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This document will:

Provide additional details about applicant &
application requirements.

Provide supporting materials to help applicants
better understand related concepts and definitions
in order to formulate a competitive submission.

Assessment for Learning Project
Supporting Materials

assessment for learning

project

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Eligibility

WHO Should Apply?

Eligibility for Grants from the Assessment for Learning Project

This Request for Learning (RFL) is open to all entities, taxable and tax-exempt organizations, and U.S. federal, state, tribal, and local government agencies meeting the requirements below. Non-U.S. organizations may apply, but the primary focus of the grant-supported work must be in the United States.

Additional Requirements for Applicants

- Your team meets the criteria listed in the Eligibility to Apply section of the Request for Learning (RFL).
- Schools may span any grade K-12. The work must be primarily conducted in public schools operating in the United States that do not charge any form of tuition to students. For-profit companies and private schools may participate as partners in a network, but may not serve as the lead applicant (see below).

Requirements for Partnerships

- A consortia or informal network of individual schools, school districts, charter management organizations (CMO), or other school operators, or a consortium of schools/districts led by a non-profit organization or state education agency, may apply.
- One entity within the partnership must serve as lead applicant. The lead applicant must meet the criteria listed in the Eligibility to Apply section of the Request for Learning (RFL).
- A CMO or local education agency (LEA) may apply for a CMO- or LEA-wide effort or for strategies that relate to a subset of students and/or schools within the CMO or LEA, such as middle schools, ninth grade, STEM, or any other type of grouping.
- Partnerships may include postsecondary institutions, for-profit or not-for-profit educational organizations, service providers, state agencies, technology firms, for-profit or not-for-profit assessment providers, private schools, or other entities that want to design next generation assessments; but only those entities meeting the Eligibility to Apply criteria may serve as lead applicant.

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HOW? The Application Process

Before You Apply

1. **Review the Request for Learning (RFL), Supporting Materials (this document), and online application materials** on the Assessment for Learning Project website at http://nextgenlearning.org/AssessmentForLearningProject.

2. **Register on the NGLC application submission website**. All application materials must be submitted via the NGLC application submission website. To access, click the "Apply" button at http://nextgenlearning.org/AssessmentForLearningProject. Upon registration, applicants must provide information about the tax status of their organizations. The online proposal template will not allow you to submit your application until such information has been included. Applicants will need to complete an intake form with a number of questions, along with submitting the materials described below.

3. **Participate in an optional webinar.** The Center for Innovation in Education (CIE) and Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC) will host two interactive webinars offering prospective applicants the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about the Assessment for Learning Project and the application process. Information about the webinars is available at http://nextgenlearning.org/AssessmentForLearningProject.

4. **Consult the Frequently Asked Questions** available on the Assessment for Learning Project page of the NGLC website. Any changes to the Request for Learning (RFL) or application process will be posted on the FAQ. Please read the current FAQ before submitting questions, which can be asked either on the webinars or by e-mail to Tony Siddall, NGLC K-12 Program Officer, at tsiddall@educause.edu.

Submission Guidelines

A complete application includes the following materials. All of these materials must be submitted through the NGLC application submission website. Please adhere to the strict page- and time-limit requirements.

1. Written narrative as described below. No more than five pages, single-spaced, at least half-inch margins, at least 11-point type.

2. One artifact, as described below.

3. Budget spreadsheet, as described below.

4. Signed letters of support from all partner organizations listed in the proposal.

5. Confirmation that you have read and understand the Conditions for Funding, Intellectual

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Property Policy, and Grant Terms and Conditions between Grantee and EDUCAUSE, the organization that manages NGLC and that will serve as the legal "Grantor" of the Assessment for Learning Project (all available on the Assessment for Learning Project page of the NGLC website); and acknowledge that any information submitted to CIE and NGLC (including applications, reports, and any related documentation and communications) will be subject to and handled in accordance with such provisions.

Written Narative

The main narrative should concisely (not to exceed 5 pages) present the rationale, working hypothesis, description, and intended impacts of your Assessment for Learning Project, as well as your capacity to execute the project and the learning you anticipate drawing from it. Be sure to link your proposal to the Funding Priorities, and to address the questions in the Your Vision section of the Request for Learning (RFL) under *Ideas, Learning, Impact, and Readiness.* Your narrative should specifically articulate your interest and readiness to participate in the network of grantees, and describe the ways your practice-level innovation could inform systems-level design.

