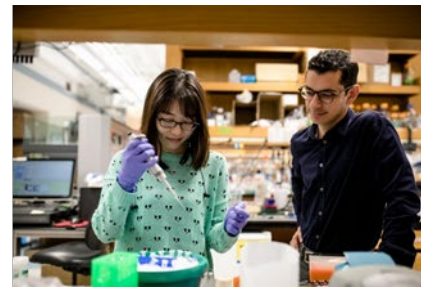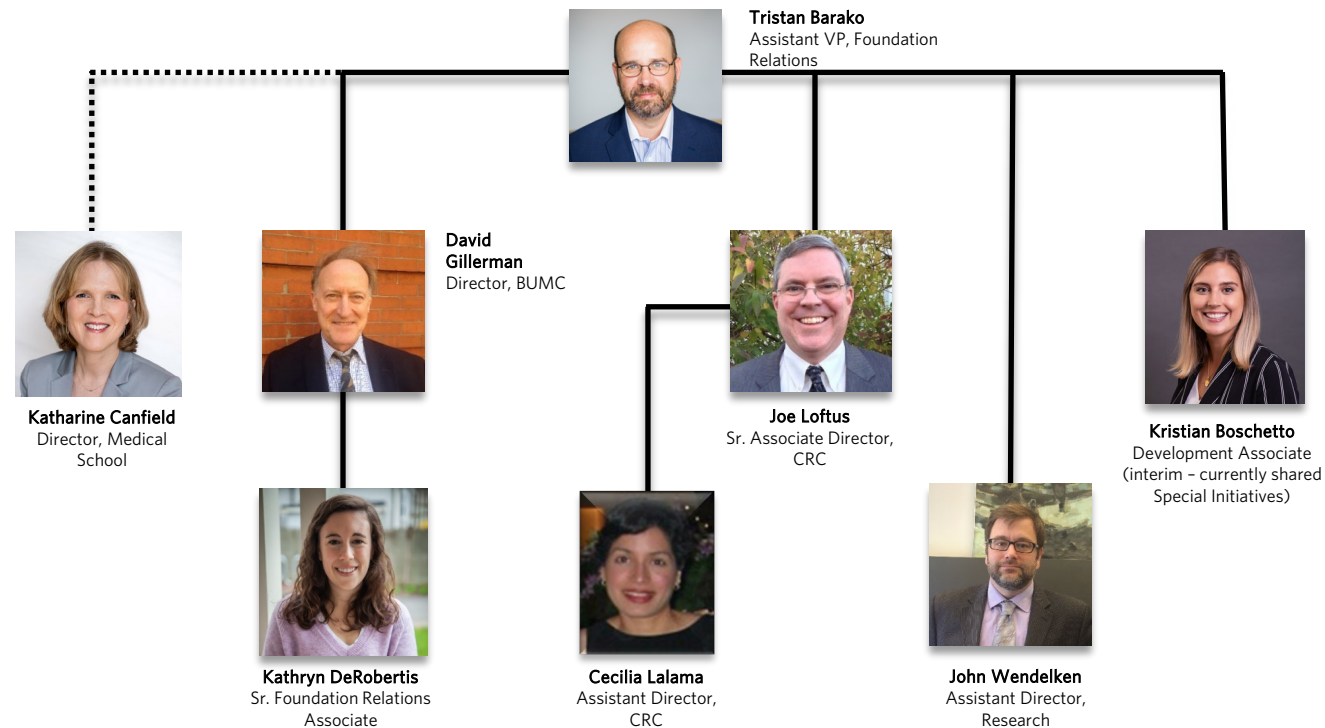# Finding Funding in the Social Sciences: Meet the William T. Grant Foundation

