

Collaborative Urban and Greater Minnesota Educators of Color (CUGMEC) Grant Program

Update to 2021 Evaluation Report

January 2023

Problems Identified

- **Unclear Program Focus.** First created in 1997, the Legislature only recently codified the CUGMEC grant program in 2019. In doing so, it used statutory language that makes it unclear whether the program—which awards grants to higher education institutions with teacher preparation programs—should focus only on activities that would increase the number of teacher *candidates*, or if it should also include other activities that would increase the number of *teachers*. In the absence of legislative direction, the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) prioritized funding for direct financial assistance to teacher candidates when awarding grants for fiscal years 2020 and 2021. Prior to Fiscal Year 2020, grantees used funds for a variety of activities.
- **Grant Award Process Lacked Clarity.** While PELSB’s award process met most requirements and was generally transparent, we noted that PELSB could clarify its instructions for scoring grant proposals. Additionally, PELSB’s grant application templates did not require applicants to report data in a uniform manner or provide all information on which PELSB must base grant awards.
- **Unreliable Data.** Our analysis of PELSB’s data showed a slight increase in recent years in the percentage of Minnesota teachers who are people of color or American Indian. However, a lack of reliable data on public school teachers’ race and ethnicities makes it difficult to accurately determine the racial and ethnic composition of the teacher workforce. In addition, grantee institutions’ reports to the Legislature and PELSB did not provide comparable data across all institutions, making it difficult for the Legislature and PELSB to assess the impact of the program as a whole.

Actions Needed

- **Update Grant Application Materials.** PELSB has revised the CUGMEC grant application and scoring rubric to better standardize how applicants report data and meet additional statutory requirements when awarding grants. The board should further revise materials to clarify scoring instructions.
- **Define Program Focus.** We recommend that the Legislature (1) clearly define the focus of the CUGMEC grant program, (2) outline how grant funding may be used and establish corresponding outcome measures, and (3) review requirements for awarding grant funds.
- **Improve Data Collection.** While PELSB reports that it is working with Minnesota IT Services (MNIT) to improve the Educators Online data system, the Executive Director noted that the system uses multiple data sources and would require a financial investment to ensure data accuracy. Nevertheless, we recommend PELSB continue to standardize and improve data collection efforts.
- **Clarify Reporting Requirements.** We recommend that the Legislature and PELSB clarify reporting requirements for the CUGMEC program to allow for reporting on the program as a whole.