Inter-University Research Network on the Achievement Gap

Guidelines and Application for Funding

Revised Application Deadline: September 16, 2019

Deadlines

Online applications activated: July 15, 2019

Application deadline: 4:30 pm, September 16, 2019

Review of applications by EECD: September 2019

Communication of funding decisions: October 11, 2019

Background—Closing the Achievement Gap

The achievement gap in education refers to disparities in academic performance between groups of students. The achievement gap is related to the systemic inequities and results in unequal access to learning opportunities, achievement, and benefits.

The achievement gap in the Nova Scotian context is evident in the underachievement of many African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq learners, as well as learners experiencing poverty in comparison to the wider Nova Scotian student population. Achievement gaps are reflected in grades, standardized test results, course selection, and high school and post-secondary completion rates, among other measures.

The Province of Nova Scotia has made strides in identifying achievement gaps, particularly in relation to math, literacy, and high school and post-secondary completion. Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education commits funding to support local research into student achievement and the achievement gap. The Inter-University Research Network (IURN) welcomes studies that bring new understanding to the ways that organizational structures reinforce the conditions leading to the achievement gap, as well as research that profiles the most effective strategies for addressing the root causes of underachievement in our public schools.

The researchers should outline how they believe their project will impact teacher practice, student learning, engagement and well-being. Projects that focus on the teacher's learning and leadership should clearly state how the intended improvements in professional knowledge, skills, and practice will benefit students: either the entire population of students, or a particular group of students identified (e.g. African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaw, and students with learning disabilities).

Eligibility

Funding through the IURN is open to individual researchers or research teams affiliated with a post-secondary institution or non-for-profit education organization and conducting work in Nova Scotia to further the understanding of the achievement gap and of strategies to improve student achievement and well-being. Projects Researchers are encouraged to partner with public school teachers as co-researchers to increase the potential to impact teacher practice and student learning (Knowledge Translation).

Applicants who are currently in receipt of IURN funding may apply to extend funding for an existing project if they are able to demonstrate that the initial phase of work has been completed.

Funding Details

Funds from the grant must be applied directly to the costs of carrying out the research. The researcher's host institution(s) must provide for administrative and overhead costs.

Schedule of Rates

- Research Assistants: $15.00 per hour (maximum). During the academic year, student research assistants may not be asked to work more than 8 hours per week. For full-time work during the summer, student research assistants will also receive 11.5% in lieu of benefits.
- Meals: $40.00 per day (maximum)
- Accommodation: Any reasonable rate for single accommodation
- Meterage: $0.42 per km

Grant Payments

Following receipt of all required ethics or board approvals, a one-year Letter of Agreement (LOA) will be signed between the host university or organization and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD). Funding of successful research grants will be made in a minimum of three payments, with the first installment paid upon the grantor's receipt of two signed copies of the LOA. Subsequent payments will be contingent upon detailed progress reports, accompanied by receipts as needed, and the assessment by the IURN Steering Committee that reasonable progress is being made.

The IURN may withhold further funding if a study is not moving forward as outlined in the proposal, or not following planned expenditures. Any changes to budget, timeline, and methodology need to be approved in writing by the IURN Steering Committee at least one month in advance of the implementation of the changes. The final payment will be made at the completion of the project when all reports and accompanying paperwork have been submitted to the committee and the research findings have been shared with educational partners.

Ongoing/Long-term Research Projects

Initial Year of Funding

Research funding provided by the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is allocated for one year. The IURN Steering Committee recognizes that some projects may be longer than one year. Applicants proposing multi-year projects must clearly identify in the "Timeline/Milestones" section of the application how the research fits into a long-term strategy. In this case, the research should be presented in a phased approach with clearly identified deliverables within the initial year of funding. Applicants proposing long-term research programs are encouraged to pursue additional partnerships and sources of funding.

Project Extensions and Expansions

To request an extension of time to complete an existing study, contact Patrick Kakembo at:
Patrick.kakembo@novascotia.ca

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- **potential** to further understanding of the achievement gap and of strategies to improve student learning, achievement (priority may be given to projects that have a focus on improved student learning, engagement, and well-being).
- evidence of appropriate research **methodology**
- **feasibility** of the proposed research, including a timetable for completion and an assessment of resources needed to complete the project
- **credentials/capacity** of the research team to undertake the proposed course of study
- **a clear plan to communicate findings** (knowledge translation plan), including building the capacity of partners through collaboration with public school teachers and administrators as co-researchers
- **completeness** of the application (including appropriateness of budget information; see Funding section below)

If the proposal involves pulling students or teachers out of the classroom, it should be designed to minimize the impact on instructional time.

Submitting your Application

The following information must be submitted by email attachments or postmarked by **4:00 p.m.** on **August 16, 2019**:

1. **Inter-university Research Network funding application**
2. **Abbreviated Curriculum Vitae**—maximum 4 pages (include areas of expertise and recent publications)
3. **Written Project Proposal**—maximum 4 pages (see "Project Proposal Information" below)
4. **Current criminal record check and Child-Abuse Registry check**—if required
5. **Copy of current ethics review committee approval**—if available

Project Proposal Information

The written project proposal (maximum 4 pages) must include the following:

Introduction—description of proposed research

Purpose of research—goals, significance of the proposed research (including the potential to impact teacher practice, student learning, achievement and well-being)

Assumption of research—hypothesis

Project timeline/milestones

Research methodology—how the researcher will collect data (observation, interview, consideration of schools, grades involved, etc.), including steps to be taken to ensure confidentiality of all subjects

Data analysis procedures—overall process, not just the end result

Plan to communicate findings to teachers, communities, and other educational partners in accessible language and format.

Project Completion

Principle investigators may be asked to make a presentation to the IURN steering committee on their research. The project will be considered complete when all reports and accompanying paperwork have been submitted to the committee. The final report, including a copy of research findings shared with educational partners, must be submitted both in hard copy and electronic formats to the IURN Steering Committee Chair. Once the project is complete, the investigator is welcome to apply for a new IURN grant.