

REQUEST
FOR INFORMATION
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
FOR HIGH SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION

SPRING 2026



Carnegie Foundation
for the Advancement of Teaching

Submissions due by 11:59 pm PST anywhere in the world on April 30, 2026

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Carnegie Foundation) is seeking input from researchers¹ who share our commitment to transforming American high schools so that every student has the opportunity to live a healthy, dignified and fulfilling life. This Request for Information (RFI) aims to identify individuals, teams and organizations already engaged in—or interested in contributing to—work aligned with our [Research and Development \(R&D\) Agenda for High School Transformation](#).

This RFI serves three purposes:

1. To learn what work is already underway related to our essential foundations and priorities;
2. To identify potential collaborators—researchers interested in working with us toward a new educational architecture; and
3. To understand important gaps, barriers and opportunities that should inform our high school transformation strategy.

American high schools stand at a critical juncture. While the world accelerates toward an AI-driven economy demanding creativity, critical thinking and adaptability, our high schools remain trapped in an outdated architecture designed for a different era. The evidence is stark: Employers seek skills not reflected in diplomas; four-year college enrollment is dropping; and since the pandemic, chronic absenteeism has soared, student disengagement has accelerated, and educator burnout has reached crisis levels.

This is not a moment for incremental change—it is a moment for transformation.

In collaboration with partners nationwide, the Carnegie Foundation is committed to building a new architecture for the American high school—one grounded in ambitious goals for student learning, new learning experiences rooted in the science of learning, and signaling systems that provide actionable insights and clear pathways to postsecondary education and work. To achieve this vision, we have developed a comprehensive R&D Agenda that identifies critical areas requiring coordinated research, development and implementation efforts. We invite you to respond to this RFI if you are interested in supporting us in advancing this agenda and helping to shape the future of American high school education.

[Read the full R&D Agenda.](#)

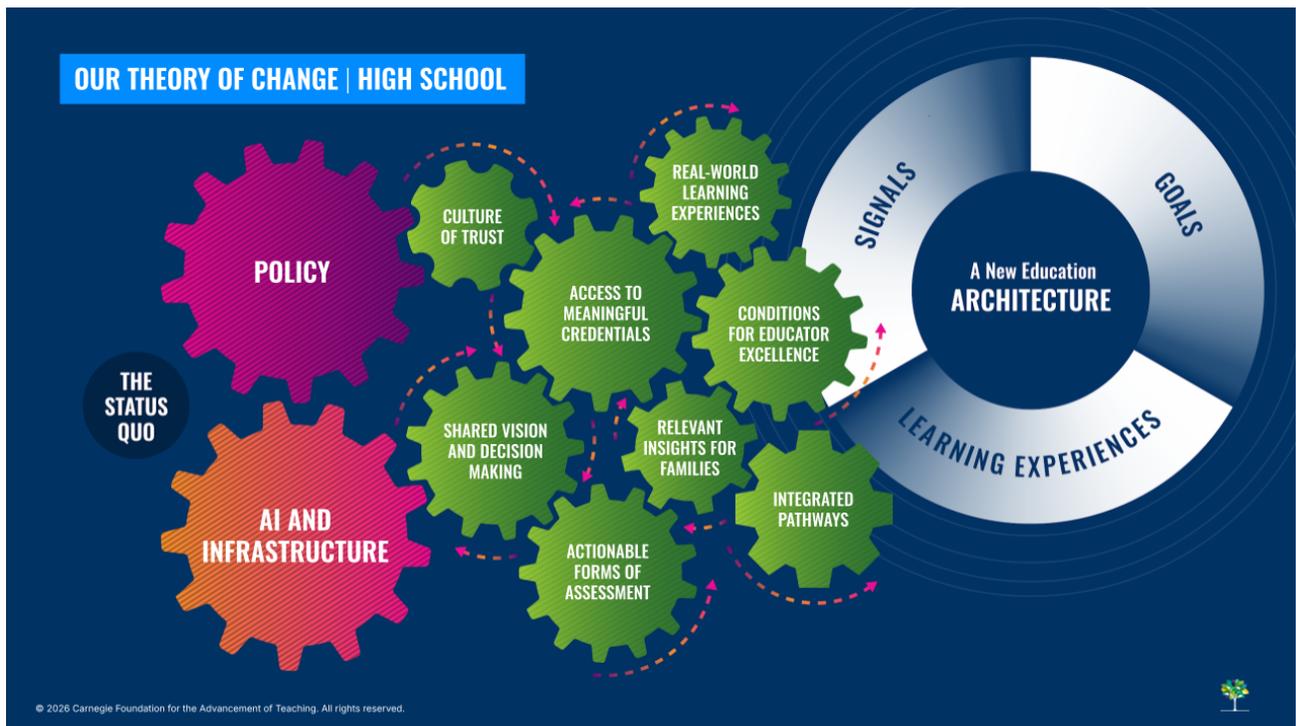
1. Researchers can come from the field of education and beyond, including but not limited to policy, psychology, assessment and evaluation, technology and data science, anthropology and implementation science. For more information, please see Section 1.2, Your Role.

