I. FCD YOUNG SCHOLARS PROGRAM PURPOSE

The FCD Young Scholars Program (YSP) supports policy and practice-relevant research that is focused on the early learning and development needs of the nation’s children who are growing up under conditions of economic insecurity and social exclusion. FCD believes that high quality early learning experiences are crucial for healthy lifelong development and learning. We are particularly interested in research in this area that is conducted in a culturally sensitive manner and that:

- Deepens our understanding of the disparities in children’s opportunities and outcomes, and
- Enhances our understanding of the systems, programs, and interpersonal relationships and interactions that support young children in reaching their full developmental potential.

To increase the diversity of perspectives in research concerning FCD’s priority populations (please see below), YSP encourages applications from scholars who are themselves from historically disadvantaged or underrepresented groups, including those who are first-generation college graduates and those from low-income communities. We also encourage applications that represent a variety of disciplines and methodological approaches and that examine the impact of mental, physical, health, social, economic, institutional, and community factors on early learning and development.

FCD continues its tradition of nurturing early career researchers who choose to work in under-researched areas. For information on FCD, please refer to: http://fcd-us.org/ as well as the FCD Guiding Principles and Themes at: http://fcd-us.org/about-us/guiding-principles.

A. FCD Young Scholars Program Priority Populations

Supported research should focus on FCD’s priority populations of young children who experience the harmful effects of poverty and discrimination across the birth to age eight continuum, including the communities specified below:

- Racial and ethnic minorities
- Children living in immigrant\(^1\) or refugee\(^2\) families, including those from Africa and the Caribbean
- Undocumented minors or children whose family members have been detained or deported
- Children who are Dual Language Learners
- Children with special education classifications
- Children living in families with incarcerated parents
- Children who are homeless

Preference will be given to research that explores the impact of early care and education professionals (e.g., lead teachers, coaches, and master teachers) on young children’s learning and development.

\(^{1}\) One or both parents born outside of the U.S.
\(^{2}\) One or both parents fleeing persecution or a well founded fear of persecution
B. FCD’s Priorities for Public Policy and Program Practice Relevance

Supported research should be framed to inform the field’s understanding of the potential for public policy and programs to effect positive change for young children in FCD’s priority populations. These include a focus on:

- The implementation of public policies at the federal, state, local, or organizational level on issues such as regulatory matters, eligibility, access, resource allocation, and/or quality of services, and/or
- Program implementation practices such as coaching, mentoring, curriculum implementation, etc. in settings such as community organizations, social service agencies, health clinics, schools, etc. (See Research Focus below)

II. RESEARCH FOCUS

The current national emphasis on early learning and development initiatives has focused on increasing the number of children who have access to high-quality experiences. However, there is still much to be understood about what specific components of high-quality early learning programs and/or policies contribute to positive cognitive, social, emotional, and health outcomes for specific subgroups of young children, especially as programs are brought to scale.

FCD is particularly interested in research that sheds light on the ways in which the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of the early care and education workforce, including teachers, coaches, and administrators, can support young children’s growth and development across the birth through age eight continuum. For example, proposed studies might address a program’s implementation by examining the impact of teacher learning communities on indicators of program quality and on outcomes for specific groups of young children, or they may examine the impact of the adults who are coaches and mentors on changes in teachers’ instructional practice.

Studies should not only help answer the question of what works but also should explore the quality and characteristics of program and/or policy implementation to identify which of FCD’s target populations benefit (or do not benefit) from specific programs and/or policies once they are put in place.

A. Examples of Research Areas of Interest

Research questions for proposed studies should focus on the implementation of early learning and development policies and/or programs as they pertain to the YSP priority populations. For example, assume that a state legislature has allocated funding for a universal preschool program. From the perspective of state and local government officials, a policy to address both the long-studied achievement gap and middle-class families’ need for affordable childcare can be addressed by allocation of public funds to support preschool experiences for all four year-olds throughout the state. Legislators might be informed by research that provides information on:

- The percentage of children who enter Kindergarten with the skills needed to be successful in school,
- Health, social emotional, and cognitive differences between children who attended preschool and those who did not, and
- The percentage of middle-class families who have access to affordable childcare.

An early childhood center director who is implementing one of the early learning programs funded by the state might be informed by analysis of data that provides information on the quality and
characteristics of a variety of program elements, e.g., staff retention, ongoing professional learning, quality of curriculum implementation, program quality, and effective communication with parents.

The following research questions are intended to be illustrative of the types of research areas that are of interest to FCD. The list is by no means exhaustive:

- What elements of the implementation of an early childhood program and/or policy appear critical to achieving successful outcomes for children in FCD’s priority populations both during the process of scaling-up and when programs are fully implemented at scale? These elements might include the levels of services, interpersonal relationships and interactions, leadership, teacher preparation and ongoing professional learning, financing, and governance, etc.

- How does the quality of the implementation of a specific early learning and development program and/or policy vary by geographic areas at the national, state, or local levels? Does the quality vary by characteristics of FCD’s priority populations?

- What do families and young children actually experience in the implementation of early learning and development programs and/or policies? Do they receive the intended services? If not, why not? What is the control group experiencing relative to those participating in the intervention?

- What is the impact of state early childhood teacher licensing regulations on the quality and distribution of teachers in the state’s preschool programs? What groups of children from FCD’s priority populations are most affected?

- How does the use of coaches and mentors in early learning programs change teacher practice and improve outcomes for specific groups of young children? What differences can be determined based on the training of coaches and the number and level of expertise of the teachers they support?