The narrative should also include a list of all partner organizations involved in the project with short descriptions of their roles. If certain characteristics of your school site(s) or your projected population of students served are important to your design (i.e., rural setting, high-poverty student population), please note that in your narrative. Finally, your narrative should include a short description of the proposed project budget to accompany the simple spreadsheet that you will attach separately, making clear how your budget will support the intent of your project.

One Artifact

Please include one artifact of your choosing. The artifact should enhance the review team's understanding of your vision, plan, and/or capacity to carry out the project successfully. Please be sure that the artifact selected is no more than five pages in length, or no more than five minutes long if it is in video or narrated PowerPoint presentation format. The artifact may be custom-produced for the purposes of this application or drawn from current or previous work by the applicant or a partner in the project. Examples of artifacts include, but are not limited to, a presentation of up to five PowerPoint slides (please use the Microsoft presentation-deck format); a video stemming from related current or previous work; or up to five pages in any format drawn from current or previous work that demonstrates applicant's relevant capacity.

Budget

Provide a simple budget for the proposed grant in a spreadsheet format, either as a PDF document or as a Microsoft Excel document. Indicate the expenses to be allocated to the proposed grant by calendar year, if the grant period spans more than one calendar year. (Applicants may propose any budget period for their project from six to 24 months, beginning in January 2016.) Budgets should include income by source (e.g., contributed income from grants as well as other sources) and expenses by category (e.g., salaries, benefits, consultants, professional services, facilities, equipment, travel, and program costs), and totals for each. Indirect/overhead costs may be included at a rate of 10% or less. Please provide an explanation of any items in your budget that you believe need clarification in a brief Budget Narrative, which should be included at the end of the Written Narrative (and may extend onto a sixth

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page if needed). Applicants should refer to the Grant Specifics section of the Request for Learning (RFL) for information about how funds may be used and the types of support grantees will receive in addition to monetary awards.

The Review Process

1. NGLC staff will screen submissions to ensure applications address the key criteria described in the Request for Learning (RFL). We will screen for ineligible applications as well as submissions that are clearly non-competitive. Applications excluded during the screening process will be notified that their applications were declined.

2. NGLC staff, in consultation with Assessment for Learning Project partners, will review all eligible applications. These initial applications will be considered on their individual merits. NGLC may contact the authors of some applications with clarifying questions, either in written form or through a short interview.

3. Applications recommended through internal review will be evaluated by a set of expert reviewers. Their appraisals will be advanced to a final review by the Assessment for Learning Project Executive Committee, composed of representatives from each of the partner organizations for this initiative: CIE, NGLC, 2Revolutions, and the funders. The Committee's decisions are final.

4. The final step is a due diligence review to ensure that the potential grantee is an appropriate recipient of funding.

5. Notification of winners will take place by email by the end of January 2016. Grantees will receive their initial payment from EDUCAUSE after all grant documents have been signed.

This process, including dates, may change—for instance, due to an unexpectedly large response to this RFL. **Any updates to the process will be published on the FAQ page, accessible from this document and the Assessment for Learning Project webpage. Please refer to the FAQ page regularly for updated information.**

Core Criteria for Review

Applications must fully meet the criteria in the Your Vision section of the Request for Learning (RFL): *Ideas, Learning, Impact, and Readiness* and align with the Request for Learning's (RFL) *Goals, Funding Priorities, and Design Principles* in the Opportunity section of the RFL.

In addition, some competitive preference will be given to:
• Applicants in states with enabling policy environments and supportive structures, or other partnerships or circumstances that increase likelihood of expansion and scaling beyond the project site(s). (Applicants should make their own case for why they believe this is so.)

• Applicants who have already partnered, or are currently partnering, with assessment design organizations to create and/or pilot next generation assessments aimed at improving teaching and learning towards attainment of deeper learning outcomes. (Our assumption is that these applicants will be readiest to move quickly into their projects once grantees are named in January 2016. Applicants not already working actively in this space should articulate why they are nonetheless poised to move as quickly.)

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Grantee Commitments

To secure funding, grantees of the Assessment for Learning Project will:

- *Actively participate in meetings, share tools and models developed through their grant,* share perspectives, including through blogs to be posted on the project partners' sites, and be *active learners* as part of the Assessment for Learning Project grantee network.

