



EQUITY TRANSFER INITIATIVE (ETI) Request for Proposals (RFP)

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Submissions Due: December 2, 2020 by 5:00 p.m. ET

EQUITY TRANSFER INITIATIVE (ETI) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Table of Contents

ETI OPPORTUNITY SUMMARY..... 2

 The Need..... 2

 Why Participate?..... 3

ETI GOALS AND DESIGN 5

 Equity 5

 Pathways..... 6

 Peer Learning 6

 Train-the-Trainer..... 7

HOW THE ETI WILL WORK?..... 8

 Principles on the Acceptance of Credit During the Current Emergency..... 9

OVERVIEW OF THE RFP PROCESS..... 10

 Eligibility 10

 Timeline..... 10

 Application Instructions 10

 Application 12

EQUITY TRANSFER INITIATIVE (ETI) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

ETI OPPORTUNITY SUMMARY

This Request for Proposals (RFP) invites applications for the Equity Transfer Initiative (ETI) which aims to increase transfer rates for African American, Hispanic, adult, and first-generation learners. Applicants will form teams of two (or consortiums) committed to increasing equity in transfer and committed to working together to increase student success. The applicant teams or consortiums can be led by an AACC institutional member community college, with one or more public four-year AASCU and/or APLU institution partners or led by an AASCU and/or APLU four-year institution with one or more AACC institutional member community college partners. The team members will work together over the course of two years to create and/or expand transfer pathways through an equity lens for African American, Hispanic, adult, and first-generation learners that lead to degrees in high-demand occupations.

The ETI is made possible through generous support from ECMC Foundation and Ascendium Education Group.

The Need

African American and Hispanic students transfer from two- to four-year institutions at a lower rate than White and Asian students. And while African American students have had greater gains than Hispanic students in terms of transfer, they still complete bachelor's degrees at much lower rates than their Asian and White peers. In addition, adult learners (beyond age 24) also complete bachelor's degrees at a much lower rate than students entering higher education between 18 and 24 years of age. Strada Education Network's *Back to School?* report notes that many adults without college degrees believe that additional education is needed to advance in their careers, but individuals 25 and older have shared that they are less likely to enroll when compared with 18- to 24-year-olds.¹

AACC analyzed The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report *Persistence, Retention, and Attainment of 2011–12 First-Time Beginning Postsecondary Students as of Spring 2017 (First Look)* (NCES 2019-401) which follows students who started postsecondary education in 2011-2012 and found the following²:

- 25.9% of adult students (25 years and above) earned a certificate or associate degree, while only 5.4% earned a baccalaureate degree within six years.

¹ Source: Strada-Gallup Education Consumer Survey 2019. Base: U.S. Adults 18-65 with less than an associate degree and who are not currently enrolled. n=8,849

² Analysis of 2012/17 [Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study](#) (BPS:12/17) data, conducted by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). Computation by NCES PowerStats Version 1.0. Variables: PROUT6, AGE, RACE. Weight: WTA000. Among students who began in public degree-granting, primarily sub-baccalaureate, and public associate and certificate-only institutions.

EQUITY TRANSFER INITIATIVE (ETI) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

- Only 1.9% of African American students and 3.2% of Hispanic students who were 25 or older when they began postsecondary education had attained a baccalaureate after six years.

The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) also conducted research on completion rates using the 2012 cohort of first-time degree-seeking students at public two-year colleges (N=752,206). These data include dually enrolled students. Of this population:

- 8.1% completed at a four-year institution, and 46.2% had not completed a credential and were not enrolled at the end of six years³.
- Of the 88,407 students identified as African American, 19% completed at their home institution, 5.3% completed at a four-year institution, and approximately 55% did not complete and were not enrolled in any institution.
- For Hispanic students (N=110,457), 25.8% completed at their home institution, 6.0% completed at a four-year institution, and 42.8% has not earned a credential and were not enrolled in any postsecondary institution.
- The percentages for African American and Hispanic students fall well below those of their Asian (N=27,291) and White (N=317,704) peers, who completed at their two-year institutions at 30.6% and 33.9%, and those students that did not complete and are no longer enrolled in any higher education at 29.1% and 39.1%. It should also be noted that 29% of students over age 24 completed a credential at the two-year college, only 3% completed at a four-year institution, and 56.3% didn't complete a credential and were no longer enrolled anywhere.

