

# OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

## NOTICE OF INVITATION

### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA EDUCATION RESEARCH PRACTICE PARTNERSHIP

Pursuant to the “District of Columbia Education Research Practice Partnership Establishment and Audit Act of 2018,” effective March 28, 2019 (D.C. Law 22-268; D.C. Official Code § 38-785.01 *et seq.*) (the “RPP Act”), the District of Columbia hereby issues this Notice of Invitation (NOI) for independent, non-governmental entities to submit proposals to conduct education research on behalf of the District of Columbia through the District’s education research practice partnership.

#### 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

##### 1.1.1 Background

The District of Columbia educates approximately 93,000 students across 67 local education agencies (LEAs). As of the 2018-19 school year, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) serves approximately 49,000 students, and 66 public charter LEAs serve approximately 44,000 students.<sup>1</sup>

For over ten years, the District of Columbia has seen consistent progress in the performance of its public schools. Enrollment in public schools in the District has increased for the 10<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, reaching just over 93,000 students in school year 2018-19. The District has experienced three years of consecutive improvement on state assessments in math and English language arts, and significant improvement on the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), the Nation’s Report Card. Due to investments in universal pre-Kindergarten, enrollment in public pre-Kindergarten has reached 78 percent of DC’s 3 and 4 year olds, the highest percentage of any state in the nation.<sup>2</sup> The District has also seen solid improvements on SAT performance and participation over the past four years. This progress reflects the hard work of numerous school leaders, teachers, students and families and a commitment to public education by the District government and community leaders.

Yet, this progress is not enough. In DC, like the rest of the nation, we have deep and persistent gaps between specific groups of students. We believe that every child is capable of learning and achieving at high levels, and yet our current results as an education system do not yet reflect this core belief and truth. The District is committed to ensuring that every student—no matter their background or which Ward they live in—has access to a high quality public school education that prepares them for college and career.

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<sup>1</sup> OSSE 2018-19 School Year Enrollment Audit Report and Data. Available here: <https://osse.dc.gov/page/2018-19-school-year-enrollment-audit-report-and-data>.

<sup>2</sup> OSSE 2017 State of Pre-K Report. Available here: <https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/OSSE%20Annual%20Pre-K%20Report%202017.pdf>.

### **1.1.2 Purpose**

The purpose of this Notice of Invitation (NOI) is to solicit proposals to enter into an education research practice partnership (hereinafter, “partnership” or “RPP”) with the District of Columbia. The partnership shall conduct independent education-related research that will support improvement in the District’s public schools and shall publicly report the findings of the research.

### **1.1.3 Eligibility**

Eligible applicants for the partnership include a university, college, non-profit organization, or a consortium that combines university, college, non-profit organizations joined for the purposes of this partnership. Eligible applicants for the partnership shall demonstrate a commitment to enter into the partnership for no less than ten years. For the purposes of this NOI, the term “entity” shall mean an individual university, college, or non-profit organization, or the organization leading a consortium.

### **1.1.4 Pre-Proposal Meeting**

A recommended pre-application webinar will be held on December 18, 2019 at 2:00 pm EDT. To register, please visit the following [link](#).

Questions from potential applicants regarding this solicitation may be submitted to [educationrppnoi@dc.gov](mailto:educationrppnoi@dc.gov) no later than January 31, 2020, and the District will publish answers on <https://osse.dc.gov/page/research-practice-partnership> periodically throughout the application window.

### **1.1.5 Proposal Submission Deadline<sup>3</sup>**

Proposals shall be submitted no later than 60 days from the issuance date of this notice, February 10, 2020, at 5:00 pm EDT. Late proposals will not be accepted. Once a proposal is submitted, it may not be revised unless requested by the panel. The District’s review panel may request further information to supplement or amend the proposal as submitted. Requests for further information may be in the form of in-person oral presentation and/or written responses, as determined by the District’s review panel.

### **1.1.6 Proposal Submission Requirements**

Submitted proposals shall meet the following requirements:

- The proposal shall not exceed 30 typed pages, excluding table of contents and appendices;
- Any supporting documentation must be included in the appendices;

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<sup>3</sup> See D.C. Official Code § 38-785.03(c).

- Pages must have 1” margins on all sides;
- Pages shall be numbered and correspond to the table of contents;
- The order of sections in the proposal shall correspond to the proposal requirements in section 3 of this NOI; and
- Proposals, including all appendices and any supporting documents, shall be aggregated in a single PDF document and submitted as such.

