



Higher Education Global Evidence Summit

Engaging Higher Education for Change:
Employability, Innovation, & the Private Sector

USAID Higher Education Global Evidence Summit Call for Proposals

Engaging Higher Education for Global Change: Employability, Innovation, and the Private Sector

Problem Statement

As described in [USAID's Higher Education Program Framework](#), well-functioning higher education systems are central actors in driving and sustaining local development. In addition to preparing graduates for fulfilling and productive lives, higher education institutions create new knowledge, spark innovation, connect with partners to solve real world problems, engage in their local communities, and further development aims. While USAID has a long history of investing in higher education, more evidence is needed to understand how the core functions of higher education systems - providing quality and relevant training, advancing research and innovation, and engaging networks and communities - can be strengthened to promote social and economic development in USAID partner countries.

The inaugural USAID Higher Education Global Evidence Summit seeks to expand the higher education evidence base by focusing on three interrelated themes: **Employability**, **Innovation**, and **Private Sector Engagement**. Drawn from the [USAID Higher Education Learning Agenda](#), these themes represent interrelated areas where knowledge generation, dissemination, and

utilization can support strategic investments and improve practices around the world. **Employability** refers to higher education institutions' ability to deliver locally-relevant curricula that not only provide graduates with subject matter expertise and the skills necessary to navigate their environment, but also prepare graduates for a wide range of future careers. **Innovation** refers to the role of higher education in strengthening national and regional innovation ecosystems. **Private Sector Engagement** refers to the ways higher education institutions and systems can be strengthened to improve the quality of teaching, learning, and research through strategic and mutually beneficial collaboration with the private sector. Together, these themes demonstrate the power of higher education systems to provide practical solutions to economic and social problems.

About this Call

The inaugural USAID Higher Education Global Evidence Summit offers a unique opportunity to bring together members of the research community, development practitioners, and USAID staff to examine the findings of high-quality, evidence-based research in higher education. The Summit will provide an opportunity for academics, researchers, donors, and practitioners to showcase emerging research, new data, trends, and promising practices as they relate to higher education in a global forum. Proposals featured in the Summit will also help activate the higher education data and evidence ecosystem¹ to influence a wide range of evidence stakeholders, including data and evidence users, generators, and translators, and help advance the Higher Education Learning Agenda. As part of our goal to diversify participation in the Summit, we are explicitly seeking knowledge from individuals in developing country contexts and research and evidence that thoroughly engages local knowledge to support best practices in solving local problems. Proposals from individuals in USAID partner countries will be given special consideration; however all academics, donors, practitioners, and students are encouraged to submit proposals.

Summit Details

The USAID Higher Education Global Evidence Summit will be a virtual event held over three weeks in May 2022 - May 3 & 4, May 10 & 11, and May 17 & 18 with events taking place for four hours each day. To encourage participation from around the world, the Summit will include asynchronous sessions as well as synchronous sessions in a variety of timezones where possible. Details on the session times will be announced closer to the event. Additional information about the [structure of the summit can be found here](#).

All sessions will take place within an online environment and will include plenary presentations, panel discussions, research to practice presentations, lightning talks, and poster presentations to capture knowledge on existing evidence, promote evidence-based policy decisions, and advance the USAID Higher Education Learning Agenda.

¹ <https://www.edu-links.org/sites/default/files/media/file/HELAImplementationPlanOverview.pdf>

Reasonable accommodations will be provided to both presenters and attendees with at least two weeks advance notice. Closed captioning or transcription will be available for all Summit sessions. Additional details on requesting reasonable accommodations will be forthcoming.

Submission Details

Evidence on “what works and what doesn’t” in higher education as it relates to Employability, Innovation, and Private Sector engagement is valuable to both higher education institutions, higher education systems, and to donor agencies. The USAID Higher Education Global Evidence Summit seeks knowledge that can be leveraged across a range of higher education institutions, including community colleges, TVETs, teaching institutions, research-extensive institutions, and minority-serving institutions, as well as across contexts, including higher education in crisis and conflict settings. The Summit also seeks evidence on best practices from local researchers and that uses local knowledge to create successful programs. Evidence related to underrepresented groups including women, indigenous people, minority groups, and marginalized communities in curricula, programs, and opportunities related to employability, innovation, and private sector engagement is especially welcome. As guidance for submitting proposals under each theme, there are a number of key questions below. These questions are meant to provide guidance but are not exhaustive; other topics related to the Summit themes are also welcome.

