

What is the purpose of this funding?

EEF funding has so far focused on evaluations of educational interventions or programmes. This funding has aimed to identify and test promising interventions at scale. This has usually involved recruiting schools who have not previously experienced an intervention to participate in a randomised experiment.

There are important practices and approaches which are difficult to evaluate using this approach. School leaders make many decisions about their provision without input from an externally-delivered, testable intervention. For example, schools might themselves decide to set by prior attainment but no widespread, testable “setting intervention” exists. Moreover, schools are often resistant to making some decisions, like whether they use setting, in response to random allocation to an experimental group. These decisions often relate to whole-school decisions and policies.

To address these challenges the EEF has started to fund studies that look at how the different choices schools make lead to different outcomes. These studies have examined the natural variation in the system and used quasi-experimental designs to estimate the impact of different approaches. They have been funded when research questions are relevant to schools and experimental impact evaluations have not been feasible. Previous EEF studies of this type include:

- [Student Grouping Study](#)
- [Teachers in Disadvantaged Primary Schools](#)

The School Choices funding stream will enable more studies of this type. The findings from these studies will inform the EEF’s messages to schools and policy makers, and the design of testable interventions in the future. In this funding stream, we seek proposals from research teams who can conduct the studies themselves. We will appoint a steering group to the project to provide independent oversight and mitigate potential conflicts of interest.

What are we looking for?

Who should apply?

- Research teams with experience of conducting quantitative or mixed methods educational research should apply.
- Intervention developers hoping to rigorously evaluate their intervention are not eligible for this funding. They should apply through the EEF’s normal funding round. More information is available [here](#).
- Practitioners with ideas for projects in this strand should [contact](#) the EEF. Their suggestion will inform the setting of priorities for funding.

What type of project will be funded?

- **This funding stream is not designed for programme developers seeking funding for evaluation.** The EEF operates a different funding stream for the evaluation and scaling up of programmes. Please go to our Apply for Funding page for more information about this funding stream.

- This scheme is designed to fund projects that examine the impact of school choices and policies on children's academic attainment or a closely related outcome.
- Projects will likely examine existing variation in the school system, using quasi-experimental designs, however we are open to research teams' proposals on the best approach.
- The EEF has previously funded two projects that fit this description and serve as useful examples:
 - The [Student Grouping Study](#).
 - [Teachers in Disadvantaged Primary Schools](#)
- Funding is not available to cover: property or capital items; student fees, scholarships or bursaries; loan or debt repayment. Website development, support to produce publications or seminar attendance are also out of scope.
- We aim to fund a mix of different types of project, so if your idea is very similar to one we have already supported, please contact us before applying.

What kind of question should the research address?

We are most interested in research questions that are relevant to large numbers of English schools, especially addressing school choices that have the potential to improve academic attainment for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The EEF has published a set of funding priorities on the main webpage for the School Choices round.

What criteria will the EEF use to award funding?

Successful proposals will:

- **Have a clear rationale for why the research question matters and its relevance to schools, especially those in disadvantaged communities. They will also have a clear description of how the project will add to the existing research evidence on this topic.** Why are your research questions important? How do you know that they are salient questions for practitioners? What does the existing research evidence suggest about your research questions? How will your project build on the existing research?
- **Be well defined, with a clear explanation of what the research will investigate and how.** Can you clearly distinguish between the different approaches that schools choose? Have you clearly described the research methodology?
- **Involve a strong team with prior experience of similar research.** Does the team have track record of delivering similar projects to a high standard? Does the team have the technical skills require to carry out the project?
- **Present an appropriate and rigorous methodology for answering the proposed research questions.** Is your proposed design a good fit for your research questions? Does the proposed approach comply with data protection legislation?
- **Represent good value for money.** Have you proposed a reasonable budget for your project?

How to apply

To apply, please register via the EEF [grants portal](#) and complete the online form. Guidance on each of the questions can be found below.

The deadline for initial applications is 5pm on the 14th February 2020. Shortlisted applications will be invited to present their proposal to the EEF Grants Committee. Applicants will then work with the EEF and a project Steering Group to finalise a full proposal. The EEF Grants Committee will give projects final approval in September 2020.

Timeline

Deadline for applications	14 th February 2020, 5pm
The EEF will review applications and recommend a shortlist to the EEF Grants Committee	February – April 2020
EEF Grants Committee will interview shortlisted applicants. At this stage the Grants Committee will grant initial approval. The EEF will tell applicants that they have been unsuccessful at this point.	Late April 2020
The applicant will create a full project proposal. The Steering Board for the project will also meet.	May – September 2020
Final Grants Committee decision	September 2020

Application form guidance notes

To submit an application, please register via our website and complete the online form.

<https://grants.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk>

Wherever the guidance refers to 'schools' this can be read as referring to a range of settings, including early years settings and post-16 institutions. Where the guidance refers to 'teachers' this can be read as referring to a range of practitioners, such as early years practitioners and teaching assistants. Where the guidance refers to 'parents' this can be read as including other carers.