- Readily *engage with technical assistance partners as appropriate* and agreed to by grantees and by the Assessment for Learning Project partners.

- *Actively participate in a potential research study* examining lessons learned and early outcomes from these grants. (Applicants need not account for any study-related costs in their budgets; those expenses for additional travel or other costs will be reimbursed.)

- In keeping with the spirit of the Request for Learning (RFL), we require grantees to make their application materials available to others for community benefit under the Creative Commons licensing framework described in the Intellectual Property Policy, below. (This requirement has been true for all NGLC grants made to date.) As part of this effort, we may post elements from grantees' full applications on the NGLC website. In order to protect individual privacy, before publishing the materials, we will redact salary line-item information from budgets, preserving only higher-level budget categories.

Reporting
Each grantee will be required to submit reflections of their learning at set intervals ranging from six months to two years dependent upon the scope of the proposed project. Consistent with the central role of the cycle of learning in this project, reporting will emphasize formative reflections on the work, its impact, and the potential for broader lessons for you, the system in which the work exists, and the broader field. In addition, grantees will be required to submit financial reports that account for the funds expended. More detailed instructions for reporting will be provided at the time of award.

Possibility of Future Funding
This Request for Learning (RFL) is stand-alone and there is no guarantee of future funding for future cohorts. Similarly, there is no promise of additional funding to grantees outside of what is awarded through this Request for Learning (RFL) and no promise of additional funding to grantees who apply for any second round of funding for projects that have different phases of development and implementation. A second phase of this initiative is in the planning stages, but has not yet been confirmed by the funders and project partners.

Conflicts of Interest
To identify and avert conflicts of interest, reviewers will not be permitted to review proposals from organizations for which they have self-identified the presence of or potential for such conflicts. See the NGLC Conflict of Interest policy, available at the Assessment for Learning Project webpage, for details.

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Grant Agreement Terms and Conditions

The grant terms and conditions have been developed by EDUCAUSE specifically for the Assessment for Learning Project and are not negotiable. You are advised to be sure that your organization can accept these terms and conditions at the time you submit an application. If your application is selected for funding, you will be provided 10 days after the notification of award to accept the grant and return the award letter with an appropriate institutional signature. The Sample Grant Agreement Terms and Conditions, available at the Assessment for Learning Project webpage, address Organizational Eligibility and Use of Funds, Compliance and Indemnification, Research Practice Assurances, Payment and Reporting Schedules, NGLC Priorities, Mandatory Participation in Designated NGLC Activities, Publication, Term of Offer, and Right of EDUCAUSE to Terminate Grant.

Intellectual Property

The Intellectual Property Policy, available at the Assessment for Learning Project webpage, describes the commitments that the grantee is required to make with respect to intellectual property rights in grant applications, content, materials, developments, and products submitted to EDUCAUSE at any time during the grant period or developed using any NGLC grant funds. This policy is supplemented by terms and conditions included in the Grant Agreement between the grantee and EDUCAUSE or as may be agreed otherwise in writing by the grantee and EDUCAUSE.

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These resources provide helpful context and background knowledge on topics germane to assessment for learning goals.

Darling-Hammond, L., Wilhoit, G., & Pittenger, L. (2014). *Accountability for College and Career Readiness: Developing a New Paradigm*. **Stanford, CA: Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.**

> As schools across the country prepare for new standards under the Common Core, states are moving toward creating more aligned systems of assessment and accountability. This report **recommends an accountability approach that focuses on meaningful learning**, enabled by professionally skilled and committed educators, and supported by adequate and appropriate resources, so that all students regardless of background are prepared for both college and career when they graduate from high school. Drawing on practices already established in other states and on the views of policymakers and school experts, **this report proposes principles for effective accountability systems** and imagines what a new accountability system could look like in an imagined "51st state" in the United States. While considerable discussion and debate will be needed before a new approach can take shape, this report's objective is to get the conversation started so the nation can meet its aspirations for preparing college- and career-ready students.

Conley, D.T. 2014. *A New Era for Educational Assessment*. **Students at the Center: Deeper Learning Research Series. Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future.**

> Among education researchers, there is a **growing consensus that college and career readiness depends on not just academic knowledge and skills but on a wide range of social and developmental competencies**, as well—such as the ability to monitor one's own learning, persist at challenging tasks, solve complex problems, set realistic goals, and communicate effectively in many kinds of settings. Yet, most U.S. schools continue to use standardized achievement tests, focusing exclusively on reading and math, as their primary means of gauging student progress. In this paper—the first in Students at the Center's new Deeper Learning Research Series—David T. Conley, well-known for his influential research on college readiness, argues that the time is ripe for a major shift in educational assessment. State and federal policymakers should reconsider their overreliance on standardized tests, he argues, and they should **embrace the use**

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of multiple measures that, in combination, provide much deeper and more useful information about students' readiness to succeed after high school.