The coronavirus is increasing the need for effective transfer pathways. Students are looking to transfer based on financial needs, to be closer to home, or are stopping out temporarily. If students can see a route to completing their degrees while keeping themselves and their families safe or staying on track despite new or growing financial constraints, they will be more likely to persist.

Why Participate?

The ETI seeks to increase the rate of successful transfer for underrepresented students. Institutions looking to strengthen their approach to successful transfer and completion for African American, Hispanic, adult, and/or first generation students and are members of AACC, AASCU, and/or APLU should consider applying. Participating institutions will:

- Receive support tailored to their specific areas of need, primarily delivered through dedicated transfer coaches and technical assistance providers, whether that is in improving financial models to make transfer work for participating institutions,

³ Shapiro, D., Dundar, A., Huie, F., Wakhungu, P.K., Bhimdiwala, A. & Wilson, S. E. (2018, December). Completing College: A National View of Student Completion Rates – Fall 2012 Cohort (Signature Report No. 16). Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

EQUITY TRANSFER INITIATIVE (ETI) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

improved recruitment strategies for underrepresented students, or facilitation with stakeholders to create transfer pathways that prepare students for careers that pay family-sustaining wages. Experts supporting the project will be available remotely and in-person once it has been deemed safe to meet face-to-face. Teams or consortiums will develop workplans with their coaches to guide their work and as a tool to identify technical assistance needs and successes.

- Join a community of professionals dedicated to transfer, with opportunities to share what works and benefit from peer-to-peer learning.
- Be eligible for mini-grants (up to approximately \$20,000) to support local needs or to engage known, trusted advisors for specific activities that help the institutions achieve their goals.
- Receive and have the opportunity to lead targeted professional development to support equity in student success and transfer.
- Have access to train-the-trainer tools and templates.

The value proposition for this transformative work is outlined in the table below.

Two-Year College Benefits	Four-Year University Benefits
<p>Student satisfaction Students will not be required to retake courses that they have already completed thus costing more money, and extending time to degree and entrance to the workforce</p>	<p>Student satisfaction Student will enter the transfer pathway in their junior year, not having to retake courses at the university that they have already completed at the community college, eliminating the likelihood that they will not complete the bachelor’s degree</p>
<p>Implementation of equity strategies Ensures that all students have access to a high quality education that considers the barriers impacting their success, ultimately leading to a family-sustaining wage</p>	<p>Implementation of equity strategies Ensures that all students have access to a high quality education that considers the barriers impacting their success, ultimately leading to a family-sustaining wage</p>
<p>Improved completion rates Alignment of academic pathways to the receiving institution ensures completion of the associate’s degree</p>	<p>Highly motivated transfer students and increased enrollment Research has shown the transfer students perform at rates equal or higher than those of native students. Alignment of academic pathways with those of the transfer institution ensures that universities will receive academically-prepared, highly motivated students that they might not have otherwise enrolled</p>

EQUITY TRANSFER INITIATIVE (ETI) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

ETI GOALS AND DESIGN

Each partnership/consortium will be responsible for developing a workplan. The workplan will include:

- An assessment of the current and/or newly proposed relationship between 2-year and 4-year institutions to identify obstacles and develop response strategies that lead to a strong transfer relationship.
- A review of current and/or new transfer pathways through an equity lens, specifically identifying evidence-based equity strategies or new innovative equity strategies that allow students to matriculate without a loss of credit and time to degree. An outline of the equity strategies that will be implemented or expanded to support access and completion of the student demographics targeted in the project with ownership for the strategy being assigned; establish chronology for mapping/enhancing the various pathways.