The Research and Development (R&D) Agenda

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has a history of pioneering transformative innovations in education.

Our current focus includes a commitment to transforming the American high school and specifically furthering the development of a “post-Carnegie Unit” ecosystem. **A central element of our approach is the pursuit of an R&D Agenda to focus national attention on the empirical evidence and practical tools required to create conditions and policies that catalyze high school transformation at scale.**

In 2025, we collaborated with a group of experts across multiple domains, including K-12 education, workforce and higher education, to develop a comprehensive R&D Agenda for high school transformation. We posit that activating this agenda through innovation and disciplined inquiry within the identified **two essential foundations** and **eight interconnected priorities** can enable education systems to overcome the gravitational pull of the status quo, which perpetuates persistent systemic challenges. By doing so, systems can move toward a new educational architecture in which students are able to set and achieve meaningful goals, engage in learning experiences that prepare them for the future, and receive actionable, credible signals that are recognized by postsecondary institutions, employers and other stakeholders.



Two Essential Foundations

Foundation I: Aligned Public Policy

Building empirical evidence and developing practical tools about the legislative, regulatory and governance frameworks that support high school transformation—including competency-based progression policies, flexible credentialing frameworks, cross-sector incentives, assessment and accountability reforms, and resource allocation models.

Foundation II: AI and Infrastructure

Building empirical evidence and developing practical tools about the digital, physical and social infrastructures required to deliver sustained impact—including AI systems, adaptive learning platforms, data and signaling systems, learning ecosystems and the interaction of these infrastructures.

Eight Interconnected Priorities

Building empirical evidence and developing practical tools related to the efficacy and impact of the following interconnected priorities:

1. **Shared Vision and Decision-Making:** Creating shared understanding and decision-making across communities for transforming high school.
2. **Culture of Trust:** Establishing a supportive learning culture and positive relationships for student and educator connection, purpose and agency.
3. **Conditions for Educator Excellence:** Reimagining the role and working conditions of teachers and leaders to empower educators to accelerate the development of academic and durable skills.
4. **Real-World Learning Experiences:** Reimagining the high school canon, ensuring student learning experiences are grounded in science and are reliably engaging, rigorous and experiential.
5. **Integrated Pathways:** Creating learning ecosystems, tools and structures spanning high school, postsecondary, and career to significantly advance student opportunity beyond graduation.
6. **Access to Meaningful Credentials:** Increasing access to credible, accelerative credentials through high school.
7. **Actionable Forms of Assessment:** Building valid and reliable assessments of academic and skill development that capture evidence of learning from various contexts and provide useful insights.
8. **Relevant Insights for Families:** Creating tools and methods for educators to engage with families to advance student learning and success.

Activating the R&D Agenda

To activate the R&D Agenda, we are undertaking research activities within and beyond our [Future of High School Network](#). This network was launched in partnership with the XQ Institute and comprises 24 high school systems dedicated to high school transformation, supported by local and state leadership in their efforts.

The four types of research projects we are pursuing are:

- **Discovery Research**

- Definition: Research that explores current practices, identifies promising innovations and maps the landscape of what exists across different contexts and communities
- Premise: Innovative practices are already emerging within systems, and we will elevate and codify them

- **Development Research**

- Definition: Research that focuses on creating, testing and refining tools, practices and systems through iterative cycles of design and implementation in real-world settings
- Premise: Innovations need to emerge to catalyze transformation, and we will facilitate this by co-designing and co-developing them with systems

- **Impact Research**

- Definition: Research that evaluates whether policies, programs and practices achieve intended outcomes, for whom and under what conditions
- Premise: Innovations must demonstrate meaningful impact, and rigorous empirical evidence is necessary to substantiate their effectiveness across contexts

- **Scale Research**

- Definition: Research that examines how innovations spread and adapt across diverse contexts and systems, studying the conditions, supports, mechanisms, and knowledge mobilization processes that enable broader adoption and sustained implementation
- Premise: Effective innovations must reach more students and communities, and understanding the processes and conditions of scale is necessary to ensure they remain effective and sustainable as they expand

