



*Seeding and Expanding Innovative Partnerships in Early Childhood*  
*Request for Proposals*  
**Proposal Deadline: March 20, 2018**

**Overview**

Together with our donor partners, the Boston Foundation (TBF) is soliciting proposals to improve young children’s readiness for success in school and life by investing in cross-sector, neighborhood-based partnerships that will expand access to quality services for pregnant mothers and families with babies and young children. Two types of proposals are being solicited for current and emerging cross-sector partnerships: *Seeding Innovative Partnerships* grants and *Expanding Innovative Partnerships* grants. Successful proposals will receive one-year grants to formulate and hone their partnership and proposed programs, or implement and track the progress of their efforts, respectively. Funded organizations may be eligible to apply for multi-year funding after successful completion of year one.

Over the last decade, research has established the power of early interventions for children: quality early childcare can have a lifetime of benefits for babies and young children. Broadly, there is a robust set of research that demonstrates these interventions can have a positive impact on physical and mental health and social well-being. This includes evidence about the impacts of high quality Pre-K, and emerging research on the importance of high-quality early education, beginning at birth. Recent research from Nobel Prize winning University of Chicago Economics Professor James Heckman also found that every dollar spent on high-quality, birth through five programs for “disadvantaged children delivered a 13% per annum return on investment”.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the growing evidence of the importance of high-quality early childhood care and services, families with babies and young children must navigate across different systems to access the care and supports they need, which are delivered by different sectors and by different providers within those sectors, and often operate in isolation. Our capacity to provide quality services to babies, young children, and their families is limited by the relative isolation in which providers operate, and also can be limited by families’ awareness of available services. Without intentional coordination, each sector’s capacity to serve pregnant mothers, children, and families well is less than it would be if cross-sector partnerships were supporting families in a more comprehensive way.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://heckmanequation.org/resource/13-roi-toolbox/>

We believe cross sector partnerships can help families access the supports and services their children need, and this will in turn increase the likelihood that children will be on track to meet developmental and behavioral milestones. We believe that working across sectors will – in the long-term – help young children arrive in kindergarten ready to succeed. Our theory is that this alignment among providers across sectors can increase family access to high-quality supports, in part because they will have a trusted and informed community of providers supporting them with common and consistent messaging about relevant and timely resources and information.

If healthcare, childcare, education, and other family-serving supports were more intentionally coordinating efforts, we believe the community safety net around families with young children would ensure that families have an understanding of children’s physical, cognitive and emotional developmental stages and gain greater access to direct services and information about:

- Prenatal and well-baby supports,
- As-needed mental health supports,
- Access to developmentally appropriate supports for child physical and emotional well-being, and
- High-quality early learning and care.

Experience tells us that families turn first to their own networks for advice about services and supports that are available, and we believe that coordination across sectors will increase the likelihood that families will know more about the supports that are available to them for their babies and young children.

Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), TBF strives to foster conditions in which our current systems of care can maximize their impact across the neighborhoods of Boston, by creating greater alignment across sectors. The RFP will facilitate this level of change in two ways:

- Fostering promising new partnerships by providing Seeding Innovative Partnerships grants, and
- Supporting existing cross-sector, place-based partnerships with Expanding Innovative Partnerships grants that focus on deepening and expanding supports for young children and their families.

Over the long-term, we hope that this work will help to increase the number of children who meet developmental and behavioral milestones from birth through age three and arrive in kindergarten ready to engage in, and benefit from, being in school.

### **Grant Structure: Two Types of Grants**

This grant opportunity will support cross-sector partnerships – current or emerging– to align work that is being done to serve pregnant mothers, babies, young children, and their parents and primary caregivers. These partnerships will work across sectors (healthcare, childcare, education, family serving organizations, etc.) and work with families with babies and young children, ages prenatal through age

three to ensure that there is a neighborhood-based infrastructure across Boston that increases child readiness for the opportunities offered in kindergarten.

