

## **NASH CATALYST FUND**

### ***Cohort I Request for Proposals (RFP)***

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Issued:</b>        | <b>September 26, 2022</b>   |
| <b>Responses due:</b> | <b>October 24, 2022 at 9:00am via email to Jessica Todtman</b>  |
| <b>Contact:</b>       | <b>Jessica Todtman, Deputy Director, Power of Systems</b><br><a href="mailto:jessica@nash-dc.org">jessica@nash-dc.org</a> |

#### **About the NASH Catalyst Fund**

As an incubator of best practices, the National Association of System Heads (NASH) is thrilled to launch the new Catalyst Fund. Its impact will be far reaching but the concept is simple: through pooled philanthropic support, NASH will be able to recognize and incentivize the development of your big ideas that, once proven to work, have the potential to be scaled not only across your system but amongst your peers around the country.

***The NASH Catalyst Fund will encourage broad engagement of system members in sharing promising practices that are leading to equitable student success outcomes scalable to fellow systems.***

The hotspots of best practices recognized through the Catalyst Fund will demonstrate actions that are already underway and proving to be successful – with the potential to have a catalytic impact in meeting NASH’s measurable goals:

- The system level **credential completion metric** depends on a modernized completion metric that aims to capture the complexity of student completion patterns across institutions to account for the variability of student enrollment patterns. This includes shorter term credentials such as certificates and certifications as well as traditional associate and baccalaureate degrees.
- The system level **social mobility impact metric** aims to capture the impact of public higher education systems on student social mobility, with a focus on underrepresented and low-income students. This metric will track the movement of undergraduate completers between income quintiles based on annual earnings.
- The system **student loan debt-to-earnings ratio** aims to capture the relationship between student debt and the ability to repay based on student earnings. The ratio will track the percent of graduates with student loan debt in relation to their annual earnings.

The available levels of Catalyst Fund awards and the purposes are as follows:

- Level 1: Prove (up to \$5,000) - You have implemented an intervention that shows signs of positive impact
- Level 2: Expand (up to \$7,500) - You have tested your concept locally or with another system and have promising results to share
- Level 3: Analyze (up to \$10,000) - You have promising results to share and are requesting funds for a deeper analysis to improve the concept or solve the problem
- Level 4: Scale (up to \$25,000) - Funding to expand the implementation of the identified best practice to all campuses within the system
- Level 5: Catalyze (up to \$50,000) - Funding to expand the best practice across systems

***For the current Cohort I RFP, NASH has \$275,000 in available funding and anticipates making most awards at Levels 1-3 to maximize representation of different systems.***

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### Background on RFP – Cohort I

We are seeking systems' nominations of interventions that demonstrate "positive deviance" at one or more of their constituent universities or colleges and/or at the system office. Positive deviance is an approach to behavioral and social change based on the observation that in any community there are people whose uncommon but successful behaviors or strategies enable them to find better solutions to a problem than their peers, despite facing similar challenges and having no more resources or knowledge than their peers.

In this first round, we are looking for NASH member systems to nominate interventions that represent positive deviance emerging at the system office and/or one or more institutions and is related to the five Imperatives of the Power of Systems and/or supports the Refugee Resettlement Initiative (RRI), which is a strong example of how our members can leverage systemness (*Details on the Imperatives and RRI are available in Appendix A*).

### Timeline

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| September 22, 2022 | Catalyst Fund Webinar; <a href="#">Click here to view webinar</a> |
| September 26, 2022 | Catalyst Fund RFP Released  |
| October 24, 2022   | RFP Responses due at 9:00am                                       |
| October 28, 2022   | Preliminary Award Notifications                                   |
| November 4, 2022   | Awards Finalized  |
| December 7-8, 2022 | NASH Superconvening in Washington, DC                             |

### Proposal Submission

Funding from the Catalyst Fund will be distributed by NASH based on review by NASH staff for alignment with the guidelines and criteria below. The proposal and funding process will proceed as follows:

1. In order to be eligible to be recognized with a funding award, systems must submit a nomination using the provided form by October 24, 2022 at 9:00am. The form should be submitted as a Microsoft Word document email attachment to [jessica@nash-dc.org](mailto:jessica@nash-dc.org).
2. Systems whose nominated proposals will be recognized with a funding award will receive a notification no later than October 28, 2022 and will collaborate with NASH to determine the final award and terms by November 4, 2022.
3. Awardees will be recognized at the **NASH Superconvening** scheduled for December 7-8, 2022 in Washington, DC and, if in attendance, will be requested to share their intervention at a poster session.

