REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHAT

The Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity (BranchED) invites proposals for innovative, collaborative, interdisciplinary research project plans that will advance and redefine high quality educator preparation and the role of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). Through this RFP, BranchED seeks to fund up to two 6-month planning grants for research projects that will further the field's understanding of the impact of MSI educator preparation in producing high quality diverse educators for all children.

WHO

BranchED is particularly interested in funding collaborative research teams that include diverse voices, stakeholder groups, and perspectives, such as: higher education faculty and administrators, EPP program candidates and alumni, school district leaders, in-service teachers, and/or community advocates. We encourage senior researchers, who may serve as PIs, to include novice researchers and junior faculty on their research team.

WHEN

Proposals should be emailed directly by the Principal Investigator to BranchED's Vice President of Strategy Rashi Jawade (attyjawade@educatordiversity.org) **by December 2, 2019**. Awards will be announced by December 18, 2019. Sub-award agreements are expected to be signed by early- to mid-January 2020. The duration of this planning grant will be from January through July, 2020. The planning grants are to be used by cross-functional research teams to develop a plan for conducting year-long research projects that will commence the following academic year (August 2020 – July 2021). Our hope is to fund these longer term research projects as a follow-up to these planning grants.

HOW MUCH

BranchED will award up to two 6-month awards in the amount of $12,000 each. The grant funds will be payable in three installments: one at the launch, one after receiving a preliminary draft project plan in spring 2020 and one after the final deliverable in summer 2020.

II. BACKGROUND

A. OVERVIEW

In a world where quality and diversity in education and educator preparation are seen as two dichotomous aims, BranchED asserts that a redefinition of quality educator preparation that includes diversity is needed.

To this end, BranchED has created the *Framework for the Quality Preparation of Educators*, which has been developed and vetted with a diverse group of educator preparation program (EPP) faculty and is the first framework to include a detailed schema ("roadmap") of what quality preparation looks like when diversity is a key component of quality. Additionally, BranchED's National Convening in 2018 was the first step in an ongoing collaborative initiative to create working groups of leaders of minority serving institution educator preparation programs (MSI EPPs), PK-12 schools district partners, and researchers of culturally relevant teacher education, teaching, and educational equity. The National Convening participants led by BranchED created knowledge maps based upon research, data, and evidence-based practice. The research findings, gaps, and challenges from these maps were then used to develop a shared vision of the future and to identify actionable next steps (called "provocative propositions"). Based on these provocative propositions, BranchED has identified the research topics for this RFP listed in the next section.

Through this RFP, BranchED seeks to fund up to two 6-month planning grants for research project that will further the field's understanding of the impact of MSI EPPs in producing high quality diverse educators for all children. All projects (including new empirical studies) that address the research topics listed below are welcome to apply under this RFP. However, BranchED is particularly interested in funding collaborative research teams that include diverse voices, stakeholder groups, and perspectives, such as: higher education faculty and administrators, EPP program candidates and alumni, school district leaders, in-service teachers, and/or community advocates. The planning grants are to be used by cross-functional research teams to develop a plan for conducting year-long research projects that will commence the following academic year (August 2020 – July 2021). Our hope is to fund these longer term research projects as a follow-up to these planning grants.

B. RESEARCH TOPICS

Applications that relate to one or more of the topics from the list below will be prioritized for funding.

EPP Admission Criteria: Looking Beyond Test Scores	Test scores persist as a major factor in the admission criteria for teacher preparation programs, despite the disparate impact on prospective candidates of color. While it is neither realistic nor desirable to eliminate testing entirely, two critical questions persist: ➢ What selection criterion is the strongest correlate/predictor of classroom performance of graduates? ➢ What impact would a more comprehensive set of application criteria and procedures – including nonacademic factors such as

