

@Scale Review Process

In order to promote transparency, the STEM team would like to clearly articulate the review process that took place on Friday, November 14, to determine which projects would receive continuation funding.

Process

Prior to the meeting, each participant received a packet containing a project profile for each @Scale program to review. The first part of the day consisted of refining the @Scale model and developing a list of criteria for project comparison. This was accomplished by reviewing the original @Scale concept, the history of @Scale, and general statements of what the evaluation group (Allison, Jean, and Keith) heard during project management meetings. It also led the committee to have a conversation on the meaning of scale. Scale for this stream of funding either means replication to other parts of the state or the capacity to reach other groups within the same area in large numbers. After the criteria were established, it was determined that there were some important constraints that an @Scale project must meet prior to reviewing how well the program matched the @Scale criteria.

Phase 1 of review

In order for a project to go through further review, the project needed to fulfill two requirements. The first requirement is that it needs to be in compliance with state regulations and policies. The second requirement is that it needs to have been a responsible @Scale grantee.

Phase 2 of review

During the next phase of review, projects were compared to the “power standards” from the list of @Scale project characteristics. Projects in this next phase of review were examined in terms of their sustainability beyond @Scale funding; demonstration that it is designed for and ready to scale; benefits students, educators, and/or the workforce; and commitment to evaluation impact. A project only needed to meet some of these four attributes in order to continue to be reviewed in order for the committee to make the most informed possible decision.

Phase 3 of review

The remaining projects were looked at against the entire list of nine @Scale criteria. Each attribute is described in more detail in the document entitled “Characteristics of @Scale projects”. The list includes the following items: uses best practices in implementation of work; is well established; demonstrates that it is designed for and ready to scale; is sustainable in the areas that it currently works without additional @Scale funding; demonstrates ability to attract external resources; benefits students, educators, and/or the workforce; has a clear potential for outcomes related to STEM Plan 2.0; is committed to evaluation; and possess the necessary partnerships for growth.

Projects were reviewed in comparison to the list of criteria articulated above and not to each other. Additionally, projects may be of high quality but may not fit the refined @Scale model.

Phase 4 of review

After all projects that were recommended for funding were identified, the Department of Higher Education looked at the set of projects to determine portfolio coverage. In other words, it was important to see how well the set of recommended projects covered the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; geography across the regions of the Commonwealth; Pre-K through workforce; and @scale award phases. The continuation projects are well distributed in all areas and the team will work on determining how to fill gaps that were already present in the portfolio, such as how to reach middle school girls or computer science.

What does this mean?

Projects that have been recommended for funding will receive funding at the same level as their prior funding, subject to approval by the Department of Higher Education's Office of Administration and Finance. Each project will need to find external funding in a 1:1 match ratio. Projects will also need to write up their revised Scope of Work to be included in their contracts.

Projects that are not being recommended for continuation funding may continue to say that they were an @Scale project from the year of award through 2014. Please include those dates in any future proposals that you write within the state to state and federal agencies or private funders. Additionally, projects that are not receiving continuation funding are encouraged to apply to future @Scale Requests for Proposals if the project aligns with the objectives outlined in the solicitation.

Thank you for your tremendous work all of these years and your cooperation in having us learn more about the model by visiting you.