

Frequently Asked Questions for the Improvement Challenge 2024

General Questions & Selection Process

How do you define continuous improvement?

We see continuous improvement as an iterative process to define a problem, set measurable goals, and conduct short cycle tests to measure both small and large changes over time.

Why are you focusing on continuous improvement?

We believe that continuous improvement (CI) is an effective set of practices to implement lasting change in your organization. Whether you're focusing on integrating social-emotional learning into core curricula, making family and community engagement opportunities more accessible, or strengthening student agency practices, we believe that CI practices provide the rigor and structure needed to promote innovative thinking. A CI approach also creates a safe space to test new ideas, use data to guide the next steps, and openly discuss what's working and what's not, regardless of the problem being addressed.

What do I have to do to participate?

- Step 1: Explore [Learning Lab](#)
- Step 2: Complete a [project listing form](#) by Thursday, February 29, 2024.
- Step 3: Look for an email by March 15, 2024. Three organizations will be invited to meet with Catalyst:Ed start the scoping and matching process
- Step 4: Details on how winners plan on using their \$10,000 to \$20,000 in consulting services with a provider from the Catalyst:Ed network will be announced in mid-April 2024.

What are the selection criteria you are using to determine grantees?

When selecting grantees, we will consider the following:

- A connection between the need identified and how the organization uses improvement practices, like continuous improvement, to create lasting change.
- Student demographics - specifically, we are prioritizing organizations serving greater than 50 percent of students of color and/or low-income students
- The organization's commitment to equity and antiracist practices as evidenced by the information submitted in the project listing form
- Ability to commit time and people to manage and support the provider throughout the project

Do grantees receive actual cash?



No, the grantees will receive between \$10,000 - \$20,000 in consulting services. The exact amount will be based on the project. Catalyst:Ed will pay the provider directly, once the organization has confirmed services are complete (i.e. key activities and deliverables).

Eligibility Requirements

Who is eligible to participate?

Any publicly-funded school, district, or nonprofit. Those whose populations are greater than 50% Black, Latino, Indigenous students, or other students of color, and/or greater than 50% economically disadvantaged will be prioritized

The only exceptions are organizations that have been awarded the Networks for School Improvement (NSI) and Model Design and Initiation (MDI) grant by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation between 2018-2021. As well as organizations that received the Improvement Challenge 2022 consulting wallet.

Choosing a Provider

Do I select the provider or is one assigned to me?

If you are selected as one of the grantees, you will select the provider that you believe is the best fit for your organization based on your review of proposals received from interested and qualified providers from Catalyst:Ed's network. Check out our [project matching process](#) for details on our provider matching process.

If I already have a provider in mind, do I have to go through the project matching process?

Yes, winners will be taken through Catalyst:Ed's scoping process, and projects will be scouted to our provider network to ensure an equity-centered matching process is utilized. Providers that you know, who you believe could be a good fit, are also welcome to apply alongside those from our network. Ultimately the decision is up to you, but organizations tell us that having multiple provider options helps them increase the quality of their project results.

If I am not a winner and find my own funding, can I still work with Catalyst:Ed to match with a provider?

Of course, we would love that! Here are more details on our [project matching process](#).

Contract and Invoice Process

Contracting with an external provider at my organization can be tricky, can you help?

Indeed, we make this process very simple for you! Catalyst:Ed will contract with the provider directly on behalf of your organization. Prior to finalizing the contract, Catalyst:Ed will work



with the provider and organization to ensure all parties agree to the terms and conditions of the contract. Prior to payment, Catalyst:Ed will check with you to ensure all services invoiced for were delivered and payment should be issued.

Additional Questions?

If you have a question not covered here, please email ivy.mckee@catalyst-ed.org, and Ivy will get back to you within two business days.

