

# Siyaphumelela Network 3.0

Request for Proposal

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# Table of Contents

<i>Table of Contents</i> .....	<i>i</i>
Introduction .....	2
Siyaphumelela 1.0 and 2.0 .....	3
Background .....	3
Siyaphumelela 1.0 .....	3
Siyaphumelela 2.0 .....	4
Partner review .....	5
Challenges identified in Siyaphumelela 2.0.....	6
Siyaphumelela Successes .....	7
Design of Siyaphumelela 3.0 .....	8
Overview.....	8
Belonging to the Siyaphumelela 3.0 Network - Institutional Benefits .....	12
Request for Participation.....	13
Process for Selection of Partner Institutions .....	13
Requirements for Concept Papers and Proposals .....	14
Applicant commitments .....	16
Competitive Application Features.....	17
Application Packs and Proposal Submission .....	17
RFP Timeline.....	17



# Introduction

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The Siyaphumelela Initiative is about to embark on its third phase of embedding student success in South African higher education.

The Kresge Foundation is pleased to invite South African Higher Education Institutions to become Partners in the Siyaphumelela Network 3.0 planned to commence in June 2024. Selected institutions will be eligible for three annual payments of \$50,000 to \$75,000 (total grants will be from \$150,000 to \$225,000/R2.75 million to R4.1 million)

The Siyaphumelela Network 3.0 aims to advance and refine the principles that underpinned the first two phases of the Siyaphumelela Initiative. These principles centre around collaborative efforts to advance equity in South African higher education by:

- Establishing a more student-centred culture in South Africa's higher education system to improve student completion rates and reduce race and gender equity differences
- Improving institutional capacity to collect and use student data to improve student success across the higher education system
- Expanding evidence-based student success efforts on a national scale, using a networked approach that builds on existing strengths, shares capacity throughout the system, and serves institutions based on their current needs and abilities.

Siyaphumelela uses a collective impact approach to systemically change how universities serve students nationally and within institutions, focusing on institutional change.

As Butler-Adam concluded in his report on the Siyaphumelela Initiative in South Africa<sup>1</sup>

*....the Siyaphumelela Network institutions have made significant progress and the student success initiative is widely recognised as a successful catalyst for change. Along with 'Achieving the Dream'<sup>2</sup> it has played a unique and effective role in promoting student success. The enduring presence and effective operation of these initiatives have laid a solid foundation for the future, making the Siyaphumelela initiative a unique and indispensable force in South African Higher Education.*

A brief overview of the first and second phases as well as a short reflection on learnings, particularly from the current Siyaphumelela Network 2.0 initiative (July 2020 – May 2024) is outlined below. This information frames the design of the Siyaphumelela Network 3.0 (June 2024-2027) and includes opportunities, evaluation criteria, submission guidelines and timelines.

<sup>1</sup> John Butler-Adam prepared this report as an independent researcher, with considerable experience in South African higher education, on the basis of documentation from *Saide* and the Partners as well as interviews with partner Vice Chancellors, Deputy Vice Chancellors overseeing the initiative at their institutions, partner institutional leads and incumbents at CHE, USAF and DHET in the period.

<sup>2</sup> Achieving the Dream (ATD) is a US based NGO that provides expert guidance to promote positive change, close achievement gaps, and accelerate student success at community colleges, particularly among students of colour and from low-income backgrounds. <https://achievingthedream.org/>

# Siyaphumelela 1.0 and 2.0

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## Background

As John Butler Adam describes in his report on the Siyaphumelela Initiative in South Africa of 2023<sup>1</sup>,

*The historic “landscape” of South African universities can best be thought of as one of hills of advantaged, and valleys of disadvantaged, institutions – hills of political, locational and historical advantage; and valleys of locational, political and historical disadvantage.... Irrespective of their location in this uneven landscape, most South African universities experience the challenges of low success and throughput rates. This problem was (and in many cases remains) a challenge in a country greatly in need of successful graduates in the workplace. Reasons for the challenges were the inability to collect, analyse and use student data, traditional approaches to teaching and learning (in both high schools and universities) and, for the greater part, a poorly performing school system for many black learners.*

