Frequently Asked Questions

Social Innovation Fund
Administrative Data Pilot Competition

Third Sector Capital Partners & the Stanford Center on Poverty & Inequality

Through their Social Innovation Fund Administrative Data Pilot award, Third Sector Capital Partners, Inc. (Third Sector) and the Stanford Center on Poverty & Inequality (Stanford) are hosting a competition to select up to three sub-recipients conducting outcomes-oriented projects in California, Oregon and Washington state focused on access to data to improve economic outcomes and opportunity for communities in need. Services provided include data access and analysis support and capacity building to help governments utilize enhanced data access to better understand program operations and potential impacts.

Third Sector and Stanford hosted the first informational webinar about the competition on Wednesday, December 14, 2016, and second follow-up webinar on Wednesday, January 18, 2017, for potential applicants and partners. A recording of the webinars and additional resources about the competition are posted on the project webpage. Answers to questions that emerged during the webinars are included in this "Frequently Asked Questions" document.

For questions not answered in this document, please email SIFcompetition@thirdsectorcap.org and a Third Sector staff member will respond to your request.

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Competition

1. ***What are the goals of the Administrative Data Pilot?***
   The ultimate goal of this Pilot is to amplify the ability of decision-makers to identify programmatic impacts by improving the quality of evidence used to evaluate outcomes-oriented initiatives. The Pilot's enhanced administrative-data framework will make it possible for outcomes-oriented projects to access high-quality data on a full complement of economic opportunity metrics.

   The Pilot strives to enable sub-recipients to build capacity for ongoing data analysis and future outcomes-oriented projects. Sub-recipients will receive assistance accomplishing the following:
   a. Enabling access to and linkages between local, state and federal data.
   b. Analyzing data to gain actionable insights.
   c. Deploying information to improve outcomes-oriented programs.
   d. Developing and sharing best practices.

2. ***How do outcomes-oriented initiatives differ from the performance-based contracting we are currently doing?***
   Performance-based contracting has traditionally focused on 'inputs and outputs' rather than 'outcomes.' Providers receive funding after meeting certain milestones, such as serving a certain number of people or demonstrating achievement of early indicators of success.

   However, in an outcomes-oriented initiative, government, service providers, and funders agree on targeted outcomes for a societal issue. Outcomes are often defined by measures of longer-term impact and are analyzed through a rigorous evaluation.

3. ***What types of issues areas are appropriate for projects under the Administrative Data Pilot?***
   Projects must be focused on addressing issues of economic opportunity. The definition of economic opportunity in effect for this opportunity broadly encompasses programs designed to improve the economic and social well-being of citizens, particularly those from vulnerable populations. Such programs could range in focal area and age group targeted, for example: child welfare, criminal justice, housing, workforce development, health, homelessness, etc.

4. ***Who can apply to the competition? Can providers apply?***
   The opportunity is limited to governments located in California, Oregon, and Washington state. Eligible government agencies include city/county agencies or departments, city/county executive offices, and state agencies or departments. While the lead applicant must be a government partner, service providers, evaluators, and other entities are also welcome components of an application.

   We welcome jurisdictions of all shapes and sizes - jurisdiction size is not a criterion used in evaluating applications. Potential applicants from smaller jurisdictions should note that applying as part of a regional partnership, in conjunction with one or more other jurisdictions, is also a possibility under this opportunity. Partnerships may be in place prior to this pilot (e.g. an existing service delivery partnership) or developed for purposes of this application.

5. ***What are you looking for in an application? How do you determine the strength of an application?***
   Third Sector and Stanford are seeking to work with government entities engaged in outcomes-oriented initiatives who want access to datasets and technical assistance to deploy the data with potential for substantial impact on economic outcomes.

   In order to qualify to be a Third Sector and Stanford Sub-Recipient, applicants must meet the two joint objectives of the Corporation for National and Community Service and Third Sector/Stanford in running this Social Innovation Fund Administrative Data Pilot competition. The first goal is to select sub-recipients who are "data ready" in that they have the capacity to successfully integrate administrative data for evaluation purposes. The review panel will make its final selection primarily based on an applicant's data readiness. The second goal is to advance the outcomes-oriented field by developing tools and templates to assist projects in accessing and utilizing high-quality, less expensive data so they can improve the outcomes of their interventions.

   There are four scored criteria for evaluating applications. Specific details and relative weighting can be found in the application guide. The criteria include:
   a. Government leadership and staff commitment to using data for decision-making,
   b. Targeting of populations and outcomes of interest relevant for the pilot project,
   c. Understanding of datasets required to measure outcomes of interest, and
   d. Commitment to community learning.

