

Letter of Inquiry
Family Math Learning Community Grants
An Initiative of the Family Math Roadmap Implementation Project

The Family Math Learning Community Grants, an initiative of the Family Math Roadmap Implementation Project (described below), seek to close early math opportunity gaps by increasing the use of home and community practices that support Family Math. Through these grants, the Overdeck Family Foundation, Heising-Simons Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Robert R. McCormick Foundation and CME Group Foundation (collectively referred to as “the foundations”) hope to support community-focused initiatives that ensure all children – but particularly those from low-income communities and communities of color – see themselves as math learners. We are requesting Letters of Inquiry (LOI) from the following:

- Organizations aiming to expand their community work in the area of Family Math and/or
- Organizations interested in sharing effective family engagement strategies around early learning issues more broadly.

Background

The foundations are dedicated to creating a world where race and income no longer predict opportunities for young children and families to learn, practice and enjoy math. Research shows that entering kindergarten with early math skills is the best predictor of 8th grade performance regardless of race, gender or family socioeconomic status.¹ By supporting programs that build enthusiasm for and confidence in math, we can close the early math opportunity gap and prepare children for success in school, career and life.

The Learning Community Grants are designed to understand what it takes to spread Family Math practices. Each grant will increase the development of home, community and other practices that support Family Math in a targeted community. These communities will also participate in a learning network of “bright spot” communities, cities and/or regions. Through the work of these communities, we hope to lift up strategies and tools that can be disseminated to other communities in an effort to spread successful Family Math practices.

We encourage any interested applicants to submit letters of inquiry, as there is an opportunity to indicate whether you want to be included in future communications and opportunities related to the overall Family Math Roadmap Implementation Project. Additionally, we hope the LOI process will highlight outstanding community work happening across the country that we can learn from and amplify in future awareness campaigns.

The original estimates for potential grants range from \$500,000-\$750,000 but this will be further explored based on responses from the LOI. It should be noted that as this time, there is no commitment on behalf of any of the listed foundations, or foundations that join the project, and Education First to

¹ “Why Early Math Matters,” The California Kindergarten Association, (2012).

make grants available. We are using this process to gather information to determine if and how the foundations will use their resources.

Requirements

We are looking for LOIs from organizations with experience building parent/family engagement around early learning issues for children ages 0-8 years old, with an emphasis on ages 2-6. While our focus is on increasing positive math experiences for children outside of school, programs/initiatives could also involve partnerships with existing family programs, researchers or community organizations supporting related issues such as math, STEM, school preparedness and success. Specifically, applicants could include organizations that are:

- Currently involved in Family Math and wish to expand or continue their work
- Not currently involved in Family Math but wish to begin work in this area
- Not currently involved in Family Math but wish to partner with math-focused organizations to bring Family Math to their community
- Not currently involved in Family Math but wish to share their family engagement strategies in an effort to advance Family Math

The Family Math Learning Community Grants also endeavor to learn from organizations that:

- Follow evidence-based practices for Family Math, family engagement and early learning and/or
- Test new, different or innovative approaches that encourage home and community learning practices

We specifically seek letters of inquiry from organizations that target low-income communities and communities of color. Family leadership should be a foundational component of the program, which can be city-wide, county-wide, regional or focused on a targeted community. We are looking for organizations that would be able to provide concrete proof points and specific practices, engagement strategies and communication tools relating to Family Math.

Process

The deadline for LOI submissions is **November 16, 2018**. Please submit your LOI by completing the online form found [here](#). Staff from each foundation and Education First will review each LOI and invite those selected to submit an RFP by January 4, 2019 at the latest, if a decision is made to move forward with the Family Math Learning Community Grants.

Reviewers will look for opportunities to support organizations or programs that:

- Work with families of color and low-income communities
- Focus and build on the strengths of the community
- Integrate parent/family leadership
- Bring together cross-sector partnerships
- Provide proof points and/or evidence of impact

Inquiries

Please send questions related to this LOI process or application to FamilyMath@education-first.com.

What is the Family Math Roadmap Implementation Project?

Each and every community has strengths that they use to support their members and their children. Family Math seeks to lift up their strengths to provide positive and enriching math experiences for children. This work is significant as millions of children throughout the United States, particularly those from low-income homes, lack access to opportunities that promote early learning, putting them behind from the very beginning of their schooling. This lack of early educational opportunity manifests in achievement score gaps as early as age five. Because early math ability is highly predictive of later academic success, it is crucial to support families in identifying, creating and sharing positive math experiences before formal school starts. The nascent field of Family Math needs greater unity and coherence to help close achievement gaps, provide opportunities for families to support children's math learning and address systemic challenges facing low-income families and families of color in particular.

Over the past three years, the Overdeck Family Foundation, the Heising-Simons Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Robert R. McCormick Foundation and the CME Group Foundation have supported an effort to bring together researchers, practitioners, advocates and family engagement specialists to begin building a Family Math agenda that might help close the gaps and provide more consistent and coherent support to families as they prepare their children for school and life.

Building on an initial convening of Family Math supporters and a landscape scan of Family Math activities, research and funders, Education First, in concert with an advisory group of 10 diverse experts, engaged diverse stakeholders in a planning process to develop a three-year Roadmap for supporting a Family Math campaign.

Education First serves as the lead convening partner to support the foundations in managing the Family Math Roadmap Implementation project. The Roadmap brings together many stakeholders that represent much of the strong work that is happening in Family Math.

Family Math Roadmap Mission

The Family Math Roadmap Implementation project works with families to help young children and families see and enjoy the math all around them. We seek – through family and community partnerships with advocates, policymakers, practitioners and researchers – to provide the foundational tools, supports, and communication necessary to close early math opportunity gaps. We seek to ensure that all children – but particularly those from low-income communities and communities of color – see themselves as math learners equipped with the attitudes, confidence and experiences necessary to grow math knowledge and skills.