We hope these partnerships will ensure that pregnant mothers and families with babies and young children know about and are able to access the supports they need in order to ensure their child is on track to be ready to succeed at age five, and is meeting the milestones related to the key dimensions of readiness for success:

- Physical well-being and motor development,
- Social and emotional development,
- Approaches to learning,
- Language development (including early literacy), and
- Cognition and general knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

The **deadline for grant applications is March 20, 2018**. All grants will be for one year, with the potential for annual renewal for up to three years.

There will be two categories of application:

#### Seeding Innovative Partnerships grants (Up to \$50,000)

Seeding Innovative Partnerships grants will be available to partners representing two or more family-serving organizations from different sectors in the early childhood ecosystem (e.g. healthcare, childcare, education, family serving organizations, etc.). Partnerships should propose a planning process that will position them to build neighborhood infrastructure that will:

- Ensure dissemination of relevant and useful information about school readiness and available services for children and families in the catchment area.
- Allow families to connect to as-needed services (for babies and young children, ages prenatal to three).
- Support ongoing communication and collaboration across sectors and networks that serve families with babies and young children, ages prenatal to three.

Successful applications will describe a planning process, and (if known) the programmatic steps they will take to foster new ways of working together across sectors to help babies, young children, and their parents know about and access the supports and services they will need to be ready for success in school and life. Partnerships should focus on increasing access to and participation in services relevant to babies and young children from prenatal through age three—particularly those drawn from vulnerable population groups within high need neighborhoods.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.childtrends.org/indicators/early-school-readiness/>

As part of the Seeding Innovative Partnerships grant application, organizations will be asked to identify a lead nonprofit partner as well as the organizations that are committed to participating in the planning process. In addition, applications will be asked to identify specific strategies that will be employed to understand community needs and engage community voice in the planning process.

To support the work funded by these grants, grants for expanding these innovative partnerships may be available at the end of the initial planning process (May, 2019).

More information about specific application requirements is below.

#### Expanding Innovative Partnerships grants (Up to \$100k)

Within the city, collaborations exist that include two or more cross-sector organizations (e.g. healthcare, childcare, education, family serving organizations, etc.) who work with pregnant mothers and families with babies and young children, from prenatal through age three. These existing partnerships are eligible to apply for grants to expand their work.

Expanding Innovative Partnerships grant applicants should provide evidence of a planning process and a track record of collaboration. Applicants should also describe the ways in which community engagement and community voice inform the partnership.

More information about specific application requirements is below.

#### **Eligibility**

This grant competition will support cross sector partnerships that include representation across sectors (healthcare, childcare, education, and family serving organizations) working with pregnant mothers and families with babies and young children, from prenatal through age three.

Each partnership must identify one lead organization that will be the applicant, and, if selected for funding, will be the funded entity for the partnership. The lead organization/applicant must be a nonprofit entity. Nonprofit organizations can apply for only one grant, however applicant organizations may be included as part of a second application as a supporting partner.

To be eligible to apply for a Seeding Innovative Partnerships grant, applicants must show evidence of new or existing agreements between cross-sector organizations that serve pregnant mothers and families with babies and young children, from prenatal through age three, and help them to access the supports, services, and interventions they need to ensure that the babies and young children are on track to reach developmental and behavioral milestones. Applicants must identify a catchment area, and a planning process. More detail is provided in the application questions.

To be eligible to apply for an Expanding Innovative Partnerships grant, applicants must show evidence of a completed planning process and a track record of collaboration. Applicants should also describe the ways in which community engagement and community voice inform the partnership. More detail is provided in the application questions.

Preference will be given to applicants with a completed Giving Common profile.

Preference will be given to partnerships that plan to or currently are serving vulnerable families in high-need neighborhoods and catchment areas.

Competitive proposals will describe:

- A cross-sector partnership that is informed by community voice and need,
- Steps (planned or underway) that will improve child readiness for success at age five, and
- The systems change implications that will sustain the work to improve child readiness for success at age five.

