

Letter of Interest Form (Seeding)

To navigate between pages of the application without writing answers to all questions, use the links across the top of this page (in the line of links that says "Go to: Basic Info, Organization Info, Main Program Info," etc.). To save your work on a page before navigating to another page, click Save & Continue Editing below. Note that answering all questions is required unless otherwise specified (such as the Impact Evaluation Supplement for those organizations not seeking to receive that supplement).

Note that this document is available as a PDF to review the questions; all Letters of Interest must be completed online at aspen.fluidreview.com.

Contact Information

Name of Organization

Organization Website

Street Address 1

Street address, P.O. box, company name, c/o

Where does your organization have its headquarters?

- United States
- Middle East or North Africa
- Other, please specify... _____

Street Address 2

Apartment, suite, unit, building, floor, etc.

Point of Contact at the Organization for this Application

City

First Name / Given Name

State/Province/Region

Last Name / Family Name

Postal or ZIP code

Title

Country

Department

Organization Main Phone Number

Email Address

Organization Fax Number

Phone Number

Organization Information

Organization's number of full-time paid staff

Organization's operating budget in Fiscal Year 2017

If necessary, convert the figure into U.S. dollars using the current exchange rate.

Briefly describe your organization's programs and the people those programs serve.

Briefly describe your organization's experience running virtual exchange programs. Include in your answer the number of young people as well as the number of educators or other facilitators who participated in your virtual exchange over the past year, if applicable.

Note that submitting the Initiative's Survey of the Field form – which asks for more detail about an organization's 2017-2018 virtual exchange activity – is required for Scaling applicants and is optional for Seeding applicants. Applicants for Scaling awards must fill out and complete the Survey of the Field form – available through the same online portal as the Letter of Interest form – by the Letter of Interest submission deadline.

What is the approximate budget you are requesting?

List the amount in U.S. dollars. Applicants will submit a complete budget at the application stage. Keep in mind that the amount requested must fall within the range for a Seeding award – \$100,000 to \$300,000 over the term of the award – and must not be more than 80% of the organization's Fiscal Year 2017 total operating budget.

Give an overview of the proposed program, including major activities, subject matter, and curriculum that will be used. Describe the communication between the participants in different locations. Include in the answer a description of how the participants would engage through synchronous communication, asynchronous communication, or both, and which technology platform or platforms will be used for communication between the young people and educators or facilitators in each location.

Which priority topic or topics, if any, does your proposed program most substantially addresses?

Technology and computing: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields give young people skills critical to the 21st century workforce. Virtual exchange is particularly well suited to facilitating hands-on, collaborative projects -- on a range of topics, including programming, web design, robotics, and many others -- that help young people gain technology and computing knowledge and skills. Vocational and job skills training in technology and computing are encouraged.

World affairs and global studies: Courses in a range of disciplines or departments -- particularly across social studies and the social sciences -- focus on places and topics beyond the borders of the country where the course is being conducted. Global education is increasingly recognized as critical for young people, who need to understand global issues and trends as they prepare for jobs that involve international communication and cooperation and as they prepare to be informed, active citizens in their globally connected communities. Direct communication with peers from other places and backgrounds through virtual exchange gives young people the opportunity to see the world and their own society from new perspectives and with greater empathy.

Business and entrepreneurship: Virtual exchange can give young people the opportunity to practice the cross-cultural communication and digital skills, such as through international projects or case studies, they need as they enter the private sector. The Initiative is particularly interested in supporting programs focused on business and entrepreneurship at the higher education and young professional level.

Language learning and practice: Virtual exchange can give young people the opportunity to practice communicating in a world language, building confidence and communication skills alongside increased language proficiency. Proposals focusing on this topic may be designed to give young people in the Middle East and North Africa the opportunity to practice English, to give young people in the United States the opportunity to practice a language spoken in the Middle East or North Africa, or to give both groups of young people the opportunity to practice the language spoken by their peers abroad. Note that while the primary purpose of these programs may be language

learning and practice, the subject or topic of the communication between participants should be any topic of relevance and interest to all participants.

