



**INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION**  
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## **IDRA José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows Program Call for Applications**

### **Purpose**

The José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows Program was established by IDRA to honor the memory of IDRA founder, Dr. José Angel Cárdenas. The goal of the program is engage the nation's most promising researchers in investigating school finance solutions that secure equity and excellence for all public school students. The José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows Program will focus on and fund school finance research that builds cross-disciplinary and inter-sector perspectives on equity. IDRA will select one or more fellows per year who will dedicate themselves to a period of intense study and writing in school finance. IDRA will hold an annual symposium that includes release of the fellow's program paper. The paper and findings will be published in the symposium proceedings and disseminated to the education research and policymaker community.

### **Key Dates\***

February 2015	2015-16 Call for Applications released
October 30, 2015	Applications due – <b>new date</b>
November 2015	Notifications to applicants
Dec 2015-Jan 2016	Formalize agreements and announce selection
2016	Fellow, in consultation with IDRA, conducts research and develops initial findings, completes one-month post as Fellow in Residence, and submits research paper
January 8, 2017	Fellows paper is finalized and symposium planned; application process begins for 2016 fellow.
Spring 2017	IDRA José A. Cárdenas School Finance Symposium is held

### **Total Awards and Length of Appointment**

The José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellow will be selected for a defined period beginning in early 2016. Fellows will receive a stipend of up to \$20,000 to include cost of release time, travel and IDRA one-month residency. IDRA will provide office space during the residency.

### **Eligibility and Selection Criteria**

*The IDRA José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows Program is open to all eligible applicants regardless of race, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, or sexual orientation.*

To be eligible, applicants must be:

- Doctoral candidate or completed doctoral training by time of selection, or
- Academic candidate reflecting scholarly experience in conducting school finance or related research, or
- Practitioner with an equivalent level of academic/professional achievement.

Applications will be judged on the applicant's past research record, career trajectory in education research and the quality of the project described in the application. Applications must be made by the individual applying for the fellowship; group applications will not be accepted.

### **Residency Requirement**

The fellow will be required to reside in San Antonio and work directly with IDRA staff for one month during the fellowship program. Costs for travel, meals and housing will be incorporated into the \$20,000 total budgeted for the fellowship. IDRA will provide office space during the residency.

### **Research Questions to be Addressed**

The IDRA José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows Program is designed to inform policy reform in the area of school finance. Based on expert panel recommendations, we are requesting that applicants select from the list of research questions outlined below. Variations of these topics will be considered as will other research questions, provided the applicant offers compelling arguments regarding why their proposed focus topic is a strong alternative.

1. Following the great economic recession in 2008, the federal government helped to offset state education budget shortfalls by the infusion of billions of dollars in short-term federal funding in support of public education. Since that period, how much have the states maintained or expanded overall and per pupil funding for their public schools, and what factors have impacted levels of state re-investment?
2. Reviews of state-level funding formulae that address special students' needs – ranging from funding for English language learner education to state allocations for low-income children, children considered at-risk and gifted students – reflect inconsistent and often incoherent policy trends. What cross-cutting contextual factors have contributed to such distinctive levels of state funding for special populations, and what kinds of initiatives might be explored to support greater uniformity or alignment in the states providing supplemental funding to serve students' specialized needs?
3. Accountability for student outcomes has been the major reform focus in many states around the country, but few have examined the effect of this accountability focus on related issues of funding adequacy or funding equity. What have been the impact – intended or unintended – of student-outcome accountability reforms on state and national efforts to improve levels of educational adequacy and education equity within and across states?
4. State funding for school facilities varies extensively from state to state. What factors contribute to expanded state investment in public and charter school facilities, and how can those be used to move states that make minimal investments in supporting facilities funding into expanding their support for facilities construction and/or maintenance?
5. Many states provide extensive funding for higher education facilities while providing little state funding for building and maintaining preK-12 public schools. Despite obviously different historical grounding, what can public school facilities funding efforts learn from the more effective facilities funding policy strategies employed by the higher education sector?
6. Litigation has historically served as an effective strategy to accelerate policy reforms designed to improve educational equity or adequacy. What lessons can be derived from successful litigation efforts that will support the adoption of strong equity and adequacy policies at the state levels, and what are important lessons learned from unsuccessful

challenges in attempting to translate legal victories into positive state-level policy funding reforms?

7. Local public school district foundations – often totally independent of local school district oversight – have emerged in states where policies were developed to close funding gaps across school districts. How prevalent are public school district foundations, and do their levels of funding vary extensively within states where they have proliferated? What kind of impact is this type of funding having on state efforts to increasing funding equity across public school funding systems?
8. Past federal efforts to create incentives to improve equity in states' public school funding systems have been weak and ineffective. Why have these federal efforts failed, and what are new policy strategies that should be explored to create more effective and more accelerated state efforts to address public school funding disparities?
9. While much discussion over the years at the state policy level in realizing equal educational opportunities for all has involved the debate over equal and adequate state school finance systems, more recent research turns to closing “opportunity gaps,” such as access to high quality teaching. What are some of the policy reforms addressing opportunity gaps, and how successful have they been in realizing equal educational opportunities for all? What is the relationship between opportunity gaps and funding mechanisms? Is it possible to close opportunity gaps without addressing school funding gaps?

## **Application Process**

To apply, submit the following:

- Completed application form with description of proposed research.
- Curriculum vita
- Three letters of recommendation
- Sample published and/or unpublished writing

Send application materials to:

IDRA José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows Program  
Intercultural Development Research Association  
Attn: Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Office of the President & CEO  
5815 Callaghan Road, Suite 101  
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Questions may be directed to Dr. Albert Cortez, 210-444-1710, [albert.cortez@idra.org](mailto:albert.cortez@idra.org).