The ETI includes the following components:

- **Equity.** A focus on equity in student support services and course and program delivery throughout the transfer project.
- **Pathways.** Alignment of at least five existing or new programs from two-year to four-year institutions that lead to jobs earning family sustaining wages. Transfer pathways provide a consistent curricular path from a two-year to a four-year institution so that students do not waste valuable time or resources by taking courses that do not contribute to their educational goals. The participating institutions will identify the employment fields that are in highest demand and either expand existing or build new pathways to prepare learners for those high-demand careers. In the case of a partnership that chooses to focus on an existing transfer pathway, the work must improve the foundation already in place by ensuring the measures are in place to ensure equity in access and student outcomes, and the work should address other ways that the existing transfer pathway can be strengthened.
- **Peer-to-peer learning.** Participating institutions will have the opportunity share challenges and opportunities that they have addressed/identified in their work so that others may learn from them, and in turn, they may learn from other participating institutions.
- **Train-the-trainer.** ETI institutions, through their work, will contribute to the development of tools and resources that will be provided to higher education institutions embarking upon this work.

Equity

Equity for student success is at the core of this transfer initiative. Teams, working with their coaches, will overlay an equity lens to their transfer work. Examples of evidence-based equity strategies include but are not limited to reviewing data on the programs that students are enrolled in with data disaggregated to assess equitable student representation, helping

EQUITY TRANSFER INITIATIVE (ETI) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

students explore and decide upon college and career goals which align to their goals and aspirations, focusing on culturally responsive career counseling, administering intake surveys to learn about students' backgrounds and family support, and ensuring academic programs are not inequitably stratified along racial/ethnic, gender and socioeconomic lines.

Pathways

The ETI seeks to fulfill the commitment to equity through the redesign of existing or the design of new academic pathways that support students in their transfer and completion, and which prepare students for family-sustaining wage careers. The pathways are critical to the success of the ETI. Teams will propose pathways as part of their applications and the workplans will allow the teams and consortiums, in collaboration with their coaches, to optimize the selection of pathways and the activities to recruit and retain underrepresented students.

Participating teams/consortiums will:

- Identify at least five clearly defined and active program transfer pathways, whether newly developed through this initiative or already active and ready for expansion. Example: Labor market data indicates that jobs are consistently increasing in public service with the starting pay of \$75,000. The two-year/four-year partnership has already aligned the A.S. in Criminology and Criminal Justice to the B.A. in Criminology, Law and Society. The partnership may focus on implementing strategies, including support services that ensure the institutions are addressing equity barriers. The partnership may also focus on further refining course competencies and program alignment that allow students to seamlessly transfer from a program at a two-year institution to a four-year institution with losing completed course credits.
- Recruit and enroll at least 100 students into the aligned transfer pathways by the end of summer 2021 and at least 300 by year two of the initiative (summer 2022). Targets for consortiums (teams of more than two higher education institutions) will set a higher goal, in collaboration with each consortium's assigned coach.

The pathways should be intentionally designed so that it is easier for students to navigate the transfer process, and there should be consideration given to meta majors or cluster groups of degrees and certificates that are considered similar from a student's perspective. Another consideration is revising the student onboarding process to increase the likelihood that students will choose a program that aligns with their interests and goals and developing a well-conceived program completion plan for students to follow.

Peer Learning

The ETI will promote peer-to-peer learning throughout the project. Although the coronavirus has diminished the prospect of in-person meetings, participating institutions will be encouraged to share successful practices and problem-solve together. The annual convenings will consist of at least one representative of each participant institution; AACC, APLU, and AASCU senior staff;

EQUITY TRANSFER INITIATIVE (ETI) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

project staff; and donor partners. AACC is looking to learn from the institutions undertaking this work and to share that information with other higher education stakeholders.