- Technology and computing
- World affairs and global studies
- Business and entrepreneurship
- Language learning and practice

What will be the age or education level of the young people directly participating in the virtual exchange?

- Middle School
- High School
- Undergraduate
- Graduate
- Young professional
- Other, please specify... _____

Reaching Diverse Participants: Indicate which of the following groups the program would prioritize including as participants.

Women and girls: While all programs supported by the Initiative must ensure that women and girls are included and encouraged to participate, the Initiative is particularly interested in programs designed specifically to empower women and girls in the United States and in the Middle East and North Africa and programs that seek to include women and girls in fields where their opportunities have been limited.

Underserved youth whose access to international exchange has been limited: In the United States, this includes reaching rural and urban public institutions, including Title I eligible schools and higher education institutions with a high proportion of Pell grant eligible students, as well as community colleges. In the Middle East and North Africa, this includes reaching public education institutions and community organizations whose primary language of instruction is not English as well as technical and vocational training programs.

Refugees: The Initiative is interested in programs that include young people who are refugees from the Middle East and North Africa, recognizing the potential of virtual exchange to help refugees sustain their education, gain skills, and engage with their host countries and with peers around the world. These refugees should be located in the Middle East or North Africa or in another country outside the United States. Refugees located in the United States are welcome to participate in Stevens Initiative programs, but this in itself would not constitute an eligible virtual exchange

program unless there are also participants from the Middle East and North Africa who are located outside the United States. Programs proposing to include refugees should indicate how they will address the challenges many refugees face, such as disruption to their studies, lack of access to adequate facilities, inability to access their credentials, unfamiliarity with the language in the country where they reside, and other issues.

People with disabilities: Virtual exchange can give young people the opportunity to engage with peers around the world regardless of their ability to travel.

Minority groups: In the United States, these programs would emphasize the inclusion of young people from diverse racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, such as through minority-serving institutions or other institutions that reach diverse young people. In the Middle East or North Africa, these programs would emphasize the inclusion of young people from under-served minority groups in the proposed participating country or countries.

- Women and girls
- Underserved youth whose access to international exchange has been limited
- Refugees
- People with disabilities
- Minority groups

Describe the young people who will participate in the program. Include in your answer an explanation, if applicable, of how the program would put emphasis on including diverse participants, as reflected in the list of options in the Reaching Diverse Participants list above.

How does the proposed program address the needs of the young people you propose to include in the program, their communities, and the involved institutions?

How does the proposed program contribute to the global competencies of the participants?

See the U.S. Department of Education global competencies framework:
<https://sites.ed.gov/international/global-and-cultural-competency/>

How does the proposed program contribute to the practical skills of the participants?

Consider the skills needed for a 21st century career, such as digital literacy, technical and vocational skills, and skills for a specific job sector

Middle East and North Africa Participants: How many young people in the Middle East and North Africa will directly participate in the program? Indicate the number per country or place in the Middle East and North Africa. Keep in mind that the total number of youth participants (including the Middle East and North Africa and the United States) must be between 100 and 750 young people for a Seeding award.

Refugees from these countries who are currently in other countries are eligible.

[Enter an amount for any applicable country in the Middle East and North Africa.]

U.S. Participants: How many young people in the United States will directly participate in the program? Indicate the number per U.S. State. Keep in mind that the total number of youth participants (including the Middle East and North Africa and the United States) must be between 100 and 750 young people for a Seeding award.

[Enter an amount for any applicable U.S. State.]

Participants by academic term: How many young people will participate in each of the following academic terms? Participants should only be counted once, during the academic term when they begin participating, even if their participation occurs across more than one academic term. Keep in mind that the total number of participants counted in the answer to this question should be the same as the total number of participants counted in the previous two questions (adding up the participants in each Middle East and North Africa country and in each U.S. state).

Fall 2019

Winter/Spring 2020

Summer 2020

Fall 2020

Winter/Spring 2021

What is the cost per participant of the proposed program?

