



**AT&T Aspire**  
**Local High School Impact Initiative**  
**Request for Proposal**

Pre-Qualification Survey Deadline: April 18, 2012

Request for Proposal Deadline: April 27, 2012

All proposals must be submitted to AT&T by the deadline above. Incomplete proposals will not be considered.



# Aspire Local High School Impact Initiative Request for Proposal

## Section 1: Introduction, Purpose, and Qualification

### 1.1 Purpose of the Request for Proposal (RFP)

AT&T is pleased to open the 2012 Aspire Local High School Impact Initiative Request for Proposal (RFP). The intention of this RFP is to support strong, evidence-based programs that:

- identify students at-risk of dropping out of school early;
- intervene quickly with targeted services to re-engage these students or to prevent disengagement;
- increase the chances of these students earning a high school diploma; and
- prepare these students for college and/or career.

AT&T funding, under this RFP, is intended to support interventions with a verifiable, scientific evidence base that are comprised of elements and/or strategies that have been objectively demonstrated to improve students' high school retention, promotion, and graduation rates. In addition, AT&T is committed to funding organizations with the willingness and capacity to provide substantial data on the performance of students who are served as well as students who did not participate (comparison group). It is the intent of this RFP to identify programs and organizations that can, and will provide considerable student-level records to the designated external evaluator in order to assess the impact of the program's intervention on student outcomes as well as explore the effects of the program on other student- and campus-level factors. A more detailed description of the volume and type of data required will be discussed following a successful pre-qualification and invitation to respond to the RFP.

**IMPORTANT:** All prospective applicants are required to complete a Pre-Qualification Survey as part of this RFP process. The survey will help AT&T determine if the proposer's program aligns with the emphasis and elements of the Program Classifications discussed in this RFP. Based on an evaluation of the pre-qualification response, prospective applicants will be asked to submit a full length RFP response to AT&T using an online, invitation-only application process. Only successfully pre-qualified applicants will be invited by AT&T to complete the full RFP application. None of an invitation to submit a Pre-Qualification Survey, the submission of a Pre-Qualification Survey, or an invitation to apply for funding from AT&T is a guarantee of funding.

National organizations or programs that are national in scope are not eligible for funding under this RFP. However, affiliates of national organizations which provide community based or location-specific programming to at risk students are eligible to compete for funding under the AT&T Aspire Local High School Impact Initiative RFP.



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## 1.2 Types of Grant Support

The 2012 Local High School Impact Initiative will provide project support for **currently** operating high school retention programs comprised of elements aligned to the [What Works Clearinghouse \(WWC\) Dropout Prevention Practice Guide](#) (Dynarski et al., 2008). The support should be used to expand the program to serve additional students, or to add components to strengthen the program. Project support is intended for organizations that are ready and capable of operating by the first semester of the 2012/13 school year. Payments ranging from \$100,000 to \$300,000 for 24 months (2012/14) are available.

## 1.3 Qualifying Organizations

We encourage the following types of entities to respond to the Pre-Qualification Survey:

- School districts, campuses, and school district foundations (Note: Foundations must have 501(c)(3) public charity status. Private foundations are not eligible.)
- Charter school foundations and private school foundations (Note: Foundations must have 501(c)(3) public charity status. Private foundations are not eligible.)
- 501(c)(3) public charities that work on-site with public and private education institutions.
- 501(c)(3) public charities that work with public and private education institutions on a project basis.'

## 1.4 Emphasis and Elements of a Competitive Program

Priority will be given to programs that have a demonstrated link to available scientific evidence on dropout prevention and boosting the college and career readiness of students that are at-risk of dropping out of school. AT&T has structured the RFP around three overarching goals:

- a) Identify and support early interventions designed to reduce student dropout rates, comprised of strategies and elements grounded in the available scientific evidence in this area;
- b) Identify and support programs that can provide considerable program data to AT&T and its external evaluator to identify effective interventions; and,
- c) Support programs that serve students who are at-risk of dropping out of school (defined in Section 1.4.c).

***Particular emphasis will be placed on programs that identify and intervene early.***

Priority will therefore be given to programs that begin serving students who are either in 9th grade or are making the transition from 8th to 9th grade.

