SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING CHALLENGE
SCE IS A SOCIAL INVESTMENT ORGANIZATION that connects talent and innovation with market forces to drive social change. Our newly launched Social and Emotional Learning Program aims to elevate informal learning pathways and reimagine education as a broad and rich ecosystem for learning beyond academics and outside school walls.

We define social and emotional learning (SEL) as the process through which people learn fundamental skills to recognize and manage their emotions and social relationships. This project will explore how youth programs encourage the development of agency, grit, resilience and other skills, which we believe play an essential role in youth development. Through this open national challenge, SCE will select a short list of exceptional programs working outside of school to participate in a project to discover the nature and impact of social and emotional learning for teens in informal learning contexts.
SCE’S OBJECTIVES ARE TO

- Identify and distinguish an exceptional cohort of organizations as high profile SEL thought leaders and practitioners;
- Identify the best SEL practices and evaluation methods, and disseminate these findings broadly through an SEL Field Guide; and
- Make SEL an intentional component of many more youth serving organizations.

We invite high-impact organizations that promote the development of social and emotional skills in teens to submit a detailed letter of inquiry in response to the prompts below. Top organizations identified will be invited to submit grant proposals.

The deadline for LOI submission is January 24, 2014.
PROJECT COMPONENTS

LEARNING COMMUNITY

This exploratory initiative will be a true partnership between a cohort of grantees, SCE, and an evaluation team. Through a learning community approach, a senior leader and frontline staff member from each partner organization will collaborate with an evaluation team to identify common metrics for a study of each organization’s practices and impact on youth’s social and emotional skills over the course of one program year. The learning community will be focused on answering three questions: 1. What are the best practices for SEL for teens? 2. What are the patterns of growth in social and emotional skills for participating youth? 3. How are the programs structured to produce high-quality SEL services?

The group will convene three times between June 2014 and September 2015, underwritten by SCE, to foster effective collaboration on research design and data collection. Grantees will be expected to collect data throughout the duration of the program with assistance from the evaluation group. In addition to participating in the convenings, the evaluation team will conduct one on-site visit, hold conference calls with grantees, and be available to provide ongoing support throughout the grant period.

The project will culminate with the production of an SEL Field Guide which will distill project findings (program case studies, practitioner expertise, and SEL methods and measurement tools) into a toolkit for use in any youth serving organization.

AWARD

This initiative seeks to surface exceptional programs that can participate as thoughtful and engaged collaborators in elevating the importance of SEL for teens. Selected organizations will receive awards of up to $100,000 to support their work in social and emotional learning.

Selected organizations will:

- Receive an award of up to $100,000
- Collaborate with an evaluation team on a study of social and emotional learning practices and outcomes
- Contribute to the creation of an SEL Field Guide that will share the learnings of this exploratory initiative with the broader field
- Come together three times during the grant period (June 2014 – September 2015), afforded by SCE
Out-of-school learning environments offer fertile ground for equipping youth with social and emotional skills. Unfortunately, many impactful programs are often under-recognized and under-resourced, limiting the capacity for highly effective practices to be shared and reproduced. As a result, valuable expertise from practitioners about innovative and impactful SEL practices rarely generates field-wide knowledge. Practitioners need tools to promote social and emotional learning and youth need rich opportunities to develop social and emotional skills. We believe this gap can be bridged.

WHAT WE THINK IS MISSING

Many high-impact programs for teens exist, though their work may not be called “social and emotional learning.” It is widely accepted that afterschool programs can impact youth profoundly, yet practitioners have few resources to describe how their programs build increased social and emotional competencies. The field needs clear evidence that the ingredients of an effective program can be linked to improved social and emotional skills for youth.

The gaps in the ecosystem are numerous; no individual thought leader, academic or program model can provide the silver bullet. What is missing from the nascent field of SEL is knowledge about what practices are most effective, how to promote the development of key SEL skills, and how to measure impact. Through a collaborative approach, this initiative seeks to elevate the expertise of established and effective practitioners in order to illustrate the links between program design and practices, and social and emotional skill development.