Applications can be saved on the system while drafting. You may find it easier to draft first in another programme, like Microsoft Word, paying attention to the word count for each question. If copying into the form, please format using the form's tools. Formatting that is added in Microsoft Word will not be transferred if text is copied and pasted into the form.

If you have any questions, please contact the EEF on info@eefoundation.org.uk or 020 7802 1676. The following notes explain each question from the initial application form. Each section relates to a section on the form.

Application form

Eligibility questions

1. Will your research take place in England?

Please note that the EEF can only fund projects that will work for the benefit of pupils and settings in England.

2. Is your application from a legally constituted organisation?

We accept applications from legally constituted organisations and not from individuals. The organisation does not have to be based in England, although if you are not based in England, we would expect you to demonstrate the partnerships and knowledge required to work with English schools.

3. Would this grant be used to pay for costs that have already been incurred?

Our grant funding is restricted to cover activities supporting your proposed project and cannot be used to cover costs that have already been incurred.

Section 1: About the applicant

1. Name of organisation

2. Research team (150 words max)

- Please describe the relevant experience and expertise of the team that would conduct the research.

3. Applicant contact name

4. Applicant contact email address

5. Application contact telephone number

6. Application contact role / position

7. Conflicts of interest (250 words max)

- Please describe any potential conflicts of interest including the team's previous publications in relation to the proposed project.

Section 2: About the project

1. Research questions (100 words)

- Please list the key research questions that your project will address.
- You might find it useful to write research questions using the PICO (population, intervention, comparison, outcome) framework.

2. Description of the school choices (400 words max)

- Please describe:
 - The population (schools, teachers and pupils) who will be subject to the research, including phase and year group as relevant.
 - The difference between schools that your research will investigate. Please ensure that your description covers the following.
 - The rationale for why this is an interesting difference to research. You can assume that we have some understanding of the broad issues facing disadvantaged pupils, but any details specific to the difference are useful.
 - Please describe the different approaches you will be comparing and how these are experienced by schools. What are the typical processes and materials used in each of the variations? How do they differ from each other?
 - Who is involved in the delivery of the approaches you are comparing? Who makes the decision to adopt an approach? Who is involved in implementation?

3. What are schools currently doing and why? (400 words max)

- How widespread are the different variations you have previously described?
- How many schools in England use the different variations?
- Do schools that use a particular variant also tend to be similar in other ways? E.g. academies with flexible pay structures might also be more likely to take a particular approach to performance pay.
- Are there particular reasons (theoretical or practical) why some schools prefer one alternative over the other? i.e. attempt to describe the "Selection Mechanism" into the treatment which would inform the methodology chosen.

4. How would you identify what schools are doing? (200 words)

- Please provide specific information about how the different approaches will be identified and defined in the population of schools. How will you distinguish one approach from its comparator? How will you decide to include and exclude schools in the different groups? Will you use administrative data or a survey? (for example, in the [Student Grouping Study](#), both mixed ability teaching and setting needed to be clearly defined so that we know if schools meet the necessary criteria to be included in one of the groups).

5. What is the evidence regarding the relative effectiveness of the different variants? (400 words max)

- Briefly describe the existing research related to the research questions and how this study would advance the field in this subject.
- What is the theory that could explain why the different approaches lead to different outcomes? Explain the theoretical underpinnings of different choices, articulating the expected mechanisms through which the choices could impact specific outcomes. This would support the creation of a logic model for the study.
- Please provide full references in question 11

6. Methods – impact evaluation (1000 words max)

- Please describe the proposed approach (e.g. Matched Difference-in-Differences, Propensity Score Matching, etc) to identifying the comparison groups and estimate impact. Briefly describe additional analyses and robustness checks.
- Will the study be prospective or retrospective? i.e. would it require purposively recruiting schools into the study?
- Explain how the proposed approach considers the selection mechanism described in Section 3
- Please describe the outcome measures and say whether the project will require the delivery of testing or will it use data already collected.
- The EEF has published guidance on conducting and reporting non-experimental designs [here](#).

7. Methods – Implementation and Process Evaluation (500 words max)

- Please describe any research you propose to look at the implementation of this approach.
- Consider using the IPE to explore the plausibility of the hypothesised selection mechanism.
- The EEF has published guidance on conducting IPE [here](#).

8. Recruitment of schools (if required) (100 words max)

- If needed, how will you recruit schools to take part in the study?

9. Data Access and Data Protection (100 words max)

- Please describe your approach to data access and data protection according to GDPR.

10. References (No word limit)

- Please list any references. Please provide links to references online where possible.

Section 3: Finances

1. Grant total requested

2. Budget (100 words max)

- Please provide a draft budget for the work.
- If your application progresses to the shortlist, this budget will be the starting point for negotiation and discussion with the EEF.

3. What funding are you intending to secure from other sources? (50 words max)

- Please describe any funding you are likely to secure from other sources.