



BT2P Request for Proposals: The Way Forward Grants

Proposal deadline: Monday, December 7, 2020 at 5:00 PM (EST)
Grant awards announced by January 15, 2021

For further information or questions, please contact BT2P's Program Coordinator, Todd Rosendahl: todd@bttop.org

Overview

Bringing Theory to Practice is pleased to announce The Way Forward Grants, a new round of BT2P's Multi-Institutional Innovation Grants (MIGs), with the purpose of encouraging creative educational responses to the current crises facing American higher education and American society. As with our first round of MIGs in 2018, The Way Forward Grants will support multi-institutional collaborations that advance—through innovative practices, programs, policies, or research—the core educational purposes to which BT2P is committed. The scale of the grants is modest: a maximum of \$8,000. Yet their aim is ambitious: to catalyze collaborative innovation that addresses the intersecting crises now confronting undergraduate students and academic institutions: systemic racism, economic inequality, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Context

Higher education is in the throes of an emergency. COVID-19 is its precipitating cause, but the pandemic is inseparable from other crises confronting the academy and the larger society: systemic racism, economic collapse, and deepening inequality (as well as the accelerating catastrophe of climate change). These crises have turbo-charged a set of challenges that higher education was already facing: racial and class disparities in student access and success, rising levels of tuition and debt, languishing graduation rates, and declining public trust in academic institutions and the value of a college degree. Higher education was heading toward a reckoning on these issues. It's upon us now.

In this moment, emergency management has been necessary, but it is not sufficient. One way or another, higher education is changing, and if all colleges and universities do is manage the immediate crisis, then the crisis will manage that change. It will lead to the decomposition of academic communities and institutions, growing inequality between sectors, and the thinning-out of teaching and learning. BT2P is launching The Way Forward Grants initiative out of the conviction that higher education has a reservoir of creativity and innovation capable of shaping the change, rather than letting crisis-driven change shape us.

The mission of Bringing Theory to Practice weaves together three commitments. We believe that undergraduate education should be holistic and transformative, nurturing active and integrative learning, personal well-being, preparation for meaningful work, and democratic citizenship. We believe that “educating

the whole student” must include *all* students, no matter their background, interests, or educational setting. And we believe that the first two commitments require the reshaping of higher education.

We invite proposals for collaborative projects that bring these core purposes to bear on the crises of systemic racism, economic inequality, and the pandemic confronting higher education. As with our first round of MIGs, this call focuses on multi-institutional partnerships through which innovative practices, programs, policies, or research can be collectively developed, implemented, and disseminated. We welcome proposals from all sectors, including both U.S. and international institutions. Yet we are especially excited to receive projects involving Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Hispanic-Serving Institutions; other colleges and universities with a sustained commitment to low-income students, first-generation students, and students of color; and faculty, staff, and student participants whose lived experience deepens their engagement with the issues of this call.

POTENTIAL THEMES AND ACTIVITIES OF GRANT PROJECTS

Within this general mandate, we invite proposals with a wide range of potential activities and modes of institutional partnership that respond to the crises of racial equity, economic precarity and the COVID-19 pandemic. Successful projects may be grounded in any of the core purposes to which BT2P is committed:

1. Active and integrative learning
2. Student well-being
3. Civic engagement
4. Preparation for meaningful work
5. Equity and inclusion

We especially welcome proposals that are based on the interdependence of these educational goals and the intersections of the current racial, economic, and health crises threatening them. Such proposals may support the development of new practices among partnering campuses, the co-creation of curricula and/or co-curricula, or research that tests and demonstrates the value of shared innovations, among other possibilities. They may propose and test alternatives to conventional academic infrastructures like the semester calendar and the credit-hour system. They may experiment with the roles of faculty, staff, students, and community partners in teaching, learning, and credit-earning. Possible projects, for instance, might include (but aren't limited to):

- the development of multi-credit project-based courses that organize gen-ed or departmental curricula around current ‘wicked problems’ like public health or racial disparities in wealth-building;
- the planning of a regional community education center that co-develops curricula or community services among institutions with diverse student bodies and disparate levels of resources;
- the development of model practices for overcoming racial and class disparities in access to high-quality online learning;
- the redesign of high-impact practices to fit the strengths, needs, and time-constraints of part-time, working, or parenting undergraduates;
- a collaboration among faculty, student-support professionals, and students to improve academic and social supports for students with COVID-19;
- a summer institute in which faculty and administrators from minority-serving institutions mentor colleagues from predominantly white institutions in best practices for supporting Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students.