Proposals, including all supporting documentation, shall be submitted in the format described above via email at [educationrppnoi@dc.gov](mailto:educationrppnoi@dc.gov). The completed application package must be received no later than February 10, 2020. OSSE reserves the right to not consider incomplete submissions.

#### **1.1.7. Proposal Review<sup>4</sup>**

The proposals will be reviewed by a six-person review panel, comprised of three representatives chosen by the Mayor and three representatives chosen by the Chairman of the Council, to evaluate the entity’s experience and expertise, the soundness of its proposed service delivery plan, the adequacy and reasonableness of proposed resources needed, and demonstrated capability for managing the proposed RPP. The decision of the review panel is the District’s final decision and not subject to appeal or further review.

## **2. EDUCATION RESEARCH PRACTICE PARTNERSHIP**

### **2.1.1 Introduction**

The District of Columbia believes in the importance of ensuring that stakeholders—educators, parents, policymakers, advocates, and the general public—have access to high-quality and actionable data on the performance of our schools. Further, the District believes that decisions should be made transparently, and based on evidence, to inform the instructional practices in public and public charter schools in the District with the goal of increasing student achievement while closing the achievement gap.

Schools and local education agencies collect a significant amount of data that is used in daily instruction and operation of schools, and ultimately reported to DC’s state education agency, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). Some of this information includes student demographics, enrollment, attendance, assessment, and graduation data. OSSE reports data on the performance of the District’s schools to inform instruction and student-focused supports and to comply with federal and local requirements. OSSE also consistently releases a broad range of data to schools and to the public through downloadable files, policy reports, and other analytical tools.

In 2018, the Council, in partnership with Mayor Bowser, enacted the District of Columbia Education Research Practice Partnership Establishment and Audit Act of 2018 (the RPP Act).

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<sup>4</sup> See D.C. Official Code § 38-785.03(d).

This legislation established a process for the Government of the District of Columbia to partner with an independent, non-governmental entity to establish an education research practice partnership. The District's education research practice partnership was modeled after those established in other cities and states, including Chicago, North Carolina, Tennessee, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Houston, New Orleans, New York, and Los Angeles. These partnerships produce research that informs the instructional practices that will increase student success and school improvement.

The purpose of the District of Columbia Education Research Practice Partnership is to provide actionable, easily consumable, independent research to the education sector, stakeholders, and the public. The research conducted by the partnership should evaluate the effectiveness of instructional practices in public and public charter schools in the District with the goal of increasing student achievement and educational equity. The Partnership would receive guidance from an Advisory Committee of 21 members with expertise in the research process related to student learning, school improvement, and urban education policy. The composition and nomination procedures for the Advisory Committee is defined by section 105 of the RPP Act (D.C. Official Code § 38.735.04).

### **2.1.2 Mission of the Education Research Practice Partnership<sup>5</sup>**

The District's Education Research Practice Partnership shall conduct independent education-related research that will support improvement in the District's public schools, including research to identify instructional practices that increase student achievement, educational equity, and school improvement based on rigorous research methods; provide the research necessary to inform and assess instructional practices in District public schools; evaluate existing instructional practices to determine their impact on student academic achievement and progress; and otherwise assist the District with research aimed to improve instruction and student outcomes in the District. The Partnership shall publicly report the findings of the research, and will also benefit the Council's legislative and oversight responsibilities.

Any research agenda established by the Advisory Committee in consultation with the Partnership, and implemented by the Partnership shall be consistent with this mission.

### **2.1.3 Scope and Responsibilities of the Partnership<sup>6</sup>**

Specifically, the Partnership shall be responsible for and expected to:

- Ensure the accountability and transparency of Partnership work and independence with regard to funders, the public, and government entities;
- Observe the highest scholarly, scientific, and professional standards in the analysis, and interpretation of data, and the reporting of research, including adherence to neutrality and conflict of interest policies;
- Adheres to local and federal laws and regulations that set forth requirements and best practices for protecting the privacy of students and families;

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<sup>5</sup> See D.C. Official Code § 38-785.02.

<sup>6</sup> See D.C. Official Code §§ 38-785.03(c)(1), (7)-(9) and 38-785.05(f)-(g).

- Solicit research partners to conduct rigorous and impactful quantitative or qualitative research using industry-recognized methodologies;
- Facilitate, obtain, synthesize, and integrate feedback through collaboration with a diverse Advisory Committee designed to be a partner in all research work, and stakeholders with diverse interests into research topics and methods;
- Communicate in a meaningful way throughout the life of the master research service agreement, including:
  - Providing interim deliverables such as periodic updates on research projects and research findings; and
  - Presenting findings in an accessible and digestible fashion with clear action steps at Advisory Committee meetings for feedback;
- Produce research products that:
  - Incorporate feedback from the Advisory Committee on research results in order to inform the public release of the findings; and
  - Build capacity for schools, educators, researchers and government partners; and
- Publish annual reports; and
- Maintain a website to publicly post the 5-year research agenda and final research reports of the Partnership.

