Data for the American Dream Initiative
Request for Proposals

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Data for the American Dream
Request for Proposals to Fund Pilot Projects

The *Data for the American Dream* (D4AD) initiative aims to support innovative efforts to expand access to education and career data through public-private partnerships. The goal of the D4AD initiative is to help students and jobseekers make better career decisions in a changing economy through data-driven information, and especially to help low-income, underemployed, and unemployed Americans access better jobs and education opportunities.

Our economy is undergoing a period of unprecedented transition as automation, digitization, and globalization upend entire industries while creating new opportunities in others. Meanwhile, social, racial, economic, and geographic inequities persist, limiting the abilities of some to fully participate in the modern economy. No one solution can address all of these issues, but what technology can do is help individuals make more informed decisions to set themselves up on the right side of economic trends.

Significant progress has been made in recent years by state and city governments, non-profits, and foundations to create more open and connected data and information systems that provide people with tools to help them acquire education, training, and skills for the economy of the future – but not enough progress has been made. There are still far too many people, especially low-income Americans, who do not have access to high-quality information on job and training programs.

The Data for the American Dream initiative seeks to provide seed funding from a consortium of funders led by Schmidt Futures for up to three pilot projects consisting of collaborations between public and private organizations to connect critical workforce and education data and to make the resulting data-driven information available to the populations who most need them. The initiative will be project-managed by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

Successful pilots will do more than just generate data dashboards. Successful pilots will make data-driven information accessible to users in a way that leads to substantial impact on improving outcomes.

In seeking to support local, regional, and state-level public-private partnerships, the D4AD initiative considers data privacy and data security to be of the highest importance and will only support efforts that make these considerations a top priority.

The enclosed Request for Proposals provides more information about the initiative, eligibility criteria for applicants, the process of applying, criteria for selection, and other details.

Request for Proposals – Data for the American Dream Initiative

Issue Date: March 11, 2019

Letter of Intent Due: April 3, 2019

Final Proposal Due: May 31, 2019

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Background and Purpose

Choices about education and job opportunities are among the most consequential decisions that individuals will make for their financial well-being. Yet, most people – especially low-income Americans from disadvantaged backgrounds – make these decisions with less data-driven insight than is the case when choosing a movie to watch at night.

Unfortunately, this problem will not be solved by the market. The business models for job sites and career builders depend on companies' willingness to pay a premium for top talent. As a result, lower-skilled, more disadvantaged workers struggle to find the information they need to make informed choices about training, education, and jobs. While government efforts at the federal, state and local level have tried to address this problem, these institutions have been slow to adopt new solutions to make data-driven information available to residents because of budget constraints, lack of knowledge about new opportunities, and bureaucratic hurdles.

If unaddressed, this problem will get worse, not better. An estimated 13 million Americans are unemployed or underemployed, in many cases because they don't know where to go to get the information they need to navigate the labor market. Opportunities are out there, but workers are simply not able to find them or to get the training needed to obtain them. This not only hurts the neediest in our society—low-income Americans from disadvantaged backgrounds—but also hurts overall economic growth as productive jobs and skill needs go unfilled.

The *Data for the American Dream (D4AD)* initiative aims to support local, regional, and statewide efforts to provide access to education and job opportunity information through partnerships that might include both public and private agencies and organizations and to ensure that this data-driven information is conveyed to, and used by, the people who need it most—underrepresented populations and especially displaced and underemployed American workers. The ultimate goal of the D4AD initiative is to help students and jobseekers make better career decisions in a changing economy for targeted populations, which include low-income, underrepresented, and unemployed Americans.

To make better data-driven information available, we are seeking proposals that aim to do the following: (1) combine critical education, training and jobs data from multiple organizations; (2) make that data available through an application programming interface (API) or similar data product; and/or (3) ensure that under- and unemployed Americans (especially low-income Americans) have access to the resulting data-driven information.

Proposals should describe a project that aligns with at least one of the following:

- Innovative efforts to create or expand sustainable, data sharing partnerships that may include: governmental agencies (this may include state, regional, county, and/or city agencies); postsecondary institutions; non-profit organizations; employers; and/or private sector organizations. These projects would move beyond the data sharing agreements commonly made as part of state longitudinal data systems (SLDS) and incorporate different kinds of data or strategies for forming data agreements. For example, they may be focused more regionally within a state or on an urban area that crosses state borders.

- Produce a data product, for example an API, that incorporates and makes available data from multiple organizations that have formed a sustainable data sharing agreement, data collaborative, or data trust. The included data should contain information on training, education, and jobs in a given area that could be used to inform career pathways above and beyond what is currently available. The data product should be made available to developers and other users of data-driven information with the ultimate goal of providing useful information to the target population.

- Activities that ensure data and data tools produce information that is made available to, and used by, an identified target population. Successful pilot projects will describe specific procedures for ensuring the target population is accessing and using the data. This could involve partnerships outside of data providers—for example, with social service organizations or other agencies that work directly with the target population.

Amount, Duration, Number of Grants

The amount of the grant will be based on the scope and scale of the proposed effort. Grants may range between $750,000 and $1,500,000.

Grants will be awarded for an 18-month duration, with the potential for follow-on funding based on success.

Up to three grants may be awarded as a result of this RFP.

