



**Informing the Design of the INCLUDES Alliances and National Network: An  
Intersectionality Approach  
Summary**

The National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity Education Foundation, FSG, The Aspen Institute, The Collective Impact Forum, 100Kin10, National Girls Collaborative Project, Mentor Net, Great Minds in STEM, American Society for Engineering Education, Science Museum of Minnesota, Changing Communities, National GEM Consortium and the Education Development Center are collaborating to implement a project to inform the design of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Inclusion across the National of Communities of Learners of Underrepresented Discoverers in Engineering and Science (INCLUDES) Initiative. The NSF INCLUDES initiative is a comprehensive national initiative designed to enhance U.S. leadership in STEM discoveries and innovations by supporting models, networks, partnerships and research to ensure the broadening participation in STEM of women, members of racial and ethnic groups that have been historically underrepresented (African Americans/Blacks, Hispanic Americans, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, Native Pacific Islanders), persons of low socio-economic status, and people with disabilities. By building Alliances of organizations implementing programs focused on broadening participation in STEM at all levels, NSF intends to build the capacity of these organizations to transform the overall STEM ecosystem to create positive change by using models of highly structured collaborative efforts that had achieved substantial impact on a large scale social problem. Inherent in the design of effective collaborative efforts is the inclusion of an overarching structure that supports the activities of the collaboration – sometimes called “backbone organizations”. In the design of NSF's INCLUDES initiative are both mini-backbones at the Alliance level and a national backbone at the National Network level. The purpose of this conference proposal is to inform the most critical design features of the structures and supports needed so that the NSF INCLUDES Alliance mini-backbones and the National backbone can work together most effectively and build the capacity to transform the STEM ecosystem. The project will:

- Create a baseline of understanding of the research and models in organizational collaboration theory, including but not limited to collective impact, from which the NSF INCLUDES backbones can be designed.
- Conduct a needs assessment with leaders in the broadening participation in STEM field who are potential members of NSF INCLUDES Alliances to collect the grassroots perspective about how mini-backbones and the national backbone can support their engagement in Alliance development and success
- Engage experts in organizational collaboration to identify the elements and design of the Alliance mini-backbones and the National backbone and the relationship between the two
- Identify infrastructure design for the Alliance mini-backbones and the National backbone that support Alliance members scaling of effective strategies for broadening participation in STEM
- Develop design features for Alliance mini-backbones that: guide vision and strategy; support aligned activities, establish shared measurement practices, build toward the goal

and activities among the larger community where Alliances operation; support implementation research; advance policy, operating practices, and relationships; and mobilize support with partners.

- Develop design features for the National backbone that: supports the sharing of data, knowledge, and best practices among Alliances; offers approaches for new organization to join the NSF INCLUDES National Network; provides technical assistance to Alliances; monitors progress in broadening participation at the national level; and supports the use of collective impact-style activities and implementation research.
- Craft a research agenda and other discoveries from the crowdsourcing and convening that will continue to inform the development of the NSF INCLUDES Alliances and National Network.

The project will accomplish the objectives through these activities:

- Planning and Logistics
- Literature review and pre-convening summary materials
- Crowdsourcing
- Convening Facilitation
- Synthesis and Dissemination

The project will generate a report that will include the following components:

- Summary of the research and practice on inter-organizational collaboration through an equity lens and what the field has learned that can be applied to broadening participation in STEM.
- Summary of the crowdsourcing data from the community of users intended to be Alliance partners on the support structures they need to be successful in collective impact-like work
- Results of the input from the experts and launch pilot organizations that participate in the convening on the design of the Alliance mini-backbones, National backbone and other aspects of the NSF INCLUDES initiative that may come forward as part of the facilitation
- A research agenda for NSF to consider as the embark on the NSF INCLUDES Alliance that can inform the community of inter-organizational collaboration particularly as it relates to broadening participation in STEM education and careers.

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