Purpose of This RFI and How Your Input Will Be Used

Through this RFI, the Carnegie Foundation seeks to:

- **Discover who is already doing this work:** Identify researchers, school systems and organizations currently engaged in work aligned with the essential foundations and priorities
- **Identify potential collaborators:** Find individuals and teams interested in contributing their expertise to advance the essential foundations and priorities
- **Understand the landscape:** Learn about promising innovations, critical gaps and barriers to progress

How We Will Use Your Responses

Your input will inform:

- The focus of research studies and development projects
- Formation of working groups and research consortia
- Future funding opportunities and partnership structures, and potential partners to identify through closed RFPs
- Convenings and collaborative initiatives
- Our understanding of where the field is strong and where gaps exist in relationship to the R&D Agenda

Within 6 months of the RFI closing, we commit to:

- Publishing a synthesis of what we learned (aggregated)
- Sharing how your collective input is shaping our strategy
- Reaching out individually to respondents with particularly strong alignment
- Hosting convenings or working sessions with potential collaborators
- Providing updates on next steps and opportunities for involvement

We will NOT:

- Publicly identify individual respondents without their permission
- Make funding decisions based solely on RFI responses (though promising respondents may be invited to future opportunities)

Who Should Respond

We welcome responses from members of the research community, including:

Researchers and Scholars (as Individuals, Teams and/or Organizations)

- Education researchers, educational anthropologists, learning scientists, developmental psychologists, organizational psychologists
- Policy researchers and analysts
- Experts in assessment, measurement and evaluation
- Implementation scientists and improvement researchers
- Researchers in AI, learning technologies, and educational data science

A Note on Collaborative Orientation

We are seeking partners who share our commitment to practical impact and are willing to align their work with the collective goals of building a new educational architecture.

This work requires:

- **Mission-driven collaboration:** Willingness to work toward shared goals rather than solely advancing individual research agendas
- **A student-focused ethos:** Addressing the needs of students from all backgrounds, with particular attention to acceleration and growth among groups with highest potential for impact
- **Practice-engaged approach:** Conducting research in partnership with practitioners to ensure that learnings for application are feasible and actionable
- **Openness to learning:** Genuine curiosity about what works, for whom, and under what conditions—even when findings challenge assumptions
- **Sustained commitment:** Recognition that transformation is a multiyear effort even while the overall work is inclusive of narrower, short-term and pilot projects

If this orientation resonates with you, we encourage you to respond—whether you have extensive experience in this work or are interested in contributing your expertise in new ways.

Request for Information

Section 1: About You and Your Work (Required for All Respondents)

1.1 Contact Information:

- Name and Title
- Organization/Affiliation
- Email Address

1.2 Your Role: (Check all that apply)

- Education researcher, educational anthropologist, learning scientist, developmental psychologist, organizational psychologist
- Policy researcher and analyst
- Experts in assessment, measurement and evaluation
- Implementation scientist and improvement researcher
- Researcher in AI, learning technologies and educational data science
- Other: _____

1.3 Geographic Context:

- What is the primary geographic scope of your work? (National, Multi-state, State, or Local)
- If applicable, which state(s) is your work primarily focused in?
- What type of area is your work primarily focused in? (Rural, Town, Suburban, or Urban)

1.4 Areas of Focus: (Check all that apply)

Which essential foundations or priorities align most closely with your work or interests?

- Foundation I: Aligned Public Policy
- Foundation II: AI and Infrastructure
- Priority 1: Shared Vision and Decision-Making
- Priority 2: Culture of Trust
- Priority 3: Conditions for Educator Excellence
- Priority 4: Real-World Learning Experiences
- Priority 5: Integrated Pathways
- Priority 6: Access to Meaningful Credentials
- Priority 7: Actionable Forms of Assessment
- Priority 8: Relevant Insights for Families

Section 2: Your Current and Planned Work

You may respond to this section with up to three lines of your work. Please feel free to respond only to the questions in this section that are most relevant to your expertise and experience. You are not required to answer every question. For questions with word limits, concise responses are encouraged and appreciated. Bullet points, brief examples, and short summaries are welcome and fully acceptable. If helpful, you may reference any supplementary materials you upload in Section 5.