### Please note:

- Review will be based upon individual proposal merit and contribution to the Power of Systems Imperatives and Refugee Resettlement Initiative as outlined in *Appendix A*.
- Systems may nominate more than one intervention for awards but must submit a separate proposal form for each intervention. Proposals may be representative of emergent/successful interventions at the system office, at one institution, or at multiple institutions. If the proposal includes an intervention being implemented at multiple institutions, the program administration must be aligned in methodology and resources at the system level or in an organized way across all participating institutions.
- While systems must *submit* the proposals, the narrative can be written by any individual affiliated with the nominated intervention.

**Proposal Format**

Proposals must be completed in the provided form and responsive to all of the following elements to be eligible for recognition:

*Project Summary Details*

Proposals must include a title, a one-sentence description of the intervention's mission, the name(s) of the system(s) and/or institution(s) currently implementing the intervention, and the number of individuals served (past and present) by the intervention.

*Executive Summary*

Systems should briefly outline the intent, methodology, and impact of the intervention, focusing on how the demonstrated outcomes contribute to the Power of Systems Imperatives and/or Refugee Resettlement Initiative as well as the potential for the intervention to be scaled or replicated at additional institutions within or external to the system.

*Amount of Funding Requested*

The available levels of funding and the purposes are as follows:

- Level 1: Prove (up to \$5,000) - You have implemented an intervention that shows signs of positive impact
- Level 2: Expand (up to \$7,500) - You have tested your concept locally or with another system and have promising results to share
- Level 3: Analyze (up to \$10,000) - You have promising results to share and are requesting funds for a deeper analysis to determine what works to improve the concept or solve the problem
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*Narrative that Addresses the Following:*

The review of proposals will focus mainly on methodology, impact, relevance, and scalability:

- **Methodology:**
  - What problem are you trying to solve and why are you well positioned to solve it?
  - How was the intervention developed, implemented, and progress monitored?
  - What was the timeline for development and implementation and how long was the intervention implemented before demonstrating results? (A visual representation of the timeline may be included as a single page attachment, but is not required.)
  - What specific inputs—including financial, human capital, and physical resources—were invested to ensure/support successful outcomes of the intervention? (A budget may be included as a single page attachment, but is not required.)
- **Impact:**
  - What was the intended impact of the intervention and was that intention met or exceeded?
  - What were the outputs and outcomes in terms of discrete data points (to the extent available), including the number of individuals supported, improvements to retention, graduation rates, equity and inclusion, and other specific areas that align with the Power of System Imperatives and/or RRI? (Visual representations of data may be included as a single page attachment in numerical chart form, but are not required.)

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- **Relevance:**
  - How does this proposal contribute to current and emerging challenges facing public higher education?
  - In this section, respondents **must** indicate alignment with one or more of the Power of Systems Imperatives and/or RRI detailed in Appendix A
  
- **Scalability:**
  - What is the current scale of adoption of this intervention from the system perspective?
  - How/could the proposal be scaled to reach more individuals in the populations being served?
  - What, if any, are the current obstacles to scaling and how could they be surmounted?

The review of proposals will also take into account collaboration, sustainability, and dissemination:

- **Collaboration:**
  - How does the intervention demonstrate interdisciplinary, cross-functional/programmatic/institution collaboration toward improved outcomes? This collaboration may already be in place or may be a targeted next step.
  
- **Sustainability:**
  - What thought has been put into sustaining the work at this stage?
  - What conditions would have to be met to ensure short- and long-term sustainability?
  
- **Dissemination:**
  - How could/is the intervention be/ing replicated within the institution (as relevant), across institutions, and across systems and states?

### Criteria for Catalyst Fund Proposals

Proposals should adhere to the criteria and eligibility requirements outlined below to provide an adequate basis for review and evaluation. Proposals that meet the favorable criteria are more likely to be eligible for Level 3-5 awards.

| Required  | Favorable   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Narrative is responsive to the prompts</li><li>• Meets one of the Power of Systems Imperatives and/or Refugee Resettlement Initiative conditions</li><li>• Serves 2- or 4-year undergraduate students as part of a credential or degree program</li><li>• Has been in place for at least one cohort or academic year with early indicators of positive outcomes</li><li>• Submitted with the support of system leadership</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Narrative fully addresses the prompts</li><li>• Fulfills one or more of the Imperatives and/or Refugee Resettlement Initiative</li><li>• Successfully serves a representative/diverse group of at least 20 students</li><li>• Has demonstrated outcomes for multiple cohorts or academic years</li><li>• Already garnered or is garnering positive attention at the campus/local, system, state, or federal level</li></ul> |

### Terms and Assurances

NASH reserves the right to:

- Request clarification or information that may not be provided within proposals without promise of eventual award
- Adjust the RFP timeline as necessary
- Make an award for a different amount than that proposed

