Racial Equity Research Grants program. If the team plans to submit their proposal for the Racial Equity program to the special call related to AI and racial equity, the PI should select “yes” indicating this.

Your draft form can be saved and returned to so that you may continue work on it at a later time if necessary. Your draft form will be available on your Draft Proposals list on your Workbench.

Intent to Apply Form Elements

Within the online form, there are detailed guidelines for each section. Below is an overview of the application elements you’ll 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, you are asked to provide their names and organizations in this section.

Proposal Summary – Information about the proposal is requested, such as the project title, estimated duration, the central research question(s), and a 200-word project summary.

AI and Education – Again, if the team plans to submit a proposal for consideration as part of the AI and Education Initiative, please select “yes” indicating this.

Project Data – Within the online application, we ask you to check off the appropriate options with regard to your research study in the following categories: disciplinary perspective, methodologies, topics, geographical scope, contexts, and participants. This information is helpful in determining the appropriate reviewers for your eventual full proposal and for internal evaluations of our grant programs.

Submit

Once you have completed the form, click the Submit button at the bottom of the page. You'll now have access to the Full Proposal application form on your Workbench.

Note: You must complete an Intent to Apply form by noon on the deadline if you intend to submit a Full Proposal for the upcoming review cycle.

Full Proposal Guidelines

Once your Intent to Apply form has been submitted, you will automatically have access to the Full Proposal application on your Workbench. Within the online application, there are detailed guidelines for each section. Below is an overview of the elements you'll 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 (Independent Consultant, Advisor)
- Travel (Project Travel, Conference or Dissemination Travel)
- Equipment and Software (Equipment, Software)
- Project Expenses (Supplies, Participant Stipends/Costs, 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 has 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.

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

A description of the project, the central research question(s), and the project's significance.

A rationale for the project. This includes (a) summary of the relevant literature, the relationship of the proposed research to that literature, and the new knowledge or contribution to the improvement of education expected to result from the proposed research; and (b) a summary of the conceptual framework or theory guiding the project and how the project utilizes or builds on this framework of theory.

A description of the proposed research methods, description of participants, data collection instruments, and modes of analysis the project will employ. If applicable to the proposed methods, please include (a) information about the proposed sample/case definition and selection procedures; (b) research design, including when appropriate a description of the context of the study; (c) description of key constructs, measures and data sources; (d) procedures for data collection; and (e) procedures for data analysis.

This narrative may not exceed 2500 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 2500-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 - A project timeline should be uploaded as a PDF file and should indicate the proposed start and end dates of the project as well as key project events and milestones. The major activities listed in the project timeline should be reflected in the proposal narrative. The project timeline may not exceed 1 page and the text should be in 12-point font. The proposed project duration can be up to 5 years.

Project Team - A document describing the project team should be uploaded in PDF format and should identify the roles, responsibility and knowledge base of the PI and any supporting researcher(s). In the case where your project includes other supporting researchers, this document should articulate how the team will work together to complete the research project, highlighting what each team member will contribute to the project. Further, a short description of the relationship between the project team and the research site may be included, if appropriate. This document should not exceed 250 words and should be double-spaced in 12-point font. Note: this document will be reviewed along with the CV of the PI and any Co-PIs included on the application.

Optional Appendices A - If you have additional documents focused on scientific instrumentation relevant to the study, for example interview protocols or survey instruments, they can be uploaded 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 in this section of the application. Please see the guidelines in the online application for more information about these types of appendices.

Optional Appendices C - Innovative Approaches to Equity in Research: We recognize that scholars and scholarship have continued to develop innovative approaches to conducting research in ethical and just ways. Scholars have raised that proposals attending to these issues in sophisticated ways often face choices in providing detail in their proposals. Thus, **if you so choose**, you are invited to upload a **one-page appendix** in your grant proposal to elaborate on the theoretical, methodological, and partnership structures, or other dimensions you deem as relevant to conducting ethical and just research. For example, if your work engages youth, families, or community-based organizations, you may want to elaborate on how traditional power dynamics will be addressed. Or, if your work engages with Indigenous communities, you may want to elaborate on the project leadership's histories and engagement with Indigenous communities, any formal agreements (e.g. Tribal IRB or approvals), or the use of Indigenous methodologies in the project. Or,

perhaps you are working on new quantitative measures or modeling approaches that would benefit from further explanation. We also recognize that scholars who are doing work outside of the US, might be approaching equity related questions in specific ways that are also innovative and related to their local context of study. As a result, international education scholars might benefit from sharing more details about their context of study and how questions about educational equity are being explored in this context. We anticipate and welcome a wide range of other possibilities.

A note about IRB Approval: Proof of Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is not required at the time of proposal submission. In the event that IRB approval is needed for this project and it is chosen for funding, the Administering Organization will be responsible for obtaining IRB review and approval in accordance with its institutional policies and applicable law.

Resubmission - If this is a resubmission of a proposal previously submitted to the Spencer Foundation, you are asked to indicate this within the application and upload a 1-page explanation of how the proposal was revised.

Project Data - Within the online application, we ask you to choose the appropriate options with regard to your research project 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 through the Adobe E-sign process. You are required to provide the Signatory's name, title, and email address; this is normally an administrative or financial person who 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've completed all of 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

Each proposal will be reviewed and will receive feedback. Due to the high volume of

proposals we are receiving, it might be the case that only a subset of the proposals submitted will receive review from an external panel of reviewers. The external panel is made up of scholars in the field of education research with expertise across many disciplines and methodological areas. The review process for this program takes approximately 8 months from the full proposal deadline date. Reviews of all proposals will take account of the following:

Significance of the Project: Reviewers will evaluate the centrality of racial equity and education in the research, the importance of the topic to transforming inequality, and the quality of the research question(s) and/or direction of inquiry. Reviewers will also evaluate whether the proposed research goes beyond documenting conditions and paradigms that contribute to persistent inequality.