## **Proposal Requirements**

The application process has several components. To apply,

1. First, complete and submit an interest form that describes the partnership, a brief description of the planned work, and any technical assistance needs that will support the development of a competitive proposal (if known). As part of this form, please confirm your attendance for the March 5 Idea Lab at the Boston Foundation. (More information is below.) Please submit this form no later than 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 8, 2018.
2. Attend the Idea Lab Technical Assistance day on March 5, from 8:30-2:30 at The Boston Foundation. More information about the Idea Lab is below. (Registration is included on the Interest Form, described above).
3. By Tuesday, March 20, 2018, please complete the application, including the narrative, outcomes, and budget. Each required element is described below.

## **Timeline**

<b>January 26</b>	RFP released
<b>February 9</b>	<p><a href="#">Early Childhood RFP Interest Form</a> submitted by 5:00 p.m.</p> <p>This Interest Form will ask for technical assistance needs of the applicant organizations. It will also ask applicants to register for the Idea Lab. The Idea Lab is a technical assistance opportunity at which TBF will share its current understanding of cross sector partnerships serving pregnant mothers, babies, young children, and their families across each of Boston’s neighborhoods. In addition the Idea Lab will create space for organizations to deepen their partnership and further articulate their likely response to the RFP.</p>
<b>March 5</b>	Idea Lab at the Boston Foundation, 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
<b>March 20</b>	Proposals in response to RFP submitted by 5:00 p.m.
<b>April (Date TBD)</b>	Pitch Competition (details will be forthcoming)
<b>Early May</b>	Funding Decisions Announced

### Application Submission and Deadline

To apply, please complete and submit the application by **March 20, 2018 at 5:00 p.m.** All applications must be submitted as a partnership team. Applicants will be notified if they have received a planning grant in May 2018.

#### Have Questions?

Contact us! Email: [earlychildhood@tbf.org](mailto:earlychildhood@tbf.org)

The Boston Foundation will hold an Idea Lab on **March 5 from 8:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.** At least one organization from each applicant team is required to attend this technical assistance event; all partners are encouraged to attend. [Register for the Idea Lab by completing the Interest Form \(due by February 9, 2018 at 5:00 p.m.\).](#)

## Application Questions

Please provide the following information:

- Please identify the neighborhood or catchment area within which your partnership will focus.
- Please describe the current landscape for pregnant mothers and families with babies and young children in this neighborhood or catchment area. (Landscape data will vary, and applicants are encouraged to provide the information that will be helpful for readers to understand the local context of the proposal. This may include, but is not limited to: population and demographic data; healthcare, childcare, schools, and family serving institutions working within the neighborhood or catchment area; if known, key challenges encountered by families with babies—from prenatal through age three—in the neighborhood or catchment area; etc.)
- Please provide an organizational description of the applicant organization, including biographical information of key leaders, a description of the relevant programming, including any pertinent outcomes or impact data (e.g. numbers of families served). For the purposes of this application, the lead applicant must be a nonprofit organization that will operate as the anchor/lead partner institution.
- Please describe the partner organizations, including mission and vision, biographical information of key leaders, a description of the relevant programming, and any pertinent outcomes or impact data (e.g. numbers of families served).
- Please describe the ways in which parent and community expertise will inform this work.
- If applicable, please provide a brief description of how the partnership is connected to, informed by, or working with other citywide or state level early childhood initiatives.
- Please provide a quantitative description of how the applicant will evaluate the impact of the proposed partnership work on the rate of pregnant mothers and children ages birth through three who meet behavioral and developmental benchmarks.

### For *Seeding Innovative Partnerships* grant applications:

- Please describe the planning process that will be supported through this planning grant. Please include: the proposed participants, goals, milestones, and timelines. If known, please identify technical assistance providers or facilitators who may support this effort.

### For *Expanding Innovative Partnerships* grant applications:

- Does the partnership have a communication strategy in place that will ensure the dissemination of relevant and useful information about school readiness and available services for pregnant mothers, children and families in the catchment area?
  - If yes, please describe the partnership's planned communication strategy that will ensure the dissemination of relevant and useful information about school readiness and available services for children and families in the catchment area.

