

Overview of AIMS EduData Initiative

Due May 4, 2026

This call for proposals invites researchers and educators to propose an R&D project using existing data from the University of Florida Lastinger Center for conducting new experiments to pursue insights about mathematics teaching and learning. This call is similar to the RFP that closed on March 16, 2026 but focuses exclusively on the Lastinger Center's digital learning platforms (DLP). These platforms include ecologically valid data that provide potential insights into the processes of student learning, ways that teachers engage with the platforms and professional development, and the impact on student motivation, engagement, persistence, and learning outcomes. For more information about the available datasets and experimental capabilities, see the [DLP Research Catalog](#).

We especially invite early career researchers and educators, including tenure-track faculty, postdocs, graduate students, researchers within non-profit organizations, district staff with research roles, and researchers located at minority serving institutions or Title I schools. In addition to providing funding, grantees will be involved in a community of practice and engage with the Lastinger Center staff, with each other, and with the broader [AIMS Collaboratory](#) network, providing opportunities for awardees to grow their professional network, research skills and results, and knowledge.

This Opportunity

This solicitation offers an opportunity to conduct research with datasets from two DLPs: the University of Florida Lastinger Center's Math Nation and Math Matrix Micro-Credential. To conduct this research, grantees will gain access to deidentified datasets and research tools, provided they comply with IRB, privacy, and data use policies and procedures established by each DLP in accordance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations. In order to write a competitive proposal, it is essential to visit the DLP catalogue, [which you can access here](#).

This opportunity is open to all types of research questions and methods, including exploratory projects, correlational research, measurement, and evaluation studies. We are particularly interested to understand how research-based concepts can lead to understanding of how DLPs can foster student motivation, engagement, and persistence in learning math. We also welcome proposals with mutual value to researchers, educators and DLPs, including analyzing how DLP features could help teachers save time or engage in known effective teaching and learning practices based on the data in a DLP, and projects involving partnerships with K-12 districts that investigate how to improve the effectiveness of DLPs for their students.

In our experience, there is a learning curve for researchers and educators entering collaborations with DLPs and gaining familiarity with their data. As such, we encourage applicants to think of these grants as opportunities to explore what is feasible with these DLPs, potentially laying the groundwork for subsequent further grant proposals to this program or other

funders. We also welcome partnerships of educators and researchers who have already done the feasibility work to indicate their readiness to begin research.

Background

In 2021, the K-12 Education Team at the Gates Foundation launched an effort called “R&D Infrastructure” to develop new research and evaluation capabilities in large existing DLPs. AIMS EduData was launched in spring 2025 to open up opportunities for external researchers and research-practice partnerships to access these tools and platforms to conduct further research on these developed research platforms, providing access to data and experimental capabilities that have been difficult to access in conventional research settings.

In partnership with other efforts like [SEERNet](#), the AIMS EduData initiative is part of a broader movement to increase the pace of discovery and innovation in US education. Conducting research through widely used DLPs can accelerate research and development and make it easier to conduct replications to identify what works for whom under what conditions. DLPs often collect far more data than their internal research teams have the capacity to analyze. The partners and platforms in the [AIMS Collaboratory](#) have been very successful in lowering barriers to make new discoveries in education based on learning platforms in widespread use among students. DLPs have developed tools and methods that enable external researchers to gain access to system log data, including newly instrumented learning activities, research data dashboards, and new datasets. An initial cohort of [research partners](#) received grants in summer 2025 and is presently conducting studies.

We invite new proposals to suggest potential insights about how to use these new data and tools to enable new discoveries in math teaching and learning. Funded projects can contribute to the education R&D movement by expanding its capacity and skills, providing feedback to DLPs about the utility of their datasets and insights about their features, and demonstrating the affordances and value of conducting research through DLPs.

Our long term vision is for the AIMS EduData initiative to grow into a robust community of researchers and educators working in partnership with DLPs to advance theory and math education. We also intend to reduce commonly-encountered barriers to conducting DLP research through re-usable infrastructure and open science practices. As such, we anticipate opening new calls for proposals roughly every six months.

