



**Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
Collaborating States Initiative (CSI)**

*Supporting State Plans to Develop and/or Improve Policies and Guidelines to Promote Evidence-Based
Social and Emotional Learning for All Students, Preschool to High School*

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS – TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Release Date: Wednesday, November 14, 2018

For information contact Dr. Linda Dusenbury at ldusenbury@casel.org

Telephone interview will be scheduled for all applicants.

The purpose and mission of the [Collaborating States Initiative \(CSI\)](#) is to work with state teams to help ensure that preschool to high school students are fully prepared—academically, socially, and emotionally—to succeed, now (in school) and in the future (in work and in life). Through the CSI, CASEL is actively partnering with states that want to develop policies or guidelines to support implementation of quality social and emotional learning (SEL). The work is supported by Pure Edge, Inc. and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The CASEL Collaborating States Initiative officially launched in April 2016. As of November 2018, the CSI community of practice included working groups from 25 separate states. Within the CSI, state plans differ in terms of approach. Some states are developing guidelines or professional learning to support student SEL. Others articulate freestanding learning standards or competencies for student SEL or integrate SEL learning goals into other existing priorities (e.g., academic standards, workforce readiness, equity, PBIS, MTSS, mental health and trauma, etc.). Still others have plans that include a combination of two or more of these approaches. The CSI supports each state to develop a customized plan that will create the conditions that meet the unique needs of its students and families. This request for applications requires that states develop plans through 2020.

Important Information.

Introduction/Purpose: The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) seeks applications from state departments of education interested in partnering with CASEL and other states to explore, develop, and/or improve policies and guidelines to promote social and emotional learning (SEL) with the goal of creating conditions that will support statewide implementation of SEL, preschool through high school.

Opportunity: The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) encourages states to prioritize educational goals and outcomes for their students. CASEL has conducted a scan of the 50 states and finds that all 50 have

articulated what students should know and be able to do with regard to social and emotional learning at the preschool level. Eleven states have done so from preschool into the early elementary grades. Fourteen states have articulated competencies (or standards) from K-12, and additional states are moving in this direction. In addition, a growing number of states have begun the important work of developing policies, guidelines, and professional learning that effectively supports students' social and emotional development (see results of the [CASEL State Scorecard Project](#)).

The purpose of the CASEL Collaborating States Initiative (CSI) is to support states as they develop a customized plan for SEL and as they design, adopt, and implement clearly defined, research-based policies and guidelines to support statewide implementation of SEL.

Application Due Date: Five-page applications (described below) will be accepted at any time and should be submitted to Dr. Linda Dusenbury (ldusenbury@casel.org). State teams are also invited to contact Dr. Dusenbury to discuss any questions they may have about this process.

Eligibility: All states, commonwealths, and territories (henceforth collectively referred to as "states") are eligible to participate. States that develop a thoughtful plan for SEL will be selected to participate in this project as a CSI state. States not selected to be CSI partner states will be eligible to participate in a broader peer-learning community of states that will also receive resources and communications (including webinars) emerging from the project.

Selection Announcement: States wishing to join the CSI should develop a plan to submit to CASEL (see instructions, below). State team leaders will be notified of their selection within one month of submitting their plan. During that time, applicants will be interviewed to discuss their plans. CASEL, working with members of our expert advisory group (see list attached), will review the quality of each state's proposal.

Funding Available \$5,000 to offset costs and expenses for developing policy, guidelines, and standards (related to the cost of this initiative, in addition to covered expenses for travel to national meetings).

Technical Assistance Available: Technical assistance from CASEL (including through regular phone consultation, conference calls, and webinars) using CSI [process tools and resources](#) and examples of high-quality policies, guidance, and resources for SEL gathered from other states across the nation. States will also receive support from CASEL [policy and practice advisors](#) and other state teams participating in the CSI (including through national and regional meetings, regular conference calls, and a thriving Google+ community).

CASEL Contact: Dr. Linda Dusenbury, Senior Research Scientist and Director of the Collaborating States Initiative: ldusenbury@casel.org.

Relevant Resources and Key Publications Can be Found [here](#).

Background

Social and emotional competencies (including the abilities to effectively manage one’s emotions, set and achieve goals, form positive relationships, work cooperatively and interact successfully in groups, and make responsible decisions) are the foundation for all learning. Extensive research, including a meta-analysis of 213 studies, has shown that programs designed to promote social and emotional competence in students produce important academic outcomes, including improvements in standardized academic test scores that are, on average, 11 percentile points higher for students who received SEL programming compared to students who did not receive SEL (Durlak et al., 2011). These approaches also are found to improve prosocial behavior and reduce conduct problems, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. Further, a new meta-analysis with 82 studies that followed students longitudinally found that positive impacts of these approaches can be lasting (Taylor et al., 2017). High-quality instruction in SEL has also been associated with reduced problem behaviors, including conduct problems, drug use, and violence (e.g., Botvin et al., 1995; Farrell & Meyer, 2001). The cost-effectiveness of these approaches has also been established in a recent report finding that programs designed to promote social and emotional competence produce, on average, a benefit-to-cost ratio of 11:1 (Belfield et al., 2015).

