

# **The New Jersey State Policy Lab:**

## **Notice of Fund Availability**

### **Introduction:**

The New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) announces availability of funds to establish a State Policy Lab (hereafter referred to ‘Policy Lab’) at a research university in the state of New Jersey. The purpose of the Policy Lab will be to contribute high-quality, nonpartisan research and analysis of policy-based solutions to the issues facing New Jersey. The Policy Lab will initiate long-term projects that help improve New Jersey governance and quality of life, and it will partner with state government to generate solutions to immediate problems.

It is anticipated that one (1) grant of \$1 million will be awarded to a research institution of higher education in New Jersey to establish and operate the Policy Lab. Upon award of the grant, the recipient will receive an initial \$500,000, and the remainder of the grant funding will be disbursed as expenses are incurred, in accordance with the plan outlined by the proposed Policy Lab.

The following summarizes the funding schedule:

March 1, 2021	Notice of funding availability released
March 31, 2021	Deadline for proposals from prospective applicants
April 23, 2021	Applicants notified of funding award
April 30, 2021	Initial disbursement of state funds released to successful candidate

### **Purpose:**

The Fiscal Year 2021 State Budget signed by Governor Philip D. Murphy allocates \$1 million to establish a State Policy Lab at an institution of higher education in New Jersey. The Policy Lab will serve as an independent source of information, research, and analysis on pertinent public policy matters that improve the functions of governmental agencies.

The Policy Lab’s outcomes will include:

- Providing high-quality, nonpartisan research on policy-based solutions to issues facing New Jersey;

- Promoting changes directed at improving how public entities in New Jersey operate, including how they overcome institutional divisions to jointly solve problems and carry out responsibilities;
- Providing policy-makers throughout New Jersey with clear and accessible research on state and local governance as well as public decision-making;
- Data modeling for policy recommendations to enable state policymakers to test different budgetary and legislative scenarios;
- Evaluating the potential impacts of proposed statewide public policy measures;
- Building coalitions across governments, institutions of higher education, and community organizations to support evidence-based policy initiatives; and
- Assisting stakeholders in troubleshooting unanticipated policy implementation issues.

The Policy Lab will be a state-of-the-art research center providing timely and thoughtful analysis of innovative public policy initiatives.

### **Uses of Funds/Administrative and Operational Expenses:**

The Policy Lab will be housed in and operated by one of New Jersey's leading research universities. In addition to providing leadership for the lab and management of its research objectives, the select institution will provide facilities and related services and resources. This institution will receive seed funding of \$1 million from the State of New Jersey to operate the lab. The seed funding should be used for:

- Staffing expenses for a full-time center research director, multidisciplinary researchers, communications staff, and administrative support;
- Expenses for facilities, IT/software, and equipment;
- Research-related expenses for interviews, publications, subscriptions, surveys, statistical analysis, and access to databases;
- Communications expenses for printing, website, social media, and digital media as necessary to publish white papers, studies, articles, and research data; and
- Event production expenses to cover the costs for small-scale conferences, roundtables, panels, and web-based teleconferences to convene state and national experts.

Upon award of the grant, the recipient will receive an initial \$500,000, and the remainder of the grant will be disbursed as expenses are incurred, in accordance with the plan outlined by the proposed Policy Lab. The grant agreement will be subject to the terms and conditions set forth in [Circular 07-05-OMB: Grant Agreements – Agency Contracts](#).

### **Selection Criteria:**

The State seeks an academic partner that can fully execute the Policy Lab and is positioned to sustain the center independently upon exhaustion of the seed funding. This institution will take

the lead in implementing a high-quality research endeavor. The selection criteria will depend heavily on the following:

- The selected institution must be classified as an institution with a “moderate, higher, or highest research activity” as designated by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.”
- The selected institution must be prepared to engage with experts, institutions of higher education, government agencies, and municipal bodies throughout the State of New Jersey and beyond to ensure that all research conducted will encompass the full scope of policy-based solutions.
- The selected institution must be responsive to the State’s policy research needs and priorities.
- The selected institution must possess a robust multidisciplinary academic environment and capacity to draw expertise from programs such as (but not limited to) cultural studies, economics, medicine, public health, business administration, engineering, statistical sciences, health services research, information technology, public policy, workforce development, housing, education, and areas of law (e.g., criminal justice, domestic violence, civil rights, civil liberties, national security)
- The selected institution should demonstrate a record of scholarly research and other contributions in state and local government public policy.
- The selected institution must demonstrate a willingness to provide as many in-kind resources as possible to optimize the \$1 million allocation. This includes a secured space for administration and researchers, IT/equipment, communications, utility facilities and services, parking, etc.
- The selected institution must demonstrate a capacity for effective fundraising to ensure the work of this lab is sustained over time.
- The selected institution must demonstrate the analytics capacity and resources required to clean and analyze data, in order to produce high-quality research that advances state policy.

### **Research Outputs:**

It is expected that the Policy Lab will fulfill its mission by providing high-quality research on the problems and potential solutions related to matters of public policy in New Jersey. This research should be conducted in accordance with sound scientific principles and methodologies (research design, data collection, experimentation, prospective trials, and analysis) and should be accessible and understandable to policymakers and the general public. It is expected that research outputs from the Policy Lab will be used in the formulation of:

- Policy Design – The Policy Lab’s research will guide and inform the development of legislation and policies in the State of New Jersey.
- Public Education – The Policy Lab’s research will guide and inform New Jersey state government and partner institutions/organizations in the development of public

awareness initiatives and programs to educate all segments of the population on policymaking and state and local governance.

