

RESOURCES

10. Change practices that shape how financial resources are distributed, used, and reported on in service of a well-networked, learning-oriented, and diverse student experience field

How funds are allocated and how they can be used shapes the composition, trajectory, and impact of a field. Based on SERN's lessons learned with re-granting and what we heard from field actors about future priorities, [changes are needed to funding practices in the field of student experience](#) aimed at cultivating a well-networked, learning-oriented, and diverse field.

Invest in relationships and relationship-building activities as essential field-level levers for impact.

Increase support for relationship-building and convening, especially among traditionally siloed actors working on student experience.

This may include more flexible and smaller-scale funding for exploratory stage relationship-building; support for deepening and extending existing partnerships; and funding or hosting field-level gatherings. Funders can include an explicit focus on relationship-building in strategies, funding opportunities, and metrics to enable this vital and resource-intensive work.

Structure financial support in ways that encourage individual and collective learning. This may include:

Enhanced flexibility in use of funds (e.g., core support funds) and timelines to enable adaptation in response to lessons learned;

More support for planning and partnership exploration, especially across silos, that recognizes and provides the time and funding necessary for this work (e.g., in the form of course buyouts for scholars and staff positions and consultants at practice and policy entities);

Streamlined reporting requirements (e.g., accepting reports in multiple formats; encouraging grantees to use the same report for multiple funders) to enable deeper focus on programming, reflection, and learning; and,

Metrics and deliverables focused on learning outcomes that are useful to both grantees and others in the field.

Ensure that the next phase of field growth in student experience expands and diversifies who is funded.

This entails changes to how potential recipients of funding are identified, recruited, and selected (see this [brief](#) for relevant detail and examples from SERN). Doing so has implications for both funders and gatekeepers who influence how resources are distributed within the field (e.g., senior scholars, non-profit leaders). Many practices can contribute to these desired outcomes, such as:

The use of inclusively developed RFPs;

Strategic outreach to potential applicants for both open and closed funding calls;

Engagement that sets up applicants to have the potential to be successful regardless of prior experience with proposal writing;

Review processes that involve thoughtful matching between external reviewers and proposals, in addition to internal reviews;

Feedback processes that support all applicants to develop their skills and ideas; and,

Longer-term relationship-building and engagement with people in the field to cultivate trust and expand and diversify the pool of potential applicants over time.