All research will require completion of ethical and legal data usage requirements, including IRB applications, privacy requirements, and data use policies and procedures established by each DLP.

What makes for a strong proposal

In previous rounds, stronger proposals built on prior research and had a theory-driven line of inquiry to advance the knowledge frontier. These applicants typically deeply reviewed the information provided through the DLP catalog, selected the platform that best matched their

research interest, and as a result were prepared to ask questions during DLP office hours. These teams were able as a result to develop research proposals that were targeted on questions of interest and were feasible with the data available. Proposals that were not funded often did not go beyond a descriptive analysis of the data, lacked a theoretical perspective, were not high value for the DLP, or did not have the potential to generate new knowledge. We welcome replication studies provided they recognize previous research and provide a rationale.

Description of Grant Opportunity and Expectations

This solicitation offers grants of up to \$10,000 for graduate students and up to \$50,000 for researchers and educators. This solicitation includes:

- *Small grant research projects* of \$10,000 to \$50,000 for **12 months**. These projects should seek to address research questions and produce findings, typically without requiring time consuming steps like establishing new partnerships or acquiring data sets beyond those available via the existing platforms. The proposer should be ready to make concrete progress on a research question as soon as funding and data become available.

Earliest starting date: August 15, 2026

The [University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning](#) offers datasets from two DLPs. One enables research with student data from MathNation, an online middle and high school mathematics curriculum. The second includes teacher data from the Math Matrix Micro-Credential, an asynchronous, competency-based online professional learning system for K-12 mathematics educators.

The Lastinger Center is particularly interested in research investigating:

- Salient patterns of student engagement across curriculum activities
- Student conceptions of mathematics content
- Relationships between student engagement and learning outcomes
- Salient patterns of teacher engagement across course features, activities, and time
- Teacher conceptions of course content
- The relationships between teacher engagement and learning across teacher characteristics.

Successful applicants will be expected to achieve the following outcomes:

- **Research grant recipients** will have completed a research project and be able to present their findings to the AIMS community. They will also submit a final report describing the research activities, methods used, findings, and implications for the DLP and for future research (including what further proposals are being contemplated, if applicable). If research results in new discoveries, recipients should write up their findings and make them publicly available, ideally in a peer-reviewed journal.
- **All grantees** are expected to:
 - Participate in monthly virtual community convenings to build relationships and share learning.
 - Prepare and present a poster at a virtual community convening and/or Gates Foundation event (travel to the event will be supported by the Gates Foundation).

- Distribute research results publicly, ideally using open science approaches that include pre-registration of studies, openly licensed and reproducible analytical code, derivative data sharing, and other techniques where feasible and appropriate.

Proposal guidance

Proposals should be 3-4 pages long, including the abstract, but not including CVs and references. The proposal should not exceed 2000 words.

Abstract / summary - provide a brief summary of your proposed research project, summarizing the elements described below.

Significance - describe how your proposed project might contribute insights about ways to improve students' math achievement and/or to establish the relevance and usefulness of digital learning platforms as research infrastructure. Why is this project important? How does your project fit with the goals of the DLP? (The latter is very important!)

If effective, this section will enable a proposal reviewer to know why the project is important for the improvement of mathematics teaching and learning, how it fits the goals of the DLP and, if applicable, how it could benefit the district partner.

Research plan - What research questions will you address, and what do you hope to learn more broadly? Describe what types of learner outcomes you wish to address, the types of data from the DLP that you will use and analysis you plan to conduct, and how these methods will enable you to address your research questions. How does your research leverage the specific data provided by the DLP?

Describe any barriers you might encounter, and what steps you might take to overcome those barriers. Because some of the work will involve discovering what is possible and not possible with the available data, you can describe the initial feasibility questions you will explore and possible adjustments you will make depending on what you learn. Provide an estimated timeline for your project.