- High Quality Research - It is anticipated that most research outputs will be provided in the form of reports, studies, white papers, or data outputs (e.g., spreadsheets) that can be shared with other researchers and mined for unique insights.
- Institutional Collaboration – The Policy Lab’s research will guide and inform New Jersey state government regarding the development of alliances and strategic partnerships that can be created among institutions of higher education, community organizations, and state agencies.

### **The State Policy Lab’s Relationship with the State of New Jersey:**

The OSHE is responsible for overseeing the application process, the selection of the institution that will house the Policy Lab, and the disbursement of seed funding to the selected candidate. The Policy Lab will be accountable to the OSHE by submitting mid-year and end-of-year progress reports detailing budgetary information, staff performance, work progress, and the emergence of challenges or impediments to the lab’s mission and operations, until the funding has been fully distributed. In addition, the Policy Lab will be expected to engage in ongoing reporting with the OSHE regarding its research, events, and other activities. Further, the grant agreement with the Policy Lab will be subject to the terms and conditions set forth in Circular 07-05-OMB: Grant Agreements – Agency Contracts.

The State will partner to support the Policy Lab in initial (year 1) activities, including the hiring of an inaugural executive director, the publication of initial reports, policy briefs, and blog posts. The Policy Lab will be expected to partner with other groups in the development of informational events and activities. The Policy Lab must also demonstrate a willingness to partner with existing state agencies to share datasets and develop and/or co-sponsor programs, in order to carry out its research mission.

### **Items for Submission:**

Any research university responding to this notice should provide the following information, including as much detail as possible where applicable (e.g., including dollars, staff numbers, units of equipment, square footage):

- List of best contact in the event of any follow-up on the submission.
- Statement explaining how and why the institution is ideally positioned to fulfill the State of New Jersey’s mission for the Policy Lab, based on the selection criteria outlined in this document. This should include a description of how the institution is able to respond to emergent issues in state government.
- Complete operational plan and budget forecast for fiscal year ‘21 (FY21), as well as a projected budget for FY22, with an indication of how in-kind contributions from the

institution, potential research grants, and other philanthropic support will be leveraged to support ongoing operational costs.

- Proposed research reports, policy briefs, and/or blog posts that could be published within the first three, six and 12 months of the Policy Lab’s creation, respectively.
- List of potential events related to policymaking and state governance that could occur within the first six months of the Policy Lab’s creation.
- Plan detailing sustainability of the Policy Lab beyond its first year.
- List of academic programs and departments that can contribute to public policy research.
- List of expected staff biographies and corresponding publications related to public policy research.
- List of past successful collaborations with external partners, such as state agencies and departments and/or community partnerships.
- List of in-kind resources (office, workspace, desktop stations, software, IT equipment, and more) that the institution is willing to provide to advance the Policy Lab’s mission.
- Proposed list of full- and part-time staff (inclusive of titles and hourly rates per month) along with total contributions in hours per month for each staff member.
- Process for identifying an Executive Director with appropriate experience and qualifications for the leadership role of the Policy Lab—this includes a draft job description, list of responsibilities, and timeline for hiring.
- List of relevant data sets with brief description to which the institution has access or is currently building.

Each of these sections within the application should have a clear and appropriate heading.

Priority will be given to joint proposals between research institutions committing to collaborate on the State Policy Lab.

**Total Budgetary Itemization and Projection:**

The budgetary forecast for the Policy Lab should provide estimates for funds drawn from the state’s \$1 million allocation as well as a dollar amount to reflect the value of in-kind provisions from the institution. Applicants should be able to demonstrate how resources (financial and in-kind) will be used in FY21. As set forth in Circular 07-05-OMB, to the extent that any portion of the grant funds are not dispersed in FY21, they are subject to appropriation for use in FY22 and beyond. The below budgetary forecast serves as a sample template for prospective applicants.

Expense Category	State Budget Allocation	In-Kind Provisions
Staff and Contractors		
Executive Director (Full-time)		
Fiscal Manager		
Administrative Support		
Senior Researchers		
Researchers		
Paid Interns		
Specialized Contractors (statisticians, data analysts, programmers, etc.)		

Other*		
<b>Overhead Costs</b>		
Office Space		
Equipment (computers, telephones, software)		
Utilities (electric, telephone, internet)		
<b>Support Services</b>		
IT Support		
Communications (print, PR, social media, web development)		
Human Resources		
Printing/Shipping		
Research Costs		
Security		
Parking		
Janitorial		
Additional Amenities		
<b>Events</b>		
Conferences, Roundtables, and Web-Events		
Catering		
Set-Up, A/V, and Support		
Honorariums for Speakers		
<b>Research Expenses</b>		
Subscriptions		
Publications		
Software (survey design)		
Travel Expenses and Lodging		
<b>Total Expenses for FY 2021</b>		

*\*For the addition of any 'other' category, please identify the line item expense and breakdown by adding another row within the category or adding a brief description within the application.*

**Deadline for Submission:**

The above requested information should be submitted as a single PDF file and no more than 30 pages in length to OSHE no later than March 31, 2021 at 5 p.m. Submissions may be emailed to OSHE@oshe.nj.gov with the subject line "State Policy Lab – (Name of Institution)". OSHE will confirm receipt of application.

Questions about this notice of fund availability should also be directed to OSHE@oshe.nj.gov.