*That there was, and still is, a very uneven surface of conditions in the high school system, remains a serious problem. The Siyaphumelela Initiative started addressing the problem, beginning with stronger universities as the basis for creating models and practices for other institutions.... [More recently,] [a]mong Siyaphumelela Partners, for 2021, five had between 64 and 77 per cent of undergraduate students sponsored by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). The availability of this funding has produced a remarkable change in the profile of students in the sector by allowing for the inclusion of far more students from poor families.*

*Nonetheless, it should be noted that most entering students were educated up to Grade 12, in what the Centre for Development and Enterprise report calls South Africa’s Failing Education System<sup>3</sup>. This has demanded more, and innovative, efforts from the universities – many of which rely on the precepts of the Siyaphumelela Initiative.*

*It is these conditions, as well as outdated university systems that marginalised student needs, that the Siyaphumelela Initiative has been addressing, and continues to address, with considerable success.*

## Siyaphumelela 1.0

South Africa faced a different higher education context during the initial Siyaphumelela design phase in 2013. When Siyaphumelela began, South African higher education had become much more diverse since democracy, but about half of some of the traditionally white institutions were still majority white. Student unrest was not as common as it would be by 2015/2016. And the planet had yet to face the disruptions of a global pandemic.

The initial phase of Siyaphumelela included five partner universities, all of which received financial support from Kresge. At its core, Siyaphumelela argued that institutional behaviour had to change to increase student success, based on data and evidence-informed reforms. Siyaphumelela 1.0 represented the inception of a fresh perspective on student success in higher education and

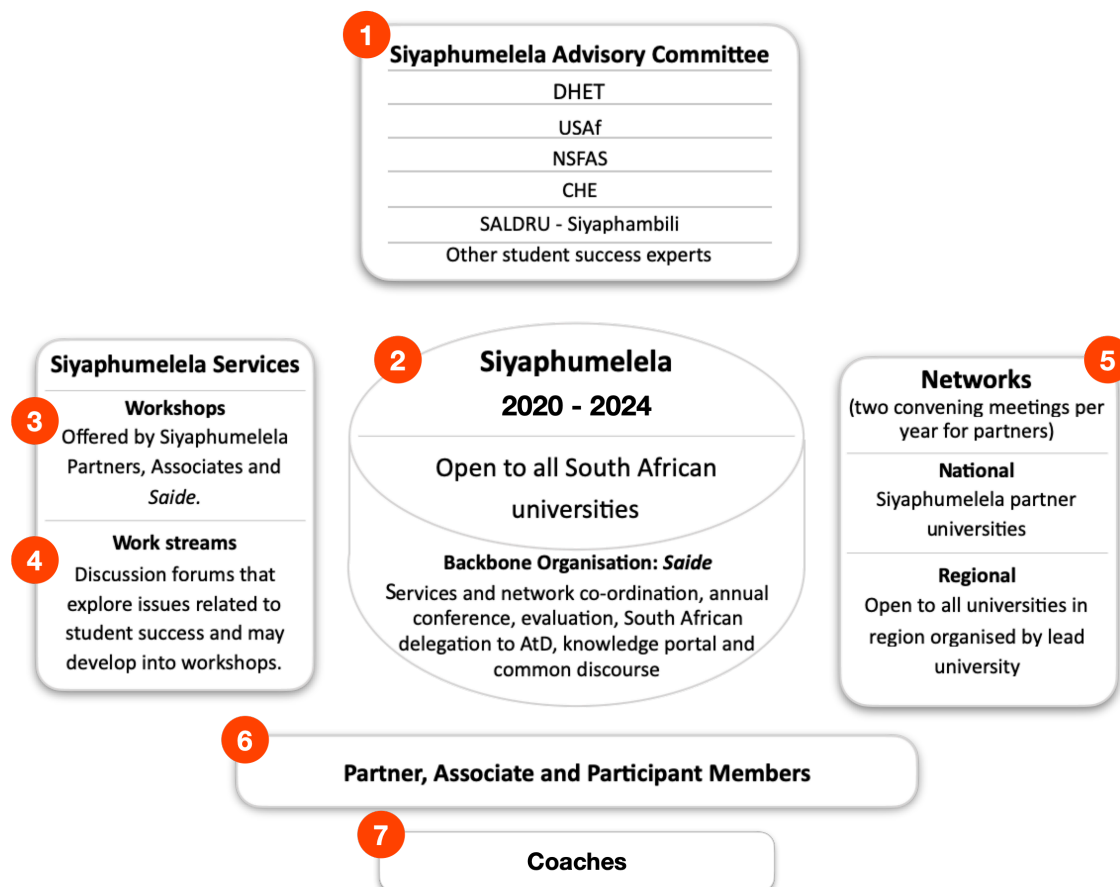
<sup>3</sup> The Centre for Development and Enterprise describes this schooling (in a five-volume report) as The Silent Crisis.

