

Question & Answer Report

100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund Informational Webinar

The 2021 Innovation Fund Grant Competition to Build Partnerships and Training Programs between the United States, Central America, and the Dominican Republic

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Grant Competition Eligibility & Institutional Partnerships

1. Is it possible for a U.S. HEI to submit a proposal that involves a partner university in Central America as well as partner university in South America?

For this Innovation Fund competition, only higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United States, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, Belize, and the Dominican Republic are eligible to participate in proposed partnerships. Partnerships cannot include institutions outside of these countries.

2. Is it possible that one HEI presents two or three different projects with different or same partners but different fields or schools?

Yes, one institution may submit multiple applications, however, it is unlikely that a single institution will receive more than one grant award in the same competition.

3. Could a U.S.-based HEI with a satellite campus from Costa Rica submit a proposal to partner with the main or “mother” campus in the U.S.?

No, a satellite campus in another country does not qualify as a partner institution in that country, as it is considered to be an extension of an HEI. The intent of the Innovation Fund is to create partnerships between different institutions. Although your satellite campus in Costa Rica cannot be the main partner, it could still be involved in the proposed project as an additional partner.

4. Can an NGO receive and manage the funds?

No. Only higher education institutions (HEIs) are eligible to receive 100K grant funds. However, NGOs are encouraged to participate as an additional partner in the proposal along with the two partnering HEIs.

5. I am having trouble finding partners to present the application. Do you have an easier way to find partners? For a U.S. institution interested in applying, does signing up on the 100K network offer an opportunity to find partners in the eligible Latin American countries? Is there a list of partner schools from Central America that we could have access to?

Answer from Dr. Kent Bream: *For us at UPenn, the application idea came after the partnership. We worked to develop the partnership through inquiry to community service and civil organizations that we identified online. Once we were working together, the application became a tool to catalyze the growth of the program.*

Answer from 100K Innovation Fund: *There are several ways to identify a partner institution. A detailed list of the different ways to find a partner institution can be found in the Innovation Network, including the Member Directory. If you are not already a member, you can [join here](#). Please refer to our guide to navigating the Innovation Network for more information on how to access these resources.*

6. Is the grant open for fields like agriculture and food processing?

Yes. Food & Agricultural Sciences is an eligible academic area. To read more, please refer to the RFP at <https://www.100kstrongamericas.org/grants/>.

7. Is there any special consideration for smaller, less well funded, institutions when evaluating grant proposals?

Yes, Innovation Fund proposals are reviewed within the context of the institutional capacity of the applicant institution(s). Proposal reviewers are reminded that not all applicants have the same capacity and resources and are asked to take this into consideration. In the case that you feel your institution's particular situation/context may cause your proposal to be perceived as "less competitive," be sure to specify this in your proposal. For example, if your cost-share is relatively "low," provide justification for this throughout your proposal, particularly in your budget narrative. The Innovation Fund strives to and has provided opportunities to institutions of varying sizes, capacity, and levels of funding.

Project Design & Mobility

1. Based on introductory comments, do I infer correctly that the early months of the grant period could be used to solidify partnerships and then the exchanges could take place in the Spring 2022 semester?

Yes. The timeline of activities of your proposed program is dependent on you and your partner institution. The only requirement is that the proposed student activities and exchange take place within the performance period of the grant award.

2. **At our university, we don't have any kind of credits for these kind of programs, what can we do?**

This question requires further elaboration. In any case, higher education institutions typically must grant some sort of credit or hours to students for participating in sponsored academic courses or exchange activities. Whether the credits/ hours are counted as academic, or they are counted as elective or extracurricular credits, students must be awarded for their time and participation in your proposed program, and their time/participation should be counted toward their graduation, degree, or certificate requirements. To further clarify, students must receive credit from their home institution. In other words, your institution would only be required to award credit to YOUR students; you do not have to provide credit to students from your partner institution.

3. **How does credit work for U.S. students if they all are on different major tracks?**

Answered during the webinar. Please refer to the recording.

4. **Is it possible to involve more than one field exchange students associated to several topics included in 100K strong?**

Answered during the webinar. Please refer to the recording.

5. **If the grant is only for one year, how is the new partnership typically continuing?**

Answer from Dr. Kent Bream: The grant can serve to catalyze four sources of future funds: institutional funds from the partner institutions, donor funds to support intercultural exchange, student interest in self-funding, and applications for additional grants. It is hard and good to think about from the beginning.

Answer from the 100K Innovation Fund: Please refer to the [RFP](#), our [Grant FAQs page](#), and our [Proposal Format & Design Guidelines page](#) for more information on program sustainability.

6. **Dr. Bream and Dra. Panero, did you encounter language obstacles among students? If so, how did you overcome them? Thank you.**

Answered during the webinar. Please refer to the recording.

7. **Do all of the students need to speak English?**

It is not a requirement that student participants have Spanish/English language capacity. It is up to you and your partner institution to create a strategy to navigate this.

8. **More questions about language: I work with underserved populations of community college students and Spanish language instruction is not something that we can add to curriculum. (Thanks Dr. Bream for your answer right now). Wondering if translators can be added to the program?**

The use of grant funds for translators is not prohibited and, ultimately, the proposed use of grant funds is up to the institutions. Reviewers are considering cost-effectiveness as well as sufficient justification as to the proposed use of grant funds.

9. You mentioned that 12 grants are awarded. How many applications do you generally receive from American universities in a year?

The number of applications we receive varies widely between competitions. In recent competitions, we have received between 25-75 applications.

10. Given the desire for hybrid, what can you say about technological capabilities on the non-US partner end?

Answered during the webinar. Please refer to the recording.

11. Do students come as J1 visa holders? if so, is your institution the "Sponsor"?

Dr. Kent Bream Answer: *Our non-US students did not require a sponsorship from our institution. The U.S. Embassy processed the visas.*

Answer from the 100K Innovation Fund: *The type of visa that the students will hold depends on the host institution in the U.S. and their ability/preference for students to have either a J-1 or B1 visa. The type of visa also depends on the length of stay and/or type of activities of the proposed program.*

Budget/Finances

1. What expenses can be covered by the fund? Can the grant be used to cover travel and other expenses for students to visit the Central American university and/or the U.S.?

Yes, grant funds can and should be used to cover travel and other student expenses. Please refer to the [RFP](#), our [Grant FAQs page](#), and our [Proposal Format & Design Guidelines page](#) for more information on the use of grant funds.

2. What kind of cost share is required, if any?

There is no minimum or maximum percentage required; however, proposals that can match the grant 1:1 are viewed more favorably by the Review Committee. In fact, cost-sharing by winning proposals of previous Innovation Fund competitions have averaged more than 1.5 to 1. You can find more details in the [RFP](#) as well as at <https://www.100kstrongamericas.org/app-format/>.

3. Are NICRA costs allowed to be included?

Yes, indirect costs may be requested as part of the grant, and there is no prescribed indirect rate; however, given the size of the Innovation Fund awards, institutions may consider proposing significant counterpart funding to compensate for the lower amount of available direct program funds for the proposed project. Generally, we recommend cost-sharing indirect costs, but if this is not possible, then we recommend that you charge no more than 20% of the grant to cover indirect costs. It is important to note that cost-effectiveness is considered during the proposal evaluation process.



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4. If we can provide free lodgings (at our research station for example), is that a valid strategy? This as the "board issue" would be covered by food purchase.

Dr. Kent Bream Answer: *Answered during the webinar. Please refer to the recording.*

100K Innovation Fund Answer: *Yes. You can include the cost of lodging at your research station, as you mention, as cost-share by your institution. In fact, this would be viewed favorably in the review process.*