- If no, please describe how the partnership ensures that families have access to relevant and useful information about school readiness and available services for children and families in the catchment area.
- Please describe the sustainability plans to ensure this work can continue over the next three years.
- Please describe the ways in which this partnership plans to inform and influence the systems that serve families with babies and young children.
- Please describe any known technical assistance needs.

### Outcomes

All grant applicants: please describe the anticipated outcomes for the grant term (May 2018-May 2019), and the longer term change toward which you are working. Whenever possible, please include both quantitative and qualitative measures.

- Short-term goals: What are the short term goals for this work? What are the planned activities to achieve this goal? What will you measure? What is the current status of the activity? What results do you want to see at the end of the year?
  - Goal 1:
  - Goal 2:
  - Goal 3:
- Long-term goals: What long-term change are you working toward? What will be different in three to five years? Who are the key partners that will help you to realize it? How will you know it has been achieved? What external factors will support or inhibit this change?

### Budget

Budgets should be submitted using the Boston Foundation's standard budget form, available [here]. Seeding Innovative Partnerships grant applications should not request more than \$50,000 for the planning phase, and Expanding Innovative Partnerships grant applications should request no more than \$100,000 for the first grant year (May 2018-May 2019).

Appendix A  
The Boston Foundation's Early Childhood Strategy: Overview

As part of the Boston Foundation's 2020 strategic plan, we are committed to exploring and supporting an early childhood strategy that will improve young children's readiness for success in school and life.

Our Strategy has two components:

- Increasing access to quality Pre-K
- Strengthening the interactions between caregivers and Boston's youngest children (ages 0-3).

Leveraging TBF's unique assets, we believe we are uniquely positioned to contribute to improving child wellbeing and readiness for success.

- Convening capacity;
- Advocacy;
- Partnerships with donors and community organizations in the medical, education, and nonprofit community; and
- Grantmaking power that will help to bring attention to this critical time of life, and marshal the resources for improving child readiness for kindergarten.

We will work to drive systems level change, and programmatic collaboration.

We will seek to partner with the adult stakeholders in the lives of babies and young children, and ultimately will measure by children's readiness for success at age 5, using a comprehensive set of measures that are being collected by the Boston Opportunity Agenda's Birth through 8 Citywide Network.

We will also track our interim progress by our ability to increase the numbers of children meeting their developmental and behavioral milestones between birth and age 3.

Our work will be guided by a four part framework.

**Build broad awareness and understanding of the challenges and opportunities in early childhood; advocate for policy change.**

- Capitalizing on TBF's strength as a convener, we will work to build understanding of the problem, and the opportunities, including what interventions and policies have been shown to work.

**Contribute to building a shared knowledge base by investing in the data (analytics) infrastructure and metrics.**

- We will pair this with our awareness building to try to help other key groups understand what is known about early childhood development. This does not mean we will commission new research, as this is a heavily studied space. Rather, we will work to lift up what is known already.
- We will develop a policy agenda to support babies and young children's progress towards developmental and behavioral milestones.
- We will continue to work with the Birth to 8 Collaborative to promote common metrics, indicators and measurement tools, and will help to report on progress toward those.

**Partner with others to scale proven programs and promising practice.**

- We will look within our own city and region, and to other cities and regions, to lift up what's already working. While there is a lot of promising work underway, there aren't a lot of examples of effective innovations at scale. Undoubtedly we can learn from other places, including cities like Oakland, Denver, and New York to capture their lessons learned.

**Find innovative solutions to tackle longstanding challenges.**

- Many of the challenges in this ecosystem appear unsolvable. Given the reach into diverse sectors, TBF can bring together new partners to the conversation to try to source solutions. Our first efforts in this will be to support cross sector partnerships working with babies and young children, ages prenatal to 3.
- We have two surveys underway to better understand the infrastructure in neighborhoods across the city of Boston that supports families as they try to access the supports and services they need for their baby and toddler.

Appendix B  
Resources

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/three-early-childhood-development-principles-improve-child-family-outcomes/>