PRIMARY PROBLEM TO ADDRESS

Not enough of the most vulnerable youth have access to learning environments that build, promote and reinforce social and emotional skills vital to life success in the 21st century.
WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

We recognize that social and emotional learning is often the fiber of many activity-based programs: sports, arts, apprenticeships, community service, and more. There are a number of ways SEL can be put into practice. It’s how these programs operate and the quality of the impact on youth that we are interested in codifying into a set of best practices. The social and emotional skills of particular interest to SCE are agency, grit, resilience, self-regulation and empathy.

CANDIDATES MUST

— Serve youth age 14-18
— Operate out-of-school time, during the school year
— Identify social and emotional skill development as an explicit program outcome
— Demonstrate evidence of the program’s impact on vulnerable youth
— Have administrative capacity, infrastructure and mission-driven motivation to participate in a learning community
— Have 501(c)(3) tax-exemption and demonstrate financial stability
— Engage paid professional staff
— Have capacity and infrastructure for program evaluation and data collection

Candidates must be willing to designate one program staff member with substantial experience and knowledge of the program to serve as the project coordinator.

LOIs WILL BE REVIEWED BASED ON THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA

— Quality of youth development practices and general knowledge, understanding and experience working with vulnerable teens
— Commitment to developing social and emotional skills in teens, demonstrated by intentionality of program design, delivery, content and quality of impact on youth
— Alignment of program mission and outcomes to SCE’s Social and Emotional Learning Program priorities
— Sound administration and organizational stability, demonstrated by strong leadership, committed and effective staff, professional development opportunities, and relationship with community stakeholders
— Capacity of the organization to devote adequate time and resources to participate in a learning community and program evaluation

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR? / WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?
# WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The letter of inquiry process is meant to surface a group of potential partners. Top applicants will be invited to submit grant proposals.

Please contact us with any questions at challenge@scefdn.org.

We will be hosting a question-and-answer call for interested parties on January 10, 2014 at 1:00pm CT. Please email inquiries prior to the call. Use the following conference line: Dial-in Number: 1-712-432-3022; Conference Code: 707402.

## TIMELINE*

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<tr>
<th>2014</th>
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<td>January 6</td>
<td>LOI submission period opens</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 10</td>
<td>Q&amp;A forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 24</td>
<td>LOI submission period closes at 5:00pm CT</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 3</td>
<td>Finalists invited to submit proposals</td>
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<td>March 21</td>
<td>Proposal deadline</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>Challenge partners selected</td>
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<td>June</td>
<td>First convening of challenge partners and evaluation team</td>
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<td>September</td>
<td>Program evaluation and data collection begins</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Second convening of challenge partners and evaluation team</td>
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<td>June</td>
<td>Program data collection concludes</td>
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<td>September</td>
<td>Third convening of challenge partners and evaluation team</td>
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<td>December</td>
<td>Completion of SEL Field Guide</td>
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*Dates subject to change.
Please submit an LOI—no longer than 3 pages—that addresses the following prompts via email attachment (.doc or .pdf) to challenge@scefdn.org by 5:00pm CT on January 24. Budget information, evaluation reports and tools, training manuals and any additional materials should be submitted as appendices. We welcome you to submit a program video no longer than 2 minutes if you would like to supplement your LOI.

**BASICS**
Please include organization name, contact name, website, mission, a brief summary of the organization and program, participant demographics and how your program fits with SCE’s Social and Emotional Learning Program priorities.

**BACKGROUND**
Provide a brief history of your work as it relates to social and emotional learning. How have you explicitly integrated social and emotional learning into your program design?

**FOCUS**
Provide a clear explanation of how the program helps develop social and emotional skills for youth ages 14-18. Indicate what steps you took to implement social and emotional learning strategies, what practices you have used, and how youth have benefited from these practices. Provide details on the specific skills that the program promotes. If you have measured outcomes, please describe them.

**BUDGET**
Include your program budget, total youth services budget (required for multiservice organizations) and annual organizational budget including sources of support.

**FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIPS**
Indicate primary sources of major support and key community partners.

**EVALUATIONS AND TRAINING MANUALS**
Please include any samples of previous internal and/or external evaluation reports and tools. Please include as an attachment any curriculum or samples of staff training materials relevant to social and emotional learning practices.

**OTHER**
Indicate how your organization could contribute to and participate in the learning community.