Proposal Process Timeline

This RFP selection process will follow this timeline:

March 22, 2019	Webinar for interested participants (4 pm EDT)
April 3, 2019	Prospective applicants submit a letter of intent
April 15, 2019	Invitations to submit a full proposal released
May 31, 2019	Final Proposals due

Selected pilot sites will be notified by June 28, 2019.

Eligibility

Proposals must be submitted by a lead organization. The lead organization must be either a government agency or a 501(c)(3) organization. The lead organization will be held responsible for the following: act as the fiscal agent of the grant; oversee all grant activities; ensure that local, state, and federal laws and regulations are met; and be the primary organization responsible for meeting grant deliverables and timelines.

Applicants may represent any sector, as long as projects make available education, training, and workforce information. The lead organization does not need to be a data provider but does need to ensure that all data requirements to fulfill the objectives of this RFP can be met.

Lead organizations can offer subcontracts to agencies or organizations that are part of the data collaborative, are strategic partners, or otherwise offer expertise to the project. Anticipated subcontractors should be detailed in the proposal.

Letter of Intent
Interested applicants should submit a letter of intent by **11:59 pm EDT on April 3, 2019**. Letters of intent should be submitted to Alli Bell, D4AD Project Director, at alli@nchems.org. Letters of intent should be no more than three pages (excluding appendices), on the lead organization's letterhead, and include:

1. A brief overview of the proposed project, the phase(s) it most closely aligns with, and principal deliverables.
2. A list of the organizations that will be part of the project, including key personnel and contact information.
3. A description of the target audience, i.e., characteristics of the individuals who will ultimately be served by the project.
4. The likely proposed grant amount (expected grants are between $750,000 and $1,500,00). In the event that the total budget for the project is more than the proposed grant amount, please also include the total project budget and sources (actual or expected) of additional funding.

Letters of intent will be reviewed and projects that are most aligned with the objectives and goals of the D4AD initiative will be invited to submit a full proposal. Applicants will be notified of invitation to submit a full proposal by April 15, 2019.

Proposal Requirements
Invited applicants should submit a full proposal to Alli Bell, D4AD Project Director, at alli@nchems.org by **11:59 pm EDT on May 31, 2019**.

The full proposal narrative should be no more than 30 pages (excluding appendices, any charts or graphs, and supporting material), and include the following components (please refer to the FAQ for additional details and clarification):

1. **Project Overview.** An overall description of the project and how it aligns with the objectives of the D4AD initiative, including:
    - The specific problem to be solved and need that will be met by this project;
    - The audience and target population for the project;
    - Specific anticipated goals, outcomes, and deliverables of the project, including specific one-year, two-year, and long-term goals of the project; and
    - A brief discussion of how the project will achieve the desired goals.

2. **Partners/Collaborators.** A description of the participating organizations, including (depending on specific project):
    - Participants in any data sharing agreements, including descriptions of current agreements and processes for data governance, security, and privacy;

- Strategic partners, and the role or expertise of each partner;
- Technical partners, proposed vendors, or additional funding sources.

Where possible, application should include letters of support from potential partners. (These letters will not count toward the proposal's maximum length.) Contact information for each organization may be provided in an appendix.

3. **Anticipated Impact and Deliverables.** A description of the specific deliverables of the project and their anticipated impact, depending on the project's goals. In the case that it is beyond the scope of the project to make information available directly to the target population, the theory of change through which the data or data product deliverables could eventually impact the target audience.

4. **Risks and Significant Challenges.** Applicants should address the principal risks and challenges that might stand in the way of their project's success in enough detail for the review team to understand any distinct characteristics about those risks and challenges for which additional supports or technical assistance from NCHEMS, or another implementation partner may prove valuable, in the event the proposed project is funded. ***In addition, applicants should explicitly address their plans for ensuring and maintaining data privacy and security***.

5. **Qualifications of Key Personnel.** The roles of key project staff from each partner organization, as well as project leads, should be listed along with a brief biographical sketch. Resumes for key personnel may be provided in an appendix.

6. **Sustainability.** A plan for how the project may be scaled and sustained beyond the project period, including the expected funding streams. In addition, applicants should note any additional matching funding from other sources.

7. **Timeline and Budget.** Project timeline with proposed deliverables, not to extend beyond February 28, 2021. The timeline should provide sufficient detail about the project activities for the selection committee to discern the means by which the pilot's implementation and preparation of deliverables will be carried out, including any important milestone dates and events. The timeline must be accompanied by a detailed budget.

Selection Process and Criteria

Final proposals will be reviewed by NCHEMS, key funding partners, and a panel of advisors. In addition to probability of success and alignment with the D4AD initiative goals, proposals will be evaluated using the following considerations:

- Clear description of proposed plan and its rationale, including careful consideration of strengths and limitations.

- Perceived ability of project to benefit specific populations.

- Considerations of data governance, security and privacy, particularly for projects that address the first two phases of D4AD project progression.

- Expertise of project personnel and agencies/organizations.

- Commitment of key partners in the data collaborative and strategic partners through letters of commitment or other guarantees of support throughout the project.

- Appropriateness of budget and timeline, as well as any additional matching funding.

- Sustainability of project beyond the project period.

- Potential for project to be scaled to other states or localities.

Contact Information
Please send questions to Alli Bell (alli@nchems.org). Questions submitted in writing by email will be answered on the D4AD web page for all applicants to view.