



Sponsored Work Funding for 2020-21

Overview

The [Madison Education Partnership \(MEP\)](#), a research-practice partnership between the [Wisconsin Center for Education Research](#) and the [Madison Metropolitan School District \(MMSD\)](#), will support research from UW–Madison faculty, research staff, and advanced graduate students (with a faculty member as principal investigator) on topics of interest in MMSD.

In response to the pressing needs of this moment, MEP has made changes to the typical RFP process used in past years. For this funding cycle, we want to **cultivate new collaborative relationships** and/or **deepen existing relationships** between UW researchers and MMSD leaders; **respond to the needs of this particular moment in time**; and **experiment with a new recruitment and selection process that implements a broker role for MEP**. For researchers, these changes mean we will offer a wider range of potential topics and funding, more options for the type and time commitment of the work, and a new process for creating, submitting and deciding on proposals.

Background: Madison Education Partnership & Sponsored Work

MEP engages in research that seeks to increase educational equity. MEP creates a space for researchers and practitioners in Madison to engage in high-quality, problem-based collaborative research that contributes to policy, practice, and broader understandings of educational processes. MEP supports researchers with funding, technical expertise, and expedited access to district data and staff. The partnership's Steering Committee and Directors annually determine the research focus for internally and externally generated research. Since 2016, MEP has funded [nine projects from UW faculty and research staff](#) at \$50,000 in direct costs each. Given the unique circumstances and demand for evidence-based decision making, MEP has changed its process and awards for 2020-2021.

While MEP is open to a variety of topics and research approaches, all funded studies **must**:

- Make explicit connection to issues of equity, such as documenting inequities, exploring means of disrupting inequities, and/or engaging in research on anti-racist teaching
- Address one or more goals in the [MMSD Strategic Framework](#)
- Seek to offer actionable recommendations to MMSD leaders

Potential Topics for Research

MEP encourage proposals that address one of the following topics, chosen by MMSD and MEP leadership:

- Instructional coaching
- Best practices to support virtual learning, including student and family engagement
- Implementation of multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS)
- Early literacy
- Best practices in social emotional learning and trauma informed pedagogy
- School climate and student belonging
- Teachers' use of formative assessments

- Pedagogical, organizational, and relational lessons we can learn from the moment to carry forward after the pandemic

Award Details

We will offer one award for up to \$50K and up to five awards for \$10K in direct costs. We describe each award type below.

One award for up to \$50K

- Original research conducted in and with MMSD on one of the proposed topics of interest - could include funding for a specific component of an ongoing research collaboration with MMSD
- Led or supervised by UW researcher with PI status (faculty member or research staff); graduate students can be co-PIs
- Work should be completed in one calendar year
- Deliverables include an interim report (one-page brief) on project progress in May 2021, a final report in December 2021 and a meeting with relevant district leads to present and discuss the work.

Up to five awards for up to \$10K

- Flexible in format - could include literature/best practice reviews, secondary data analysis on a question of interest, or pilot data work to prepare for a longer-term study
- Led or supervised by UW researcher with PI status (faculty member or research staff); graduate students can be co-PIs
- Work should be completed in 3-6 months
- Deliverables include an interim update (3 paragraph max) to MEP on project progress, a final product shared with MEP and MMSD leadership and a meeting with relevant district leads to discuss the work

Regardless of award amount, all sponsored researchers are required to:

- Present work to relevant stakeholders as requested.
- Provide any reports, papers, or presentations to be disseminated outside the research team to MEP for preview at least 30 days in advance of distribution.
- Communicate regularly with the appropriate district lead as research progresses

Funds may be used to pay for PI time, research assistance, tuition remission, materials, or travel. Other expenses directly related to research may be permissible, based upon approval from MEP Directors.

In addition to funding, sponsored researchers also receive:

- Expedited MMSD approval to undertake the research; no need for district External Research Committee review of projects. Researchers must still secure approval for research from the UW–Madison Institutional Review Board. Under no circumstances may MMSD or MEP prevent publication or dissemination of research results once researchers have satisfied their disclosure obligations.
- Streamlined access to research sites, parents, teachers, and students.
- Facilitated connections with district staff, if needed, to help with study development, recruitment, implementation and use

- Quicker access to administrative data and support from MMSD's Research & Program Evaluation Office and MEP project staff to facilitate understanding of the data.
- Direct access to district policy makers to disseminate research results, increasing the likelihood that research will be used to drive decision-making at the district level.

How to Indicate Interest & Next Steps

Researchers interested in pursuing funding should contact [Amanda Kruger](#), MEP Project Manager, via email. Please submit your CV, a brief description of your topic of interest suitable for sharing with potential MMSD content leads (two paragraphs at most), and your preferred award amount and/or projected research end date.

MEP will seek to connect you with a MMSD content lead for an introductory meeting (approx. 30 minutes on Zoom) to discuss potential research. This meeting will create space for researchers to ask questions and craft proposals that more closely align to district leaders' needs and timelines, while also opening up those leaders to new ideas and approaches they may not have previously considered. Partners can also gauge their capacity and interest in working with each other.

If that meeting results in a potential project, the PI would then write up a one-page description of the project proposal, including research questions, analysis methods, potential products, timeline, and budget. MEP would connect with the researcher with more details on that submission.

Proposal Review Process & Timeline for Funding Decisions

MEP Directors will vet proposals as they come in, reaching out to the MMSD content leads and submitting PIs as needed. Directors will then send promising proposals to Steering Committee members and MMSD content leads for offline review. In that review, they will consider the following criteria:

- **Relevance:** How useful are the results likely to be to policy makers and/or practitioners seeking to enhance the quality and/or equity of education in MMSD?
- **Methodological rigor:** Does the proposal clearly outline an empirical strategy and does that strategy serve to address the research questions? Will the empirical strategy produce valid, replicable results?
- **Personnel/Feasibility:** Does the PI have relevant substantive and methodological expertise and experience to do this research? Has the PI committed adequate time to the project? Are requests reasonable for data and/or participation of MMSD personnel, students, or families?
- **Project Potential:** Does the proposed work seem likely to contribute to publications and/or funding? Does it fit into a program of research for the PI as an emergent trajectory of part of an established line of inquiry?

With input from the Steering Committee, the MEP Directors will recommend proposals to fund to WCER director on a rolling basis until all funds spent or by November 25, 2020. All applicants submitting a proposal will be notified within 2 weeks of submission.