Connection to Research and Theory: Reviewers will evaluate the adequacy of the description of how other researchers have treated the same topic and how well the proposal responds to prior work and theory.

Research Design: Reviewers will evaluate the overall quality, sophistication, and appropriateness of the research design as well as its alignment with the research question(s) and/or conceptual framing.

Budget and Timeline: Reviewers will evaluate the adequacy of the budget and timeline.

Project Team: Reviewers will comment on the potential of the investigator(s) to complete the study as described and share the results or other findings.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Does this program support research in settings other than PreK-12 and higher education institutions?

A: Yes, Spencer funds research projects that span the life-course (i.e., from early childhood to adult learning) as well as those that focus on contexts outside of school.

Q: Do you have a preference for certain research methodologies?

A: No, we are open to whatever qualitative and quantitative methods make sense for answering the questions at hand. Historically, Spencer has supported research across a range of methods and academic disciplines, and we expect this to continue in this program.

Q: Do you have a preference for research teams vs. individual researchers?

A: No, we do not have a preference. The important thing is to plan the staffing around the aims of the project.

Q: Can a graduate student serve as a Co-PI on a proposal submission?

A: No, the PI and any Co-PIs named on the proposal are expected to have earned doctorate degrees prior to proposal submission. While graduate students may be included in the budget as research assistants, they cannot serve as a PI or a Co-PI and this program is not meant to support student research projects.

Q: Do you accept 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: Do you have a preference for regional, national, or international projects?

A: No, we do not have a preference.

Q: What is the expected duration of projects in this program?

A: We leave the duration of the project up to the PI/research team to determine, but limit it to no more than 5 years.

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

A: Yes, as long as the proposals are for different projects and the research teams are different, it is fine for an organization to submit multiple applications at one time.

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, many factors go into the final decision on each proposal, including our limited budget. Even if you receive feedback on your proposal and are able to address all of the reviewer concerns in the submission, we can offer no guarantees as to the likelihood of funding due to the fact that we currently fund less than 10% of the submissions we receive. 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 project 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 whether your idea for a research project falls within this program, feel free to email us at racial-equity@spencer.org for guidance. While we are not able to provide feedback on proposal drafts, we are happy to answer questions by email. Additionally, if helpful please consult the [Spencer writing guides](#).

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 7-8 months after the full 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 1-2 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.

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.

Recent Awardees

February 2025 awardees (June 2024 deadline)

Unmapping Youth Incarceration: Designing for Abolition by Formerly Incarcerated Youth

Subini Ancy Annamma, Jennifer Wilmot
Stanford University

The Impact of Social Bias on Adults' Learning of the Pronunciation of a New Language

Shannon Lee Barrios, Rachel Hayes-Harb, Alayo Tripp
University of Utah

Cooperative Economics within Oaxacan Epistemologies: Reimagining Economics Education Through Ethnic Studies

Tadashi Dozono
California State University Channel Islands

Co-Creating Teacher Professional Development to Foster Racial Literacies and Navigate Digital Racial Identities in Secondary Education

Robyn Ilten-Gee, Pooja Dharamshi, Jabari Mahiri
Simon Fraser University

Advancing Education Justice for Preschool Black Children: Understanding Parents' Motivations for Enrolling Children in African-Centered Education Early Learning Programs

Iheoma U. Iruka, Danielle J. Allen
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Blurring the Language Boundaries: AI Support for Translanguaging in Classrooms

Shamya Karumbaiah, Mariana Castro, Diego Roman

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Advancing a Healthy Racial Climate in Teacher Education

Rita Kohli, Uma Jayakumar
University of California, Riverside

Youth as Storytellers and Educators: Asian Americans Remaking School Curriculum

Jungmin Kwon, Min Yu, Roland Sintos Coloma, Wenyang Sun
Michigan State University

Visualizing Educational Placements in California: The Junction of Disability, Identity, and Place

Kirsten Rebecca Lansey, Matthew Marcus, Jennifer Mason
University of Arizona

Examining Race Conscious Contextual Approaches in Promoting Equity in School Discipline

Kamilah B. Legette, Yolanda Anyon
University of Denver

"Democratizing" PTO Data for Racial Equity

Brittany C. Murray
Davidson College

Learning or Legitimacy? An Investigation of the Professional Development of Graduate Students in Chemistry Doctoral Programs

Jocelyn E. Nardo, Jessica M. Karch
The Ohio State University

The Cultural Mismatch Theory of Inequality: Social Emotional Learning Among Korean Newcomer Immigrant Adolescents

Eui Kyung Kim Seo
University of California, Riverside

Examining Systemic Course Taking Barriers and Their Impact on College Admission Eligibility: Development of Measures of Course Accessibility for Latinx/Hispanic EL Students in Nine School Districts

Guillermo Solano-Flores, Diana Mercado-Garcia
Stanford University

A Pláticas Based Case Study Using the Coyolxauhui Framework

Azucena Verdin
Texas Woman's University

Empowering Educators to Foster Fairness through Strategic AI Practices

Melissa Warr, Suparna Chatterjee

New Mexico State University

Affirming and Protecting Minoritized Students: The Impact of State Education Policy on Mental Health

Brittany Zakszeski, Eric K. Layland, Tia N. Barnes
University of Delaware
