

Current Research Interests

The William T. Grant Foundation supports research to understand and improve the everyday settings of youth ages 8 to 25 in the United States. Social settings are defined as the social environments in which youth experience daily life. These settings include environments with clear boundaries such as classrooms, schools, and youth-serving organizations and environments with less prescribed boundaries such as neighborhoods or other settings in which youth interact with peers, family members, and other adults. At their best, these settings embed youth within a network of engaging activities; ample resources; meaningful relationships with adults and peers; and opportunities for academic, social, emotional, and identity development.

We support research that enhances our understanding of: (1) how settings work, how they affect youth development, and how they can be improved; and (2) when, how, and under what conditions research evidence is used in policy and practice that affect youth, and how its use can be improved.

Examples of research questions that fit our interests

- How do instructional practices in classrooms affect racial achievement gaps?
- How do welfare policies affect family processes and, in turn, youth's well-being?
- Do activities in a youth organization have different influences on engagement for youth of varying ethnicities?
- Can a professional development intervention improve staff relationships with youth in after-school programs?
- What factors influence the reliability and validity of observational measures of family functioning?
- How do service agency directors' social networks influence their access to and use of research evidence?
- What are the mechanisms by which some organizations are more effective than others in brokering research evidence for policymakers and practitioners?

Applicants and other interested parties should visit our website (www.wtgrantfoundation.org) for more information on our research interests in social settings and use of research evidence and resources related to conducting research on these topics.

Additional Information

The William T. Grant Foundation's Senior Program Team has written a series of essays for our *Annual Reports* in which we describe in-depth our Current Research Interests, the types of studies we support, and our grantees' work. We encourage interested readers to review these essays for detailed discussions of the research questions and topics of interest to the Foundation. In addition, we have written statements detailing how biological processes, interventions, measurement development, and policy and practice fit *our Current Research Interests*. *All this information is available on our website, as are additional resources (e.g., reference lists, tools, publications, presentations) related to our interests in settings and the use of research evidence.*

Within our research interests, we seek studies that inform theory. We support research that builds and tests theories about how various youth settings work and how to improve them. This includes work to develop and improve measures of those settings. We also support studies that build and test theories about when, how, and under what conditions research evidence is used in policy and practice that affect youth and how to improve the use of research evidence.

We are particularly interested in research that can inform policy or practice. We do not expect that any one study will have policy or practice impact but believe in the importance of accumulating a body of useful and relevant empirical evidence. In reviewing applications for individual studies, we consider whether the project addresses questions or issues that are important to youth policy and/or practice. Some studies directly examine policy choices, program practices, and services. Other studies advance our understanding of how youth settings work and how they affect youth in ways that can inform policy or practice.

Applicants often ask us if we prefer studies focusing on specific types of youth settings and outcomes or that employ particular designs and methods. We are interested in a range of different settings, including but not limited to youth programs, schools, after-school programs, families, peer groups, and neighborhoods. We also are interested in a range of important youth development outcomes, including those related to schooling, employment, health, social and emotional well-being, and identity. We support a variety of research designs and methods. In our application reviews, we look first at the research questions and then at the research designs and methods, because we believe applicants should choose the research designs and methods best suited to the questions posed.