

The “Investing in Innovation” (i3) Program Frequently Asked Questions

Please note that the information provided here is from the “Notice of proposed priorities, requirements, definitions and selection criteria” published in the Federal Register on October 9, 2009. This information may change when the U.S. Department of Education publishes the final Notice.

1. What is the purpose of the i3 program?

The purpose of the i3 program is to provide competitive grants to applicants with a record of improving student achievement, in order to expand the implementation of, and investment in, innovative practices that are demonstrated to have an impact on:

- Improving student achievement or student growth for high-need students
- Promoting school readiness, closing achievement gaps, decreasing dropout rates, increasing high school graduation rates, and improving teacher and school leader effectiveness.

Grants will allow eligible entities to expand their work, identify, document and share best practices, and take successful practices to scale.

2. Who is eligible to submit an i3 grant proposal?

Organizations that can submit a proposal include:

1. A Local Educational Agency (LEA), or
2. A nonprofit organization working in collaboration with one or more LEAs or with a consortium of schools.

Not all LEAs and nonprofit organizations will be eligible for an award. Eligible applicants must have a track record of success. To be eligible to receive a grant award an applicant must have:

- Significantly closed the achievement gaps between groups of students (economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with limited English proficiency, students with disabilities)
- Have exceeded the State’s annual measurable objectives for two or more consecutive years or have demonstrated success in significantly increasing student achievement for all groups of students through another measure
- Have made significant improvements in other areas, such as graduation rates or increased recruitment and placement of high-quality teachers and school leaders, as demonstrated with other meaningful data; and
- Have established partnerships with private sector organizations that will provide matching funds to help bring results to scale.

LEAs and consortia of schools that are applying in collaboration with a nonprofit organization do not have to have met these criteria in order to participate in a grant, as long as the nonprofit partner does meet the criteria listed above.

3. What kinds and sizes of grants are available?

Three types of grants will be available:

1. *Development grants* of up to \$5 million for promising programs. Development grants would provide funding to support new, high-potential, and relatively untested practices, strategies, or programs whose efficacy should be systematically studied. An applicant would have to provide evidence that the proposed practice, strategy, or program, or one similar to it, has been attempted previously (although on a limited scale or in a limited setting), and yielded promising results that suggest that more formal and systematic study is warranted. An applicant must provide a rationale for the proposed practice, strategy, or program that is based on research findings or reasonable hypotheses, including related research or theories in education and other sectors.
2. *Validation grants* of up to \$30 million for existing programs that have moderate research evidence of their efficacy, and that may have substantial and important impacts on student achievement. Validation grants would provide funding to support practices, strategies, or programs that show promise, but for which there is currently only moderate evidence that the proposed practice, strategy, or program will have a statistically significant effect on improving student achievement or student growth, closing achievement gaps, decreasing dropout rates, or increasing high school graduation rates, and that with further study, the effect of implementing the proposed practice, strategy, or program may prove to be substantial and important.
3. *Scale-up grants* of up to \$50 million for existing programs that have strong research evidence of substantial and important impacts on student achievement. Scale-up grants would provide funding to scale up practices, strategies, or programs for which there is strong evidence (through experimental or quasi-experimental research) that the proposed practice, strategy, or program will have a statistically significant effect on improving student achievement or student growth, closing achievement gaps, decreasing dropout rates, or increasing high school graduation rates, and that the effect of implementing the proposed practice, strategy, or program will be substantial and important.

4. Could a school district get a development grant to fund implementing AVID in our schools?

A school district might be able to get a development grant that would help fund AVID in its schools only if AVID is a component of a comprehensive strategy that the district is using to improve student achievement. The strategy would have to include other practices combined with AVID in a way that has not yet been tested. AVID by itself would not likely win a development

grant, since the AVID system already has been proven to impact student achievement, and therefore is not the “new, high-potential, and relatively untested practices, strategies, or programs” that the development grants will fund.

5. Do the i3 grants require matching funds?

The applicant must demonstrate that they have established one or more partnerships with an entity or organization in the private sector (which may include philanthropic organizations). To help bring project results to scale, the private sector partners must provide matching funds or in-kind donations equal to at least 20% of the grant award.

6. Can the LEA and schools participating in the grant provide the matching funds as in-kind contributions of teacher time?

No, the match must be from the private sector. Since schools and school districts are in the public sector, they cannot provide the required matching funds.

7. Would AVID Center partner with us on an i3 proposal?

AVID Center would be pleased to partner with a school district or group of districts on a proposal that utilizes AVID as a strategy to improve student outcomes. AVID Center would be able to serve as a contractor or vendor in this application, not as an applicant for funding. We expect that each organization will be limited in the number of proposals they will be able to submit (perhaps to only one). AVID Center is planning to submit a proposal for a scale-up grant, and so cannot commit to being a partner applicant on other projects.

8. Can our school district be included in AVID Center’s i3 grant proposal?

We are currently planning the design of a project to help scale up the AVID program on a national basis. We anticipate inviting LEAs and/or consortia of schools to participate as partners in our proposal. We will invite LEAs and schools to participate with us in our project after the final i3 regulations are published.