Product Efficacy Research

Request for Information (RFI)
Application Instructions

ENCORE
Engagement Collaborative for Research & Equity
PRODUCT EFFICACY RFP

Overview

Digital Promise, with support from the Gates Foundation, is funding a cohort of studies evaluating whether AI-enabled math products improve student outcomes at scale. This Request for Information (RFI) is the first stage of the application process and will help us identify teams to invite to respond to the full Request for Proposals (RFP) in early 2027. Funding up to $300,000 is available for selected grantees. This document outlines the requirements for the RFI application and includes the full set of application questions.

How to Apply

Please use the following document to prepare your application responses, but submit using the linked Qualtrics form. Applications submitted outside of the linked Qualtrics form will not be accepted. We recommend that you prepare responses outside of Qualtrics and copy your responses into the Qualtrics form when you are ready to submit. You can reach out to us at any time with any questions about the application: encore-product-efficacy@digitalpromise.org.

Apply Here	Online application form
RFI Deadline	Jan. 8, 2027 at 11:59 p.m. PT
RFP Deadline	Feb. 19, 2027 at 11:59 p.m. PT
Award Period	April 2027-December 2028
Learn More	digitalpromise.org/encore-rfi

What We Are Funding

These grants support rigorous evaluation of an established product as it exists today, not new feature development. The primary aim of each study is to establish whether product adoption and use improve student performance and accelerate academic growth in real-world conditions. Products may focus on student-facing tools, teacher-facing tools, or both. Studies should also help us understand what works, for whom, and under what conditions, including how leading indicators (student motivation, engagement, and persistence, and teacher effectiveness) relate to student performance. Selected projects will run over the course of one full academic year in 2027-28, in partnership with one or more schools or districts, and an external research partner.

What This Application Asks For

The questions below cover your organization and product, your product's readiness for evaluation, your project readiness (including research experience, partners, and the opportunity this study represents), a preliminary study design, and a budget estimate.

Together they should demonstrate your readiness for a product efficacy study and your ability to conduct research with school or district partners. Selected applicants will be invited to the full RFP, which will ask for more detail on your study design and measures, analysis plan, partnerships and approvals, and timeline.

How to Answer

Please answer with specifics rather than intentions. “Short answer” questions call for a few sentences, and “long answer” questions for a paragraph or two. Where a question asks for numbers, dates, named measures, or named partners, please provide them. Where a decision has not yet been made, please note that and give the date by which it will be made.

RFI applications are due **Jan. 8, 2027**. Selected applicants will be invited to apply for the full RFP by the end of January 2027. All applicants should expect to hear from us by February 2027.

Product Efficacy RFI Application

Section 1: Applicant Information

Organization

Short answer

Primary contact

Name, role, email

Short answer

Product name

Short answer

Product description

Briefly describe the product you are interested in studying, including the grade levels and math content it covers.

Short answer

Section 2: Product Readiness

For which of the following use cases does your product use generative AI?

Select all that apply.

- ☐ **AI Tutoring:** tools that simulate a one-on-one or small-group tutor, offering step-by-step guidance, explanations, hints, and encouragement; chat-based or multimodal, using voice and images as inputs.
- ☐ **Adaptive Practice and Feedback:** tools that adjust the difficulty, sequence, and type of practice in real time based on student responses, providing instant feedback and personalizing trajectories toward mastery.
- ☐ **Student Work Analysis and Grading:** tools that automate evaluation of student work, from auto-scoring short answers to analyzing step-by-step reasoning, surfacing patterns and misconceptions that inform instruction.
- ☐ **Lesson Planning:** tools that generate or adapt lesson outlines, examples, activities, and assessments; align to standards; and personalize components based on student profiles.
- ☐ **Professional Learning and Coaching:** tools that scale observation, feedback, and practice: analyzing audio and video to deliver targeted instructional feedback and creating low-stakes simulation environments for teachers to rehearse skills.
- ☐ **None**
- ☐ **Other**:

Briefly describe the way that users (teachers and/or students) interact with your product, the role that AI plays in its features and functionality, and how you expect this use to improve student learning.

Short answer

In this section, we will ask you to briefly describe your product's alignment with high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), including describing your product's alignment with any specific core titles (e.g., Illustrative Math, Eureka Math^2, etc.). Please specify and distinguish current capabilities from those planned:

a) Each core title/version you explicitly align to, clarifying what you do to achieve core-specific alignment, vs. general standards alignment

Short answer

b) How that alignment shows up in the student and teacher experience (e.g., ability to assign content by selecting a core unit/lesson in your UI, references to the core in teacher reports and next steps)

Short answer

c) Core-specific implementation and professional learning (PL) supports you offer

Short answer

d) Links to existing district-facing artifacts (e.g., crosswalks, implementation guides) documenting your alignment

Short answer

Can you maintain sufficient consistency in your product's core features and functionality in participating districts throughout the 2027–28 school year to support a rigorous efficacy evaluation?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Unsure

Briefly describe any development planned before the 2027–28 school year and when it will be complete. Bug fixes and minor improvements during the study are acceptable. Grant funds cannot support new feature development.

Short answer

Which of the following describe your process for reviewing the accuracy, safety, and reliability of AI-generated outputs?
Select all that apply.