A growing number of states have begun the important work of developing policies and related guidelines that effectively support implementation of teaching practices, including standards and competencies, designed to promote students’ social and emotional development (see results of the [CASEL State Scorecard Project](#)). Further, as part of their efforts to promote equity in education, many states are recognizing that SEL can be an important driver of equity because it enhances teaching practices when it promotes awareness of social and cultural identities, respect for diversity, and compassion for others. Because SEL promotes emotional literacy in adults as well as students, it can provide educators with effective strategies for creating safe and nurturing school and classroom environments for all students.

The purpose of the CSI is to support states as they develop, adopt, and implement clearly defined, research-based policies and guidelines to support statewide implementation of SEL. In collaboration with a team of experts and other state partners, CASEL has developed the following set of tools and resources to help states working on the development of SEL policies and guidance:

[Key Features of High-Quality Standards and Guidelines to Support Social and Emotional Learning](#)

[The Collaborating States Initiative \(CSI\) Recommended Process for Developing State Policies and Guidelines to Support Social and Emotional Learning](#)

[A Process for Developing and Articulating Learning Goals or Competencies for Social and Emotional Learning](#)

In addition to these and other [resources and tools](#), as part of the Collaborating States Initiative (CSI) CASEL will provide support and consultation to help state teams to: (1) develop new SEL policies or guidelines, and/or (2) improve existing free-standing SEL standards, policies, or guidelines for preschool through high school. States might also work in this project to align existing free-standing learning standards for SEL with academic standards and/or help develop policies, guidelines, and implementation tools to support implementation of existing standards. A central feature of the CSI is that it has established a thriving community of practice for collaborating states (currently 25 states) to support deeper learning and educational practice related to SEL. In addition, CASEL will communicate regularly and to a wide audience about progress and outcomes of this project to educate and influence a broader audience of states and districts.

CASEL is seeking applications from state departments of education interested in exploring, developing, and/or modifying state policies and/or guidelines to advance social and emotional learning. Following the application guidelines, below, applicants should present clear, well-defined, attainable goals and a plan for achieving them. Strong applicants will also demonstrate how this project supports their state's education priorities and how the proposed strategies further the states' larger education reform agenda. In preparing their project plan, applicants are encouraged to identify potential partners and to reach out to such organizations in advance of submission so that proposed collaborations are well-defined and can be readily engaged. For example, state departments are encouraged to build out a multisystem and multilevel team that includes representation from other major youth systems, especially health and human services, labor, and juvenile justice.

Scope of Services Available to States

Selected states will have access to a range of technical assistance services from CASEL, including:

- Technical assistance from CASEL, its policy advisors, and other state leaders to help with development and adoption of policies, guidelines, and standards to support statewide implementation of SEL. This will include individualized and group consultation from CASEL staff to build on strengths and priorities that states propose, using an effective process to adapt and adopt policies, guidelines, and standards as well as meetings with constituents (e.g., guidance and feedback on meeting purpose and goals, agendas, speakers, and presentations). CASEL may also participate virtually or otherwise in key meetings in each state. Further, CASEL will provide ongoing consultation on how to effectively implement SEL standards or learning goals, including enhanced communication plans to garner statewide support, teacher preparation, professional development, assessment and data, evidence-based practices and programs, evaluation, and continuous improvement. This will also include group consultation from other state teams (including through national and regional meetings, regular conference calls, and a thriving Google+ community) to exchange lessons learned and sharing of high-quality examples and resources from across states.
- \$5,000 to cover in-state meeting costs and other costs related to bringing state and local leaders together to raise awareness and improve competency-based education policies to meet the proposal's goals.

- Participation in national and regional meetings. These meetings will offer the opportunity to work with experts and other states to learn about the most recent research on SEL.
- Participation in an ongoing community of practice with other states (including at national and regional meetings and in regular conference calls, webinars, and a thriving Google+ Community) working on policies and guidelines related to SEL to support each other’s learning and practice by sharing and collaboratively problem-solving the best ways to foster the social, emotional, and academic learning of all students. The community of practice will also work with experts and CASEL to develop a plan and concrete action steps to communicate about SEL and its importance in education to raise awareness among educational leaders and other key audiences in states and districts.
- Participation with other partnering states in shaping development of (and access to) CASEL tools, resources, and evidence-based examples from other states and districts, and modeling SEL policies, guidelines, and related tools (including assessment tools) to support statewide implementation.
- Access to “state stories” describing the process different states have used to develop policies, standards, and guidelines for SEL, as well as analyses to understand the features of effective standards and policies in different contexts.
- Connections to [national experts](#).
- Content review and comment by experts as state policies, standards, and/or guidelines are adopted by the state’s team to ensure they have all the features of high-quality standards for SEL and are comprehensive regarding the five core competencies of SEL. Feedback will be provided primarily in writing and during phone consultation.

