

Request for Proposal: School Support Center Education Forward DC

The Client:

Education Forward DC (Ed Forward DC) is a nonprofit organization founded in 2016 in Washington, DC. Guided by our core values, we work to advance quality and equity in public schools to ensure that every DC student gets a great education. Specifically, our five-year goal is to reimagine schools, enabling schools to emerge from the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic to provide a reimagined experience for students that values their identity and meets their full academic, social, and emotional needs. Tangibly, we hope to double the share of high-quality schools. Ed Forward DC accelerates the work of local leaders by aggregating and disseminating philanthropic dollars to local grantees who are committed to transformational change, and takes an active role with each grantee in its portfolio to help them create sustainable organizations that generate breakthrough results for the students they serve.

The Challenge:

- In DC, academic achievement was growing pre-pandemic, though students with disabilities (SWD) and students designated as “at-risk” were not seeing the same gains.
- As was true across the country, the pandemic had a major impact on student learning; in DC, some schools were even slower to reopen.
- DC saw sharp declines in student achievement, and gaps across student groups persist.
- DC has a unique education landscape – roughly 50/50 charter/District, with several single-site or small charter LEAs that lack the economies of scale of larger networks. In these schools, operational challenges can threaten academic progress because time and resources devoted toward operations can pull attention away from academic improvement efforts.
- Stakeholders across the city have named a need for an organization (a school support center) that can support schools, particularly those that are single-site or part of small charter networks, with the hope that a center could eventually serve DCPS or charter schools across the city. We hope that the winning bid on this request for proposal (RFP) will support in building out what this will look like, but our initial ideas for potential school support center offerings include:
 - Support for schools with operations, academics, financials, human resources, and/ or board governance, pending market need and highest-leverage opportunities to support academic improvement
 - Fostering coordination and collaboration opportunities across schools in the city
 - Support for schools developing strategies to better serve specific student populations, e.g., English Learners (ELs), SWDs, and those designated as “at-risk”

The Project:

Ed Forward DC is seeking to identify an organization with experience in solicitation and synthesis of stakeholder input; understanding of school operations; awareness of proven academic interventions; and experience with nonprofit or startup management to develop a business plan and launch plan for a School Support Center in Washington, DC. The organization will work with school leaders and other education stakeholders to determine what services the School Support Center should offer to best meet the needs of schools, enabling them to improve student academic outcomes. The

business plan and launch plan must be complete by June 30, 2024, enabling another entity (or the same one) to launch a pilot of the School Support Center in school year (SY) 2024-25, with full implementation in SY 2025-26.

Key activities could include the following:

- Upfront planning work:
 - Work closely with Ed Forward DC to align on the overall goals of a School Support Center.
 - Identify methods of soliciting school leader and stakeholder feedback regarding what the School Support Center should offer (i.e., focus groups, surveys, needs assessment, etc.).
 - Develop messaging that articulates the purpose and goals of a School Support Center (to be included in communications requesting feedback).
- Determining services offered: Applicants are encouraged to propose an approach to determining what services should be offered. Elements might include:
 - Develop methods of soliciting feedback and determine what groups of stakeholders to engage (at minimum, this should include school leaders and the DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB)).
 - Conduct research to determine what other jurisdictions with similar student populations to DC are doing to drive academic improvement at a systems scale (e.g., interventions, supports, citywide offerings, etc.), and which initiatives have proven results.
 - Review existing data to determine where student group gaps are most prevalent, including data from the DC PCSB and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE).
 - Identify where schools may need additional capacity to improve academic outcomes (e.g., academic intervention, operations, other), analyze the existing market of school support providers in DC, and determine what gaps exist in the city in terms of building that capacity.
 - Develop a comprehensive list of potential support services (which will ultimately be pared down to focus on those with the greatest impact, feasibility, and sustainability).
 - Supports offered should, at minimum, aim to significantly improve academic outcomes for students furthest from opportunity, particularly students designated at-risk (thereby improving school performance on applicable accountability frameworks such as the PCSB's revised accountability framework or the DC Report Card).
- Developing the business plan:
 - Work with Ed Forward DC to ensure alignment on the final model and support offerings.
 - Develop a workplan that codifies all the steps necessary to launch a successful pilot of the School Support Center. (Note: the entity that is selected for this RFP may or may not be the same entity to launch the pilot and full implementation of the School Support Center.)
 - Identify potential operational risks and develop contingency plans to help manage any unexpected challenges leading up to the pilot launch.

Deliverables:

- Proposal for what services a School Support Center should offer to enable schools to increase student academic outcomes—this should be based on input from school leaders representing various models/ school types and other educational stakeholders, research from other jurisdictions, and a market analysis of school support providers in DC
- Develop a business plan and a launch plan for a School Support Center in Washington, DC to be piloted in SY 2024-25 and fully launched in SY 2025-26. Key elements should include:
 - 5-year financial model that demonstrates sustainability at scale
 - Staffing plan
 - Market analysis of school support providers in DC
 - Overview of service model

Qualifications:

- Ability to gather and synthesize feedback from stakeholders
- Comprehensive experience in charter school operations
- Deep understanding of proven academic interventions
- Expertise developing a business plan and budget
- Knowledge of DC education landscape, and an understanding of DC data and trends, is strongly preferred

Ed Forward DC is committed to building a diverse team and strongly encourages applications from candidates of color or teams led by people of color.

Budget:

Organizations are invited to propose budgets that align with their proposed scope of work. A sample is provided below; however, applicants may propose a different scope of hours. Example:

- Initial planning: 100 hours
- Solicitation of feedback from schools, stakeholders, etc: 100 hours
- Synthesis of feedback to determine potential services offered to schools: 150 hours
- Development of business plan and budget: 100 hours
- Miscellaneous (e.g., research, market mapping): 100 hours

Project timeline and key dates:

- Optional office hours with Ed Forward DC staff: October 6-13, 2023
 - Sign up [HERE](#)
- **Proposals due by: November 1, 2023**
- Interviews with select applicants: November 8-9, 2023
- Organization is selected: November 16, 2023
- Project start date: November 30, 2023
- Submission of business plan and launch plan: June 30, 2024 (or earlier)

Next steps: If you're interested in this opportunity, please submit the following through [this link](#) :

- A proposal document (2-3 pages) encapsulating the following*:
 - A brief description of how you would approach this project
 - A brief description of your qualifications to do this project
 - A brief workplan, including potential timeline and deliverables
- Budget, including hourly rate or project rate and estimated number of hours to complete the work
- Team resumes: Please consolidate all resumes into one file
- The name, title, email, phone number of up to 3 references who can vouch for your experience and expertise in the project area
- Optional: Relevant work samples

*We are aware there are discussions in the DC Council about potential legislation to create an initiative related to school support. We encourage potential applicants to be flexible with the scope of their proposal, which may require adjustment pending any new legislation.

*Updated: Proposed legislation for a school support office was introduced on October 16, found here: <https://lms.dccouncil.gov/Legislation/B25-0540>. The School Support Center that is developed from this RFP will aim to complement, and not duplicate, efforts that come out of this legislation.

Questions? Email Caitlin Campbell-Hahn at caitlin@edforwarddc.org.