	verbal communication skills, human interaction, and leadership (assessed via group interviews and a mini-teaching demonstration) - have on the selection of candidates into teacher preparation programs?
The Relationship Between Equitable Experiences and Candidate Resilience at MSI EPPs	The majority of candidates at MSI EPPs come from underserved backgrounds, including low-income and first-generation families, where college admission, persistence and degree attainment can be an uphill battle. ➢ What specific factors support MSI EPP candidates' resilience from entry into the program through graduation and induction? For example: creating a climate of belonging through cohort models, mentoring and advising; nurturing affective engagement through developmental education and socio-emotional learning; easing financial burdens through scholarships, paid student teaching, and low-cost childcare; providing multifaceted testing support; and offering courses virtually or during evening hours. ➢ How can these services be offered to candidates in the most comprehensive manner?
MSIs EPP Graduate Success: In Their Own Voices	While we are beginning to know more about educator preparation programs as minority serving institutions, the unique contributions and cumulative impact of this work remains largely "under the radar" in national conversations and research about quality educator and preparation. Conspicuously absent is the voices of successful MSI graduates. ➢ How do MSI graduates who have been recognized as accomplished teachers (i.e., nationally board recognized or recipients of teacher of the year awards) characterize their own preparation experience and the strengths and opportunities for improvement among teacher preparation programs today?
The Role of Community-Based Organizations in Quality Educator Preparation	The importance of EPP partnerships with PK-12 is a noted best practice, however, we still know very little about the role that community-based organizations can play in educator preparation. ➢ How are MSI EPPs leveraging strong community partnerships to inform educator preparation, including recruitment of candidates and the development of specific candidate competencies related to social emotional learning (SEL), family engagement, and curricular rigor and relevance? ➢ How can EPPs, PK-12 schools and community-based organizations work more productively together as a genuine "community" of learners and practice?
Quality Preparation	BranchED's unique Quality Framework embeds diversity, equity and inclusion across all aspects of a quality diverse educator preparation

That Embeds Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	program and identifies six interlocking principles for targeted impact: community of learners, data-empowered, inclusive pedagogy, intersectional content, practice-based approach, and equitable experiences.
	➢ You may propose a topic related to one or more of the design principles in BranchED's Quality Framework OR choose one of the topics noted above.

C. GRANT PARAMETERS

Interested collaborative teams may apply to be considered for a planning grant to conduct research on a topic that meets the following criteria:

1) Research must be directly related to the preparation of high quality diverse educators for all children (as noted in the six design principles of BranchED's *Quality Framework*);
2) Research must have an explicit focus on and/or clear relevance to MSI EPPs;
3) Research must be on a topic and question in which there is insufficient research, for example: the existing research could be outdated, methodologically limited or flawed.
4) Researchers may also seek to replicate or expand on existing studies by focusing on a different demographic.

The planning grant funds in the amount of $12,000/grant will be used by cross-functional research teams to develop a plan for conducting year-long research projects that will commence the following academic year (August 2020 – July 2021). The duration of this planning grant will be from January through July, 2020. The grant funds will be payable in three installments: one at the launch, one after receiving a preliminary draft project plan in spring 2020 and one after the final deliverable in summer 2020.

D. SUPPORT AVAILABLE

In addition to these planning grants to the collaborative teams, BranchED will provide the following forms of in-kind support to funded projects:

- Monthly check-in and support calls with the PIs and Co-PIs
- Review and feedback on draft research plans
- Hosting in-person convenings to launch the project

III. APPLICATION CRITERIA

A. ELIGIBILITY AND AWARD INFORMATION

We invite proposals for funding up to $12,000 for a six-month period. We expect that proposed budgets will vary depending on project scope. Collaborative research teams that include at least

two researchers and PK-12 practitioners will be prioritized for funding. For teams that involve more than two collaborators, we encourage a co-leadership model with a more senior and more junior scholar as team leads.

Please note that applications will be prioritized if:

1. The applicants meet the preferred eligibility requirements stated above.
2. The research questions proposed fall under the priority questions described above.
3. The application follows the formatting guidelines and includes all relevant application materials as described below.

B. APPLICATION REVIEW CRITERIA

Consideration will be given to proposals that are strongest in meeting the following criteria, which will be explicitly evaluated in the review process:

1. *Relevance***:** The project addresses practice-relevant research questions.
2. *Collaboration:* The project will draw on expertise from cross functional team members (e.g., higher education faculty and administrators, EPP program candidates and alumni, school district leaders, in-service teachers, parents and/or community advocates).
3. *Interdisciplinarity***:** The project will use multiple theoretical and empirical approaches and draw on expertise spanning more than one discipline.
4. *Sustainability***:** The project is likely to generate preliminary findings that could be used to launch a full-scale research project in the next academic year (August 2020 – July 2021)
5. *Timeliness***:** The project plan includes an efficient turnaround of analyses and reporting of results (see detail on deliverable timeline below).
6. *Approach***:** The project's design and learning plan are well-developed and appropriate to the aims of the proposed project and the research environment.
7. *Strength and availability of PI and Research Team***:** The PI has a demonstrated ability to carry out and publish high quality research, and team members are uniquely qualified to create new synergies across traditional disciplines with appropriate content knowledge and methodological expertise to carry out all elements of the proposed project, including dissemination of research findings. The proposed team also has the capacity to launch the project immediately and generate findings within the required timeframe.