For each line of your work, please address the following:

2.1 Overview of Your Work: (500 words maximum)

Briefly describe your current or planned work related to the R&D Agenda for High School Transformation. What are you doing (or planning to do) that connects to the essential foundations and priorities? (Please identify a primary and, if applicable, a secondary area of focus.)

2.2 Evidence of Promise: (500 words maximum)

What evidence suggests your line of research/approach is important or promising for advancing high school transformation? Applicants should describe evidence demonstrating actual or potential impact on educational practice, policy and student outcomes. Evidence may include, but is not limited to:

- Preliminary or published research findings
- Policy implications
- Practice-based evidence from implementation
- Theoretical frameworks supporting your approach
- Strong logic models or theories of change

Note: We understand that evidence may be at different stages of development, and we welcome both proven approaches and promising innovations that require further validation.

2.3 Demographic Focus: (300 words maximum)

Does your work focus on specific populations? What is your rationale for this focus—for example, what evidence motivates it, or which design features are related to studying this subpopulation?

2.4 Stage of Work: (Check one)

- Early conceptual stage—interested in developing this work
- Pilot/proof of concept stage
- Development and testing stage
- Scaling and refining stage
- Established work with evidence of impact

Section 3: Research-Specific Questions

You can respond to this section for up to three essential foundations or priorities that are most relevant to your work. Please feel free to respond only to the questions in this section that are most relevant to your expertise and experience. You are not required to answer every question. For questions with word limits, concise responses are encouraged and appreciated. Bullet points, brief examples, and short summaries are welcome and fully acceptable. If helpful, you may reference any supplementary materials you upload in Section 5.

Focusing each essential foundation or priority, please address the following:

3.1 Your Research Questions: (300 words maximum)

Within this area, which specific research questions are you best positioned to address? What is your approach to answering these questions? What makes your approach distinctive or particularly well-suited to generating actionable insights?

3.2 What We Know and Don't Know: (300 words maximum)

Based on your expertise:

- How is this area defined and operationalized?
- What evidence do we already know and consider settled related to this area?
- What are the most critical gaps in knowledge, practice or policy?
- What promising innovations should the field be paying attention to?

3.3 Connection to Other Areas: (300 words maximum)

How does this area interact with, reinforce or depend on the other areas in the R&D agenda?

3.4 Development Needs: (200 words maximum)

What tools, resources, measures, practices, policies or systems need to be developed to advance this area in ways that would accelerate progress in building the new educational architecture described earlier?

3.5 Implementation and Scale: (200 words maximum)

What are the key barriers to implementing and scaling effective practices in this area? What conditions or supports are necessary for implementation and scaling?

Section 4: Collaboration and Partnership

Please feel free to respond only to the questions in this section that are most relevant to your expertise and experience. You are not required to answer every question. For questions with word limits, concise responses are encouraged and appreciated. Bullet points, brief examples, and short summaries are welcome and fully acceptable. If helpful, you may reference any supplementary materials you upload in Section 5.

4.1 Your Collaborative Experience: (200 words maximum)

Describe your experience working collaboratively across disciplines, sectors or organizational boundaries. What is the impact of these partnerships? What challenges have you navigated?

4.2 Potential Contributions: (Check all that apply)

How might you contribute to advancing the R&D Agenda?

- Lead or co-lead research studies
- Contribute specific subject matter or methodological expertise
- Provide access to research settings or populations
- Develop tools, measures or resources
- Serve on advisory groups or working groups
- Support synthesis and knowledge translation
- Connect to key networks or partners
- Other: _____

4.3 Networks and Partnerships: (200 words maximum)

What existing networks, partnerships or research sites could contribute to this work?
How might the Carnegie Foundation best support these?

4.4 Capacity and Resources: (150 words maximum)

What resources, infrastructure or partnerships do you have (or would you need) to contribute meaningfully to this work?

Section 5: Additional Input

Please feel free to respond only to the questions in this section that are most relevant to your expertise and experience. You are not required to answer every question. For questions with word limits, concise responses are encouraged and appreciated. Bullet points, brief examples, and short summaries are welcome and fully acceptable. If helpful, you may reference any supplementary materials you upload in this section.

5.1 Other Insights: (300 words maximum)

Is there anything else you would like to share that would inform the Carnegie Foundation's work on high school transformation?

5.2 Connections: (200 words maximum)

Are there any other individuals, organizations or bodies of work that you believe the Carnegie Foundation should explore or learn from to inform its work on high school transformation?

5.3 Supplementary Materials:

You may attach up to three documents (publications, project descriptions, case studies, etc.) Please upload files (up to 10 MB each) and/or include links to web-based content in the description box. For each resource, please provide a brief description and if web-based, please specify which parts are most pertinent and why.