The entity shall:

- Possess a strong understanding of the challenges of a state education system and urban public education systems;
- Commit to enter into the partnership with the District of Columbia for 10 years, in order to ensure continuity and stability for the education research practice partnership;
- Possess a record of scholarly output and achievement which demonstrates experience and expertise in designing, planning, and conducting educational research projects using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in urban public education systems;
- Have demonstrated experience and expertise in evaluating potential research proposals and partnerships for rigor, feasibility, and utility, in consideration of the relevance and alignment of potential projects to District needs and priorities;
- Be knowledgeable of similar partnerships implemented in other cities and states nationwide and able to glean best practices and lessons learned from those models and apply them to the District context;
- Have demonstrated experience and expertise in being responsible for enforcing data policies aimed at protecting the privacy of students and families; while coordinating research interests of a diverse set of stakeholders; and
- Have demonstrated experience and expertise in safeguarding student level data, including but not limited to the ability to:
  - Use, restrict, safeguard, store and dispose of all data and information related to services provided under this partnership in accordance with all relevant federal and local statutes, regulations, policies and guidance;
  - Comply with the provisions of Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (20 U.S.C. § 1232g) (FERPA) in all respects and to require all employees, contractors and agents to comply with these provisions;
  - Use data shared pursuant to this partnership for no purpose other than research and analysis authorized under 34 C.F.R. 99.31(a) or 42 U.S.C. §

- 1758(b)(6)(A)(i)(II), which allow disclosure of personally identifiable information for the purpose of developing, validating or administering predictive tests, administering student aid programs, and/or improving instruction;
- Ensure that all research activities under this partnership comply with the U.S. Department of Education’s regulations governing the protection of human subjects in research found in 34 C.F.R. Part 97; and
  - Adhere to generally accepted polices on information security, access and employee controls in the handling of personally identifiable confidential information. Such policies will adhere to best practices and standards within the education community related to information security and will include technical, operational and physical controls.

### **2.1.4 The District’s Responsibilities<sup>7</sup>**

Within 60 days from selection, the District, through OSSE, will enter into a Master Research Services Agreement with the selected entity that encompasses the responsibilities of both parties, including but not limited to data sharing with the entity, ownership, and confidentiality, the scope of services and the process for developing research projects.

The RPP would receive intellectual guidance from diverse perspectives of an Advisory Committee made up of 21 members, selected by the Mayor and the Council, with the ability to contribute substantive expertise to the research process related to student learning, school improvement, and urban education policy. Members shall be actively involved in practice, policy, or research on school improvement.

The Advisory Committee would establish a 5-year research agenda based on the mission stated in Section 2.1.2 of this NOI. The Advisory Committee shall provide the Partnership with feedback upon the initiation of a research project.

Following the Advisory Committee feedback, the appropriate District agency and/or LEA (or agencies or LEAs) would provide the RPP access to legally available data needed to undertake the research project. The RPP would enter into or update a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with appropriate District agencies and/or LEAs for research projects that aligns with the research agenda in order to access these data. The MOU will speak to the purpose for which the personally identifiable information from student records is to be disclosed, the specific data elements to be shared, and the terms under which data must be destroyed when the information is no longer needed for the purpose specified in compliance with 34 CFR 99.35(b)(2). The District may also require individual employees, agents or contractors of the RPP to enter into non-disclosure agreements regarding the protection of personally identifiable student information.

## **3. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS**

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<sup>7</sup> See D.C. Official Code §§ 38-785.04 (a)(1) and (3), 38-785.04(c)(1)-(2), and 38-785.05(a), (b)(1)-(2).

Proposals should include a written response to each prompt below. Responses shall include sufficient information necessary to adequately describe the qualifications of the entity. Applicants are encouraged to provide additional documentation that demonstrates experience, expertise or capability, under each prompt, as relevant.

The District of Columbia will accept proposals from eligible, independent non-governmental applicants, which include a university<sup>8</sup>, college, non-profit organization, or a consortium that combines university, college, non-profit organizations joined for the purposes of this partnership.

For the purposes of this NOI and the applicant proposals, the term “entity” shall mean an individual university, college, or non-profit organization, or the organization leading a consortium. Accordingly, if the proposal is on behalf of a consortium, the lead organization shall respond to the prompts below and supplement with information about other organizations in the consortium, as necessary.