involved the challenge of convincing institutions about the tangible advantages of the recommended approach. As a result, Phase 1 began with universities that had the operational and visionary capacity to adopt to changing higher education circumstances and put into practice the principles advocated by Siyaphumelela. This approach has, in turn, allowed for the growth of the network to include more institutions that can learn and implement the most promising practices from these partner universities.

## Siyaphumelela 2.0

While Siyaphumelela 1.0 enjoyed considerable support from DHET, the Department encouraged the network to include more historically disadvantaged institutions in the initiative. Siyaphumelela Network 2.0 sought to rectify this and funding from Kresge increased from five to seven institutions. In addition, a further ten institutions joined the network as Participants or associates, thereby growing the network to 17 South African universities, including five historically disadvantaged universities, three universities of technology and two post-apartheid universities.

The design of the Siyaphumelela Network 2.0 included several different components (Fig. 1) that supported the development and integration of a range of different tools, methodologies and approaches to improve student success in South African higher education institutions.



**Figure 1. Components of the current Siyaphumelela Network**

(The numbers in this figure identify the specific components of **Siyaphumelela 2.0** and are referenced below).

The components of the Siyaphumelela Network 2.0 included Saide as the backbone organisation<sup>2</sup> responsible for conceptual leadership and for coordinating and supporting a range of Siyaphumelela Services (including, Workshops<sup>3</sup>, Work streams<sup>4</sup> and Coaches<sup>7</sup>), Networks of higher education institutions (National and Regional)<sup>5</sup>, Siyaphumelela Members (Partner, Participant and one Associate institution)<sup>6</sup>, and the Advisory Committee<sup>1</sup>. Achieving the Dream has supported the



Siyaphumelela Initiative in several ways, and the New York-based Institute for International Education (IIE) provides international travel support.

Membership of the Siyaphumelela 2.0 Network was formalised through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with each partner, associate and participant university.

Collaboration and sharing played a pivotal role in the success of the Siyaphumelela Network 2.0, including in the work streams, regional networks, convening meetings, service workshops, national Siyaphumelela conference, international Achieving the Dream conferences, and through the coaching model. Siyaphumelela focused deliberately on fostering collaboration with university executive leadership, which included panel discussions, a special dinner at the annual Siyaphumelela conference, and a participant convening meeting and dinner held in June 2023.

Conferences, workshops and regional networks play an essential role in the expansion of the Siyaphumelela Initiative practices and insights. In late 2022, *Saide* initiated a review of the service workshops to align them with the three competency levels (basic, intermediate and advanced) that link directly to Siyaphumelela's Theory of Change, which emphasises Knowing, Doing and Being or Transforming.

Through this review, three key areas of evidence-based student success practices were identified: Supporting Students, Utilising Data for Student Success and Transforming Institutions. Professional development in these evidence-based student success practices remains a priority for the network. However, more structured learning pathways are necessary to further enhance the effectiveness of these practices.

Universities South Africa (USAf), through its University Lecturer Development Programme (ULDP) and the efforts of several individual universities, has documented the need to enhance learning design and the approach to teaching in our universities as a further means of promoting student success. This aspect was not included in Siyaphumelela 2.0, emerged as a missed opportunity during a feedback session following the June 2023 Siyaphumelela conference.