Submission Guidelines

How to Submit

Please download this document and complete your responses accordingly. Once finalized, submit your response via the [submission form](#) no later than **April 30, 2026**.

Technical Support

If you experience any technical difficulties with the submission portal, please contact Angel Li (angli@carnegiefoundation.org) for assistance.

Questions About the RFI

- **Email:** Please direct all questions to Angel Li (angli@carnegiefoundation.org).
- **Q&A Webinar Office Hours:** We will host two virtual informational sessions to answer questions about the RFI.
 - [Please register to attend](#)
 - [Sessions will be recorded and posted](#)
- **FAQ:** We will also maintain [FAQ section](#) based on questions we receive.

Confirmation

You will receive an automated confirmation email upon successful submission. If you do not receive confirmation within 24 hours, please contact Angel Li (angli@carnegiefoundation.org).

Expected Timeline and Next Steps

March 2, 2026: RFI opens

April 30, 2026: RFI closes

June 1, 2026: Initial follow-up conversations begin

July 31, 2026: Findings shared with all respondents

August 28, 2026: Findings shared with the broader public

Ongoing: Regular updates to respondent community on progress and opportunities

What to Expect After Submission

All respondents will receive:

- A summary report of key findings and themes (aggregated)
- Information about how collective input is shaping the Carnegie Foundation's strategy
- Updates on working groups, convenings and other opportunities to engage
- Early notification of future funding opportunities

Selected respondents may be invited to:

- Individual follow-up conversations with Carnegie Foundation staff
- Working groups focused on specific essential foundations and priorities
- Convenings with other researchers, practitioners and partners
- Participate in collaborative research or development projects
- Join advisory groups informing the R&D Agenda implementation

The selection of respondents for engagement will be based on:

- Alignment with R&D Agenda and mission
- Quality
- Demonstrated commitment to collaboration
- Synergy with other respondents and existing efforts
- Capacity and resources to contribute meaningfully

Our Commitment

From today through 2035, the Carnegie Foundation will work across sectors and in partnership with educators to accelerate the learning and discovery described in our R&D Agenda. We have convened the [Future of High School Network](#) to identify leading innovations and build knowledge to accelerate high school transformation.

The transformation of American high schools cannot be achieved by any single organization or sector. It requires unprecedented collaboration and a willingness to work toward shared goals. This RFI is one step toward building a national community of research committed to this work.

This RFI is not a one-time, information-gathering exercise. We view this RFI as the beginning of an ongoing relationship with collaborators who share our commitment to ensuring every student has access to a high school education that prepares them to thrive in work, civic life and beyond.

We are committed to:

- **Transparency:** Clearly communicating how we use your input and what we are learning;
- **Reciprocity:** Sharing insights and creating value for respondents, not just extracting information;
- **Action:** Translating insights into concrete research, development and partnership activities; and
- **Accountability:** Regular updates on progress toward the goals outlined in our R&D Agenda.

We invite you to join us in this critical work.

Disclaimer: Privacy and Confidentiality

This RFI is for information and planning purposes only. This is not an application for funding, a solicitation for proposals, or an offer to contract or award grant funds. Responses to this RFI are not part of a screening process and will not alone result in funding decisions. The Carnegie Foundation assumes no responsibility for costs you incur in responding to this RFI.

Use of Information

To support our review and analysis of RFI responses, we may share submitted materials with Carnegie Foundation employees, advisors, consultants, independent subject matter experts, and potential co-funders and collaborators. All individuals reviewing responses will be instructed to maintain the confidentiality of specific submissions. We will publicly share aggregated findings and themes from the RFI to inform the broader field. We will not publicly identify individual respondents or attribute specific ideas to individuals without your explicit permission. In addition, we will not independently pursue the specific research questions outlined in the submitted materials without prior consultation with you.

Intellectual Property

Please carefully consider the information you submit. We urge you not to submit confidential, proprietary or sensitive materials, as we are under no obligation to treat them as confidential even if you characterize the information as such. If you have concerns about disclosing confidential, proprietary or sensitive information, we recommend consulting with your legal counsel and taking steps you deem necessary to protect your intellectual property. All responses become the property of the Carnegie Foundation, though we respect the intellectual contributions of respondents and will not claim ownership of your specific research questions or work products described in submissions.

Contact Information Use

By submitting a response, you consent to be added to the Carnegie Foundation distribution list and further contact related to this work. You may opt out of communications at any time.