The exact scope of work will be mutually determined by the individual states and CASEL in keeping with the needs articulated in each state’s application.

Requirements for Collaborating States

Selected CSI states will be required to engage in: (1) an initial planning meeting with CASEL staff to finalize its scope of work, intended outcomes, and timeline; (2) national and regional meetings with the state partners; (3) conference calls and virtual meetings as needed, approximately once every two months; and (4) periodic check-in calls over the course of the period of performance.

Selected CSI states will be expected to form a team that will participate in a community of practice with other states. State teams will also be expected to work with CASEL and consultants on an ongoing basis to achieve common goals. Ideally each state team might include the following individuals:

- A member from the state’s department of education who has a leadership role in K-12 education relative to SEL.
- A member of the state’s department of education who is a leader in preschool education (0- 5) from the state’s education, early learning, or human services agency.
- A member of the state’s department of education who has a leadership role in development of K-12 standards and implementation.

- Additional members whose expertise is likely to help advance SEL implementation, e.g., an advocate, a researcher, and/or others, including representatives of major youth systems.

Selected states will also be required to submit a final progress report summarizing their work as well as the extent to which the work met the goals, benchmarks, and outcomes they originally proposed.

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

To apply to participate in the CSI, the state department of education should submit a brief application with the following information to Dr. Linda Dusenbury at ldusenbury@casel.org. Applications should not exceed five (5) pages, single-spaced. Once we receive the state's submission, CASEL staff will schedule a conference call with the team leader to review goals, scope of support needed, and timeline. The application should include the following components:

1. State Name
2. Name of a team leader/contact for the project (title, organization, contact information)
3. Qualifications of the team within the SEA, including a statement about how state leadership (including the Education Commissioner/State Superintendent) is supporting this work.
4. Involvement of other key stakeholders (e.g., governor's office, legislature, key community organizations, other systems, as well as state grassroots movements to support SEL) who might be involved in a variety of ways. For example, an application might plan to develop two groups—an active working group that helps draft standards, policies, or guidelines, and a separate advisory panel of stakeholders who may be helpful in guiding and supporting the process, including at the stage of communication and dissemination.
5. A statement about how the team will connect with the SEA's Communication Department to develop a thoughtful strategic plan for when, how, and with whom to share information about, and products emerging from, the work of the team over time (e.g., to begin by announcing the purpose and goals of the work at professional meetings; over time sharing drafts of new policies or guidelines for comment from state education organization members or teachers and administrators; requests for feedback or piloting with LEAs and families; formal rollout to the broader community, including families).
6. Previous activities in the state. Please provide an overview of whether and how the state currently supports social and emotional development of students, with particular attention to any attempts to develop or implement policies, standards, or guidelines for SEL, preschool through high school, in the past. Please also describe any future plans to develop related standards, policies, and guidelines.
7. Opportunity. Please describe any strengths or resources in the state (including professional learning communities) that can be leveraged to promote implementation of SEL standards, preschool through high school, including funding resources (e.g., support from state business leaders) that might be used to carry the work forward beyond this project.

8. Anticipated barriers to success. Please describe any obstacles the team knows it will likely need to tackle as part of this project.

9. Goals. Please identify and discuss specific goal(s) your team would like to accomplish through this project (see “Project Goals” above). We expect that states are likely to propose different approaches to support implementation of policies, guidelines, and/or standards to promote student SEL. Be as concrete and explicit as possible about how your state team plans to accomplish its goals, expected outcomes, and measures of success, and how these goals align with the department’s strategic plan or larger agenda for education. A variety of goals may be appropriate. For example, some states may already have SEL standards or policies they want to improve as part of this project. Such states might also want to develop guidelines or strategies to increase implementation of existing standards. Other states may not yet have developed policies or guidance for SEL and want to begin developing plans for policies, guidelines, and standards to support statewide implementation of SEL as part of this project. Some applicants may also want to work specifically in this project to develop statewide policies or guidelines for SEL to support students of color, students living in poverty, and other underserved and underrepresented groups.

10. Timeline. Please provide a timeline through December 2020 that identifies a schedule of key activities and deliverables, as well as meetings.

11. Needs. Please describe the resources and services your team anticipates needing from CASEL to achieve these goal(s). Please see “Scope of Services” above for possible resources and services.

12. Signature of Chief State School Officer.