



SOCIETY FOR  
EXPERIENTIAL  
EDUCATION

## Experience Matters Grant

### Research & Scholarship Grant Program

Request for Proposals

Application Form: <https://forms.gle/VMnSq4fGmKKp9Eqx7>

### Program Overview

The Experience Matters Grant Program supports collaborative scholarship from practitioners, faculty, and other scholars that advances the field of experiential learning. Experiential education transforms learning by engaging students as active participants in authentic experiences followed by reflection and meaning-making. As institutions demonstrate their value to students, families, government, and the public, experiential learning stands as a critical bridge between academic preparation, applicable skills, and meaningful career and civic outcomes.

However, significant questions remain about long-term impacts of EL, causal linkages between specific pedagogies and outcomes, and effective implementation strategies. This grant program addresses these gaps by funding collaborative inquiry that generates evidence, advances practice and strengthens the rationale for investing in experiential learning across higher education.

### Grant Purpose

Experience Matters grants fund projects. Collaborative projects are recommended and consist of two or more scholars working together to advance experiential learning through research, assessment, program innovation, or knowledge synthesis that contributes to the field's evidence base and theoretical foundations.

### Grant Information

**Total Annual Funding:** Up to \$15,000 USD per annual cycle

**Individual Award Amounts:** \$3,000 - \$5,000 per project

**Number of Awards:** 3-5 funded projects per annual cycle

**Project Duration:** 15-18 months (potentially ranging across 2 academic years; shorter durations acceptable)

### Eligibility

Open to practitioners, researchers, and educators engaged in experiential learning. Applicants must be affiliated with a non-profit organization or educational institution. One member of a collaborative team must be a SEE member. SEE board members may not receive funds from this grant.

## Recommended Focus Areas

While proposals on any aspect of experiential learning are welcome, we particularly encourage projects addressing:

**Long-term Impact Studies:** Examining career outcomes, civic engagement, and life trajectories following experiential learning, building on foundational work while addressing unanswered questions about sustained effects

**Causal Linkages and Effectiveness:** Investigating whether specific pedagogies lead to particular outcomes and under what conditions (e.g., Does community-engaged learning enhance civic identity? Does undergraduate research improve critical thinking?)

**Justification and Investment Rationale:** Developing frameworks that support policy decisions, campus strategy, accreditation alignment, and state/national workforce initiatives related to experiential learning

**Pedagogical Innovation and Comparison:** Studying how specific approaches work, including community-engaged learning, undergraduate research, internships, work-integrated learning, micro-internships, project-based and place-based learning, capstones, clinical placements, mentoring, and time-on-task requirements

**Assessment and Benchmarking:** Creating tools, metrics, and benchmarks for evaluating experiential learning quality, equity, and outcomes across institutions

**Institutional Implementation:** Examining campus-wide strategies, platforming approaches, and organizational change processes that support sustainable experiential learning programs

**Emerging Contexts:** Exploring experiential learning's future in relation to higher education transformation, artificial intelligence integration, competency-based education, and evolving student needs

**Value Demonstration:** Building evidence for how experiential education contributes to higher education's public value, including positive externalities for society beyond individual student benefit

## Application Components

Proposals (maximum 2,500 words) must include:

1. Research question(s) or project focus, including significance to field priorities
2. Connection to existing literature and how the project advances knowledge
3. Collaborative structure and team member roles/expertise (recommended, not required)
4. Methodology, data sources, or implementation plan
5. Timeline and specific deliverables
6. Budget narrative

7. Plan for knowledge sharing (required - choose at least one item from list below)
8. Training/preparation of scholars/researchers (short narrative; CV/Resume may be attached but is not sufficient)

## **Guidelines for Use of Funds**

Funds can be used for a variety of purposes that advance research activity, including but not limited to:

- Course buy-out
- Hiring a student assistant
- Paying for training materials or time (Train the trainer is acceptable; personal professional development is not)
- Data analysis software
- Travel to conferences to present research/findings
- Travel to experiential learning sites
- Educational programming/intervention (if the research requires an educational intervention)
- Refreshments (if refreshments are a key element of a program or intervention)

**Important:** Funds cannot be used for indirect costs. All funds go directly to the researcher/project as determined by the accepted application.

## **Knowledge Sharing Requirements**

Grantees must commit to at least one of the following knowledge-sharing activities:

- SEE Conference presentation of findings
- Publication submission to relevant journals (Journal of Experiential Education, International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning, International Journal for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement, Metropolitan Universities, Experiential Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, or other relevant journals)
- Participation in SEE webinar series to share emerging findings
- Contribution to SEE's curated resource library (research briefs, frameworks, assessment tools, curricula)
- Development of training materials for shared use among SEE constituents

## **Review Process**

**Review Panel:** Five-member committee including SEE board members, practitioners, and researchers

### **Review Criteria:**

- Field significance and alignment with priorities (25%)
- Collaborative strength (20%)
- Methodological rigor/feasibility (20%)
- Innovation (20%)

- Dissemination potential (15%)

**Process:** Blind review followed by panel discussion and consensus ranking. Preference will be given to SEE members and/or active participants in a SEE committee.

## Important Dates

Milestone	Date
Application Release	March 16
Proposal Deadline	May 15
Review Period	May 16 - June 30
Award Notifications	July 15
Funding Distribution	August 1

## Reporting Requirements

Grant recipients will be required to:

- Submit a mid-project update (brief written update at 6-9 months) sharing progress and preliminary findings to the SEE Board
- Participate in three (3) required check-ins with the Research & Scholarship Committee EM Grant Liaison throughout the grant period
- Submit a comprehensive final report including methodology, findings, limitations, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research. The final report must include accounting for all funds, and responses to a questionnaire about the EM Grant experience, usefulness, and areas for improvement.
- Submit a report of monies spent at end of grant period

## Submission Instructions

Applications must be submitted electronically by May 15, 2026. Detailed submission instructions will be provided with the application form:

<https://forms.gle/VMnSq4fGmKKp9Eqx7>

## Questions and Contact Information

For questions about the Experience Matters Grant, please contact:

Bill Heinrich, PhD  
 Research & Scholarship Committee  
 Society for Experiential Education  
 Email: Bill.Heinrich13@gmail.com

*We look forward to receiving proposals that advance the field of experiential learning!*