SILICON VALLEY | community® foundation
SERVING SAN MATEO AND SANTA CLARA COUNTIES

Request for Proposals

Education:
Closing the Middle School Achievement Gap in Mathematics through an In-School Strategy

Introduction

Silicon Valley Community Foundation is a catalyst and leader for innovative solutions to our region's most challenging problems. We address one of these problems – the achievement gap in middle school mathematics that divides many English Learners, students of color and low-income students from their peers – through our education strategy. To better understand our goals and objectives for this strategy, we encourage you to read the community foundation's research paper on the topic at http://www.siliconvalleycf.org/grantmaking-strategies/pdf/research-paper-closing-the-gap.pdf.

The education strategy takes a two-pronged approach, supporting **in-school strategies** which seek to increase the effectiveness of instruction during school hours, and **out-of-school strategies** which seek to increase the number and effectiveness of extended learning time opportunities. The anticipated outcome of the education strategy is that more students will be prepared to take and successfully complete college-track high school mathematics courses after the intervention. This request for proposals (RFP) targets closing the middle school achievement gap in mathematics through **in-school strategies.** By using an RFP approach, the community foundation aims to solicit the best thinking of public school districts and other public sector agencies, nonprofit service providers, professional and research institutions and other entities serving San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

Responses to this RFP are due at 5:00 p.m. on December 1, 2011.

Problem Statement

Silicon Valley is a global hub of technological innovation and discovery, but a majority of students, especially those who are English Learners (ELs), students of color and low-income students, will not be adequately prepared to contribute to our region's work force. Achievement in mathematics is fundamental as it is a predictor of later success, including students' pursuit and completion of post-secondary education and higher earnings.

Competence in mathematics is essential for functioning in everyday life as well as for success in our increasingly knowledge-based economy. Success in Algebra I, in particular, is commonly recognized as a gatekeeper to the college-preparatory track. Students who take Algebra I by eighth or ninth grade are far more likely to take Calculus in high school and pursue higher education than those who do not. Despite the many signs that point to the importance of algebra, an alarming number of students in the region are not taught or prepared to study, nor do they successfully complete, this course. The numbers are particularly high for ELs, low-income students and students of color.

Disparities in the quality of education contribute to gaps in student achievement. Low-income students and students of color disproportionately attend schools that receive fewer quality education resources. Teachers are central to improving student outcomes, yet in schools with a high percentage of these students, teachers tend to be less experienced, are more likely to lack full credentials and have less access to professional development and opportunities to learn from other teachers. Research also supports the importance of rigorous curricula and high expectations as a means to improving students' academic achievement, however, schools serving a high percentage of ELs, low-income students and students of color are less likely to offer appropriate, high-quality math curriculum, and staff are more likely to have lower expectations for student performance.

Program Goal

It is critical to invest in programs that improve the way teachers teach and the way students learn mathematics. Community foundation funding will target building the capacity of public schools and supporting organizations so that all students are prepared to take and successfully complete Algebra I during eighth or ninth grade.

Through this strategy, grants will support teacher professional development, specifically programs that improve:

- Mathematics content expertise.
- Teaching practice and skills, so that classroom instruction improves students' problem-solving and thinking skills; specifically, helping students learn a higher order of questioning, analyzing and reasoning.

The community foundation funds organizations that:

- Create and support professional learning communities by allocating time so peer teacher learning becomes an established part of the school day and a regular part of school life.
- Assess students effectively so teachers can monitor progress and use the assessments to drive instruction.
- Appropriately design and provide individualized instruction that recognizes the diverse levels of learning styles and interests of students.
- Promote a culture of high academic achievement for all students.

The intent of the community foundation's in-school education strategy is to improve mathematics proficiency in middle school students and, through sharing best practices and results, build teaching and learning capacity that can produce systemic improvement in the way teachers teach, what they teach and how students learn mathematics in middle school.

The community foundation will gauge success according to one or more of these indicators:

- Gains in students' achievement as measured by performance levels on standardized tests, enrollment in seventh or eighth grade Pre-Algebra and eighth or ninth grade Algebra I.
- Number of students who completed seventh or eighth grade Pre-Algebra/eighth or ninth grade Algebra I and were placed in ninth or 10th grade Geometry.
- Gains in teacher Pre-Algebra/Algebra I content knowledge as measured by pre/post surveys and/or assessments.