   Additionally, there are two unscored, supplemental factors that could be considered:
   a. Potential for impacts during the award services period, and
   b. Pay for Success projects under development.

6. ***Is there any preference for communities with existing projects? For those with new projects?***
   Both new and existing projects are eligible for services under this service opportunity.

7. ***What types of services will winners receive under this opportunity?***
   Depending upon the needs of the sub-recipient's outcomes-oriented project, Third Sector and Stanford will provide sub-recipients with some or all of the following services:
   a. **Data Access and Analysis.** Stanford will determine mechanisms for data access requests to relevant agencies and negotiate data access with and for sub-recipients. Stanford will provide data access to sub-recipients, correlate relevant datasets, conduct analyses and create a plan to ensure ongoing access to data after the award period (where appropriate, based on access feasibility).
   b. **Data Deployment Technical Assistance.** Third Sector will complement Stanford's data access with an Administrative data deployment "blueprint" for pilot projects to integrate real-time learnings and also embed data feedback loops into future contracts.
   c. **Learning Community.** Third Sector and Stanford will provide a combination of specific technical trainings and collaborative peer learning for local government staff and partners throughout the 2.5-year award period.

8. ***What amount of services will winners receive? Is funding available through this opportunity to offset associated staffing costs?***
Selected sub-recipients will receive up to $708,000 worth of services from Stanford and Third Sector over the course of the two-and-a-half-year award period. The exact amount of services will depend on the specific activities of individual projects

    Awards under the Administrative Data Pilot are for services, but we are looking to engage additional partners to possibly provide funding for local staff efforts. Applicants are encouraged to document this need for funding for associated staffing costs in their application, both to apprise Third Sector but also to ensure that this information can be passed on to organizations that may have resources to help offset staffing costs associated with participation.

9. ***How long will services last under the award?***
Services will begin as early as April 2017 and will last for a maximum of 2.5 years under the award. The exact length of services will depend on the specific requirements of individual projects. Third Sector and Stanford will endeavor to continue data access support and analysis after the conclusion of the award period, however this will require funding sources separate from this specific Social Innovation Fund award.

10. ***What can we do now to prepare?***
    a. If you did not participate in our first informational webinar on December 14, 2016, we highly recommend that you **watch the webinar recording**.
    b. If you are interested in applying, **complete a Letter of Interest** and follow the instructions on the form. Deadline for Letters of Interest is January 25, 2017.
    c. **Attend the second webinar,** scheduled for January 18, 2017, which will focus on reviewing the selection criteria and the scoring rubric used for application evaluation, and give potential applicants further opportunities to ask questions of staff from Third Sector and Stanford. Register here.
    d. Continue to check the **project webpage** for updates and future details about the competition.

11. ***What is the timeline of the competition?***
The following timeline is subject to amendment. Any amendment will be posted here.

Social Innovation Fund: Administrative Data Pilot	
December 14, 2016	Webinar #1 for Potential Applicants Letter of Interest Released
January 9, 2017	Application Released
January 9 - February 17, 2017	Open Information Period

January 18, 2017	Webinar #2 for Potential Applicants
January 25, 2017, by 5 pm PST	Letter of Interest Due (optional but recommended)
February 17, 2017, by 5 pm PST	**Applications Due**
February 20 – March 10, 2017	Application Review
March 13 - 21, 2017	Finalist Due Diligence Interviews
March 22 - 27, 2017	Sub-Recipient Selection and Notification
Match 27 - 31, 2017	Announcement of Sub-Recipients

12. ***How many sub-recipients will be selected?***
Approximately three government sub-recipients will be selected for the Administrative Data Pilot.

13. ***What does the interview process look like?***
Following the application period, applicants will pass through a two-stage selection process: Application Review and Finalist Due Diligence. During the Application Review phase, reviewers will assess and score eligible applications based on a set of predetermined criteria included in the application guide. Applicants entering the Due Diligence phase may be requested to refine their submission materials if clarification is required by application reviewers.

Finalists will be invited to an interview by Friday 3/10. From Monday 3/13 to Tuesday 3/21, review teams will conduct 60-minute videoconference interviews with each finalist's leadership across government and stakeholder partners and complete a rapid feasibility assessment. Reviewers will specify any questions to be addressed during the Finalist Due Diligence phase. These questions will be sent to applicants before the videoconference interviews.

Announcements of competition winners will happen by the end of March 2017.