**IMPORTANT:** AT&T will give special consideration to organizations that incorporate social innovation in their programs. Organizations might use new concepts, ideas, strategies to achieve success for at-risk students. Organizations might collaborate with school districts, foundations, nonprofits, government entities and/or businesses to



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maximize positive impact on students' success. Organizations might employ technological innovations to support student success.

AT&T also has a keen interest in the disciplines of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and a goal of increasing the number of minority and underrepresented students in these fields. AT&T will therefore also give additional consideration to organizations that focus on the STEM disciplines in their programs for at-risk students and encourage students to pursue these fields of study in college and career.

### ***1.4.a Evidence Base***

To identify applicants with promising dropout prevention interventions, AT&T and its evaluator developed the Pre-Qualification Survey and the RFP scoring rubric around the *Dropout Prevention: A Practice Guide* (Dynarski et al., 2008). Each practice guide presents “recommended practices” constructed after an intensive review of the scientific literature on the impact of interventions within these program areas. In the review, particular emphasis was placed on practices, strategies, and programs supported by quasi-experimental or experimental evidence. Additionally, each practice, based on the rigorosity and strength of the available scientific evidence, was assigned a rating that describes the level of evidence associated with each practice, ranging from Low, to Moderate, to Strong. Applicants whose programs contain the characteristics and strategies identified in this publication will be well positioned to be competitive in the scoring process.

Importantly, RFP respondents will not be automatically disqualified if they request support for a program without an existing evidence base (e.g., an evaluation report or research study estimating the impact of program participation) that has met the WWC evidence criteria. Rather, AT&T is searching for interventions and programs that have components or strategies that align with the recommended practices described in the Dropout Prevention practice guide. AT&T encourages all respondents to this RFP to familiarize themselves with this report to understand how their programs align with the recommendations outlined within the guide. ***Competitive proposals will have a clear, explicit, and demonstrated connection to both the general “Recommended Practices” described within the report, and to the specific program components and strategies underpinning each of these practices.*** The *Dropout Prevention: A Practice Guide* report can be found [here](#).

### ***1.4.b Program Participation and Monitoring Data***

AT&T intends to support programs that are willing and able to provide substantial student-level data on both participating and non-participating students. The specific data elements and the target student populations that will be requested are elaborated in section 3.3 of this RFP. Respondents who cannot provide credible assurances about the types of data they can submit to AT&T's designated external evaluator will be negatively impacted by their score this section of the RFP evaluation rubric.



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## *1.4.c At-Risk Students*

AT&T aims to fund programs that serve high school students who are at risk of dropping out of school, as well as programs that support these students' preparation for college and the workforce. Applicants must demonstrate that the students they serve are at risk of dropping out of school. In particular, applicants must confirm that they are serving students who display characteristics such as:

- Repeating a grade in elementary or middle school, or failing to be promoted on time from 9th grade to 10th grade;
- Reading or math test scores that are below grade level;
- Significant attendance problems (attendance rate below 90%);
- Inadequate credit accumulation, particularly for core courses (e.g. English, mathematics, science, social studies); and/or
- Significant behavioral or disciplinary events, including at least one in-school or out-of-school suspension.

## **1.5 Program Outcomes**

The applicant's program should be designed to improve students' success in high school and readiness for college and careers. AT&T is interested in supporting programs that improve student outcomes according to the following metrics derived from research from the program areas described in section 1.1 of the RFP:

- Increased high school graduation rates;
- Increased on-time promotion to the next grade or on-track to graduate rates;
- Increased credit accumulation and completion of core courses;
- Improved attendance rates;
- Reduced behavioral and disciplinary problems.

## **Section 2: Program Classification**

Applicants will be asked to describe the program drop-out prevention emphasis and intervention classifications within the following areas that most resemble their intervention. Applicants can describe multiple emphasis areas and intervention classifications if their program contains elements that correspond with more than one domain. However, for each classification described, the applicant will be expected to 1) provide justification for this classification, and 2) demonstrate that they will be able to provide AT&T's external evaluator with the data required to monitor the effectiveness of this type of program intervention. For instance, if the program is designed to reduce student misbehavior, the applicant should be prepared to demonstrate that they will be able to provide student-level disciplinary records, across multiple school years, for participating and non-participating students (comparison group).