To calculate the cost per participant for the sake of this application, divide the approximate budget request at the top of the page by the total number of participants based on the answers to the questions immediately above. Keep in mind that in addition to falling within the budget request range and number of youth participants range, proposals for Seeding awards must have a cost per participant between \$400 and \$1,000 per participant. List the amount in U.S. dollars.

Describe the educators or facilitators who will directly participate in the virtual exchange and explain how they will be prepared or trained for their role.

Is there an in-person exchange for youth or for facilitators/educators? If so, describe briefly and describe where it falls in the course of the program and how it contributes to program goals and the participant experience.

If the proposed program addresses one or more of the invitational priorities listed in the call for proposals and you feel the plan to address the invitational priority or priorities has not been fully described in the answers to the questions above, you may use this space to briefly explain how the proposal meets the invitational priority or priorities.

The Initiative is particularly interested in projects that involve the following: Participants and institutions located in Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Libya, and in the Palestinian Territories. Programs that would involve intra-regional interaction, such as between Israeli participants and those in other countries in the Middle East and North Africa. These programs must still include participants in the United States. Community engagement and community service. Virtual exchange programs can include activities that bring participants outside the classroom and into their communities to better understand and make a difference in addressing local and global issues.

Which institutional partners, if any, are involved in this project and what are their roles? Include in the explanation any organizations or educational institutions that will include their students or young people in the virtual exchange program. Indicate whether the partnerships are established or are not yet established. How will you secure these partnerships if you are invited to submit a full proposal?

More information about the status of proposed partnerships will be requested of those invited to submit applications.

For Seeding applicants only: How is your proposed program different from virtual exchange programs that exist today? Why did you decide to launch a new program rather than replicating or expanding an existing program? How will it add value to the virtual exchange field?

What vision do you have for the long-term growth and reach of this virtual exchange program? How would the program be sustained after the period of this award?

Impact Evaluation Supplement (Optional)The Initiative is seeking to work with a small number of awardees that have the willingness and capacity to implement a statistically rigorous impact evaluation, using either a randomized controlled trial or a quasi-experimental design as described below, for both U.S.- and Middle East and North Africa-based participants. The goal is to measure the impact of the virtual exchange program, or a specific program feature, on participant outcomes, including global competencies, substantive learning, and behavior change. The evaluation should be conducted with a new cohort of youth who have not participated in the program in the past. The evaluation could take one of the following forms:

A randomized controlled trial (RCT) to measure the impact of virtual exchange participation. In an RCT, applicants to the program would need to be randomly assigned to either participate in the virtual exchange (treatment group) or to not participate (control group). Both the treatment group and control group would complete pre-program and post-program surveys, and their data would be compared at the end of the program to isolate the effects of the virtual exchange. The most common and least disruptive approach to conducting an RCT for programs such as the virtual exchange programs that we support is a natural experiment in which there is more demand than it is possible for an awardee to accommodate. Rather than admitting applicants or implementing the program in institutions/classrooms on a first-come-first-serve basis, there is an application window in which all applicants have an equal chance of admission, and those who are not admitted (by random selection) agree to take a post-exchange survey. The organization conducting an RCT should have a realistic target of at least 30 participants per academic term in the United States and 30 participants per academic term in the Middle East and North Africa as well as 30 additional eligible young people per academic term in both the United States and the Middle East and North Africa who

would serve in the control group. Those control group members can then be considered with priority for admission in a future round of the activity during this award period.

A quasi-experimental design (QED) to measure the impact of virtual exchange participation. In a QED, participants in the program would be matched with similar non-participants willing to serve in a comparison group (no randomization used in this case). Both the treatment group and comparison group would complete pre-program and post-program surveys, and their data would be compared at the end of the program to isolate the effects of the virtual exchange. The organization conducting a QED should have a realistic target of at least 30 participants per academic term in the United States and 30 participants per academic term in the Middle East and North Africa as well as 30 additional, comparable young people per academic term in both the United States and the Middle East and North Africa who would serve in the comparison group.