- ☐ Documented review process
- ☐ Human review of outputs before and/or after release
- ☐ Automated checks or testing

- [ ] Regular monitoring and refinement over time
- [ ] Process is in development
- [ ] No formal process yet

Summarize the work you have done to date with this product, particularly in schools.
Describe where and how the product has been used in schools (e.g., number of schools, teachers, or students, and for how long), and what you have learned about its feasibility, use, or outcomes, including the share of teachers or students who used the product at the intended level. Include any prior research or evaluations, and how this study would build on them.

Long answer

Section 3: Project Readiness

Describe the opportunity this project represents.
Where is the product in the market today, and why does establishing evidence of its impact now matter for the field and for your organization?

Long answer

Describe your organization's previous experience conducting research with schools or districts.
Provide up to two examples. For each example, please include: 1) the school/district context or partner, if appropriate to share; 2) the type of research conducted; 3) the approximate scale (e.g., schools, educators, or students involved); 4) when the research took place; and 5) your organization's role in the research.

Long answer

Research partner
Please name the research partner you intend to work with. At minimum, the research partner must conduct the primary outcome evaluation analysis. By the full RFP, your research partner should have agreed to work with you, pending funding, and you will need to include a quote for their work.

Name	Organization	Status
		Agreed pending funding

Which activities do you plan to have your research partner lead?
Select all that apply.

- [ ] Study design
- [ ] Recruitment
- [ ] Data collection
- [ ] Primary outcome analysis
- [ ] Reporting
- [ ] None
- [ ] Other:

School or district partners

List any school or district partners you have identified. A letter of support is encouraged but not required at the RFI stage. At the full RFP stage, a letter of support from each partner will be required. If your project is funded, you will need a signed MOU with each partner within about 30 days of being notified of your award.

District / school	Approx. # of schools	Status
		Agreed pending funding

Letter(s) of support (optional)

File upload

Section 4: Preliminary Study Design

What type of comparison group do you plan to use?

Single-group pre/post designs are not eligible.

○ Concurrent comparison group, randomly assigned
○ Concurrent comparison group, matched on prior achievement and demographics
○ Staggered rollout (comparison group starts using the product the following semester)
○ Historical comparison (a prior cohort of students in the same schools)
○ Not yet determined
○ Other:

At what level will the product be assigned?

○ Districts
○ Classrooms
○ Schools
○ Not yet determined

Approximate sample size

Please provide your best estimates; exact numbers aren't expected at this stage. Fill in the rows that apply to your design. For example, a school-level design may not need classroom counts. For historical comparisons, the comparison group is the prior cohort.

	Product use group	Comparison group
Districts		
Schools		
Classrooms		
Students		

What will be your primary student outcome measure?

○ State assessment
○ District interim or benchmark assessment (e.g., i-Ready, MAP, STAR)

○ Other standardized assessment:
○ Not yet determined

Which leading indicators do you plan to assess?
Leading indicators are changes in students or teachers that are expected to lead to improved achievement. They should be measured with validated tools, such as surveys or classroom observation protocols, in both the product and comparison groups. Product usage data, such as time on the platform or problems completed, measures how much the product was used and is not a leading indicator.

☐ Student motivation, engagement, persistence
☐ Teacher effectiveness
☐ Other:
☐ Not yet determined

Briefly describe your proposed study.
Explain:
- How schools or classrooms will be selected for the product and comparison groups, and who makes that decision. Note: Groups cannot be formed only by who chooses to use the product (for example, comparing teachers who opted in with those who didn't).
- If matching, what characteristics you will match on (e.g., prior achievement, demographics).
- How you will limit spillover to the comparison group, if product and comparison classrooms are in the same schools.
- Anything else reviewers should know about your design.

Long answer

Do you plan to use AI tools to help collect or analyze data for this study (separate from your product)?

○ Yes
○ No
○ Not yet determined

If yes, briefly describe how, including how you'll protect student and teacher privacy.

Short answer

What are the biggest risks to completing this study on time, and how will you mitigate them?
While you may not know your full study details at this time, please briefly address risks that may arise, including consideration for approvals, timing of outcome data, implementation fidelity, and loss or contamination of the comparison group.

Short answer

Will you pre-register your study and publicly report findings, regardless of outcome?
Pre-registration and public reporting of results are required for all funded projects.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Other:

Section 5: Budget Estimate

Which funding level does your proposed study design align with?
Award amounts depend on study design (see budget guidance on the RFI webpage).
○ Up to $200,000: historical comparison (a prior cohort of students in the same schools)
○ Between $200,000 and $300,000: concurrent comparison group with one leading indicator, or a smaller sample
○ Up to $300,000: concurrent comparison group with multiple leading indicators and a sample substantially larger than the minimum study scale

Please provide a budget estimate for the study you have outlined.
Include your total estimated cost and a rough breakdown, including estimated costs for school or district partners and your research partner. A detailed budget and budget justification will be required at the full RFP stage.

Category	Estimated cost
Research partner	
School or district partners (e.g., incentives, staff time, data)	
Your organization (e.g., implementation support, professional learning, staff time)	
Other	
Total	

How did you hear about this RFI? Please indicate the social media posting, newsletter announcement, individual message, etc. where you heard about this RFI opportunity. Thank you!

Short answer