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- Make an award for an amount distinct from the levels of funding described herein based on the needs and opportunities demonstrated in the proposal
- Publicize award recipients and publicly celebrate the impacts of the awarded interventions
- Reject any or all awards and discontinue this RFP process without obligation or liability

Awardees must:

- Be part of a NASH member system
- To the maximum extent practicable, travel to present their proposal at a poster session at the NASH Superconvening on December 7-8, 2022 in Washington, DC
- Be available for a follow-up interview with NASH staff regarding the awarded intervention
- Be available to present the intervention at a future NASH webinar (to be scheduled in coordination with awardees)
- Be willing to share outcome data at least annually for up to three years (December 2025) to support NASH in monitoring the ongoing implementation and sustainability of the intervention

Please note that the period between award notification to award finalization will be used for NASH to collaborate with awardees to finalize award levels and terms.

***[Conclusion of RFP; Continue to the following page for Appendix A]***

## **Appendix A: Power of Systems Imperatives and the Refugee Resettlement Initiative (RRI)**

In the “relevance” section of the proposal, respondents must indicate how the intervention addresses at least one of a menu of challenges that need to be solved in public higher education - the Power of Systems Imperatives and/or the Refugee Resettlement Initiative. The Power of Systems Imperatives were developed during the Big ReThink strategic planning process and informed by NASH members.

### ***The Learning Imperative***

WHY: There is no such thing as a 'traditional' college student. One-size-fits-all approaches to teaching and learning have hindered students' prospects for success.

WHAT: We must shift the postsecondary experience from institution-centric to student-centric to increase completion rates and help students attain their future goals.

HOW can we:

- Teach and support students recognizing individual learning and social-emotional needs.
- Advance equity in academic and experiential curricula.
- Design flexible pathways and shared credentials to streamline completion.
- Align transfer policies, practices, and processes for seamless movement of credits.

### ***The Talent Imperative***

WHY: Designing the postsecondary learning experience on "Education-to-Work" has become the clarion cry of American businesses to ensure inclusive civic engagement and global competitiveness.

WHAT: We must re-envision an “Education-and-Work” cycle that students revisit throughout their careers to retrain and upskill in response to a dynamic economy and diverse society.

HOW can we:

- Deepen employer partnerships and civic engagement to address workforce readiness.
- Support faculty and staff to meet changing student and employer demands.
- Prioritize diversity in hiring so students see themselves reflected in the faculty and staff.
- Develop learner pathway profiles to help students communicate their skills.

### ***The Equity Imperative***

WHY: Too many students - particularly under-resourced and low-income students - do not have the support and opportunities to access or complete a postsecondary credential.

WHAT: We must empower all students through the dismantling of structural and systemic barriers to improve upward social mobility.

HOW can we:

- Close equity gaps between and among student groups to improve outcomes for all.
- Implement the NASH Equity Action Framework.
- Strengthen Pre-K-12 partnerships to better support postsecondary preparedness.
- Expand access to technology, broadband, and digital resources for students.

***The Investment Imperative***

WHY: The rising cost and decreasing financial support of postsecondary programs have had the chilling effect of limiting access and, as a result, decreasing enrollment and completion rates.

WHAT: We must tackle the cost of college through collective resource sharing and efficiencies to reduce student loan debt and maximize investments.

HOW can we:

- Create a new business model through shared assets, infrastructure, and services.
- Design flexible pathways to reduce the amount of time it takes to complete a credential.
- Advocate for state reinvestment in public higher education systems.
- Cement systems as central to the federal education and workforce agenda.

***The Systemness Imperative***

WHY: Systems have not fully realized their potential to scale improvements across campuses, nor have they had the incentive to collaborate and share proven solutions across state lines.

WHAT: We must work together and harness the power of public higher education systems to better serve students and society.

HOW can we:

- Demonstrate the impact of systemness to affect societal change.
- Set system-wide goals and strategies with the tools and resources to achieve them.
- Use continuous improvement to inform the scale-up of proven solutions within systems.
- Demonstrate the impact of higher education on economic and community prosperity.

***Refugee Resettlement Initiative Conditions***

WHY: One of the greatest challenges of the 21st century is the number of forcibly displaced people across the world. The U.S. has renewed its leadership as a place of welcome for refugees and their families.

WHAT: We must support and empower refugee students and families with access to education, offering wrap-around services, community sponsorship, securing refuge for displaced scholars, and more.

How can we:

- Deepen the impact and quality of response to the resettlement of refugees.
- Ensure refugee voices and experiences shape new policies and tools to support this population.
- Implement sustainable programs for sponsorship, scholarship, recognition, and career opportunities.
- Assist outreach and support in rural areas.
- Track progress of program impact on refugees, and buy-in from partners, for this work.
- Institutionalize refugee programs with municipal, state, and federal governments.