These are examples, not prescriptions. We welcome and encourage your creative ideas and approaches.

TIME FRAME

Grant proposals are due via electronic submission to info@bttop.org by 5:00 pm (EST) on Monday, December 7, 2020, with the subject line “2021-2022 TWF Proposal.” Awards will be announced by January 15, 2021. Although the timeframe for grant-supported activities and expenditures can be somewhat flexible depending on the project, we generally expect the work supported by The Way Forward Grants to be pursued and completed between February, 2021 and September, 2022.

ELIGIBILITY

The Way Forward Grants are open to public and non-profit colleges and universities from all academic sectors. Associations and consortia may apply, but not to support their normal collaborative activities. Proposed projects must comprise at least two academic partners, but they may involve broader partnerships, including K-12 schools and community organizations. We especially welcome proposals that bring together institutions from different academic sectors or with diverse educational missions. For each partnering academic institution, there must be a full-time faculty or staff member serving as Principal Investigator or Co-Principal Investigator.

AWARD CRITERIA

Grants will be selected by a committee of BT2P staff and network leaders. Criteria for awarding grants will include:

- the proposal’s alignment with the mission, purposes, and values of BT2P
- the proposal’s thoughtful engagement with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, systemic racism, and/or economic inequality within higher ed and, where relevant, the intersections among them
- the potential of the proposal for advancing the institutional priorities of the partners
- the significance and timeliness of the proposal for creative innovation and positive change in higher ed
- the feasibility of the proposed work within the timeframe and budget of the project, and the institutional profile and practices of the participants
- the durability of the partners’ commitment to each other and the project and their plans to sustain the proposed work beyond the grant itself

As stated, BT2P will award The Way Forward Grants of up to \$8,000. **All grants require a 1:1 matching commitment from the partner institutions.** As much as half of the match may come in the form of in-kind resources, but at least half is required to be a financial commitment to the project budget. Because we expect—and hope—that many proposals will involve partners with unequal resources, the matching contributions (both monetary and in-kind) may be shared unequally by the participating institutions or fully borne by one partner. The proposal budget should clearly describe the source of matching contributions. Please note that BT2P grant funding cannot be used to pay institutional overhead or indirect costs, and the covering of these costs by institutions will not count toward in-kind matches.

PROPOSAL FORMAT

Project proposals should be submitted by electronic attachment to info@bttop.org by 5:00 pm (EST), on Monday, December 7, 2020. Proposals should include:

- an **information sheet** listing all participating institutions or associations and the names and contact information of Principal Investigators (PI) or Co-Principal Investigators from each partner. These will be the primary point of contact for funding decisions, grant management, and other communications
- a **proposal narrative of no more than 5 pages**, laying out the project, its goals, activities, timeline, key participants and stakeholders, hoped-for outcomes or products, and plans for sustaining the collaborative project beyond the limits of the grant
- a **project budget** and budget narrative, including sources of matching contributions and categories of expenditures
- **letters of endorsement** from the President or relevant Chief Academic Officer of all partners, speaking to the partners' commitment to the project and their collaborative relationship
- relevant **biographical or organizational materials** about key participants and stakeholders

GRANTEE EXPECTATIONS

Recipients of The Way Forward Grants will be expected to document and share the results of their project in four ways:

- a final **grant report** to the Bringing Theory to Practice staff (and, depending on the length and timeline of the project, an interim report);
- a formal, final **budget report** (and where relevant an interim budget report) to the Bringing Theory to Practice staff;
- sharing of project experiences and learnings with other Way Forward grant awardees through virtual conversations facilitated by BT2P; and
- **public-facing materials** that accessibly present the project, its outcomes, and its significance for wider consumption. Depending on the nature of the project, these materials might take the form of reports, curricula, research papers, media and digital resources, or contributing to the BT2P Newsletter or blog.

Please feel free to contact Todd Rosendahl, Program Coordinator of Bringing Theory to Practice, at todd@bttop.org if you have questions or need further information. We are grateful for your interest in this grant opportunity.