



WellAhead

Student Wellbeing for Systems Change Fund

Supporting and amplifying efforts to improve student social and emotional wellbeing while also addressing the barriers to long-term change.

Background

[WellAhead](#) is a philanthropic initiative of the [McConnell Foundation](#) that aims to improve child and youth mental health by integrating social and emotional wellbeing into K-12 education. We believe that **all** young people deserve to be in school environments that support their wellbeing, and that for this to happen, all educators and schools need to have the capacity and conditions to take on this role in a sustainable fashion.

For this reason, WellAhead's work has focused primarily on systems change: shifting culture, structures, priorities, and practices of schools and the education system at-large to better incorporate social and emotional wellbeing as a key role. At the same time, however, WellAhead recognizes the importance of addressing the wellbeing needs of current students.

The Student Impact for Systems Change Fund is intended to bridge these two interests – supporting and amplifying efforts at directly improving student social and emotional wellbeing, while also addressing barriers to long-term, systemic change.

Fund Description:

The objective of this fund is to support immediate impact on student social and emotional wellbeing while also paving the road towards systems change. WellAhead recognizes that school-based efforts to improve student wellbeing can reveal important systemic barriers that impede long-term, sustainable change. A grant from the Student Impact for Systems Change Fund is intended for projects that combine:

ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT STUDENT SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

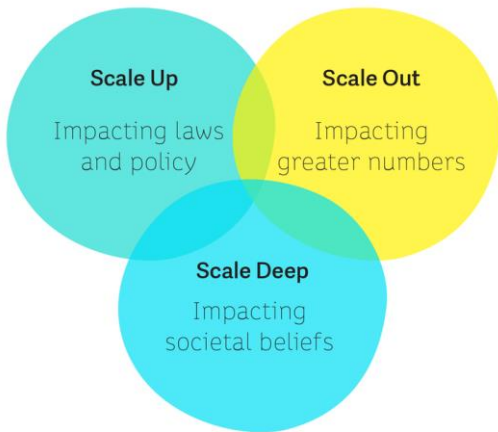
+

EFFORTS TO INTEGRATE WELLBEING INTO THE K-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM

For sustainability purposes, WellAhead seeks to be a partial funder of this work. Applications must show additional funding sources and/or in-kind contributions to project costs.

Systems change: Scaling up and deep

WellAhead uses the following framework for thinking about scaling and systems change:



Three types of scaling:

- **Scale Up:** changing institutions at the level of policy, rules and resource flows
- **Scale Out:** replication and dissemination, increasing number of people or communities impacted
- **Scale Deep:** changing relationships, cultural values and beliefs, “hearts and minds”

Many efforts to improve student wellbeing focus on scaling out – disseminating the intervention so it impacts more students, typically in more schools or districts.

The Student Impact for Systems Change Fund is intended to support efforts at addressing larger systemic barriers, which involves scaling up or deep. For example:

Scaling up:

- Changes to a provincial or regional policy
- Increased long-term funding allocations that prioritize wellbeing
- Updates to relevant rules or regulations

Scaling deep:

- Shifts in attitudes or beliefs
- Increased core knowledge about a concept or topic
- New types of collaborations across disciplines, sectors, or stakeholder groups.
- Engagement of hard-to-reach groups

Eligibility:

All project proposals must include a combination of on-the-ground efforts to support student wellbeing AND broader systems change. There is no specific weighting that proposals must give to each: all that is required is a clear interest in, and commitment to, both.