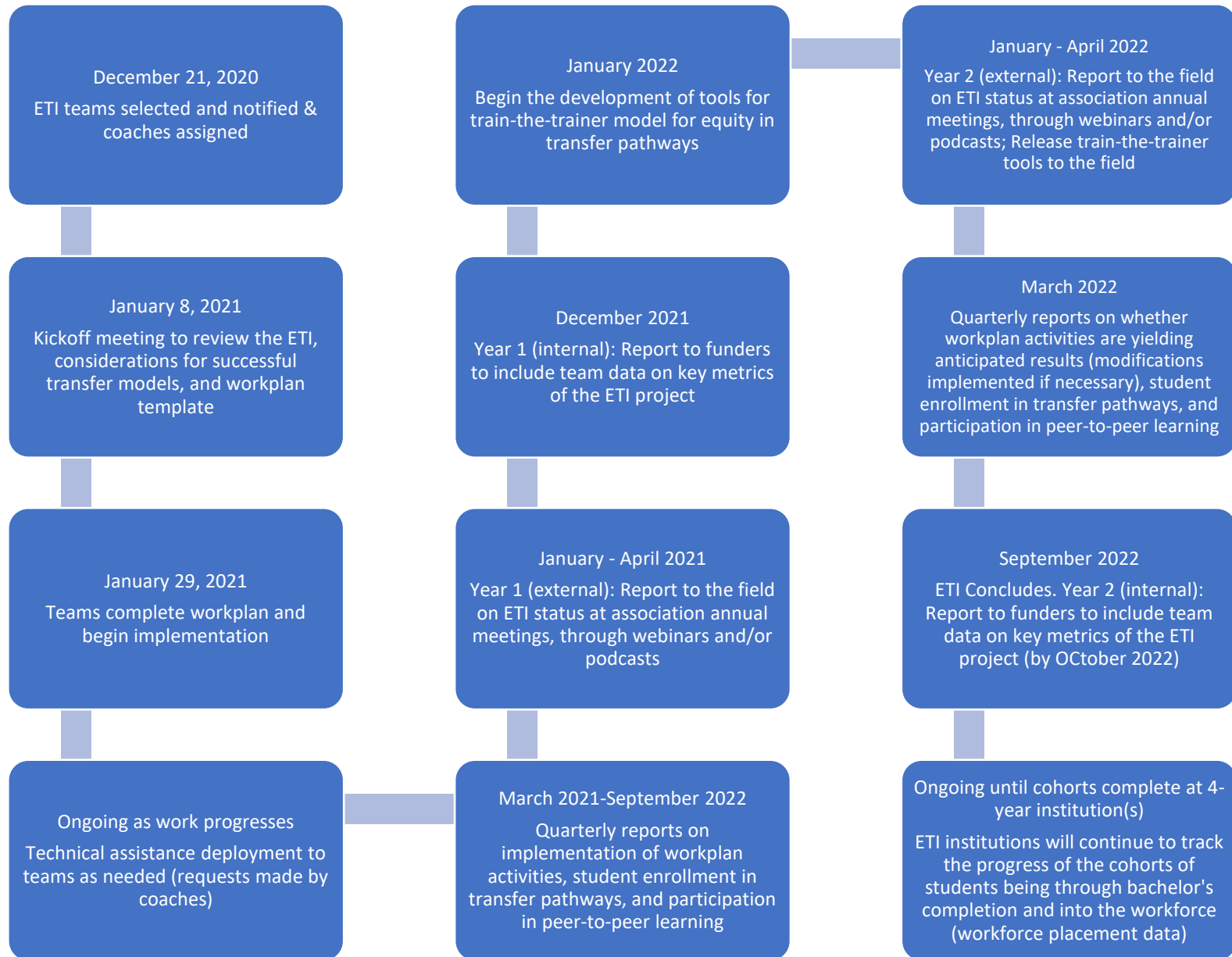
Train-the-Trainer

The ETI will result in a train-the-trainer program to be implemented after the completion of the two-year initiative. Participating teams will be offered the opportunity to train to serve as coaches or technical assistance providers so that once the ETI project is concluded that they can lead other institutions to increase equity in transfer. AACC plans to work with ETI participants to increase transfer within their institutions and with other higher education institutions, building on the success of the ETI.

