

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
Learning Lab on developing and initiating a Networked Improvement Community

Background

For the past five years, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has been pioneering a fundamentally new vision for the research and development enterprise in education. We seek to join the discipline of improvement science with the capabilities of networks to foster innovation and social learning. This approach is embodied in what Carnegie refers to as Networked Improvement Communities (NICs). These NICs are scientific learning communities distinguished by four essential distinguishing characteristics:

- ***focused*** on a well specified common aim,
- ***guided*** by a deep understanding of the problem, the system that produces it, and a shared theory of practice improvement,
- ***disciplined*** by the rigor of improvement science, and
- ***coordinated*** to accelerate the development, testing and refinement of interventions, their more rapid diffusion out into the field, and their effective integration into varied educational contexts.

In seeking to move NIC ideas into action, Carnegie has been committed to a learning-by-doing strategy. **This strategy now moves us to offer a NIC Design Learning Lab for a small number of STEM initiatives.**

About the Opportunity

A Learning Laboratory is a form of learning experience that supports both capacity building and programmatic planning and development. STEM participants in a Learning Lab will develop their knowledge of a set of tools and processes (in this case the knowledge base, tools, and processes of improvement science and NIC formation) by applying them to their own work under the tutelage of Carnegie instructors and learning guides.

We envision this NIC Design Learning Lab as a series of Learning Sessions hosted at the Carnegie Foundation that focuses on technical skills (e.g., establishing aims, refining theories of improvement, developing measurement models, learning improvement research skills), leadership development and will building (for working in a new and very different way), establishing the improvement science and knowledge management support necessary to enliven a NIC, and creating a learning community among STEM teams working on different but clearly related STEM goals. These Learning Sessions are interspersed between Action Periods wherein the knowledge and skills gained are put to work to further the effort among various constituents locally. At each Learning Session, participants will receive coaching on activities to date, address problems and issues encountered, and engage in learning activities regarding the “next steps “ in NIC formation and initiation. They then return home to apply this new knowledge as they take the next steps toward launching their own NICs. We anticipate the NIC Design Learning Lab will include five to seven teams and convene for four Learning Sessions over about an eight month period.



Anticipated Learning Lab Outcomes

Carnegie staff will work with teams to achieve the following outcomes:

- Participating teams will develop a proposal to secure funding to launch a NIC on a STEM problem of practice
- Participants will understand basic theories, processes and tools of network initiation and improvement science
- Participants will participate in and contribute to a learning community among teams

Whom we are looking for

We are looking for the leadership of a small number of STEM initiatives who are interested in being part of this NIC Design Learning Lab. More specifically, we think the following characteristics make applicants good candidates for this opportunity:

- Working on a high-leverage STEM-related problem
- Able to commit to the full participation in the Learning Lab (includes attendance of a consistent team at Learning Sessions, completion of of pre-work, and engagement during Action Periods)
- Serious interest in forming a NIC, including being able to deploy organizational resources towards this aim.

Resources and Supports for Participants

Participants will receive training during Learning Sessions from Carnegie staff with experience in the different aspects of Improvement Science and NIC initiation and development. Participants will also have access to peer support from others in the Learning Lab who are also working to launch a NIC. During Action Periods, Carnegie staff will facilitate coaching calls with the Learning Lab community to provide feedback and advice on their progress. Carnegie will provide all learning materials necessary for the Learning Lab.

For questions about the NIC Design Learning Lab contact Eva M. Mejia mejia@carnegiefoundation.org. For more information about The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and our work, please see <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/>.