

Dated: 13 February 2019

## Learning Impact Fund Matched Funding round: Frequently asked questions

*NB: For applicants with early years projects, where the guidance refers to ‘schools’ this can be read as referring to a range of early childhood settings, e.g., long day care centres and pre-schools.*

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## 1. What is the Matched Funding round?

Evidence for Learning is the Australian representative for a new Global Trials Fund from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), a UK education charity.

The Fund, made possible by a partnership between the EEF and the BHP Foundation, is testing the impact of different approaches to teaching and learning across the globe.

In Australia, Evidence for Learning will manage the application process. Successful projects will then be delivered through our Learning Impact Fund.

For more information on the Learning Impact Fund and our other projects see [here](#).

For this Matched Funding round we are looking for:

- **Well-defined** programs with a clear explanation of how they will be implemented within schools or educational settings. Are you clear about what will happen at every stage of the program?
- **Evidence** that suggests that the program is effective at raising the attainment and skills of disadvantaged students. This evidence needs to be as specific to the intervention as possible. It is a good idea to draw on the wider research literature but only if you can make a clear link back to the intervention.
- Programs that are **scalable** (can be replicated in schools/settings across your jurisdiction or in other jurisdictions). A program that relies on the ability of one particular teacher or developer is not scalable. Scalable programs can be delivered by other teachers and other organisations, and should be cost-effective.

## 2. Who can apply for a Learning Impact Fund grant?

Grants are available for an independent evaluation of a program to any not-for-profit organisation - Catholic education offices, charities, universities, and social enterprises as well as Government departments and for-profit companies.

Please note that the Learning Impact Fund can only fund projects for the benefit of students and schools in Australia, including early childhood settings.

## 3. Do you understand that the funding will involve your approach being independently evaluated?

The Matched Funding round is not a source of funding for ongoing delivery of existing programs. If successful, you will be required to work with new settings that you have not previously worked with, and to collaborate with an independent evaluation team who will work with you to design a robust evaluation.

#### 4. Who will evaluate my project?

We will commission one of our panel of independent evaluators to design and deliver the evaluation, and you will need to work closely with them to ensure this is implemented successfully and evaluated appropriately.

We are committed to publishing the evaluation reports of all our projects regardless of the findings. Our overall decision on whether and how the project might be scaled up will be based on the results of these evaluations.

#### 5. Have you secured 'in-principle' matched funding?

The Matched Funding round is only open to applicants with matched funding arrangements. Applicants will be expected to raise 1:1 match funding for the project costs. Please consider whether you have or could secure a match funder who will 'in-principle' contribute to the costs of delivery and/or evaluation.

Project costs include:

- Direct costs of the program (e.g., license/subscriptions fees, materials, training costs)
- Indirect costs to schools (e.g. teacher release, travel and training time)
- Independent evaluation costs (e.g. tests, evaluator visits, statistical analysis, reporting)
- Project management (e.g. Evidence for Learning management, reporting and promotion costs)
- In-kind contributions (e.g. covering staff costs) will be taken into account.

You do not need to have a detailed understanding of total project costs to make an application. These will be developed with you if we decide to further consider your application.

The Learning Impact Fund will not fund program or overhead costs of for-profit companies. Learning Impact Fund grants are not intended to replace funding lost from other sources, nor simply to enable the continuation or expansion of established programs.

A Matched Funding grant will offer up to \$500,000 with the total cost of the project to be less than \$1 million AUD.

**For example:** *A State Education Department wishes to evaluate the impact of a reading program in your schools. The direct and indirect costs of the program for 10 schools is \$100,000 and the expected evaluation and reporting costs is estimated at \$100,000 making a total project cost of \$200,000. The Department could apply and contribute its matched funding but paying for the costs of the program (\$100,000).*

## 6. When should I apply for funding?

The Learning Impact Fund will accept Matched Funding round applications from 13 February 2019 when the funding round opens, up until the closing date, 31 March 2019. The Learning Impact Fund will accept applications at any point when a funding round is open up until the closing date. There is no advantage in submitting applications early in a funding round.

Before submitting a Matched Funding application, you will need to email [grants@evidenceforlearning.org.au](mailto:grants@evidenceforlearning.org.au).

We will respond within three business days to arrange an initial phone call to discuss whether your program has the potential to meet our criteria. This will include some due diligence checks on your program. This may involve but not be limited to: governance structures, funding streams, assets/cash, and experience in managing complex contracts.

The key terms used in these three questions are explained below.

- **Well-defined** programs with a clear explanation of how they will be implemented within schools or educational settings. Are you clear about what will happen at every stage of the program?
- **Evidence** that suggests that the program is effective at raising the attainment and skills of disadvantaged students. This evidence needs to be as specific to the intervention as possible. It is a good idea to draw on the wider research literature but only if you can make a clear link back to the intervention.
- Programs that are **scalable** (can be replicated in schools/settings across your jurisdiction or in other jurisdictions). A program that relies on the ability of one particular teacher or developer is not scalable. Scalable programs can be delivered by other teachers and other organisations and should be cost-effective.

## 7. What do we mean by 'well defined' and 'evidence'?

In this round we are looking for 'informed innovation' – in other words, innovation that builds on what we already know from existing evidence. All Learning Impact Fund projects aim to build or secure the evidence base of what works in raising the achievement of economically disadvantaged students.