This fund is targeted at initiatives operating at scale. As such, we will not be making grants to individual schools or teachers. Please see below for more details on eligible grant recipients:

Eligible to apply for funding	Not eligible to apply for funding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An organization working with 5 or more schools • A single school district <u>or</u> multiple districts applying together • 3 or more schools across multiple districts or groupings of schools (e.g. independent schools, first nations schools) applying together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An individual school • An individual teacher • An organization with an idea, that has not yet demonstrated impact in schools • A small group of schools within one school district



The following projects will **not** be considered eligible for funding:

- Efforts that are solely directed towards program dissemination. While impacting a greater number of students can be included as an objective, this must also be combined with some effort at addressing systemic barriers to integration of social and emotional wellbeing into K-12 education.
- School districts whose scaling up efforts are limited to the development of a district wellbeing strategy. Applications from a single school district that are seeking to influence policy, strategy or resource flows should have a scope that extends beyond their district – either regionally, across multiple districts, or provincially.

Criteria

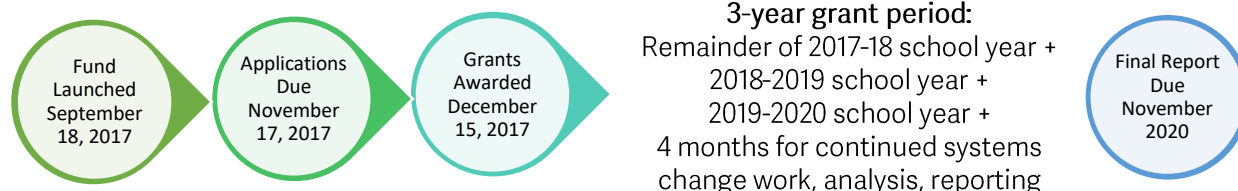
Considerations for granting decisions include:

1. **Understanding of the problem:** How well does the applicant understand the systemic barriers to addressing student wellbeing? Is there a strong enough rationale that addressing this/these barriers will lead to greater integration of wellbeing into the school system?
2. **Scale of systems impact:** How significant are the expected outcomes of the systems change (scaling up or deep) efforts? Will there be broader ripple effects throughout the system? Will the effects be long-lasting?
3. **Positioning to influence systems change:** What partnerships and relationships does the applicant have that would enable them to address the systemic barriers listed?
4. **Evidence of student impact:** What evidence is there that the approach being taken ultimately delivers positive impact on student wellbeing?
5. **Generalizability of student impact approach:** How concerned is the applicant with fidelity to their approach? Does the applicant take a broader, holistic approach or is it very specific? What is the potential for dissemination – can the approach be applied more widely and/or in other settings in a cost-effective manner?

Grant period and timelines:

Recognizing that systems change takes time, grants will be made for a period of 3 years.

Applications are due November 17th, 2017 and notifications of approvals will be made by December 15th, 2017. Grant recipients will be allowed a planning and preparation period for the remainder of the 2017-2018 school year, but must be actively working to address student wellbeing for the entirety of the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. Final reports will be due in November 2020.



Grant Amounts and Funding Stipulations

The Student Impact for Systems Change Fund will award grants of anywhere between \$75,000 and \$300,000 over three years. Please consider the following when making a request:

- Request amounts should be proportionate to the amount of work being undertaken and the scale of expected impact. Applicants who apply for the maximum amount without clear justification in terms of allocated expenses will not be considered.
- The McConnell Foundation cannot be the sole funder of a project. There is an expectation that applicants will demonstrate a minimum of 50% matching funding from other sources. (For example, a request amount of \$100,000 should have at least \$50,000 in matching funding, for a total project cost of \$150,000). This can include coverage for replacement teachers, allocation of district- or provincial-level funding, in-kind contributions of space or staff time, or a grant from another organization.

Learning and Evaluation

WellAhead is looking for grantees that are curious, critical thinkers, who are excited by the potential of addressing big social challenges. Selected grantees will be supported in their strategic learning in the following ways:

1. Advice and guidance on developmental evaluation approaches from the WellAhead team
2. In-person grantee retreats and gatherings to share experiences and learnings
3. Facilitated knowledge exchange of grantee learnings and impacts through the WellAhead network.

We recognize that there are many different approaches to evaluation. As such, there is no pre-determined evaluation process that grantees have to follow during their grant.