FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ORGANIZATION ELIGIBILITY

1. **We are a for-profit entity or a membership organization. Are we eligible to apply for funding?** The Foundation funds IRS-designated 501(c)(3) charitable organizations; therefore, for-profit entities are not eligible, and membership organizations are only eligible if they are an IRS-designated 501(c)(3) charitable organization.
2. **I work for the County Office of Education, a state agency, or a school district. Are we eligible to apply for funding?** Yes. The Foundation can provide grants to government units and departments. However, the application system requires an EIN that can be verified through the IRS database. Please contact the Foundation at grants@stranahanfoundation.org to begin the Letter of Inquiry (LOI) screening process.
3. **I am part of a university system. Whose information should I include in the application?** The Organization Background section should be specific to the department, institute, or program directly involved in the proposed project. Be sure to mention somewhere in your LOI and application whose information was provided.
4. **I work for a public school district or higher education institution, and I'm having trouble using my EIN in the portal. Am I ineligible?** Not necessarily. Public institutions may encounter issues because the application system requires an EIN that can be verified through the IRS database. Please contact grants@stranahanfoundation.org for assistance.
5. **My organization operates an early childhood education center or program. Are we eligible to apply?** Potentially. Eligibility for this grant opportunity depends on who will benefit from your proposed project. If your organization currently employs, or plans to employ, more than 25% of the anticipated beneficiaries, your project would be a better fit for the Foundation's Provider funding cycle.
6. **I am using a fiscal sponsor. Whose information should I include in the application?** The Organization Background section should be specific to the department, institute, or program directly involved in the proposed project. Be sure to mention somewhere in your LOI and application whose information was provided.
7. **Can organizations submit more than one proposal?** Generally, the Foundation accepts only one LOI per organization. Exceptions may be considered for colleges and universities or fiscal sponsors. However, the Foundation does not anticipate advancing more than one proposal from any single institution or fiscal sponsor beyond the LOI screening stage.
8. **Can multiple organizations apply together?** Yes. The Foundation welcomes collaborative proposals, particularly for projects that require coordination across organizations, programs, or systems. This may be especially relevant for state-based initiatives. Collaborative proposals should clearly identify the lead applicant, each partner's role, and how the partnership will support the project's goals.
9. **Can an organization apply if it has not previously received funding from the Foundation?** Yes. Organizations that have not previously received Foundation funding are welcome to apply for any funding priority for which they are eligible. The exception is Priority C: Reinvestment for Recent Grantees, which is specifically intended for past Foundation grantees.
10. **Are only institutions of higher education eligible for Priority B: Innovative Pathways to Degree Attainment?** No. Organizations other than institutions of higher education may apply. However, applicants must have established partnerships or working relationships with these institutions to help early educators navigate and complete degree programs.

MODEL

11. **Can we apply to more than one of the four funding priorities?** The Foundation encourages applicants to identify the funding priority that most closely aligns with their proposed model or approach. Organizations may submit only one LOI, so applicants should select the priority that best reflects the model's or approach's primary focus.
12. **Does our organization need to have an established professional development model to apply?** The Foundation is interested in investing in approaches, systems, and models that already have a promising theory of change or logic model developed. We recognize that these may evolve and be refined through this project's implementation and learnings.

13. **Would programs that support CDA credential attainment be eligible under the innovative pathway's priority?** No. This priority focuses specifically on increasing the number of early childhood educators who earn associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees. Programs focused solely on CDA credential attainment are not eligible under this priority.

TARGET POPULATIONS

14. **Does the foundation support professional development for family or home-based childcare providers?** Yes. The Foundation supports professional development across a variety of early childhood settings, including family childcare, Early Head Start and Head Start, center-based childcare, pre-K, and kindergarten. The Foundation does not favor one setting over another.
15. **Are home-visiting professionals and specialty staff (e.g., behavioral health specialists, speech-language pathologists, and family navigators) considered eligible early childhood professionals?** The Foundation recognizes the important role these professionals play in supporting young children and families. However, our funding focuses on professional development for program-level leaders, instructional coaches, and teaching staff, including classroom teachers, assistant teachers, and teacher aides. Projects primarily serving home-visiting or specialty staff would generally not align with this focus.
16. **How does the Foundation define "low-income"?** The Foundation defines low-income families as those whose income does not exceed either 200% of the federal poverty level for their area or 50% of the area's median household income. For reference, see the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services 2026 Poverty guidelines here.
17. **Are organizations that serve both early educators and K-12 educators eligible, or must the proposed project focus exclusively on birth to five educators?** While organizations may serve K-12 educators, the proposed project must focus exclusively on those working with children from birth to age 5 (including Kindergarten).