ETI participants, including institutions, TA providers, and coaches, will develop resources and templates that can be used to expand equitable transfer at participating institutions or used by other institutions that wish to engage in this work. AACC, AASCU, and APLU will support this effort and may also introduce tools or templates. These templates and resources will serve as the basis for the training-the-trainers.

EQUITY TRANSFER INITIATIVE (ETI) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

HOW THE ETI WILL WORK?



EQUITY TRANSFER INITIATIVE (ETI) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Principles on the Acceptance of Credit During the Current Emergency

The need for improved transfer pathways and opportunities for students, especially those that help underrepresented students persist and obtain high-demand jobs, is even more apparent and critical at the time of this project's launch, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. AACC, APLU, and AASCU have all endorsed the Six's⁴ Principles on Acceptance of Credit During the Current Emergency. The principles support collaboration among and between higher education institutions to ensure that students moving between institutions during the pandemic, where pass/no-pass options in particular might have been implemented, do not experience difficulty in the transfer of credit. Participating teams must address how they have already implemented the Principles within their operations or how they plan to implement them into their ETI work.

The principles are as follows:

1. Institutional policies and the evaluation of grades and credit should recognize the extraordinary burden placed on students during this time. Even in the best of cases, student dislocation and the need to change the very basic patterns of life impose challenges on our students that may have an impact their performance.
2. Institutional policies and practices should recognize that traditional inequities are exacerbated in the current crisis and that "equal" treatment of students' transcripts is unlikely to result in "equitable" outcomes.
3. Institutional policies and practices should, therefore, be as holistic as possible, taking into account the range of situational and behavioral circumstances in which our students find themselves.
4. Institutional policies should, wherever practicable, provide flexibility in the timely reporting of grades and other markers of achievement, understanding that the dislocations mentioned above are also present for faculty, staff, and others.
5. Institutional policies should aim for complete transparency. The circumstances under which credits and or grades are accepted and not accepted should be clear and publicly stated in accessible, specific, and easy to understand terms. The rationale for these policies should be made equally clear and transparent.
6. This transparency should extend inside as well as outside the institution. Institutional policies that respond to this unprecedented and unique situation should be broadly communicated and disseminated within institutions. At a time when telework has become the norm, it is in the collective best interest of higher education that each student-facing employee understands new and existing policies.
7. Institutional decision-making regarding individual students should be swift and definitive. Students and their families need clear, timely information on which to make decisions.

⁴ The Six refers to the six presidentially-based higher education association in DC. These institutions are American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), American Council of Education (ACE), Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU)

EQUITY TRANSFER INITIATIVE (ETI) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

8. Finally, we ask that institutions clarify their policies as soon as possible. Students and families are making decisions now about, for example, whether to take courses pass/fail, whether to enroll in non-traditional coursework to fill gaps in their curricula, and whether to accept partial credit for coursework already underway.

OVERVIEW OF THE RFP PROCESS

Eligibility

The ETI is open to teams that include institutions that are members of AACC, APLU, and/or AASCU.

Timeline

RFP release	November 2, 2020
RFP info session (webinar)	Approximately 2 weeks after release
Applications Due	December 2, 2020
Team/Consortium Selection Announced	December 21, 2020
ETI Kick Off Call	January 8, 2021
Team Workplans Finalized	February 2021

Application Instructions

Eligible institutions	Applications are invited from current AACC, AASCU, or APLU member institutions. Members of these three associations can lead an applicant team/consortium.
Submission deadline and format	Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, AACC will accept applications for the Equity Transfer Initiative through formsite by 5:00 p.m. ET on December 2, 2020 . Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered.
Required response elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary Applicant Cover Letter (5 Points) • Section 1. Contact Information (Not scored) • Section 2. Transfer History (20 Points) • Section 3. Approach (30 Points) • Section 4. Team/Consortium Relationships (15 Points) • Section 5. Organizational Capacity (20 Points) • Section 6. Principles on the Acceptance of Credit During the Current Emergency (10 Points)
Review criteria	A minimum of three reviewers will score each application. The teams/consortiums will be selected based on scores

