Science Teacher Retention (closed)

This grant-funding round closed on 22 March 2018. Thank you to all those who put the time and effort into submitting your ideas for our consideration. We will be in touch with applicants in due course.

Summary

The EEF and Wellcome are seeking proposals for interventions to improve the retention of science teachers in secondary schools, with the aim of developing and testing the most promising ideas. The interventions should aim to improve science teacher retention in the teaching profession, and also in schools of highest need, for example in schools in more disadvantaged areas. Successful proposals will build on the existing evidence about science teacher retention and may explain how practices already intended to improve retention could be made more effective or efficient using evidence.

We expect to fund 3-5 proposals in total, and have identified several approaches from which we particularly welcome responses:

- Mentoring programmes
- Programmes to reduce workload (for example timetable changes, increased class sizes, different deployment of teaching assistants)
- High quality subject-specific CPD programmes
- Flexible working arrangements
- Initiatives to support the mental health and wellbeing of science teachers

We are interested in funding a spread of proposals from across these areas. However, we will judge each application on merit and we remain open to funding ideas not identified here.

Unusually for the EEF, student attainment will not be the primary outcome for the trials we fund in this one-off round. We expect science teacher retention to be the primary outcome in proposals, although secondary outcomes may include student attainment or other outcomes such as teacher wellbeing, as appropriate.

Interventions should be practical for schools and we expect project teams to include relevant expertise to ensure that approaches are feasible for schools to deliver.

Project criteria

Successful proposals will:

- Focus on improving the retention of science teachers within the profession, and also in schools of highest need, for example in schools in areas of higher deprivation.
- Be applicable to a wide range of science teachers in state secondary schools in England. Applicants should be open to working with teachers in at least one of Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4 (Key Stage 5 may be included, but the programme should not be tailored to support only Key Stage 5 teaching or Key Stage 5-only settings).
- Be informed and supported by encouraging evidence. This should be evidence for the principles behind the
Be practical, appropriate, affordable and scalable. Our aim is to identify interventions and approaches that, if shown to be successful, could be taken on by other schools. Therefore we are only interested in testing initiatives that are practical and affordable for schools. We also need to understand what training and support is needed so that schools and teachers can use the intervention effectively.

Be willing and able to be independently evaluated. We will rigorously evaluate the impact on retention and, if appropriate, impact on secondary outcomes such as student attainment or pupil wellbeing of the projects, wherever possible by randomly allocating which schools or pupils receive it. We will appoint an independent evaluator, and work with successful applicants to design an appropriate evaluation plan. Note that this does not need to be included in your project plan and budget.

Be led by a project team with expertise in the relevant areas. For example, the team should have experience of delivery with teachers, or within schools. Ideally, the team would include someone with extensive teaching experience. We welcome applications from a variety of organisations including schools, universities, charities and for-profit organisations.

While student attainment is not the primary outcome, proposals should support the EEF’s ultimate aim to support the academic achievement of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. This may be indirectly through supporting the prevalence of a more experienced teacher workforce. We would expect successful applicants to be willing to work with challenging schools, those with existing issues with science teacher retention and those serving disadvantaged learners (pupils eligible for pupil premium funding).

**Type of projects**

We are interested in projects that either:

**Test the impact of a fully developed intervention through a randomised controlled trial** (with the evaluation aspect designed in collaboration with the independent evaluator). For this to be applicable the intervention would need to have been previously been delivered in a number (at least 10) schools and be fully developed in terms of the resources and training required, with the project team ready to deliver in 50 or more settings. There would also be clear descriptions of what good fidelity to the intervention looks like and evidence indicating that the programme is likely to impact on teacher retention. An example of an existing EEF project that met our usual criteria is Thinking, Doing, Talking Science, which had previously been evaluated in 16 primary schools through a match study. In addition, there was background evidence that supported the rationale for the programme.

**Test the feasibility and collective evidence of promise of a more developmental project through a pilot evaluation** (again, with the evaluation aspect of the project being designed in collaboration with the independent evaluator). For projects to be suitable for this funding they would need to have evidence (from the literature) supporting the rationale for the approach and why we would expect this to lead to the intended outcomes. They would also need to demonstrate the need for the project and that they are not re-developing something that already exists.

We will prioritise projects that are fully developed and suitable for randomised controlled trials, but will consider pilot trials in the absence of project proposals in the former category.

**How to apply**

To submit an application please register for the Science Teacher Retention Round on the Apply Now section of the EEF website and complete the online form before 5pm on the 22nd March 2018. It is recommended that you read the full guidance notes, the attachment to this webpage (top right). The Application Form is designed to be short and easy to fill in. Following the closing date, we will review the applications received against our criteria. We will begin conversations with a small number of the most promising proposals, with a view to jointly developing a project and
evaluation plan with the independent evaluator that will be appointed by the EEF. We do not expect to make final funding decisions until the end of June 2018.

If you are unsure if your approach is suitable, please contact the Education Endowment Foundation office for guidance.