- What teacher/child or teacher/parent interactions are most beneficial in achieving positive outcomes for young children in FCD’s target populations?

B. Research Methodology

Proposals may include research using a range of methodological approaches and involve new data collection, the analysis of data previously collected, program evaluation, empirical field experiments, pilot studies, or continuing work for a larger-scale research project that has received or is seeking additional funding from other public or private funders. Regardless of the approach, type of study, or source of data, all research must produce findings that are relevant for the outcomes of young children in FCD’s priority populations. This includes studies with an adult research sample population, e.g. analysis of school principal and teacher data.

Please note that analysis of international data and data from international sources that provide comparisons relevant to U.S. policies and/or programs is also within the scope of interest, but due to limited resources international data collection is not supported.
III. ELIGIBILITY

- Principal Investigators must have received their doctoral degrees (e.g., Ph.D., Ed.D., Psy.D., J.D.) within one to seven years of the application submission (January 1, 2007 to June 30, 2014). Please note that physician applicants must have received their M.D. degrees within one to ten years of the application submission (January 1, 2004 to June 30, 2014). A minimum of one year must have elapsed since receiving their degrees before Principal Investigators may apply to the program.

- Applicants must be United States citizens, legal permanent residents, or those who have employment authorization from the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services at the time of the award and for the duration of the fellowship.

- For the duration of the fellowship, individual Principal Investigators must be full-time employees of a private, nonprofit institution or American college or university located in the United States3 that will receive and process FCD’s grant as well as support (i.e., contribute material and in-kind support) the funded research project, if awarded.

- The affiliated nonprofit institution must have a minimum annual operating budget of $2.5 million, have a minimum three-year track record in conducting multi-year research projects (at least three over the last three years), include research as a core activity as described in recent annual reports, and have produced and publicly disseminated a minimum of five publications (over the last five years) reporting the results of their research.

- The applicant is the sole Principal Investigator and will lead the proposed research.

- More than one applicant may apply from a single institution.

IV. FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITY

- Up to six grants are available for support of individual scholarship.

- For proposed research projects involving either primary data collection or a combination of primary data collection and secondary data analysis, the maximum grant award including indirect costs is $225,000 to be used over a two- to three-year period. Grant funds are intended to support the Principal Investigator’s salary, research assistance, and direct research expenses. Indirect and overhead costs are limited to 15% of direct personnel costs.

- For proposed research projects solely focused on secondary data analysis, the maximum grant award including indirect costs is $180,000 to be used over a two- to three-year period. Grant funds are intended to support the Principal Investigator’s salary and direct research expenses. Indirect and overhead costs are limited to 15% of direct personnel costs.

- In general, up to 10% of direct personnel costs may be used towards senior advisors and consultants.

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3 Including Puerto Rico
• Each award will be paid directly to, and will be administered by, the affiliated nonprofit institution at which the recipient holds his/her full-time position.

• Principal Investigators may only submit one proposal during an award cycle.

• Award recipients are designated Foundation for Child Development Young Scholars.

V. FCD YOUNG SCHOLAR REQUIREMENTS

1. Initiate the research project within three months of award notification, which will be approximately March 2016.

2. Submit a request to the institution’s internal review board if applicable. To offset any potential delays, the process for receiving approval for human subjects review from the institution’s internal review board must be underway at the time of full application submission.

3. Complete research that results in a manuscript, e.g., report, book, or article suitable for publication, where the Principal Investigator is first author.

4. The applicant is the sole Principal Investigator of the research project.

5. Submit annual narrative and financial reports on the progress of the research.

6. Participate in meetings with other Foundation for Child Development Young Scholars. Expenses for these meetings will be underwritten separately and should not be included in the proposal budget.

VI. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

Senior FCD staff, the FCD Young Scholars Program Advisory Committee, and external reviewers will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria:

1. Support of the YSP Purpose and Research Focus: The degree to which the proposed research addresses specific aspects of the implementation of an early learning and development program and/or policy, and the extent to which the research analysis and findings have direct relevance to program and/or policy development or improvements related to FCD’s priority populations. Preference will be given to research that explores the impact of early care and education workforce (e.g., lead teachers, coaches, master teachers, and other professionals) on young children’s learning and development.

2. Research Concept and Methodology: The degree to which the proposed work is theoretically based as well as conceptually and methodologically sound. Procedures for data collection and analysis should be detailed and clear for both quantitative and qualitative studies. Where both quantitative and qualitative approaches are being used, the proposed work should demonstrate the ways in which the combination of these approaches potentially enhances the proposed study.

3. Applicant’s Qualifications: The quality of the applicant’s previous research and capacity (e.g., publications, presentations, etc.) to undertake the proposed research successfully.
4. **Cultural Sensitivity to FCD’s Priority Populations**: The extent to which the proposed research and Principal Investigator demonstrate an understanding of culturally-specific issues that may be relevant to FCD’s priority populations (e.g., language as reflected in identity and culture, alternative family structure due to incarceration, stigma associated with mental illness, etc.).

5. **Institutional Support and Capacity**: The capacity and intention of the host institution to support (e.g., expertise, material, in-kind) the Principal Investigator and the FCD-funded research project including its attendant public policy outreach. In general, any institution with more than 10% operating deficit within the prior fiscal year may be considered lacking capacity. Institutions that support peer-reviewed articles will be favorably considered.

**VII. Additional Information and Key Dates**

Please consult the FCD website: [www.fcd-us.org](http://www.fcd-us.org) for the YSP Frequently Asked Questions page and for specific deadlines and updates.