Employability

- How can HEIs best be incentivized and supported (through accreditation, national curriculums, etc) to create relevant curriculum that builds students’ employability skills?
- What interventions or combinations of interventions have the greatest impact on employability for learners in general and underrepresented populations in particular (including women, people with disabilities, indigenous groups, and other marginalized groups)?
- How can institutions incorporate technical and soft skills into the curriculum to promote employability of graduates in a wide range of industries?
- What kinds of teaching and learning practices best support employability of graduates and how can they be accomplished at scale across campuses and underserved populations?
- Beyond their academic course of study, what are ways institutions can support employability of graduates, particularly for underrepresented groups and individuals?
- What are effective models of professional development for higher education faculty to stay up-to-date on skills needed by students?
- How can HE systems and HEIs use and/or generate local labor market data to ensure programming is aligned to local labor market needs?

Innovation

- How can the coordination and governance of HE systems be improved to support private sector engagement and innovation ecosystems?
- How can HE systems and institutions best incentivize research and innovation?
- What are examples of institutions that use their teaching, learning, and research missions to support innovation and entrepreneurship and for what result?

- How can students and faculty better integrate and connect academic research to support innovation?
- How can HE systems best be supported to measure HEI contributions to innovation?
- How can HEI teaching and learning be enhanced to promote research and innovation?

Private Sector Engagement

- How can the roles and interests of the private sector be leveraged to address challenges and opportunities in higher education, training, and workforce development at the system and institutional level?
- How can higher education and private sector engagement be grounded in the empowerment and needs of local or marginalized communities?
- What kinds of training, infrastructure, or other support are necessary for higher education institutions to equally and fully collaborate with the private sector?
- What are good practices in teaching and learning to connect higher education institutions to the private sector?

Required Proposal Elements

- Presentation Title
- Name and Affiliation of Presenter(s)
- Type of presentation (Research to Practice, Lightning Talk, Poster)
- Will you consider a different format of your presentation? If so, indicate which one(s)
- The USAID Higher Education Global Evidence Summit will take place May 3 & 4, 10 & 11, and 17 & 18. If you have a conflict on any one of these dates, please indicate which dates you are not available
- Abstract of 500 words as indicated below
- Three guiding citations for research (from the academic literature or other relevant sources)
- In addition, you will be asked in the submission process to identify the following:
 - Evidence Summit Theme (select all that apply): Employability, Innovation and Private Sector Engagement
 - Relevant guiding question (choose all that apply or describe why proposal aligns with theme or goals)
 - Type of Research: Implementation/Applied, Theoretical, Empirical
 - Description of Data Collection Methods Used (select all that apply): interviews, focus group discussions, surveys/questionnaires, assessments, observations, documents analysis, literature review, pre-post tests, secondary data analysis, other
 - Were subjects of research involved in the research project? If so, how?
 - Additional Key Lens Addressed (select all that apply): Women, Indigenous populations, people with disabilities, minority groups, marginalized communities
 - To what type of higher education institution is this research relevant? (Select all that apply): community college, TVET, teaching institution, research-intensive institutions, higher education systems, minority-serving institutions
 - Geographic Description (identify country, countries or region of research):

Submission Process & Deadline

Proposals are submitted through our online Call for Proposals Submission Form. The proposal submission form can be accessed on the Edulinks Call for Proposals announcement page or by using the direct link: <https://fs19.formsite.com/heaney/HESummit-CFP/index.html>. Once you begin to use the form, you can save your progress and return to work on your submission by clicking on the “Save & Return” option at the top of the portal screen. You must create an account to use the Save & Return option.

Proposals are due by Friday, December 10, 2021 at Midnight Eastern.

Session Types and Description

Research to Practice Presentation – 50 MIN. LIVE SESSION

Maximum number of facilitators allowed: 4

Description: Research to Practice presentations go beyond a typical academic conference paper presentation to allow for deep and thorough presentations of research and evidence combined with audience participation in lively discussion. Sessions should contribute to what works in higher education as it relates to the key themes of the Summit along with key takeaways, such as tools, for the audience to apply in their practice. Sessions can take the form of research presentations or panels of researchers, but can also present single or comparative case studies on a topic or roundtable discussions of lessons learned among other examples.