Deeper Learning Defined. Hewlett Foundation, April 2013.

Deeper learning is an umbrella term for the skills and knowledge that students must possess to succeed in 21st century jobs and civic life. At its heart is a set of competencies students must master in order to develop a keen understanding of academic content and apply their knowledge to problems in the classroom and on the job. **The deeper learning framework includes six competencies that are essential to prepare students to achieve at high levels:** 1) Master core academic content; 2) Think critically and solve complex problems; 3) Work collaboratively; 4) Communicate effectively; 5) Learn how to learn; 6) Develop academic mindsets.

Personalized Learning Resources

- NGLC's personalized learning webpage differentiates personalized learning from other types of learning (e.g. next gen learning, blended learning) and also provides concrete Personalized Learning School Design Attributes.
- CIE associates six critical attributes with systems of personalized learning.
- EdGlossary.org also provides a succinct definition of personalized learning with anecdotal examples of how it could look in different learning environments.
- EdSurge has elevated personalized learning as a key topic on its website and created a robust repository of resources.

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We are looking for applicants that have already made a deep commitment to exploring assessment *for* learning and can demonstrate ample readiness to design, test, study, and refine innovations in practice with awareness of systems-level implications. Understanding your readiness becomes an important bridge between your current context and the future strategies and systems of assessment you are working to create.

To help you determine if this opportunity is a fit, we are providing tangible archetypal examples of the work we envision funding through this initiative. **These are not intended to be prescriptive**; instead, we provide these as illustrations of some types of work we believe are needed to push our collective understanding forward and develop a greater set of proof points of promising practice at different levels of the system.

Archetypal Examples of Competitive Project Ideas

Example A: Assessing Deeper Learning Outcomes (School)

A high school has established a strong foundation in project-based learning, aligned to a deeper definition of student success, and seeks to improve the ways it assesses deeper learning outcomes. The school wants to rethink assessment by testing the following hypothesis:

> "If we a) re-envision our core assessment strategy to prioritize deeper learning outcomes; b) increase the level of rigor and authenticity in student learning experiences; and c) ensure that students are receiving frequent and actionable feedback based on personalized learning goals, students will be more invested in learning as evidenced by higher outcomes on a variety of performance assessments."

The school-based team proposes to design and test a model of expanded learning grounded in rigorous and authentic performance assessments, replacing or supplementing the school's current reliance on end-of-course exams. Students use their personalized learning goals and propose to address a real and timely challenge in the broader community. Grant team members work closely with students and community partners to develop, test, and refine a growing body of rigorous projects, performance tasks, rubrics, and formative assessments, (many freely available through open education resources), which help to develop—and generate evidence of—students' deeper learning skills. As part of the project, the team builds, tests, and refines protocols for leveraging frequent and timely feedback opportunities leading to student improvement (including on the Smarter Balanced assessments in which the school is participating), and public demonstrations of their learning. The grant team will compile their learning into a collection of open-access artifacts that can help others assess deeper learning outcomes and cultivate students' professional capacities.

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Example B: Moving Toward Learning Progressions (Multiple districts)

Districts in two states have been engaged in a network that is helping systems move towards competency-based, personalized education. They have been struggling to shift instruction, assessment, and credentialing away from grade level as the organizing structure, especially in mathematics. Their essential question is:

> "If we support a group of schools to anchor teaching and learning in mathematics on learning progressions, rather than on grade level standards, then educators will be better able to assess for learning and adapt instruction so that each student is moving on when ready and no one is left in failure, as evidenced by attainment of individual competencies that lead to mastery of key mathematical concepts."

The districts develop a blended professional learning network, made up of school principals and teachers from across grade levels, representing six K-8 schools ready to make the transition to instruction rooted in learning progressions rather than linear grade-based standards. These deeper learning efforts build teachers' capacity to gather and interpret multiple forms of evidence, apply what they are learning to practice, and improve student learning.