A variation of an RCT, in which specific program features are offered to subsets of participants. Opportunities are randomly assigned to individuals or groups of participants, and the outcomes of the subsets are compared at the end of the program. Examples of features that can be varied include: the amount of virtual exchange contact hours or the amount of synchronous communication (real-time, such as by videoconference) incorporated into the program. Non-experimental variations of this design may be considered as well.

All organizations seeking to conduct the Impact Evaluation Supplement should have experience conducting virtual exchange and should have at least preliminary evidence of program effectiveness. Applicants submitting this supplement must answer additional questions during the Letter of Interest phase and, if invited, during the full application phase. These applicants must also submit a supplemental budget for no less than \$50,000 and no more than \$125,000 during the full application phase. These supplemental funds would be in addition to the main proposed budget and would not count toward the minimum or maximum request amount and would not be factored into the cost per participant calculation. Applicants submitting this supplement will be considered with or without this supplement and may be offered an award with or without the Impact Evaluation Supplement. Scaling and Seeding applicants are both permitted to apply for this supplement.

Are you proposing to conduct the Impact or Program Attribute Assessment Supplement?

- Yes
- No

If you answered "No" to the question above, skip the rest of the questions on this page. If you answered "Yes," answer the questions below ONLY for one of the three options: RCT, QED, or Attribute Variation.

If you answered Yes to the question above, select the type of supplemental evaluation or assessment you propose to conduct, keeping in mind that this would be in addition to the core evaluation and assessment requirements of all awardees and that this supplement may or may not be accepted if the overall application is accepted.

- Implementing a Randomized Control Trial (RCT) to compare virtual exchange participants with non-participants
- Implementing a Quasi-Experimental Design (QED) to compare virtual exchange participants with non-participants
- Program attribute variation, running two or more variants of a program to test a particular program attribute

Randomized Control Trial (RCT) Questions

RCT: Why do you think that your program would be a good candidate for an RCT?

RCT: In the main part of the Letter of Interest form, you propose a specific number of young people as participants in your program. How many additional qualified young people do you expect to apply or otherwise express interest in participating in your program? In other words, how many young people do you expect could be randomly assigned to a control group, with the understanding that they may have the opportunity to participate in a future academic term after being in the control group?

RCT: Do you have any experience conducting a RCT with your program? If yes, please explain.

RCT: Are you working with an evaluator? If so, please describe that person's experience conducting RCTs or quasi-experimental designs.

Quasi-Experimental Design (QED) Questions

QED: Why do you think that your program would be a good candidate for a QED?

QED: Please describe your initial plans for identifying and incorporating well-matched comparison groups into your evaluation, including your anticipated size of the comparison groups in the United States and Middle East and North Africa.

QED: Do you have any experience involving comparison groups in evaluations of your program? If yes, please explain.

QED: Are you working with an evaluator? If so, please describe that person's experience conducting QEDs or other evaluation designs with comparison groups.

Attribute Variation Questions

Attribute Variation: What program dimension do you propose to vary and why? What different variants will you conduct? (For example, a program could propose to vary the number of hours of synchronous communication that would be conducted in addition to a consistent amount of asynchronous communication, conducting a version of the program with three hours of synchronous communication and a version with 20 hours of synchronous communication.)

Attribute Variation: Please describe your initial plans for implementing different versions of your program, including the anticipated size of the participant groups experiencing each version of your program in the United States and the Middle East and North Africa, and how you would assign them to the different versions.

Attribute Variation: Do you foresee any challenges in varying your program on this dimension? If so, please explain.

Attribute Variation: Have you implemented any evaluation in the past? If yes, what type of evaluation?

Attribute Variation: Are you working with an evaluator? If so, please describe that person's experience.

Check Answers, Sign, and Submit Letter of Interest

Please note that if you are invited to submit a full application, we will want to see full logistics, tech, partnerships, communications, evaluation, knowledge sharing, and sustainability plans and we will ask more about those at that stage.

Please check all pages of this form and ensure you have answered all questions. Note that answering all questions is required unless otherwise specified (such as the Impact Evaluation Supplement for those organizations not seeking to receive that supplement).

My signature below affirms that the information I have provided here is true and accurate.