Proposal Eligibility Criteria

- San Mateo and/or Santa Clara County-serving organizations. Organizations headquartered outside the two county region must demonstrate significant service to the area.
- Organizations with a 501(c)(3) designation, those that have a fiscal sponsor with a 501(c)(3) designation, public institutions or other entities that have a designated charitable purpose.
- Organizations that do not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, citizenship status, creed, religion, religious affiliation, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, veteran status or any other protected status under applicable law. If an organization only serves a specific population, e.g., women, the community foundation will consider the proposal on a case-by-case basis.
- Organizations with religious affiliations will be considered for funding only if the project for which they seek support attempts to address the needs of the wider community without regard to religious beliefs.

Project Proposal Characteristics

We are receptive to concrete, practical and impactful project proposals that:

■ Include both well-tested models that can be scaled up or expanded regionally while maintaining local relevance, and new pilots that, if successful, can be grown and replicated.

■ Benefit from collaborative work and bring public and private partners together with nonprofit organizations.

■ Demonstrate knowledge of the sector and its trends.

■ Identify target population to be reached and justification for that focus.

■ Provide clear benchmarks for measuring progress.

Application Process

1) Review of reference materials.

■ Key Dates (http://www.siliconvalleycf.org/content/education)

■ Grant Applicant FAQ sheet (http://www.siliconvalleycf.org/grantmaking-strategies/grant-FAQ.html)

■ Research paper (http://www.siliconvalleycf.org/content/grant-applicant-faq)

■ RFP for Education: Closing the Middle School Achievement Gap in Mathematics through an In-School Strategy

2) Participation in the information session is highly encouraged for those interested in responding to this RFP.

To reserve your seat, please visit our website at www.siliconvalleycf.org and register online. For planning purposes, we ask that you complete your online registration no later than two days prior to the date of the information session. Only those organizations considering a response to a RFP should attend an information session.

Follow-up phone consultations and in-person meetings will be available with community foundation staff as time permits.

3) 3) Submission of proposal. Although we prefer proposals in electronic form, hard copies will be accepted.

All proposals must be received by email or postmarked no later than 5:00 p.m. on December 1, 2011.

Key Dates

November 17, 2011:	Information session (Please visit our website to register)
December 1, 2011 – 5:00 p.m.:	Proposal submission deadline
February 2012:	Announcement of grant awards

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Proposals for grants should include a narrative that responds to the questions posed at the end of this document. The narrative should be a maximum of eight typed pages, use 12-point font and no less than one-inch margins. Grant proposals will be evaluated, on a competitive basis, using the following criteria:

- Clarity of project description and project activities regarding steps to be taken to achieve desired outcomes.
- Achievable timeline that corresponds to the key activities.
- Meaningful benchmarks and indicators of success.
- Innovative and effective strategy with potential for systems change.
- Organizational capacity to implement project , including staffing and leadership, operational and fiscal management.
- Established track record in specific program content area or potential to achieve needed content expertise.
- Ability to leverage financial, human and technical resources leading to greater impact.
- Ability to contribute content area knowledge to the field.

Total Awards

Successful applicants will receive grants in the range of $50,000 to $100,000 for a one-year period. Budget requests will be closely analyzed, and applicants should include a budget narrative that makes clear the necessity of the project's specific line-items. Planning grant requests should not exceed $50,000.

Please note that project proposal narratives may be posted publicly on our website, to reflect our value of transparency and encourage learning among grantees and future applicants as well as members of the community at large.

Review and Selection Process

An advisory committee with issue expertise for this strategy will help staff review all proposals recommended for funding to the community foundation's board of directors. Applicants may receive a site visit, telephone call and/or other type of communication from community foundation staff as part of the proposal review process.

Successful applicants will be informed of selection in February 2012.

Evaluation, Monitoring and Grantee Learning Activities

- Grantees will be expected to meet the community foundation's requirements for the submission of financial and narrative reports, including an interim progress report when appropriate and/or presentation to community foundation staff and donors, and a final report.

- In an effort to further the overall program goals of this RFP, inform future RFPs related to this topic and contribute to larger field-building objectives, grantees will be asked to participate in periodic meetings to share information on project activities and best practices, as well as participate in research-based evaluations.

Thank you very much for your interest in responding to this RFP and in making our region a better place. We look forward to reviewing your proposal.

Application Checklist

❑ **Cover Sheet**

❑ **RFP Proposal Narrative** addressing the proposal information requirement questions specified on the Cover Sheet
  - ■ A maximum of eight pages, 12-point font, margins no less than one inch

Attachments: All attachments are required.