BU Office of Research & Foundation Relations Workshop
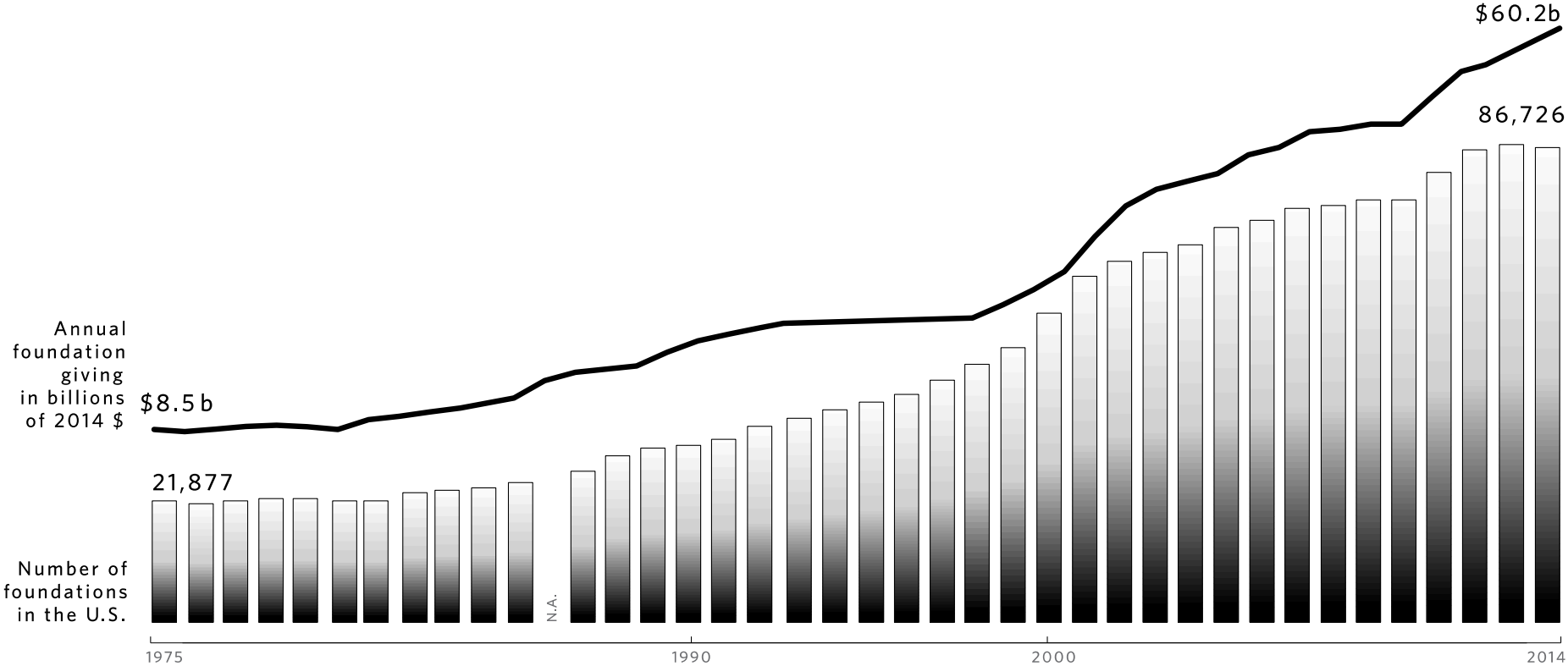
Foundation Relations team
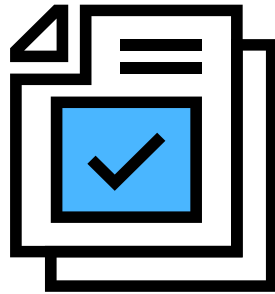
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Boston University Office of Research

Foundation Funding trends

Annual foundation giving in billions of 2014 $

$60.2 b

$8.5 b

86,726

21,877

Number of foundations in the U.S.

N.A.

1975   1990   2000   2014

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

What Foundation Relations does

Identification:
targeted RFP distribution; early career roadmaps

Cultivation:
leverage alumni connections; info sessions w/ funders

Solicitation:
drafting/editing/reviewing; peripheral components; proposal library

www.bu.edu/foundations/

Boston University Office of Research

Contact:
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https://bushare.sharepoint.com/sites/Proposal-Library

Boston University Office of Research

Plan for today

➢ William T. Grant Foundation

➢ Foundation's focus areas
  o Reducing Inequality
  o Improving the Use of Research Evidence

➢ Opportunities for funding
  o Research Grants
  o Scholars Program
  o Institutional Challenge Grants

William T. Grant
FOUNDATION

Our History

1930's

1940's

1950's

1960's

1970's

1980's

1990's

2000's

2010's

- Founded in 1936

- Committed to understanding human behavior through research

- Focus on the most pressing challenges confronting young people

- Support high-quality research relevant to youth ages 5 to 25 in the U.S.

