Request for Proposals
Rules and Guidelines

Applications due October 1, 2012

Summary

The Postsecondary Success team at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is part of a community of higher education institutions, state and federal agencies, and nonprofit organizations that are learning and working together in order to ensure that every student who has the will to get a postsecondary education has the way to obtain one. We believe our postsecondary education system should help students go as far, as fast, and as high as they can. Our goal is to help students obtain the credentials they need to be competitive in the workforce, and help institutions adopt strategies and tools that will improve the quality of the student experience while managing costs in an increasingly challenging fiscal environment.

We seek system-wide innovation and change; for too long, islands of reform and innovation have failed to scale or sustain their impact. One of our core beliefs is that postsecondary experiences that better personalize learning experiences for students are most likely to deliver the best outcomes in terms of completion rate, time to completion and cost of completion. We have been inspired by innovators both inside and outside of the traditional postsecondary system who are beginning to demonstrate and generate evidence of such outcomes. In particular, we are interested in the role of technology as a tool for helping faculty and administrators better deliver quality instruction and assistance to struggling students. Technology is not a replacement for the student-teaching experience.

One area we believe technology may play a role is in helping make high-quality, affordable learning content and experiences for the full sequence of high-demand general education and developmental education courses available to all students. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are demonstrating the possibility of making content and learning freely available at web scale – for at least some disciplines and types of content. This Request for Proposal (RFP) seeks to stimulate the development of high quality MOOCs that will engage a broad range of students in successfully advancing their general and developmental education. Ultimately, our vision is that MOOCs may provide institutions a way to blend MOOC content into formal courses with more intensive faculty, advising, and peer support and also provide students an alternative and direct path to credit and credentials.

These types of courses are likely to provide value to a broader range of learners than is currently served by existing MOOCs, and the availability of such courses would help at least three types of students:
1) Learners who are already studying the subject matter and enroll in the MOOC as a study aid;
2) Learners who enroll in a MOOC and wish to gain formal credit for their learning in support of their pursuit of a certificate or credential; and
3) Institutions that integrate the MOOC content/functionality with classroom courses in order to increase quality and blend the student learning experience.

While we are cautiously optimistic that MOOCs might help some learners in each of the above cases, there is still much the field has yet to learn about MOOCs. This RFP also aims to encourage rigorous research on important questions, such as:
1) For which students, disciplines, types of knowledge, and contexts are MOOCs more/less effective?
2) Which components drive impact for non-self-directed learners and what additional supports need to be added online or face-to-face?
3) What data captured from MOOCs is most informative and how might such data be best used for the advancement of learning?

What success looks like: A portfolio of up to 10 high-quality, new general education and developmental education MOOC courses that are developed by strong faculty members and validated by their corresponding institutions, i.e. meet the learning standards set by the relevant academic department. These courses are deployed and completed

by a wide range of learners by June 2013, and the data that underlies the courses is captured by the course platform and co-owned by both the platform and institution to enable academic research on how different students learn.

Application Criteria and Award Information

In developing courses, **applicants should**:

- Leverage institutions and faculty with strong reputations for subject matter expertise and teaching quality;
- Leverage institutional experience and demonstrated proficiency in online learning *in addition to* subject matter expertise. In courses mediated by technology, how the course is designed and delivered is at least as important as, if not more important than, than the content itself;
- Design learning content, assessment, experiences and feedback around specific course learning outcomes that are aligned with the institution's standards and existing pedagogical/learning science research;
- Align learning outcomes, content, and structure with "typical" course offered at most colleges and universities; and
- Create courses that are widely accessible to a broad range of learners, including learners who may have a greater distance to travel in their academic proficiency and mastery.

Additionally, applicants that agree to the following will be looked upon **favorably** (not required):

- Openness – use of open educational resources and/or use of a Creative Commons license with some or all of the course content;
- Integration – plans to offer the proposed course in a blended course format in a for-credit course; and
- Credit equivalency – plans to offer the course(s) for credit or agree to submit the course(s) for an assessment of credit equivalency. To be clear, the courses need not be offered for credit by the developing institution.