### **3.1.1 Executive Summary**

Briefly describe the independent, non-governmental entity and its proposed plan for leading the District of Columbia’s education research practice partnership.

### **3.1.2 Information about the independent, non-governmental entity**

*Mission and History:* Provide the entity’s mission statement, a description of its core programs, and explain the relevance of the entity’s programmatic and operational activities to conducting research that has supported school instructional improvement and student achievement.

*Period of Commitment:* Describe and demonstrate the entity’s commitment to enter into the partnership with the District of Columbia for no less than 10 years, in order to ensure continuity and stability for the education research practice partnership. Provide an organizational history and describe the financial supports in place to uphold the commitment, specifically as it relates to conducting education research or partnering with government organizations for similar purposes.<sup>9</sup>

*Consortium:* If a group of organizations is applying as consortium, describe the consortium and why such collaboration between entities will be effective and beneficial in producing actionable, easily consumable, independent research to inform the instructional practices that will increase student success and school improvement in the District.

### **3.1.3 Vision for the District RPP**

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<sup>8</sup> The University of the District of Columbia and its professors may be an eligible entity, either individually or as part of a consortium. *See* Report of the Committee of the Whole on RC 23-110, Correspondence from the Mayor – Draft Notice of Invitation for Proposals to Enter into a Education Research Practice Partnership with the District of Columbia, at 4 (Council of the District of Columbia November 19, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> *See* D.C. Official Code § 38-785.03(c)(1).

*Vision:* Describe the entity’s vision for the District’s education research practice partnership. Explain how the entity would structure the partnership in accordance with the RPP Act and execute the responsibilities and duties set forth in Section 2.1.3 of this NOI.

### **3.1.4 Knowledge and Expertise<sup>10</sup>**

*Expertise in Education Research for Urban School Districts and States:* Describe the entity’s experience and expertise in conducting and disseminating quantitative and qualitative research on education topics relevant to state education systems and urban areas. Include description of prior research on education topics relevant to state education systems and urban school districts that it has conducted independently or in partnership with other entities, including a synopsis of the work, specific examples and artifacts related to the work, implementation time-frames, and the dates of the work was conducted; and lessons learned from past implementations regarding qualitative and quantitative research.

*Expertise in Partnering with Government:* Describe the entity’s experience and expertise in conducting research in collaboration with either the District of Columbia government or another government entity. Include detail on whether and how the entity and government partner jointly arrived at the research questions, provided interim deliverables, communicated in a meaningful way throughout the life of the project, adjusted the course of the project as needed in response to stakeholder feedback, provided results in multiple formats aligned with stakeholder need, and ensured that the work was useful and productive for the government partner, and, if not useful, what measures were taken to rectify the usefulness of the products either in the short or long term, and evidence of how this work intentionally built capacity for both researchers and government partners.

*Plan to Leverage Best Practices of RPPs:* Along with the description of the RPP approach the entity plans to adopt, the entity should demonstrate knowledge of similar partnerships implemented in other states and cities nationwide and should include detail on how the entity plans to glean best practices and lessons learned from those models and apply them to the District context.

*Philosophy:* Describe the philosophy of the entity and the specific approach it will adopt for designing and maintaining an RPP. Describe previous research partnerships the entity has led or been a member of that are directly related to the proposed approach Describe how this previous experience guides and provides a foundation for the proposed effort.

*Networks:* List and describe existing entity partnerships or alliances with public and/or private entities that would provide benefits to the education research practice partnership, and provide associated documentation. Entities must also describe, in detail, their strategy for developing additional partnerships to further the goals of the research agenda, once developed. Documentation of existing partner relationships should include brief descriptions of existing MOUs, letters of support, and detailed plans for working relationships and shared

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<sup>10</sup> See D.C. Official Code § 38-785.03(c)(7).



responsibilities. Documentation of proposed or yet to be finalized agreements may include brief descriptions of the proposed partnerships.

*Expertise in Coordinating and Conducting Community Outreach:* Describe the entity's experience and expertise in coordinating and conducting effective community outreach, including how the entity has or will engage diverse stakeholders, such as educators, families, education and business leaders, and policymakers, in soliciting research questions, sharing research findings, and translating findings to spur action. Provide examples of how the entity has communicated or will communicate research findings in employing multiple mediums and to diverse audiences.

### **3.1.5 Partnership Personnel and Collaboration<sup>11</sup>**

*Current Personnel:* Describe the entity's current staffing level. Provide the entity's current organization chart; and counts of the full-time equivalent positions devoted to conducting qualitative or quantitative research in education.