PROPOSED PROJECT

18. **What level of commitment from a state agency is required at the time of application?** The state agency must be fully on board with the proposed project at the time of submission. Applicants should be prepared to demonstrate the agency's support for and commitment to the project.
19. **Do I need to have signed MOUs with my participating early childhood sites at the time of submission?** No. Signed MOUs are not required at the time of submission. However, applicants should have had at least preliminary conversations with potential participating sites, confirmed their interest in the project, and established the relationships and capacity needed to carry out the proposed work.
20. **Does my innovation project need to involve technology?** No. The Foundation welcomes technology and digital tools that support early childhood professionals and improve teaching and learning, but innovation does not need to involve technology. Innovation may include new or improved curricula, coaching strategies, programs, tools, delivery methods, or professional development models.
21. **Does the Foundation put a limit or cap on indirect costs?** Yes. Indirect costs may not exceed 10% of the requested direct program costs.
22. **Is there a limit on the percentage of the project's total budget that the Foundation will fund?** The Foundation does not have a set percentage limit on the portion of a project's total budget it may fund. However, the Foundation rarely provides full funding for a project. Applicants are encouraged to identify other funding partners to support the work and help sustain it beyond the grant period.
23. **Can we include funding for existing staff positions?** Yes. The Foundation may support salaries and benefits for staff who are responsible for overseeing or implementing project-related activities.
24. **How rigorous does my evaluation plan need to be? Do I need to hire an external evaluator?** All proposals must include a plan for tracking key outputs, outcomes, and lessons learned throughout the project. Additionally, each proposal must use at least one standardized assessment tool for classrooms, teachers, or children.

    The strongest proposals will incorporate evaluation activities appropriate to the project's goals and stage of development. These may include:

- **Process or implementation evaluation:** Are project activities being implemented as intended?
- **Formative evaluation:** What is working well, and what could be improved along the way?
- **Outcome or impact evaluation:** Is the project achieving its intended results?

The evaluation approach should reflect the model's context and stage of development, as well as any existing evidence informing the work. For example, a pilot project may require a smaller feasibility assessment, while a more established model seeking to strengthen its evidence base may require a more robust evaluation.

An external evaluator is not required. The need for one will depend on your organization's internal evaluation capacity and the scope of the proposed project.

APPLICATION PROCESS

25. **Am I required to identify the type of project or strategy for which I am seeking funding?** Yes. In the LOI, you will be asked to identify the development stage of your professional development model or approach, which corresponds to the Foundation's innovative or proven PD strategies. Your response will determine which additional questions you must complete.

26. **Can I review the application questions outside of the portal?** Yes. Please see the *"How the Application Process Works" section of the RFP Overview for the LOI and the* abbreviated proposal application questions. Please note that some questions are conditional and will depend on your responses to earlier questions.

27. **Do I need to attach a project budget as part of my LOI?** No, a project budget is not required at the LOI stage. However, if you have already secured a portion of the project's funding, you are encouraged to share that information in your responses.

28. **Are there word or character limits in the portal?** The Foundation provides recommended word limits for questions where applicants may be inclined to provide more detail than necessary. However, the application portal does not impose system-enforced word or character limits. Applicants are encouraged to provide the information necessary to clearly and effectively answer the question.

APPLICANT SUPPORT

29. **I need help accessing or submitting my application. Who should I contact?** Please email grants@stranahanfoundation.org for assistance with accessing the application portal or submitting your LOI.

30. **Is it possible to schedule a quick call with Foundation staff to discuss my proposal?** No. Unfortunately, given our own staff capacity, the Foundation is unable to schedule individual calls with applicants. However, we are happy to answer your questions via email and encourage applicants to stay on after our open office hours/webinars to speak with Foundation staff.

31. **I haven't heard back from the Foundation, and the deadline is fast approaching. What should I do?** Applicants are responsible for submitting all materials by the published deadlines. The Foundation cannot accept late submissions or LOIs submitted outside the designated application systems. Please review the cycle timeline carefully and allow enough time to complete and submit your materials before each deadline.