



AEP Wire:

Investing in Innovation Fund: Eligibility and Evidence

April 5, 2010

Investing in Innovation Fund (i3). U.S Department of Education.

Note: This information is intended as guidance only. Please refer to the official documents published in the Federal Register, as well as the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), located on the i3 website at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/index.html>, as well as other sources referenced on page 3 of the *Wire*.

Background

The U.S. Department of Education's new Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund provides a competitive pool of \$650 million for qualified local education agencies and nonprofit organizations in partnership with local educational agencies (LEAs) or consortia of schools to implement innovative school reform measures that increase student achievement. The final guidelines were published on March 12. Currently, the Department is providing workshops for applicants. This AEP Wire focuses on the topics of *Eligibility* and *Evidence* and is based on the March 19 Baltimore workshop and the PowerPoint presentation included in that workshop.

Note: Applications are due on May 11.

Eligibility

Role of Nonprofits as Applicants

An applicant may be a local education agency (LEA) or a nonprofit organization (a category that includes public or private institutions of higher education) in partnership with one or more LEAs or a consortium of schools. The applicant, whether an LEA or a nonprofit, will be the grantee and fiscal agent, if the application is funded.

Eligible consortia are limited to public schools only (including public charter schools).

Highlights

- Applications for the U.S. Department of Education's Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund are due May 11.
- The Department is currently providing workshops for applicants. The workshops focus on Eligibility, Evidence, Priorities, Selection Criteria and Review Process. The webinar of each pre-application workshop is archived and available on the i3 website.
- This edition of the AEP Wire focuses on Eligibility and Evidence.
- The next issue of the Wire will focus on *Priorities, Selection Criteria and Review Process*.

In addition to the applicant, the application may include partners, which can be either “official” or “other” partners. The applicant and all official partners must demonstrate that they have a record of improving student achievement, attainment, or retention.

The applicant may make subgrants to “official” partners. “Other” partners must be funded through a procurement process.

Three types of awards are available under i3: Development, Validation, or Scale-up. These award types vary in terms of the evidence that an applicant is required to submit in support of its proposed project; the expectations for “scaling up” successful projects during or after the grant period, either directly or through partners; and the funding that an eligible applicant is eligible to receive.

Evidence

In their applications, all applicants must demonstrate that they meet requirements for evidence that supports their proposed practice, strategy, or program. These requirements vary with the type of award, as follows:

Development	Validation	Scale-up
Reasonable – research findings or hypotheses, including related research or theories in education and other sectors.	Moderate – either high internal validity and medium external validity, or vice versa.	Strong – both high internal validity and high external validity.

Note: These evidence requirements are both *eligibility requirements* and *rating criteria*. This means that applications will not be considered if they do not meet the evidence requirements for the level at which they are submitted.

For additional details on evidence requirements, refer to the table on page 30 of the [Application Package](#) at the Department’s i3 Website.

Some Definitions

Experimental study: a study that employs random assignment of, for example, students, teachers, classrooms, schools, or districts to participate in a project being evaluated (treatment group) or not to participate in the project (control group). The effect of the project is the average difference in outcomes between the treatment and control groups.

Moderate evidence: evidence from previous studies whose designs can support causal conclusions (i.e., studies with high internal validity) but have limited generalizability (i.e., moderate external validity), or studies with high external validity but moderate internal validity. The following would constitute moderate evidence: (1) At least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental or quasi-experimental study supporting the effectiveness of the practice, strategy, or program, with small sample sizes or other conditions of implementation or analysis that limit generalizability; (2) at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental or quasi-experimental study that does not demonstrate equivalence between the intervention and comparison groups at program entry but that has no other

major flaws related to internal validity; or (3) correlational research with strong statistical controls for selection bias and for discerning the influence of internal factors.

Quasi-experimental study: an evaluation design that attempts to approximate an experimental design and can support causal conclusions (i.e., minimizes threats to internal validity, such as selection bias, or allows them to be modeled). Well-designed quasi-experimental studies include carefully matched comparison group designs, interrupted time series designs, or regression discontinuity designs.

Strong evidence: evidence from previous studies whose designs can support causal conclusions (i.e., studies with high internal validity), and studies that in total include enough of the range of participants and settings to support scaling up to the State, regional, or national level (i.e., studies with high external validity). The following are examples of strong evidence: (1) More than one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study or well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study that supports the effectiveness of the practice, strategy, or program; or (2) one large, well-designed and well-implemented randomized controlled, multisite trial that supports the effectiveness of the practice, strategy, or program.

AEP Recommendations

The following are some recommendations for potential applicants:

- Before choosing to apply, a potential applicant should carefully assess its eligibility as specified in the guidelines. Especially for nonprofits, it is essential that they can clearly demonstrate a record of improving student achievement, attainment, or retention.
- In developing the application, applicants should clearly understand the most appropriate level.
Applications that do not meet the evidence requirements at the level for which they are submitted will not be considered at another level.

Sources

[Investing in Innovation Fund \(I3\) Website](#)

[I3 Resources](#)

[Investing in Innovation Fund Summary Document](#)

[Investing in Innovation Fund \(i3\) Program Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Investing In Innovation Fund \(i3\) Frequently Asked Questions ADDENDUM #1, March 30, 2010](#)

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In the Next AEP Wire: *i3 Priorities, Selection Criteria and Review Process*

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