Proposal Requirements: Proposals should include a brief summary of the research, including theories engaged, data sources, and relevance of the findings. Proposals should also include the structure and format of the session (i.e. roundtable, panel, paper presentations etc), a designated moderator, and strategies to facilitate audience discussion and learning. A list of key takeaways from the talk, including how to apply this knowledge is required.

Some Guidance for Research to Practice Presentations

- Have a clear learning goal in mind for the presentation - what will the audience know or be able to do at the end of the session?
- Be realistic about how much information you can cover in 50 minutes inclusive of discussion and Q&A. Presenters should plan for no more than 20-30 minutes of presentation time.
- Remember the session will take place virtually - consider how you can facilitate discussion in an online platform (Google Meet) when planning your session

Pre-Recorded Lightning Talks with Live Q&A - 5 MIN. PRESENTATION, 30 MIN. Q&A

Maximum number of facilitators allowed: 2

Description: Lightning Talks are a fast-paced, highly energetic delivery style. Lightning Talks are 5-minute presentations (no exceptions), with exactly 20 PowerPoint slides that auto-advance every 15 seconds. These talks will be pre-recorded and available asynchronously for summit attendees. During the summit session, presenters will participate in a 30 minute drop-in session for attendees to ask questions about their talk and engage in conversation.

Proposal Requirement: Proposals should include a brief summary of the research, including theories engaged, data sources, and relevance of the findings. A list of key takeaways from the talk, including how to apply this knowledge is required.

Some Guidance for Lightning Talks

- Be realistic about how much information you can cover in 5 minutes.
- Highly technical presentations are difficult (but not impossible) in this format; you might need to talk about general concepts rather than detailed step-by-step technical instructions.
- Focus on including interesting, but brief descriptions. Time for questions IS NOT built into the presentation; colleagues who are interested in learning more about your program will seek you out during the drop-in session.
- Identify several key points you want to make and include on your submission form.
- Make sure you have time to prepare; some may find it harder to present a coherent 5-minute presentation than a 50 minute one because the margin for error is much smaller, and you need to quickly and concisely make your points.
- If you don't have visual information to include in 20 different slides, you have the option of using one or more slides multiple times as you continue to expand on information that correlates to that slide.
- Please be certain to include your name and contact information on your last slide (#20).
- Have fun with your topic. Lightning Talks give the audience just enough basic information to pique their interest for following up with you later.
- If accepted in this format, we highly recommend practicing your Lightning Talk multiple times before recording. Recordings exceeding 5-minutes will not be accepted.

Virtual Poster Session with Live Q&A – 30 MIN. Q&A SESSION

Maximum number of facilitators allowed: 2

Description: A one-page Poster PDF that can be published online and viewed asynchronously by participants is required. Posters are a vibrant way to showcase research findings, innovative practices, and programs.

Proposal Requirements: Proposals should include a brief summary of the research, including theories engaged, data sources, and relevance of the findings. Presenters will participate in a 30 minute drop-in session for attendees to ask questions about posters and engage in conversation.

Criteria for Review

USAID Higher Education Evidence Summit strongly encourages proposals that have a high level of rigor with explicit implications for practice. Successful proposals will draw from research-based evidence and theory and apply it to the how and the why of a practice, strategy, or cutting-edge model to achieve intended outcomes related to the Evidence Summit key themes. Successful proposals may also represent models that emerged rapidly over the past year and for which a case can be made that the models are likely to prove effective through empirical inquiry over time. Proposals from scholars, students, and practitioners in developing country contexts will be given special consideration in order to diversify the participation and voices

present in the Summit; however all academics, donors, practitioners, and students are encouraged to submit proposals.

The following elements serve as criteria for proposal selection:

- **Rigor** including the strength of the design, data collection, analysis and use of theory
- **Practical application** and utility for USAID's/Summit's primary audiences including effectiveness, lessons learned, and challenges overcome
- **Relevance** to the theme or key questions
- **Contribution** of evidence to practice as it applies across institutional types, leverages local knowledge, or supports underrepresented groups.
- **Inclusiveness** in the methodology and approaches of the research that demonstrates equity through principles of reflexivity, collaboration, and participation

Resources

- [USAID Higher Education Program Framework](#)
- [USAID Higher Education Learning Agenda Resources](#)
- [USAID Higher Education Online Learning Module](#)
- [Resources from the USAID funded LASER-PULSE on Embedded Research Translation](#)
- [USAID Program and Policy Change \(PPC\) Framework](#)
- [Implementation Research Overview](#)