EQUITY TRANSFER INITIATIVE (ETI) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

	<p>in the outlined categories. Approximately 20 teams/consortiums will be selected to participate in the ETI.</p> <p>Criteria include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Demonstrated institutional commitment to equity in transfer (evidenced through CEO letters and Section 5).2. Current or prior experience with prioritizing equity in student success (evidenced through Section 5).3. Goals for planned transfer pathway programs are realistic and attainable (evidenced through Section 3).4. Transfer pathways are well planned to prepare students for locally high demand jobs that offer family-sustaining wages (evidenced through Section 3).5. Clear understanding of activities needed to recruit, enroll, and graduate underrepresented students prioritized by the team/consortium (evidenced through Sections 2, 3, & 4). <p>Applicants will receive notification (selected and non-selected) by December 21, 2020.</p>
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EQUITY TRANSFER INITIATIVE (ETI) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Application

Listed below are the questions or topics that the primary applicant must address. For each, a score weight and estimated page length is provided. **To submit an application for the ETI, please provide the answers to the questions and upload the required documents using the link provided: <https://fs29.formsite.com/aroyalaaccncheedu/lau9nprhym/index.html>** . All materials must be uploaded at the time that the application is completed.

Primary Applicant Cover Letter (5 POINTS)

Provide a cover letter (2 pages maximum) as a PDF from the president/CEO of the lead institution addressing:

- Support of their institution's involvement.
- Reason why lead institution is seeking to participate in the ETI.
- Institution's commitment to equity.
- Institution's commitment to the financial impact of participating in the ETI project.

SECTION 1: Contact Information (NOT SCORED)

Primary applicant

- Name of Institution
 - physical address
- Affiliation: AACC, AASCU, and/or APLU
- Contact Name and Title
- Contact Email and Phone

Team/Consortia institution's contact information:

- Name of Institution
 - physical address
- Affiliation: AACC, AASCU, and/or APLU
- Contact Name and Title
- Contact Email and Phone

SECTION 2. Transfer History (20 POINTS)

This section provides an overview of the primary applicant's current and recent transfer rates and transfer processes.

The applicant should:

- Describe the applicant's current transfer process and list its institutional transfer partners, including the proposed team/consortium members if applicable. Within this description please include details regarding when students are required to commit to their selected transfer pathway (i.e., upon onboarding, after the first semester) and

EQUITY TRANSFER INITIATIVE (ETI) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

describe the handoff process from the two-year to four-year institution. If these processes include specific steps to increase equity, please describe.

- Provide baseline data on transfer rates for the last three academic years, including available data specific to African American, Hispanic, first-generation, and adult learners using the template labeled Enrollment and Transfer Data. This template should be uploaded at the end of the Proposal form. attached.
- Describe how the institutions efforts align with the ETI and why the initiative can make a difference in improving equitability in transfer.

SECTION 3. Initial Approach to the ETI Work (20 POINTS)

After selection to participate in the ETI and once a coach is assigned to the team, team/consortium participants will develop workplans and timelines. The workplans will incorporate the unique experience and perspective of the teams and allow for the initiative to learn from these various approaches. The workplans will, at least in part, be built off the approach described in this proposal and the attachments. Areas where the team anticipates needing technical assistance and coaching should be identified. Teams/consortiums are not expected to have all the answers at this stage. Anticipated length: 3-4 pages

