Alliance for Learning Innovation

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN EDUCATION R&D

via State & Local Infrastructure; Inclusive R&D;
and HBCUs, MSIs & TCUs

Alliance For
Learning
Innovation

The need to strengthen America's competitiveness in the world, the quickly changing demands of our modern society and economy, and the COVID-19 pandemic's disruption of traditional learning and exacerbation of existing educational inequities have all placed a spotlight on the importance of supporting all learners and educators across all contexts. **To make real progress, we must buttress our current education improvement efforts with a larger and more robust education research and development (R&D) ecosystem that spurs innovation and grows the evidence base of what works, for whom, and under what conditions.**

The Alliance for Learning Innovation (ALI) has been advocating for increased federal investment, effectiveness, and coherence in education R&D, and is committed to advancing critical aspects of a more effective education R&D ecosystem. To better understand the current state of affairs and chart a path forward, ALI convened a diverse cross-section of education leaders, including perspectives from across the education ecosystem, to serve on **task forces** that dug into the following three critical priorities:

What is ALI?

The Alliance for Learning Innovation (ALI) brings together education nonprofits, philanthropy, and the private sector, to advocate for building a better research and development (R&D) infrastructure in education. ALI advocates for increased capacity of education R&D and supports the research and development of evidence-based innovation in education that centers students and practitioners, advances equity, improves talent pathways, and expands the workforce needed in a globally competitive world.

1. Strengthening State and Local Education R&D Infrastructure

There is a compelling case for investing more in education R&D infrastructure at the state and local levels. Over 90% of education funding comes from state and local sources. Innovation, decision-making, and implementation all happen there. For R&D to be more effective, it must become more proximate to the educators, learners, families, and communities it seeks to support. Strengthening R&D capacity at the state and local levels will lead to more effective and efficient use of public resources to help each student thrive.

2. Making the Education R&D Ecosystem More Inclusive

The education R&D ecosystem is composed of myriad components and actors, yet almost every part of it needs to become more inclusive of practitioners and of the communities the R&D seeks to serve. To be more inclusive, practitioners and communities must help determine R&D priorities, including the methods and processes used to pursue those priorities. Inclusive R&D values the perspectives and experiences of the people involved, and the context and policies that guide their decision-making.

3. Expanding and Strengthening the Role in Education R&D of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs)

For education R&D to be more effective and responsive to the needs of all learners, educators, and communities, we must expand education R&D funding to a wider array of institutions and individuals; grow and sustain a more diverse pipeline of R&D professionals; and better incorporate a broader range of communities' assets, needs, expertise, and perspectives. This must include an intentional focus on institutions that provide some of our most promising pathways to progress: HBCUs, MSIs, and TCUs.

Each task force produced a policy brief outlining priority recommendations, the topline summaries of which appear in the chart below. Access the briefs at www.alicoalition.org/taskforces. Note that six recommendations (in **purple**) are common across the State and Local Education R&D Infrastructure (**blue**) and Inclusive Education R&D (**red**) task forces. The latter shares one recommendation***** with the HBCUs, MSIs & TCUs (**green**) task force.

State & Local Infrastructure	Inclusive R&D

1. Prioritize knowledge mobilization and engagement to increase the impact of education R&D.
2. Invest in high-quality collaborative education R&D efforts centered at the state and local levels.
3. Leverage fellowships to add R&D capacity.
4. Develop "state and local R&D infrastructure" and "inclusive R&D" playbooks (or one combined playbook) for higher education and help aligned institutions execute it.
5. Develop "state and local R&D infrastructure" and "inclusive R&D" playbooks (or one combined playbook) for philanthropy and help aligned philanthropies execute it.
6. Communicate the importance of state and local education R&D infrastructure and inclusive R&D.

State & Local Infrastructure	Inclusive R&D
7. Develop and sustain internal state and local R&D capacity, particularly through targeted funding.	7. Provide some R&D funding directly to practitioners and communities.
8. Deploy existing R&D infrastructure more toward strengthening state and local R&D capacity.	8. Evaluate R&D partnerships.
9. Modernize state longitudinal data systems and strengthen related policies and capacity.	9. Design more inclusive Requests for Applications (RFAs).
10. Require that R&D project budgets include a more functional allocation of the funding for indirect costs with SEA or LEA partners.	10. Diversify peer reviewers.
11. Make federal waiver processes more accessible to support innovation.	11. Make the invisible visible.*****
	12. Encourage the development and use of measures that will generate more accurate and useful data to inform inclusive R&D.

HBCUs, MSIs & TCUs

1. Build and extend grant writing/management capacity to secure and implement education R&D grants.
2. Make the invisible visible.*****
3. Prioritize and incentivize HBCU/MSI/TCU engagement.
4. Ensure representation among peer reviewers.
5. Develop programs to grow scholarship and expertise.
6. Leverage networks and shared services.

Advancing all of these recommendations is a long-term project—as is building, strengthening, and sustaining the human capacity necessary to take advantage of the resulting new opportunities. But we can make important progress in the short- and medium-terms, with bright spots to build upon, promising "build anew" efforts to fill gaps in the status quo, and a growing consensus that state and local R&D infrastructure, inclusive R&D, and HBCUs, MSIs & TCUs must be central to any effort to improve education outcomes for each student.