C. PRIORITY POINTS

Priority points will be given to proposals that include the following:

- PIs and/or Co-PIs from MSIs
- Research teams that include novice scholars and/or junior faculty
- Research teams that include individuals from educator preparation programs and from PK-12 districts
- Proposals that are explicitly related to one or more of the design principles in BranchED's *Quality Framework*

V. APPLICATION PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION

A. PROPOSAL FORMATTING

For ease of reviewing, please format application materials to fit on 8.5 x 11" paper with 1-inch margins, single line spacing, 12-point Times New Roman font, and consistent with the professional style guidelines of the applicant's field. We have provided suggested page limits for each section (listed in parentheses below). Please submit all proposal materials as a single PDF document.

B. PROPOSAL MATERIALS

Proposals that include the following items will be prioritized:

1. **Project Abstract:** A 1-paragraph description of the project.

2. **Project Description** *(up to 4 pages):* We recommend that the description contain the following sections:

- *Specific Aims:* Describe the background, learning goals or objectives of the project, the preliminary research hypotheses or questions addressed, and the anticipated outcomes.
- *Significance:* Describe how the project addresses the relevance, collaboration, interdisciplinarity, and sustainability evaluation criteria listed above.
- *Approach:* Describe the proposed research plan, including analytic methods, innovation on methods (when applicable), justification for the proposed approach, procedures to ensure accuracy and reproducibility of results, and how practitioners will be consulted to interpret and surface broader implications of the findings. We encourage a range of innovations in analytic methodologies, from basic linear statistical modeling to more advanced machine learning.
- *Project Timeline*: Include a brief project timeline (table format preferred) that identifies major activities, the names of individuals who will perform the various activities, and their projected completion dates. The timeline should include the following deliverables:
    - Participation in kick-off convening in January 2020
    - Participation in monthly check-in calls beginning in February 2020
    - Draft of research plan submitted by April 30, 2020
    - Final research plan submitted by July 31, 2020
    - Notification of whether the project plans to seek funding from federal or private sources for related follow-up analyses or new data collection efforts submitted to BranchED by August 30, 2020
- *Authorship plans:* Include a brief description of a tentative plan regarding how authorship will be shared. BranchED understands that these plans may change as the project progresses but believes that initiating the discussion on author inclusion and order at the beginning of projects is important, particularly to honor the various contributions team members can make to the project and the ability of those who collected the dataset to publish on it.

3. **CVs for the PI, Co-PI(s), and other Key Personnel:** Given the funding timeline and relatively quick turnaround for sharing results, it will be critical that everyone on the team is on staff and

able to hit the ground running as soon as the project has been selected for funding. We expect that team members may hold very different roles based on their interests, expertise, and availability. Please list the names of all project members and the proportion of their time that will be dedicated to the project, and attach copies of their CVs to the proposal. This list should include the names of any students who will be involved.

4. ***Budget and Budget Justification*** *(1-2 pages):* Include PI and Co-PI effort (whether funding is requested for this or not), other personnel (i.e., graduate students or post-docs), new data collection, and meeting expenses, if the team feels it is important to meet in-person. Funds can be used to cover team personnel's salaries (and tuition in the case of students). Indirect costs should be calculated at 10% of total direct costs. Please also include a list of any other existing or anticipated funding for research related to the proposed project.

5. ***References:*** Please include a list of references cited in the project description.

C. APPLICATION DEADLINE AND TIMELINE FOR REVIEW

Proposals should be emailed directly by the Principal Investigator to Rashi Jawade by December 2, 2019. Evaluation of proposals will be carried out by a team, including external evaluators. Awards will be announced by December 18, 2019. Sub-award agreements are expected to be signed by early- to mid-January 2020.