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This section is organized according to the recommended practices described in *Dropout Prevention: A Practice Guide* for each program emphasis area. For each recommended practice described below, the programmatic components and requirements for satisfying these recommendations are listed. Should the applicant's responses to the Pre-Qualification Survey result in an invitation to complete the RFP, they will be required to address the appropriate components for each program emphasis chosen in their narrative response.

## **Emphasis 1: Early Identification of Students At-Risk of Dropping Out**

### ***Intervention Classification 1-A: Early Diagnostic Systems***

"Utilize data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out" (Dynarski et. al, 2008). This type of intervention is largely diagnostic and is used to quantify the scope, severity, and type of dropout risk, as well as to identify students at-risk of dropping out. Because this is diagnostic and requires a comprehensive longitudinal data system, applicants that select this program classification type must have access to these types of data systems. For non-profits and university applicants serving campuses and districts, applicants must be able to demonstrate that they will be serving students in districts that are able to meet the data requirements.

Proposals should indicate practices and/or strategies that the applicant's program uses (see list below). If the applicant's program uses other practices and strategies for the early identification and intervention for students at-risk of dropping out of school that are not listed below, please describe them in the proposal.

- Use data systems to monitor the academic progress of students who are enrolled in your program.
- Use data systems that link student participation in your program to other academic or behavioral measures, such as disciplinary referrals, attendance, and GPA.
- Use data systems to identify incoming students who are at risk of failing courses or dropping out of school.
- Use data systems to accurately and quickly document and track student withdrawals and movement into and out of the district, and between campuses.
- Use data systems to identify students at risk of failing or dropping out of school and to assign staff members to monitor these students' academic performance.
- Administer assessments to monitor the ***academic progress*** of students who are enrolled in your program.
- Administer assessments to monitor the ***socio-emotional and/or behavioral progress*** of students who are enrolled in your program.
- Other Interventions or Practices. Please explain.



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## **Emphasis 2: Targeted Interventions**

### ***Intervention Classification 2-A: Adult Advocate Programs***

“Assign adult advocates to students at risk of dropping out” (Dynarski et. al, 2008). Programs within this domain enlist adult advocates with the appropriate training and background and match them purposefully with students to help address their academic, behavioral, or socio-emotional needs.

Proposals should indicate practices and/or strategies that the applicant’s program uses (see list below). If the applicant’s program uses other types of targeted interventions for students at-risk that are not listed below, please describe them in the proposal.

- Assign an adult mentor to meet with students identified as at risk of dropping out.
- Organize regular, predictable meetings between at-risk students and their adult mentor.
- Ensure a low or manageable caseload for adult mentors.
- Provide regular communication between adult mentors and program staff to ensure adult mentors have the necessary support, training, and resources to respond to the needs of their students.
- Locate adult mentors on the campuses of the students they serve.
- Document meeting times between adult mentors and their students and the challenges they discuss.
- Design adult mentor and student conversations around the specific challenges or needs the student faces (e.g., attendance, behavior, academic struggles).
- Provide adult mentor with ongoing training, orientation, or induction that familiarizes them with the types of challenges their students may discuss with them, and the resources available to help them overcome these difficulties.
- Other Interventions or Practices. Please explain.

### ***Intervention Classification 2-B: Academic Support and Enrichment***

“Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance” (Dynarski et. al, 2008). Programs within this domain identify at-risk students and provide them targeted academic support services, including individualized or small group tutoring sessions, and additional opportunities for credit accumulation for students who prefer a non-traditional schedule.

Proposals should indicate practices and/or strategies that the applicant’s program uses (see list below). If the applicant’s program uses other types of targeted strategies that are not listed below, please describe them in the proposal.



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- Provide students with **individual** support or tutoring in test-taking, study skills, or specific subject areas.
- Provide students with **small group** support or tutoring in test-taking, study skills, or specific subject areas.
- Provide students with small group enrichment courses in specific subject areas.
- Embed additional study or remediation time for students during the school day schedule.
- Provide students with additional and flexible opportunities for credit recovery.
- Offer additional reading or math courses for students who need additional support.
- Provide opportunities during the summer break to accelerate credit accumulation and/or targeted enrichment opportunities.
- Other Interventions or Practices. Please explain.