14. ***Will there be opportunities to ask questions of Stanford and Third Sector prior to the application due date?***
Yes, there will be a number of avenues for potential applicants to ask questions of staff at both organizations. On January 18th, a second webinar will be held that will discuss the opportunity in further detail and allow interested parties to ask questions of project staff. As applicants develop their applications, Stanford and Third Sector staff will spend up to two hours per applicant discussing the opportunity and questions specific to individual applications. Interested parties can also email questions to SIFcompetition@thirdsectorcap.org.

15. ***Will sub-recipients have to provide any funding?***
No, sub-recipients will not be required to provide any funding, aside from making provisions for the associated staff time required for participation. Applicants are encouraged to document any need for funding to offset staffing costs associated with participation during their application. While Third Sector and Stanford cannot guarantee the availability of such funding, we are open to assessing additional funding options who express such a need.

16. ***What happens after the conclusion of the pilot period and the end of services funded by the Administrative Data Pilot award?***
Third Sector and Stanford are committed to ensuring that the impacts of the Administrative Data Pilot continue after the conclusion of the award period. Services during the award are designed to facilitate ongoing data access (where feasible) and to ensure ongoing capacity building on the part of sub-recipients. Third Sector and Stanford will actively work with sub-recipients to establish a foundation for continuing projects served under the Administrative Data Pilot, including efforts to secure post-pilot funding as appropriate.

17. ***What happens if my jurisdiction is not selected?***
Third Sector plans to provide feedback to all applicants with the aim of enabling them to increase their future administrative data readiness and obtain future technical assistance and resources. For applicants who demonstrate promise, but are not selected in this round of applications, Third Sector will endeavor to provide opportunities to participate in future competitions and undertake future administrative data projects. These opportunities may include:
    a. Customized feedback on where project stands on the readiness assessment framework,
    b. Ongoing participation in learning communities and knowledge sharing activities, and
    c. Access to the training program and resource center developed through this project.

    In addition, non-selected applicants who demonstrate promise may be directed to other funding opportunities outside of this Administrative Data Pilot competition if the applicant desires and other resources become available.

Data Access and Analysis

1. ***What types of administrative data would be available to applicants as part of this opportunity?***
Potentially available data for sub-recipients are listed in the application guide. Note that access to data is subject to a clear explanation of the value of such data for estimating program outcomes, as well as formal data use agreements, however services under the award are designed to aid applicants in developing such agreements.

2. ***How will datasets be linked? Who links the data?***
Stanford will manage the data linkage in conjunction with awardees, and we will also engage local research partners in supporting this work. Linkages with federal Census Bureau data holdings are subject to specific requirements (detailed later in this FAQ and in the application guide). Linkages with state datasets will be subject to the specific requirements of the particular agencies granting access, and will also be informed by Stanford's ongoing work with the Census Bureau with regard to linking state and federal data. One purpose of the Administrative Data Pilot is to understand the most efficient and effective ways to structure data agreements to facilitate access beyond the conclusion of the award period; this perspective will inform the approach to data access and analysis.

3. ***Please explain the Census FSRDC environment that allows access to federal data as part of this opportunity? How is the data secured? What are the rules and requirements surrounding data access and analysis?***
   Federal Statistical Research Data Centers (FSRDCs) are Census Bureau facilities (primarily located at research universities, such as Stanford) that are connected directly to the main Census Bureau data facility. Data are secured according to Census's own stringent requirements to prevent data release. Researchers cannot remove microdata from the environment, and all analytic products are reviewed by the Census Bureau staff to avoid disclosure of personally identifiable information (PII). FSRDCs also meet Internal Revenue Service (IRS) security requirements, which allows access to IRS data holdings at the Census Bureau.

   Researchers with approved projects who have obtained Special Sworn Status are allowed to access an FSRDC and access Census Bureau data as part of an approved project. Local/state data to be linked to Census Bureau data are linked within the FSRDC via the Census Bureau Data Linkage Infrastructure (DLI), and then reside within the FSRDC environment for future data analyses. Local/state staff can be certified to access the FSRDC, and the data can be accessed at other FSRDC facilities (relevant locations include locations at UC Berkeley, UC Irvine, UCLA, USC, and the University of Washington, in addition to Stanford).

4. ***How would you envision data linkage for data sets that are de-identified?***
   The specifics of data linkages depend on the types of data being linked. Linkages within the Census Bureau DLI require the use of identified data to conduct the linkage process. The resulting linked data sets are then harmonized and de-identified, and must remain within the FSRDC if they contain Census Bureau data. Linkages outside the Census Bureau infrastructure between local and state datasets will depend on the specifics of data access and analysis negotiated with relevant state agencies.