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Focus Areas

REDUCING INEQUALITY IN YOUTH OUTCOMES

IMPROVING THE USE OF RESEARCH EVIDENCE IN WAYS THAT BENEFIT YOUTH

Goal

Build strong theory and compelling evidence about ways to inform change that benefits young people.

Reducing Inequality

- We seek research to reduce inequality on the basis of **economic standing, race, ethnicity, and immigrant origin status**

- We seek research to **build, test, or improve policies, programs, and practices** to reduce inequality in **academic, behavioral, economic, or social outcomes**

Types of Studies

- Intervention studies that examine attempts to reduce inequality

- Descriptive studies that clarify the mechanisms for reducing inequality

- Measurement studies of inequality that will enhance the work of researchers, practitioners, or policymakers

- Research that addresses ways to combat systemic racism and the structural foundations of inequality

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Application Tips

- Clearly identify the dimension(s) of inequality to be studied (e.g., race, ethnicity, economic standing, and/or immigrant origins)

- Specify the youth outcome(s) to be studied (e.g., academic, social, behavioral, and/or economic)

- Show that the outcomes are currently unequal

- Articulate a lever for reducing inequality

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Is It a Fit?

- Can you complete this sentence?

This project explores how [proposed lever] operates as a lever of change to offset inequalities in [specific youth outcome(s)] for [dimension of inequality] youth (or youth living in/with [dimension of inequality]).

- For example:

This project explores how a mindfulness intervention operates as a lever of change to offset inequalities in mental health outcomes for LGBTQAI youth.

This project explores the mechanisms by which political engagement operates as a lever of change to offset inequalities in academic outcomes for youth living in poverty.

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Is It a Fit?

- Do I have to directly measure youth outcomes?

No, particularly if there is a strong empirical or theoretical argument to be made for why a given lever would lead to improved youth outcomes in the intermediate or long term.

- For example:

This project will test whether an anti-racist professional development intervention for teachers mitigates their practices of exclusionary discipline toward Black elementary school-age children. As research shows, experiences of exclusionary discipline have been shown to negatively impact Black children's academic performance and engagement.

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Is It a Fit?

- True or False?

  - This project focuses on vulnerable (at-risk, at-promise, disadvantaged, etc.) youth

    - NOT a fit—these all-encompassing terms are too broad and vague. Successful proposals provide a compelling argument for why a proposed lever could mitigate a *specific* (or intersectional) dimension of inequality.

  - This project is about documenting the extent or impact of inequality

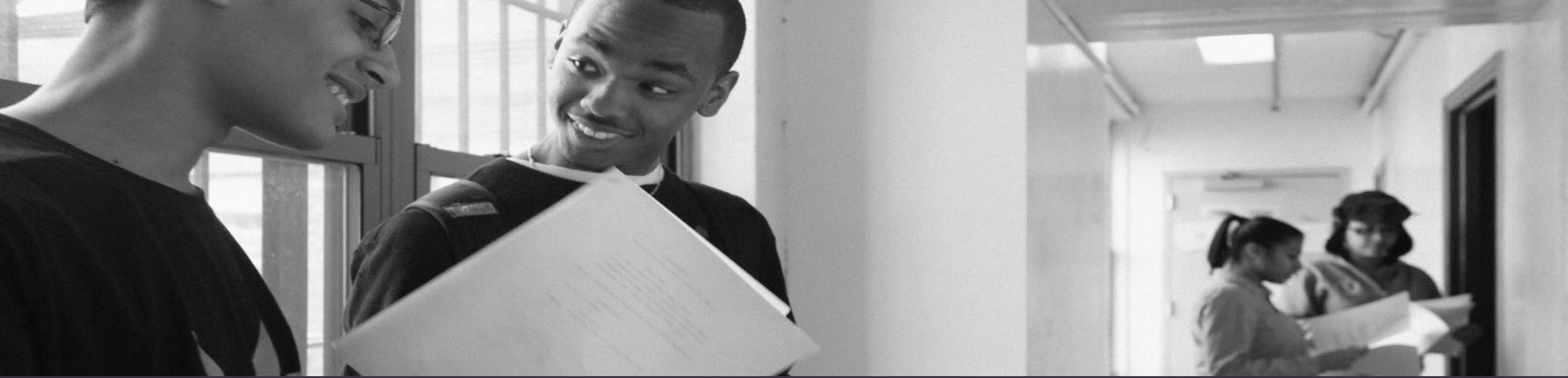   - NOT a fit—the project must focus on *reducing* inequality.