Plans should describe approaches to reproducibility and dissemination of results, ideally using open science methods consistent with the Gates Foundation [Open Access Policy](#).

Proposals involving district partnerships and new data collections should describe how the DLP will be implemented, what intervention or implementation factors will be examined (as applicable), who from the district will be involved, and how any data collected outside the DLP will be integrated with DLP data for analysis.

A proposal reviewer will have a clear understanding of the research you seek to do and how you will do it, including how you will resolve issues of feasibility.

Career (Partnership) growth - How will participation in the AIMS EduData initiative contribute to your career growth? What demonstrated skills and knowledge could you apply to this project? What new skills or knowledge do you hope to gain? How might belonging to the AIMS Collaboratory and this cohort of researchers open up new possibilities for your career?

A proposal reviewer will be able to discern if you are capable of doing this research and will learn how it will advance your career (or partnership) in important ways.

Resources - Describe the personnel, consultants, travel, equipment, facilities and other resources you would need to conduct your project successfully and demonstrate that you have access to these resources through existing means or through use of grant funds. Explain what systems and procedures you would use to ensure secure data transfer and storage. State how you will comply with data security and human subjects research requirements and execute data sharing agreements.

A proposal reviewer will have confidence that you have access to the skills, facilities and resources needed to do the research.

Budget (outside the 2000 word limit)

Provide a budget using the [template](#) described below.

Note that acceptable use of funds includes:

- Researcher and/or educator time, including course buy outs or summer salary
- Consulting fees or a stipend for a senior researcher for mentorship and guidance on the research, and/or a research assistant or postdoc for support.
- Up to 2 professional conferences relevant to the research project.
- Equipment and computational resources, (including devices, internet access, privacy-compliant analytical applications, computing power, and storage)
- IRB review and legal support for data sharing agreements
- Institutional overhead up to limits established by the Gates Foundation (0% for government agencies, 10% for colleges and universities, 15% non-profits and for profits (see https://docs.gatesfoundation.org/documents/indirect_cost_policy.pdf))

You can include additional narrative outside the word limit if necessary to further justify your budget (beyond the explanation in the Resources section).

What to Submit

Your submission should include:

- An abstract or summary of your project and narrative addressing the topics above, not exceeding 2000 words (including the abstract).
- Citations
- Resume or CVs for the PI and any other key staff
- Early career scholars (graduate students and postdocs) MUST include a letter of commitment from a faculty advisor at your institution who can help to navigate the process to obtain IRB approval and data sharing agreements, and to ensure smooth execution of grant agreements and receipt of funds. The letter must have a specific commitment to an amount of time.
- Budget in the [template provided](#), along with any additional justification. Download a copy of the template and save your version with the file name convention PI LAST NAME_BUDGET.XLS.

Eligibility Criteria

This opportunity is open to any U.S.-based applicant(s), whether in a non-profit organization, for-profit organization, or educational/government agency. These may include individuals submitting on their own behalf, individuals working for an institution of higher education, a school district, research organization (e.g. a nonprofit) or U.S.-based small business or

consultancy. Prior to award, applicants must establish their ability to complete necessary IRB, MOUs, Data Sharing Agreements and to comply with data security requirements.

We are especially interested in receiving proposals from the following types of proposers: graduate students and early career professionals, educators with research roles, such as those working in district research offices, research-practice partnerships, and researchers located at minority serving institutions or Title I school districts.

Individuals may not submit more than one application.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be assessed on four main criteria:

- Significance, explaining the value of the research in relation to the stated priorities and including why the chosen DLP is a good fit for realizing that value.
- Research Plan, including both the strength of the plan, but also awareness of feasibility and contingencies you will need to resolve as you go.
- Career or Growth, including both how you are positioned to do this research and how the funds will enable growth of your career or growth of a valuable partnership.
- Resources, access to needed expertise and institutional support, and reasonable and appropriate use of resources available to you both from this grant and in your context.

An FAQ will be available at <http://aimsedudata.org>. We will also offer office hours to respond to questions about the RFP.