5. ***Is there an opportunity to integrate service provider data?***
   Yes, the value of data integration is dependent on the needs of applicants and the specifics of their projects. Whatever data sets might be relevant to help grow and sustain outcomes-oriented projects will guide what data is integrated as part of these projects.

6. ***Is there a possibility that the state-level data owners could deny data requests?***
   Stanford and Third Sector will be spending considerable time working to negotiate data access with relevant state agencies. Several collaborations with state agency leaders in California have been established to provide data access for research and evaluation projects. In our experience, these leaders want to see such projects happen, and they have worked closely with us, their data security officers, and agency attorneys to facilitate the required data agreements. We have consulted with our contacts in these and other agencies to learn what additional relevant datasets may be available, to advise them of this initiative, and to begin developing a governance structure for data access. We have also engaged local research partners in Washington and Oregon who have a track record of

working with state data in their respective states, and have communicated with state officials in these states, to facilitate data access.

7. ***Do the sub-recipients need to hire their own evaluators?***
   No, Stanford and Third Sector will provide evaluation support during the award period. However, evaluators already engaged by applicants for work related to the project in their application are welcome partners and are encouraged to continue to assist in evaluation efforts.

8. ***Within the projects supported by the program, is there room to continue to work with local researchers with expertise in data harmonization, linkage, and analysis?***
   Yes, anyone currently engaged in data analysis and program evaluation work is encouraged to continue to assist in those efforts, and we welcome their expertise.

9. ***Will MOUs between local and state governments be needed to ensure data collection, database communication, and deadline agreements? If so, will Stanford CPI and Third Sector help facilitate this agreement?***
   Yes, doing this work is one of the primary purposes of this award opportunity. One of the main goals for Stanford and Third Sector is to streamline and facilitate the process of executing MOUs for data access. The team at Stanford will take the lead in helping to structure and negotiate data use agreements to facilitate data access and analysis for successful sub-recipients.

10. ***How would the linked data be made available to the government entities selected for participation in this initiative?***

    The Census DLI has an established process for data governance, access, and disclosure avoidance within the highly secure FSRDC environment. One critical requirement is that linked datasets which include Census Bureau data must be analyzed within the FSRDC environment. To analyze linked data within this environment, we will form research and evaluation project teams comprising Stanford and sub-recipient staff, and potentially others engaged in data analysis and program evaluation work with sub-recipients. Members of these teams will obtain Special Sworn Status to access the data. For linked data sets not involving Census Bureau data (e.g., if local/state-only linkages are requested), project teams will operate within Stanford's own secure data environment. In this case, data governance will be subject to the specific requirements of the particular state/local agencies granting access, and will also be informed by Census DLI procedures.

11. ***What entities outside of the jurisdiction of a selected applicant would be permitted to access the applicant's files in their linkages to other sources?***

    A key goal of this program is to establish an administrative-data framework for measuring and evaluating the success of social service programs designed to expand economic opportunity. We aim to broaden access to this framework for non-applicant entities whose work and programs may benefit from it. That said, the terms of access to any dataset that includes linkages to applicant data are ultimately at the discretion of the applicant; the Census Bureau has established procedures for restricting access according to the requirements of the entities that provide data for linkage.

12. ***Where will the linked data reside? Can the linked files be exported to an applicant's servers and machines or do they reside on a remote server?***

    Data linked to Census Bureau data will reside in the FSRDC environment. Data in this environment are typically accessed in a physical FSRDC but may in some cases be accessed remotely. State/local data sets not involving Census Bureau data will reside in Stanford's own secure data environment. These data may also be accessed remotely or provided directly to project team members subject to the specific requirements of the particular agencies granting access.

13. ***If states don't need help accessing and integrating data (because their research staff has already completed data sharing agreements and done other initial work), can the work streams be focused on analysis and performance assessment?***
    Yes, the specifics of the services provided under the Administrative Data Pilot will be contingent on the specific needs of applicants and the workplans they outline as part of their application.

Questions from the Second Webinar

1. ***Are you planning to award grants evenly across the three states?***
   We are not planning to make awards evenly across the three states, though we would welcome and hope that we can get representation across all three states. There are several other possible opportunities that may allow us to fund additional projects, so from within the pool of applicants we expect that projects from all three states will be represented in one form or another.