### ***Intervention Classification 2-C: Socio-behavioral Support Programs***

“Help students identify, understand, and self-regulate their emotions and interactions with peers and adults” (Dynarski et. al, 2008). Programs within this domain attempt to improve students' classroom behavior and social skills, possibly through the use of social problem-solving curricula to teach positive interaction and communication skills. Proposals should indicate practices and/or strategies that the applicant's program uses (see list below). If the applicant's program uses other types of targeted strategies that are not listed below, please describe them in the proposal.

- Use adult advocates or other engaged adults to help students establish attainable goals for interacting with peers and teachers.
- Use adult advocates or other engaged adults to help students establish benchmarks for academic behaviors such as turning in homework.
- Recognize student accomplishments and progress towards goals through positive rewards and public recognition.
- Teach explicit strategies to strengthen problem-solving and decision-making skills and other 'life-skills'.
- Establish partnerships with community-based services providers such as social and child-welfare agencies to provide additional support external to the school.
- Provide professional development to school staff so that they may directly instruct and model positive behaviors and social problem-solving skills throughout the day.
- Other Interventions or Practices. Please explain.

### ***Intervention Classification 2-D: Personalization of the Learning Environment***



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Creating “a personalized learning environment [within a school] creates a sense of belonging and promotes a sense of community” (Dynarski et. al, 2008). Programs within this domain may incorporate team-teaching, the formation of learning academies within schools, or other efforts to create learning communities or schools-within-schools.

Proposals should indicate practices and/or strategies that the applicant’s program uses (see list below). If the applicant’s program uses other types of targeted strategies that are not listed below, please describe them in the proposal.

- Establish small learning communities.
- Establish team teaching.
- Create smaller classes.
- Create extended time in the classroom through changing the school schedule.
- Change the school schedule to allow more student-teacher and student-student interactions throughout the day.
- Encourage students’ participation in extracurricular activities.
- Other Interventions or Practices. Please explain.

### ***Intervention Classification 2-E: Modification to Instructional Practice to Improve Rigor and Relevance of Curriculum***

"Schools can implement reforms aimed at improving instruction to ensure students have the necessary skills to complete high school as well as...succeed in college” (Dynarski et. al, 2008). Programs within this domain may provide professional development to teachers, clearer career and technical education (CTE) pathways, choices of classes that offer academic, real world applications, and field-based learning.

**IMPORTANT:** AT&T funding cannot be used to deliver professional development to educators. Should this intervention require educator development, the applicant must demonstrate the ability to secure an alternate funding source for this activity.

Proposals should indicate practices and/or strategies that the applicant’s program uses (see list below). If the applicant’s program uses other types of targeted strategies that are not listed below, please describe them in the proposal.

- Provide teachers with ongoing ways to expand their knowledge and improve their skills such as monthly PD workshops. (See **IMPORTANT** above.)
- Integrate academic content with career and skills-based themes through career academies or multiple pathways models.
- Host career days and offer opportunities to visit postsecondary campuses.



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- Invite community members who work in different fields to share workplace experiences.
- Provide students with extra assistance and information about the demands of college.
- Provide additional information and workshops about various sources of financial aid.
- Partner with local businesses to provide opportunities for work-related experiences such as internships, simulated job interviews or long-term employment.
- Other Interventions or Practices. Please explain.

### Disclaimers and Miscellaneous

The preceding provides descriptive information about the types of programs that AT&T intends to fund under the 2102 AT&T Aspire Local High School Impact Initiative RFP. Competitive organizations must show that their programs are comprised of research-based elements and strategies, and use appropriate data to illustrate improvements in students' high school retention, promotion, and graduation rates.

Only pre-qualified applicants will be invited by AT&T to complete the full RFP application. None of an invitation to submit a Pre-Qualification Survey, the submission of a Pre-Qualification Survey, or an invitation to apply for funding from AT&T is a guarantee of funding.

AT&T reserves the right to limit overall funding of programs based on the total number of qualified submissions received by the published due date.

[Take the Pre-Qualification Survey](#)