In practice, what this means is that we are more likely to fund projects which fulfil at least one of these three criteria below:

**You have some limited evidence already.**

Your evidence might be from a pilot where there is good quantitative data which suggests your approach or intervention is likely to have a positive and gap-narrowing impact on academic outcomes.

This evidence might also be drawn from existing educational research, such as the [Teaching & Learning Toolkit](#), which synthesises and summarises what we currently understand about what works best at raising achievement, including that of economically disadvantaged students. This is based on multiple randomised controlled trials (RCTs) or other robust quantitative studies (meta-analyses) and is the most high-quality form of evidence available to us, especially in understanding what is most likely to narrow achievement gaps.

Explaining how your program applies the existing evidence in the Teaching & Learning Toolkit is often more persuasive than using evidence from smaller evaluations, which may be less robust. For instance, if your project has been working in three schools and the students involved have made higher than expected levels of academic progress, this would not normally be sufficient for us to be confident that it is the intervention itself which has made the difference if the wider evidence in the Toolkit suggests that it is not usually a successful approach.

[You have some good evidence already and you are now looking to secure that evidence and/or test a new model of delivery.](#)

Your approach or intervention may already have been tested and you have data to suggest it has a positive impact on academic outcomes – but you may now be looking to secure the evidence by having it independently and robustly evaluated. Or it may have been shown to work in other countries but hasn't yet been tested in Australian schools. Or you may be looking to adapt it so that you train teachers or teaching assistants to deliver the intervention, rather than delivering it yourself. Or you may be looking to test a more cost-effective version of the approach or intervention.

[You aim to shift current teaching and learning practices to be more effective at narrowing the achievement gap.](#)

Some approaches or interventions are already in widespread use in Australian schools, but current evidence shows they do not necessarily have a positive impact on students. The Learning Impact Fund is interested in trialing projects which would shift current practice to raise achievement and narrow the gap. You should be able to explain the logic of your program: how the outcomes of the activities you propose will lead to higher achievement for students.

## **8. What do we mean by 'scalable'?**

We are interested in projects that we believe have a good chance, once they have been properly and robustly trialed, of making a positive impact on raising the achievement of large numbers of children, especially disadvantaged children, across Australia's early childhood centres and primary and secondary schools.

Cost is an important consideration when assessing a program's potential for scale. We are looking for programs that can be funded with a school's budget, and especially its needs-based funding.

We initially run projects in a relatively small number of schools – anything between a few and 200 schools, depending on the project. For those which show the most promising results we will look to see how they can be taken up much more widely. Exactly how we do this will depend on the nature of the approach or intervention and will be discussed fully with the grantee.

### **9. What do we mean by 'economically disadvantaged'?**

The Learning Impact Fund uses the lowest quartile in the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority's (ACARA) Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) as the best available proxy measure for economic disadvantage. We do not expect that all projects we fund will work only with disadvantaged students. However, we do expect that projects will have the potential to narrow the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and all other students.

In the case of projects involving the whole school, rather than targeted interventions, we would expect applicants to be willing to work with schools where the proportion of disadvantaged students is well above the national average and/or with schools where disadvantaged students are under-performing academically.

### **10. What is the standard length of a grant?**

There will be no standard length of a grant. We want projects to be given the best possible chance to show their effectiveness and recognise that some may require a development phase and/or a multi-year intervention period before their impact can be properly evaluated. We work collaboratively with applicants and with our independent evaluators to design an appropriate project timeline.

### **11. What is the process?**

We will set out the timetable with approximate dates for decisions for the funding round. The general process is as follows.

During the matched funding round, all applications will go through an initial assessment for eligibility and meeting our criteria. You will be separately and individually reviewed by the Learning Impact fund team in order to identify a list of potential projects. This will include some due diligence checks on your program. This may involve but not be limited to: governance structures, funding streams, assets/cash, and experience in managing complex contracts. Based on this initial assessment we will decide whether you are eligible to submit an application.

After submitting an application, we will undertake further research and due diligence prior to making recommendations to the Education Endowment Foundation, who will give approval to progress projects (or not) as part of the Global Trial Fund. We will then let all applicants know the outcome of their application. This process is expected to take 4-6 weeks.

Projects which have received in-principle approval will then be progressed by our team. Independent evaluators will be appointed by Evidence for Learning. The applicant, the evaluator and Evidence for Learning will collaboratively begin detailed project design and budgeting, and Evidence for Learning will undertake further due diligence. This process usually takes 2-3 months.

Once there are specific, costed plans for the project (and for its evaluation), the applications will then be re-considered by Evidence for Learning and the Education Endowment Foundation, who retains the final discretion. If approved, we will then draw up a Grant Agreement with the applicant/grantee which sets milestones to assure successful delivery of the project. There is a period of time (usually 2-6 months) between formal approval of the project and delivery beginning.

## **12. Can I make or participate in more than one application?**

Organisations and schools are free to participate in multiple applications (e.g. as a named school), but we would advise against a single organisation leading more than one application.

The Learning Impact Fund will be making only a limited number of relatively large grants for the Matched Funding round and we would like to see these spread across a range of different organisations, areas and approaches. As a result, if you are considering leading multiple applications, we would encourage you instead to focus on developing the single idea which you believe has the most potential.

If your application is not approved, you would be welcome to submit a more developed proposal in future funding rounds, or we may speak to you about carrying over your project to a future round.

**For further information contact [grants@evidenceforlearning.org.au](mailto:grants@evidenceforlearning.org.au)**