2. ***Is there an option for the awardees to conduct the data analysis or does Stanford do that alone?***
   There is an option for awardees to conduct the data analysis along with Stanford. The requirement will be that any staff the awardees designate to conduct the data analysis would first complete a federal background check and receive what is called Special Sworn Status, which essentially makes them an unpaid Census Bureau employee while remaining an employee of the local or state agency. This is the same background check process that the researchers at Stanford complete to be able to access the Federal Statistical Research Data Center (FSRDC) on Stanford's campus. These awardee staff would then be able to conduct data analysis at the FSRDC. Data analysis not involving Census Bureau data will be subject to the data access agreement governing the datasets in question, but similarly we expect that local/state staff would be able to participate in the data analysis process.

3. ***How long is Special Sworn Status for local partners valid for? Will local/state analytical staff continue to have access to the linked data after the grant ends?***
   Special Sworn Status may be renewed yearly, with the only requirements being short yearly trainings and an ongoing need to conduct analyses using Census Bureau data for which Special Sworn Status is required. This means that after the grant ends, as long as there are research questions that awardees want to answer by accessing Census Bureau data, then that access may continue subject to the yearly renewal process mentioned previously. It bears repeating that the

Administrative Data Pilot is expressively designed to build internal capacity and expertise around data access, analysis, and deployment, and as such Third Sector and Stanford will work with awardees to determine the process by which this ongoing data access may occur.

4. ***How narrow should the research question be or could one agency apply for multiple projects? We have a number of projects with different emphasis (ex. Poverty, CalWORKs, Children and Family Services) that could benefit from using these data***
   Having a well-defined project as a starting point is an important consideration for this Administrative Data Pilot. Applicants are therefore encouraged to be focused and specific about what data they need and how it can inform a new or existing project. However, applicants should absolutely document in their applications if they expect that this data access will have broad utility across their organization and be able to assist multiple projects, particularly given that one of the evaluation criteria is a commitment by the organization to use data to inform decision-making and that the long-term goal of the Administrative Data Pilot is to improve the ability of participants to do so.

5. ***Can you talk a bit about the project in Ohio child welfare services on obtaining housing for parents? Does Third Sector or the university partner stay involved after the 2.5 year service award period is over?***
   This question is in reference to a previous PFS project conducted by Third Sector in Cleveland, OH, centered on a child welfare and housing intervention. This intervention was a critical-time intervention focused on getting parents into housing and then providing mental health services to address traumatic issues that might lead to future engagement with the child welfare and foster care systems.

   In this project, Case Western Reserve University played a role similar to Stanford's in this competition, linking Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) data with child welfare data and helping the county understand how homelessness and housing instability can lead to interactions with the child welfare system. Case Western has continued in this role and Third Sector continues to support the county and the service provider to understand how the intervention has deployed over time.

   This project in Cuyahoga County provides a great example of one type of project that would align well with the competition scope of the Administrative Data Pilot.

6. **Is it ever possible to turn the PIK data back into identifiable data at the local level?**
   Census Bureau data can only be accessed via the FSRDC data infrastructure, meaning the data is only accessible from within an FSRDC (whether at Stanford or another location). However, non-Census Bureau data linked for the purposes of this project can be accessed from other locations pursuant to the data use agreement negotiated between the relevant agencies. In some cases, the Census Bureau may actually be able to conduct the data linkage and provide the parties with data stripped of personally identifiable data

7. ***Is there an offline copy of the Letter of Intent questions available?***
Yes, the Letter of Interest form is now posted in a Word document format on the project webpage on Third Sector's website.

8. ***Does the data linking and analysis look at historical program outcomes as well as data on future outcomes for participants currently receiving services?***
Yes, and one critical benefit of administrative data is that we can track program participants before, during, and after they've participated in the project under examination. The intent of the data access, analysis, and deployment services under the Administrative Data Pilot are to inform

9. ***Would data for a comparison group be permitted?***
Yes, data for a comparison group is permitted. We would need the same identifying information such as name, address, SSN, and date of birth to be able to link the comparison group to the administrative data. This personally identifiable information (PII) would then be removed once the data linkage is completed and replaced with a unique research identifier. If Census Bureau data holdings are involved, then the linkage would occur within the FSRDC and the research identifier would take the form of the Census PIK identifier.

10. ***What opportunities are there for the linked data to be updated after the grant period ends?***
There is every opportunity. We hope the projects and evaluations continue after the grant period ends. We are building an infrastructure to allow for the update of data and research after the grant period ends. For example, the data sharing agreements can be structured to allow for updates to the program data and for updates to the administrative data.