In the 2020-2023 University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG), Siyaphumelela was recognised as a trusted partner and as an Institutional Grants Sub-Programme. Universities not directly funded by the Siyaphumelela Network incorporated network participation into their Institutional Grant Sub-Programme projects. This allowed them to cover subscription costs and other expenses related to Siyaphumelela Network's capacity-building activities, supplementing what they already received as network members. This approach ensures that the UCDG's Monitoring and Evaluation framework contributes to clear outputs, short-term outcomes, outcome indicators, medium-term impact indicators, and compelling evidence, optimising its use for institutions.

## Partner review

Partner institutions submit a yearly report to the Kresge Foundation and *Saide*. The purpose of the reports is to collect and analyse institutional data and align institutional reporting with the Siyaphumelela Network 2.0 objectives, which seek to:

- Establish a more student-centred culture in South Africa's higher education system to improve student completion rates and reduce race and gender equity differences
- Improve institutional capacity to collect and use student data to improve student success across the higher education system
- Expand evidence-based student success efforts on a national scale, using a networked approach that builds on existing strengths, shares capacity throughout the system, and serves institutions based on their current needs and abilities.

Annual reports include narrative descriptions and progress ratings:

0. Implementation to be undertaken in another funding cycle
1. Initial action taken: Concept work completed and action underway; 25% of implementation of agreed intervention/s completed.
2. Steady progress is being made: 50% of the implementation is completed.
3. Substantial elements of a project nearly or fully completed: 75% of implementation completed.
4. Fully deployed: 100% of implementation completed.
5. Embedded in practice at scale across the Institution.

Analysis of partner ratings from the most recent reports (Fig. 2).

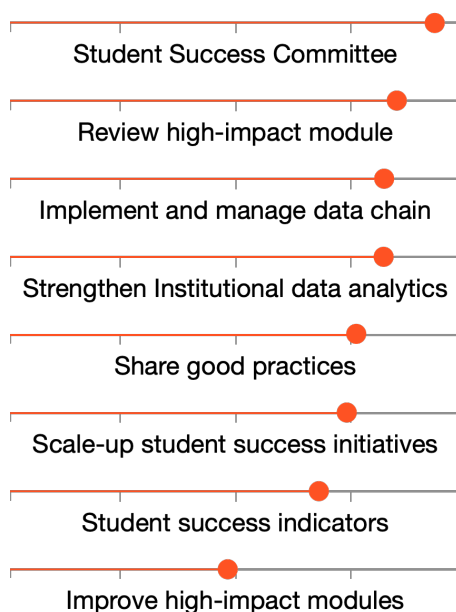


Figure 2. Analyses of Siyaphumelela Partner progress from the 2022-2023 reports.

Items with high ratings included the establishment and management of the institutional Student Success Committee; review of high-impact modules<sup>4</sup>; implementation and management of the data chain; strengthening data analytics; and sharing of good practices. Siyaphumelela institutions seek to identify, improve and scale effective student success interventions. While institutions were able to identify high-impact modules or courses, they presented little evidence of having identified and corrected issues related to these modules.

## Challenges identified in Siyaphumelela 2.0

The challenges faced by the partner institutions in Siyaphumelela 2.0, as summarised in Butler-Adam's aforementioned report, remain relevant as the effort progress into its next phase. These challenges are likely to apply to both current and newer institutions in the Siyaphumelela network as they embed student success into their institutions.

These challenges encompass several key areas:

**Institutional leadership and executive support:** The pivotal role of institutional leaders in providing support and recognition for Siyaphumelela's ability to enhance, students' experiences and success cannot be overstated. The consistent backing and support of the institutional leadership team,

<sup>4</sup> High Impact Modules (HIMs) are thus named because of their potential to impact institutional performance indicators such as throughput and pass rates.



including the VC and DVC, on both intellectual and financial priorities for student success is essential to turn Siyaphumelela reforms into long-term, sustainable institutional operations and long-term practices.

**"Projects" versus institutional integration:** Institutional Siyaphumelela interventions should be seen as ongoing processes and practices requiring institutional integration rather than finite "projects" with distinct start and end points.