Example C: Building Assessment Literacy Through Professional Learning (Multiple districts in partnership with state and higher education partners)

A set of districts working in partnership with their state's education agency seeks to develop a new assessment literacy initiative as one component in its larger commitment to catalyze deeper learning. Based on learning from previous efforts, state education leaders believe supporting teachers in assessment literacy, particularly around performance-based assessments, is a vital element of advancing personalized, competency-based learning models. Moreover, for transformation to occur, state leaders seek to integrate professional learning opportunities related to assessment with those related to instruction. Thus, the districts and the agency are aiming to test the following hypothesis:

> "If we provide sustained, practice-based professional learning opportunities that closely link assessment literacy and instructional practices, then teachers will be better able to provide students with timely, meaningful, and frequent standards-based feedback that improves learning."

The consortia proposes working with three ready districts within the state, alongside a key higher education technical service provider, in order to develop and test the professional learning prototype with hopes that the effort can scale statewide based on evidence of effectiveness and learning.

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Example D: A Broader Definition of Personal Success Skills (NPO and network of schools)

A non-profit organization working with a network of K-12 schools wants to develop, test, and refine a broader definition of personal success skills and corresponding assessments. The grant team's hypothesis for the proposed work is:

> "If we test and refine developmental frameworks that allow teachers and students to effectively define and capture evidence of learning across a comprehensive and balanced range of learning targets, then practitioners will be positioned to support students in more deeply owning and measurably improving upon their learning and accelerate their readiness for college and careers."

Academic leaders, in partnership with on-the-ground practitioners and the non-profit's coaches, leverage a high quality framework developed by a separate research organization in order to deepen and refine personal success skills for elementary, middle, and high school students. The framework also provides a set of teacher teams with a foundation to develop, test, and refine comprehensive, interdisciplinary, project-based performance tasks. Teacher teams work closely with curriculum and assessment specialists to develop, test, and capture learning related to the frameworks, the performance tasks, and best practices for curriculum and assessment that enable student success with the plan to refine and scale the work.

Example E: Digital Tools Leveraged to Inform Instruction (District)

A district has implemented a number of technology tools as part of a personalized learning initiative but it is struggling to effectively synthesize all of the data being generated by those tools to provide actionable data to teachers in order to inform instruction. The grant team's hypothesis for the proposed work is:

> "If we can effectively integrate the student performance data being generated across our portfolio of digital tools, teachers will have more specific and timely data about their students' performance and can more effectively tailor instruction to meet the needs of individual students."

The district works to map its suite of digital instructional tools against the Common Core State Standards as well as scope and sequence in order to create greater clarity about which tools provide insight around mastery for which standards relative to their traditional assessment tools. From there, educators analyze real-time student performance data generated by each digital tool, along with traditional assessment tools in order to understand what's being generated with what frequency and in what format. Based on the available data, there is work with teachers to develop the highest priority use cases (e.g. grouping and re-grouping, weekly lesson planning, individual student learner profiles) and synthesize assessment results to provide actionable reports and professional development support to teachers in integrating this reporting into their instructional practice.

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Examples of Non-Competitive Project Ideas

The following examples are efforts the Assessment for Learning Project would not likely support. We believe the work in these sample illustrations is extremely important and aligned with the need to think differently about assessment, however these efforts fall short in that they scale what has worked rather than test new approaches; or they aren't explicitly linked to a learning agenda to push thinking in the local context or more broadly; or they reflect an applicant need for initial familiarization and development of deeper capacity on these issues, rather than a readiness to design, iterate, and refine new practice-level prototypes with potential implications for system change.

- A state education agency submits an application with hopes to expand an existing performance assessment pilot program by adding two additional districts to the initiative.

- A charter management organization submits an application with the intention of scaling its project-based learning model to an additional campus.

- A district submits an application with plans to expand the number of seat licenses and corresponding training for the district's current Learning Management System.

- A network of districts submits an application to create a study group to become more familiar with personalized learning and performance-based assessment and make recommendations for initial steps in that direction.

- A non-profit/district partnership submits an application focused on implementing better formative assessment strategies aimed at improving the district's proficiency scores on the state math tests.

The examples above are only intended to be illustrative. Each application will be judged against the clearly defined Request for Learning core criteria.

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Please check the FAQ document frequently, as it will provide answers to common applicant questions and all updates to program timelines and additional resources, as well as any other changes in the Request for Learning (RFL).