Overview of Application, Selection and Award Criteria	
Timeline	- September 11, 2012 – RFP released - October 1, 2012 – applications due - October 19, 2012 – up to 10 winning courses selected
Applicant Eligibility	U.S. public or private not-for-profit institutions of higher education accredited to offer associate's, bachelor's degrees, or both. Institutional leadership must approve the application, as indicated by a letter of support by the institution's President and/or Chief Academic Officer. Institutions may apply to develop more than one course. Applicants must work with a technology platform that currently enables tens or hundreds of thousands of students to learn from the course. The platform must utilize interactive pedagogy (active learning, frequent assessment and social connectivity/interactivity) and agree to the below charitability requirements. Applicants are required to submit an agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a platform, and one that specifies agreement to the general requirements described in this RFP, including the below charitability requirements. Please see sample MOU.
Application	Short five page application (max), three-minute video and simple budget template.
Award	All award winners are eligible for grants of $50,000, for a grant period of 12 months. Funds may be used for course development and implementation (i.e. teaching assistants) costs. Additionally, the cost of submitting the course for assessment of credit equivalency will be covered by the foundation, if the applicant is willing to submit it. Institutions are responsible for course maintenance and associated costs.
Course content	Must focus on a high-enrollment, low-success introductory level course that is a barrier to success for many students, particularly low-income/first-generation students, as defined below. Course learning outcomes, content and structure should align with those of a

"typical" course at a U.S. university, i.e. a proposed algebra MOOC should have the same learning outcomes, content and structure as an on-campus algebra course. Eligible courses:

- Math - developmental arithmetic, geometry, pre-algebra, algebra, college algebra, statistics, pre-calculus, calculus
- ELA – developmental reading, developmental writing, English composition I, English composition II, oral communication
- Social & behavioral sciences – US history, political science, psychology, sociology, economics
- Physical & life sciences – biology, anatomy and physiology, general chemistry, physics
- Other – computer science, Spanish, accounting, criminal justice, geography

Date of Course Availability

Courses must be made available and completed by students no later than June 2013.

Charitability Requirements

Applicants MUST agree to the following:

Accessibility of course – our goal is to make courses as widely accessible as possible without preventing reasonable revenue opportunity, which we recognize is necessary for sustainability purposes. With this in mind, institutions and platforms must agree to the following terms:

- For <u>students</u>: all MOOC content must be made publicly accessible (e.g. via archive) and free for five years, except in cases of significant substantive errors in the course
- For <u>institutions</u> that seek to implement the MOOC in an integrated/blended format: all MOOC content must be made available to public two-year colleges for at least five years at a price of no more than 10% of the tuition charged for the course (in-state tuition, where appropriate)
- Reasonable fees for assessments and certification may be charged
- Reasonable fees for integrating/blending content into institutional course offerings to non-public two-year colleges may be charged

Data – we believe that the data underlying MOOCs has tremendous research value for the purposes of teaching and learning.

- <u>Availability</u> – student and faculty *activity data*, anonymized student *performance data* and anonymized *student profile data* (age, geography, intended use of the course, self-reported income level, self-reported level of academic attainment) must be captured and co-owned by the institution and the platform in order to enable research
- <u>Reporting</u> – the applicant agrees to regularly report to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation on key data. This includes reporting at three intervals:
    - After enrollment closes and before the course begins
    - At course midpoint
    - At course end
- <u>Analysis</u> – the applicant agrees to make available to the foundation any material new research and analysis on data collected on the course, such as how students "travel" through the course (e.g. did students who successfully complete often view instructional materials and supports in a particular sequence? Were there elements of the course that seemed more effective than others? Did certain types of students do particularly well or worse?) and the relative impact of different course components

Additionally, institutions must commit to submitting completed courses for a **full Quality Matters course review**.

Intent and Disclaimer

This RFP is made with the intent to identify an institution to complete the project scope as described above and in other areas of this RFP. The Foundation will rely on an institution's representations and consider them to be truthful as described. The Foundation assumes it can be confident in an applicant's ability to deliver the activities described in this RFP. The responses will be incorporated into a future funding agreement should the Foundation wish to support the activities proposed by the applicant.