*Personnel Dedicated to the Partnership:* Provide a staffing plan of how the entity would fulfill the responsibilities for the Partnership, describe in detail how the entity will increase its capacity to fulfill its responsibilities if selected. Describe what staff will be responsible for management and administration of the partnership. Describe whether researchers conducting research for the Partnership will be full-time dedicated staff, whether staff shall be required to log a certain number of billable hours or be required to be faculty at the entity. Please provide the resumes and/or CVs of all personnel who will contribute to the work of the RPP.

*Advisory Committee Collaboration:* Provide an explanation of what processes are in place or would be in place to collaborate effectively with a large and diverse advisory committee designed to be a partner in all research work. Provide a discussion of the philosophy of engagement with the Advisory Committee.

*Consortium Coordination:* If more than one organization is applying as a consortium, describe the organizational structure including the roles and responsibilities of each organization for the purpose of the Partnership. Include a description of the role and responsibilities of the lead organization, and each participating organization, as well as a plan for governance and decision-making within the consortium. Provide documentation of agreements and commitments between the organizations.

### **3.1.6 Data Use & Protection/Research Methods<sup>12</sup>**

*Expertise in Data Security:* Describe the entity's experience, expertise, and current capacity to collect, maintain, store, clean, de-identify, use, interpret, translate and publish any data provided to it in a safe, secure, accountable, and confidential manner, consistent with relevant federal and local laws and regulations, including section 438 of the Family Educational Rights & Privacy

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<sup>11</sup> See D.C. Official Code §§ 38-785.03(c)(4) and (9).

<sup>12</sup> See D.C. Official Code §§ 38-785.03(c)(5), (6), and (8).

Act of 1974, approved August 21, 1974 (88 Stat. 571; 20 U.S.C. § 1232g *et seq.*) and its implementing regulations, 34 C.F.R. Part 99.

*Data Management and Security Plan:* Submit a Data Management and Security Plan that describes how data supplied by District agencies and/or LEAs will be managed by the entity and what measures will be taken to ensure that no persons, other than those authorized by the Master Research Services Agreement, can have access to any data shared by the District pursuant to this partnership. The data management and security plan applies to all data supplied by District agencies or LEAs, as well as any copies made by the research team and any new data derived from the data supplied by District agencies. The plan should be aligned with industry standards and best practices and should include all relevant artifacts that appropriately describe the information and data architecture that will be used by the entity. The plan should also include information about the technology platform(s) that will be used to store, analyze, and securely disseminate or provide access to data among research team members. The plan must include the information security model that will be implemented to ensure that necessary security policies will be applied and research members will be able to access only the data that is appropriate to their research. This should also include methods of data destruction when specific data are no longer needed.

*Validity:* Describe the entity's internal review processes and protocols to ensure the validity of research methods and outcomes. Include detail on whether the entity is supported by an Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is responsible for reviewing and approving all research projects and associated methodologies. Whether or not the entity is supported by an IRB, describe how the entity's internal review processes compare to best practices for similar partnerships, and whether the entity's research outcomes have been challenged based on the validity of the research methods.

*Data Quality:* Provide a detailed description of the entity's processes and protocols concerning the reliability and validity of data and statistical analyses, including approach to handling challenges and variation in data quality among source data. Describe the standard quality review process(es) applied both to the execution of data analysis and research as well as to the creation of research outputs and deliverables.

*Independence:* Provide an explanation of what processes are in place or would be in place to ensure accountability and transparency of Partnership work and independence with regard to funders, the public, and government entities.

### **3.1.7 Financial Management and Proposed Budget<sup>13</sup>**

*Financial Management:* Describe the financial management and internal accounting procedures of the entity that will be used to ensure proper financial management of the Partnership.

*Potential Funding Sources:* Provide potential sources of funding, including funds contributed by the entity, funds anticipated from named and anticipated private sources, and funds, if any,

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<sup>13</sup> See D.C. Official Code §§ 38-785.03(c)(2)-(3).

needed from the District for the initial start-up costs and annual operations of the Partnership. Provide documentation of committed internal and external funding, or plans for securing additional funds and support.

*Proposed Budget:* Provide a proposed budget for initial start-up cost to establish the Partnership and the annual costs needed to operate the Partnership, include a narrative description of how line items in the budget are necessary to fulfil its responsibilities of leading the Partnership.

*Institutional Support:* Describe what types and level of institutional support the entity will provide to the Partnership, including any in-kind donations or administrative and professional services.