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Improving the Use of Research Evidence

- Identify, create, and test the structural and social conditions that **foster more routine and constructive uses of existing research evidence.**

- Identify, create, and test the incentives, structures, and relationships that facilitate the production of new research evidence that **responds to decision makers' needs.**

- Investigate **whether and under what conditions** using high quality research evidence improves decision making and youth outcomes.

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Application Tips

- Clearly identify how you will conceptualize and operationalize the use of research evidence.

- Focus on an area in which a body of research evidence, if used, has the potential to benefit youth.

- Proposals should be strong both theoretically and methodologically.

- Special interest in state and local decision makers and intermediary organizations.

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Studying the Use of Research Evidence:
A Review of Methods

Drew H. Gitomer
Rutgers University

Kevin Crouse
Rutgers University

Is It a Fit?

- Can you complete this sentence?

This project explores how [proposed mechanism] improves the use of research evidence in [specific youth program or policy areas].

- For example:

This project explores how a research practice partnerships operates as a lever of change to increase the use of research evidence in the mental health system.

This project tests whether district curriculum development managers use of research evidence improves academic outcomes for youth.

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Is It a Fit?

- True or False?

  - This project focuses on use of data, not research evidence

    - NOT a fit—research evidence is derived from applying systematic methods and analyses to address a predefined question or hypothesis

  - This project is about describing the use of research evidence

    - NOT a fit—the project must focus on *improving* the use of research evidence. Proposals may include descriptive studies to *clarify mechanisms* for improving research use.

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Is It a Fit?

- True or False?

  - This project focuses on front-line practitioners

    - NOT a fit—the project should focus on state and local decision makers, mid-level managers, and/ or intermediaries

  - This project proposes a change effort but does not study it

    - NOT a fit—the project should study (identify, build, test) strategies to enhance the use of research evidence

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Funding Opportunities

- Research Grants
- Scholars Award
- Institutional Challenge Grant

Research Grants

- The goal of this program is to fund studies that build theory and empirical evidence in our two primary focus areas.

- Letters of inquiry are accepted in January, May, and August. Applicants with promising projects will be invited to submit a full proposal for further consideration.

- Major grants on reducing inequality typically range from $100,000 to $600,000 and cover two to three years of support. Major grants on the use of research evidence range from $100,000 to $1,000,000 and cover two to four years of support.

- Officers' research grants in both focus areas typically range from $25,000 to $50,000. Applications are accepted in January and August.

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William T. Grant Scholars

- The goal of this program is to fund studies that build theory and empirical evidence in our two primary focus areas, as well as to facilitate the professional development of early-career scholars in the social, behavioral, and health sciences. We seek applicants who have demonstrated success in conducting high quality research and are looking *to extend their work to new areas.*

- Applications are accepted annually in July and reviewed by the Scholars Selection Committee.

- Scholars receive $350,000 each to support five years of research and a mentoring plan to acquire new expertise.

- Scholars also are offered opportunities to network and build their skills through meetings and workshops.

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Institutional Challenge Grant

- The goal of this program is to encourage research institutions to build sustained research-practice partnerships with public agencies or nonprofit organizations in order to reduce inequality in youth outcomes.

- Applications are accepted once per year in June and are reviewed by the Institutional Challenge Grant Selection Committee.

- Applications are welcome from partnerships in youth-serving areas such as education, justice, child welfare, mental health, immigration, and workforce development.

- The Foundation will make a $650,000 award to a research institution to support a research-practice partnership for three years. The award may be renewable for an additional two-year term.

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Application Tips

- Make sure the fit is strong.

- Show how the work significantly adds to theory and prior empirical work.

- Tackle a few research questions or hypotheses well.

- Show the project's relevance for policy or practice.

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Application Tips

- Map research design, methods, and analyses tightly to the research questions or hypotheses.

- Provide sufficient information for reviewers to evaluate rigor and appropriateness of methods.

- Demonstrate your understanding of the strengths and limitations of the design, methods, and analyses.

- Respond to reviews seriously, graciously, and in depth.

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On Our Website

wtgrantfoundation.org/grants/research-grants-reducing-inequality

√   Research Grants Application Guide and submission instructions

√   Relevant papers and essays

√   FAQs

√   Webinar recording and slides

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Questions?

THANK YOU!

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Supporting Research to Improve the Lives of Young People

Questions?

www.bu.edu/research
www.bu.edu/foundations

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