- Which underrepresented (African American, Hispanic, adult, and/or first generation) students will be prioritized for this project and why? What are the main activities that the team will take to recruit these students and see to their successful transfer?
- List the five or more transfer pathways that project will undertake. Describe whether the proposed partnership will focus on expanding existing transfer program pathways or establishing new transfer program pathways. What is the team or consortium's transfer goal (# of students in year one, total # of students over two years)?
- How has the team identified the careers that are in highest demand in the community or region of focus for which the students can earn family sustaining wages? Please reference labor market data to support the selected pathways where applicable and provide any citations for data listed.
- Describe the main activities the team or consortium will take to recruit and enroll 100 or more students from the targeted demographic in year one and any additional steps that will be taken to meet the goal of 300 or more students by the end of year two.
- If the pathways are being newly developed, what approach will the team take to ensuring a smooth transition for students moving from two-year to four-year institutions?
- How do you anticipate the team working together to ensure student completion?

SECTION 4. Team/Consortium Relationship (15 POINTS)

EQUITY TRANSFER INITIATIVE (ETI) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

This section aims to build understanding of the current relationships, including transfer specifically, among the prime applicant and the team or consortium members.

- Provide an overview of the lead applicant's relationship with the proposed team/consortium members, specific to transfer and/or equity, or more broadly as appropriate.

SECTION 5. Organizational Capacity (20 POINTS)

Organizational capacity to successfully undertake or expand transfer programs and partnerships is critical to the success of the project. Transfer initiatives, especially newly formed ones, can require time and resources.

- Describe how the applicant team prioritizes equity. If there are specific initiatives or programs that contribute to equity, especially equity in transfer, please describe. Do programs prepare students for completion and careers in jobs that pay family sustaining wages? If so, please describe.
- How does the prime applicant see itself as ready to lead a team/consortium to achieve the project goals? If the lead has more than one partner, what are the resource and other considerations the prime applicant has assessed to determine their readiness to undertake leading a consortium.
- Each institution is required to have a cross-functional team to address the various components of its transfer work including program alignment between the two-year and four-year institution(s), financial implications for elimination of excess credits, policy changes and review, and accreditation: the chief academic officer, chief student affairs officer, faculty leads for the expanded or new transfer programs, chief financial officer, and transfer program manager. Describe the transfer team at the lead institution. Note that bio summaries for each team member will be required as Appendix 3 of the application (see instructions below).
- Describe where the project will reside at the lead institution and the internal departmental collaborations needed for success. Also describe where the project will reside at its partner institutions.
- Describe anticipated risks or challenges, both internal and external, to the team's ability to reach its targets. This description should include an analysis of financial risk, impact of COVID or other external factors. It should also include internal challenges, such as resistance or concerns around the revenue impact, personnel turnover, or faculty hesitation about the change that may be needed. Describe for each risk at least one approach to addressing this challenge or a technical assistance need that the ETI could address.

EQUITY TRANSFER INITIATIVE (ETI) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

SECTION 6. Principles on the Acceptance of Credit During the Current Emergency (20 POINTS)

Describe the policies, processes, and strategies your institution has implemented to institutionalize the Principles on Acceptance of Credit During the Current Emergency with regard to existing transfer programs. Describe areas where the primary institution may require technical assistance to ensure their fulfillment of the principles.

Required Attachments

Please upload the required attachments within the application form. All materials must be uploaded at the time that the application is completed.

1. A letter of commitment (2 pages maximum in PDF format) from the president/CEO of each institution on the applicant team/consortium (except for the lead applicant). Letters should give a brief overview of their role and key project activities and include a statement of:
 - Commitment to expand access and improve student success through equitable transfer for underrepresented communities and preparing student for high demand careers.
 - Commitment to capture unique stories of success, including individual student stories for showcasing.
 - Commitment to participate in technical assistance, evaluation reports, and networking among the other selected institutions.
 - Commitment to financially support the strategies being implemented by the institution to improve equity in transfer.
2. Enrollment and Transfer Data (download the Excel template)
3. Background Information (download the template)
4. Bio Summaries. For each cross-functional team member (referenced in section 5), provide the following:
 - Name, title, and institution. Specify who is the team lead at each institution and provide the lead's email address.
 - A one-paragraph bio for each team member.