This RFP is not an offer to enter into a funding agreement. The Foundation assumes no responsibility for Recipient's cost to respond to this RFP. Until a written agreement is fully executed, the Foundation will have no obligations to any Recipient.

Application Checklist

There are four components to the application:

1) **Brief narrative (max 5pp)**. The attached Application Narrative and questions intend to help us understand your most current and deepest thinking about the proposed course design, content and assessment. We recognize that the course that you have in mind is not yet fully developed and therefore appreciate that specifics of the course may be finalized over the course of the upcoming months.

2) **Simple budget template**. In order to help us better understand projected use of funds, please fill out the provided simple budget template.

3) **Short, three minute video**. In order to give us a different angle on the proposed course, please submit a short video clip that demonstrates an example module of the course. The video does not need to be the final product, only illustrative of the style and approach you intend to use. Please upload the video to YouTube and include a link with your written narrative.

4) **Required documents**. Please attach the following to your application:
   - Documentation reflecting institutional approval of your application (e.g. letter of support signed by President and/or Chief Academic Officer, board resolution, etc.);
   - Memorandum of Understanding with technology platform; and
   - Letter indicating tax status.

Additionally, applicants may provide up to five additional pages of appendices that specifically relate to course design and content, such as syllabi, sample assessments, etc.

Application Narrative

1. ***Instructor and Institution (0.5 pages or less).*** Please tell us about the instructor(s) who will lead the course and specify the activities that he/she will be involved in. Please include any recognitions for teaching or other leadership in your field. Please also tell us why your institution has the capacity/supports to facilitate the development and implementation of this course and is a leader in this discipline.

2. ***Course (3 pages or less)***. Please describe the course that you aim to develop (the categories below are adapted from the well-known Quality Matters™ framework http://www.qmprogram.org/rubric.
   - Who is the ***target learner*** and why do you believe the course can be effectively delivered in a MOOC format and on the platform that you have selected as a partner? Are there any pre-requisites?
   - How would you describe the ***learning objectives*** of the course, and how will the course be structured to meet those objectives? How do the learning objectives and course content align with the on-campus version of the course? How do the learning objectives and course content align with those of a "typical" course offered by the same title at other U.S. colleges and universities?
   - In a matrix or visual format, please depict ***how instructional materials, activities, assessments and technology will be aligned*** to the proposed learning objectives. A sample format is provided in Appendix A. Please include the following:
     - Please describe the types and frequency of ***assessments*** that will be employed in the course, and how students will receive feedback.
     - What ***instructional materials***, both required and supplemental, will be used or available to students? Please describe why you have chosen such materials and how they will be complemented by the assessments and supports that you propose.
     - Will the course utilize any ***technologies*** over and above what the platform enables, and how will such technologies be made accessible to a range of students?
     - How will the course be designed to enable ***learner interaction and engagement***?
   - What ***student supports*** will be in place to assist students, and how will they access them?

3. ***Development plan (.5 pages or less).*** *Please outline the major activities associated with the development of the proposed course, including how grant dollars will be spent.*

4. ***Optional (1 page or less).*** Answers to the below are not required, but are areas of particular interest, as specified in the RFP.
   - Please discuss any plans that you may have to use ***Creative Commons*** licensing.
   - Please discuss any plans that your institution and/or another institution might have to offer the proposed course in a ***blended course format in a for-credit course***
   - Please discuss your plans or willingness to submit the course for credit or to submit the course for an assessment of ***credit equivalency.***

5. ***Video Link.*** Please include a link to the required short video.

Sample Alignment Framework for Question 2

	Course Name:
Alignment	Alignment refers to the ***direct link*** between the learning objectives and the assessments and measurements, resources and materials, learner engagement, and course technology. Under the principle of alignment, these four aspects of the course are driven by and support the learning objectives. Please use this table to show the alignment between the learning objectives for the course and the other key components. Be as specific as possible to allow the reviewers of your application to understand the structure and coherence of your proposed development plan. Use a separate row for each learning objective.

Learning Objectives	Assessment and Measurement	*Resources and Materials*	Learner Engagement	Course Technology