❑ **Attachment A:** A detailed line-item budget for the project (that includes details on how the community foundation's funding would be used)

❑ **Attachment B:** A budget narrative for the project

❑ **Attachment C:** A copy of your organization's current overall operating budget

❑ **Attachment D:** Most recent audit, if available

❑ **Attachment E:** Board of Directors list that includes members' professional affiliations

❑ **Attachment F:** Evidence of tax-exempt status

❑ **Attachment G:** Memorandums of Understanding from collaborative partners (if appropriate)

❑ Send to grantproposals@siliconvalleycf.org OR mail one hardcopy to Silicon Valley Community Foundation's headquarters

Silicon Valley Community Foundation
Attn. Grantmaking Department
2440 West El Camino Real, Suite 300
Mountain View, CA 94040

Thank you for your application.

If you have any questions, please call 650.450.5400 or email us at grants@siliconvalleycf.org

Application Cover Sheet

Education: Closing the Middle School Achievement Gap Through an In-School Strategy

Submit one electronic* copy to:
    grantproposals@siliconvalleycf.org

or

Submit one hard copy to:

    Silicon Valley Community Foundation
    Attn: Grantmaking Department
    2440 West El Camino Real, Suite 300
    Mountain View, CA 94040
    Telephone: 650.450.5400   Fax: 650.450.5453

*We prefer electronic submissions. If you have questions, please contact us at grants@siliconvalleycf.org

General Information

Date: _____

Amount Requested: $ _____ Duration of project: _____

Project Name: _____

Name of Institution/Organization: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Website Address: _____

Name and title of primary contact for proposal: _____

PHONE: FAX: EMAIL ADDRESS:

Executive Director of organization (if other than above):

PHONE: FAX: EMAIL ADDRESS:

Are you a past grantee under this grantmaking strategy?   Yes ❏   No ❏

Please describe in one sentence the project and the purpose for which funding is being sought:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Proposal Information Requirements

1. What is the mission of the organization?

2. What is the project for which funding is being sought and what is the primary purpose of the project?

3. What is the geographic region(s) served by the proposed project (county and specific cities/communities)?

4. What is the demographic population that will be served by your project? *(Please provide specifics, e.g. percentage of low-income or people of color, etc. as available.)*

5. What are the key project activities and time line?

6. What impact do you hope to achieve? How will you know if you achieve it? *(Please provide specific outcomes: identify benchmarks and indicators of success that are meaningful and can be captured using qualitative and quantitative evaluation approaches. Programs should measure success according to one or more of these indicators: gains in students' achievement as measured by performance levels on standardized tests; enrollment in seventh or eighth grade Pre-Algebra and eighth or ninth grade Algebra I; and, number of students who completed seventh or eighth grade Pre-Algebra/eighth or ninth grade Algebra I and were placed in ninth or 10th grade Geometry, as well as gains in teacher Pre-Algebra/Algebra I content knowledge, as measured by pre/post surveys and/or assessments.)*

7. What are the unique aspects and features of your project?

8. What experience does your organization or collaborative have working in this area? *(Please provide specific achievements that describe your organization's capacity.)*

9. Describe your organizational capacity to implement the project. *(Please include staffing and board leadership as well as operational and fiscal health and management.)*

10. What is the most difficult aspect of this project that could affect your success?

11. Why is this the right time for this project?

12. If your proposal receives funding from the community foundation, would it have the potential to become self-sustaining when the community foundation's support ends? If so, how?

13. Collaborative Partners/Agencies (if any) and their contact information.

ABOUT SILICON VALLEY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The vision of Silicon Valley Community Foundation is to be a comprehensive center for philanthropy that inspires greater civic participation throughout San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

The mission of Silicon Valley Community Foundation is to strengthen the common good, improve quality of life and address the most challenging problems. We do this through visionary community leadership, world-class donor services and effective grantmaking.

We value:

Collaboration	Integrity
Diversity	Public Accountability
Inclusiveness	Respect
Innovation	Responsiveness

At a Glance

Silicon Valley Community Foundation is a catalyst and leader for innovative solutions to our region's most challenging problems. Serving all of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, the community foundation has $1.8 billion in assets under management and 1,500 philanthropic funds. The community foundation provides grants through donor advised and corporate funds in addition to its own endowment funds. The community foundation serves as a regional center for philanthropy, providing donors simple and effective ways to give locally and around the world. Find out more at www.siliconvalleycf.org.

MORE INFORMATION

If you have questions, please contact us at grants@siliconvalleycf.org or call 650.450.5400.

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VALLEY | foundation
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2440 West El Camino Real, Suite 300
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**To read more about Silicon Valley Community Foundation
visit www.siliconvalleycf.org**
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