**COVID-19 realities and consequences:** The impact of COVID-19 on the initiative has been notable, with both negative and, in the long term, positive aspects. The experience of remote learning during lockdown underscored the need for real-time learning analytics data, which became highly sought after. The potential negative effects of COVID-19 on student success were mitigated through measures taken by institutions, drawing on their experiences with Siyaphumelela.

**Student unrest:** Student unrest remained a challenge, in particular at the start of the academic year. Key issues included outstanding student fees, academic exclusion, and delays in the disbursement of funds from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS).

**The pivotal role of data in improving student success:** In the local context, Siyaphumelela has identified data specialists who:

- Rigorously measure and analyse raw student performance data.
- Transform primary data into comprehensible information for internal and external stakeholders.
- Make data readily meaningful to all involved in order to identify appropriate actions to strengthen institutional student success.

Every institution's student success committee, along with its managers and council, need to have access to this primary set of clear indicators. Limited staff in the data domain has been a common challenge for all partner institutions to date.

Siyaphumelela 3.0 will prioritise data management and capacity building, including how to analyse and convert data into actionable reforms and interventions to enhance student success.

The design and development of Siyaphumelela 3.0, as depicted in Figure 3 below, has built on a strong foundation, along with the insights gained from learnings and partner reports analysis.

## Siyaphumelela Successes

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As the Siyaphumelela student success initiative prepares to celebrate 10 years since its inception in 2014, a few of the Network's successes are highlighted, including:

- The increase in university participation in the Siyaphumelela Network, from five partner institutions in 2014 to the current seven Partners, nine Participant institutions and one Associate, totaling seventeen universities, thus moving from 19% of all South African universities to 65%. With three more institutions possibly joining the network in 2024, participation will increase to 78% of South Africa's higher education institutions.
- The strong working relationships, which have been developed between *Saide*, the DHET, the CHE, the universities, Achieving the Dream and the Kresge Foundation, have been key to successful collaboration and the promotion of student success.
- Several promising student success practices led by individual universities and implemented across the Siyaphumelela Network include designing and developing the Academic Advising Professional Development short programme, creating the Supplemental Instruction Supervisor professional development programme, designing and developing a Biographical Survey used to capture relevant student profile data, and developing the Siyaphumbili website that tracks

qualifications attainment as a key indicator in South Africa's progress towards achieving the 2030 National Development Goals. Also currently in the pipeline is the creation of the National Student Data Warehouse in partnership with DHET and the CHE.

- Notable progress of the Siyaphumelela Network institutions in increasing academic equity in retention and course success rates. Current data from the seven partner universities shows that two of the seven institutions have a 2% increase in overall first-year undergraduate student retention; one university has a 3% increase in first-year undergraduate student retention; one institution has stayed the same and in two institutions, retention rates have dropped slightly. Between 2018 and 2020, overall student success rates in three of the seven universities increased, in two instances by 2% and in one instance by 4%. One university has made significant progress in success rates between 2010 and 2020, with the general success rate improving by 13 percentage points from 72% to 85%. Within groups, Indian/Asian students' success rates increased by 23 percentage points. Similarly, African students' success rates improved by 18 percentage points, coloured students' success rates improved by 16 percentage points, and white students' success rates improved by 10 percentage points. The achievement gap between white and African students halved from 16 percentage points in 2010 to 8 percentage points in 2020. These results are particularly noteworthy given the significant shift in the demographics of university students since the NSFAS expansion, with the majority in many institutions hailing from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Recognition of the original five Siyaphumelela institutions in the 2020 Educause Horizon Report as a global leader in using data and evidence-based interventions to support student success.

*Siyaphumelela: Five South African universities are working together to improve their institutional capacity to collect and analyze student data and integrate it with institutional research, information technology systems, academic development, planning, and academic divisions within their institutions to increase student success.*

*Educause Horizon Report, 2020: p 20<sup>5</sup>.*

- The growth of international partnerships that have developed. In particular, this includes the many South African delegates that have been afforded the opportunity to be inspired by attending the Achieving the Dream annual student success DREAM conferences in the US since 2012. It also includes the growth of an emergent student success movement in New Zealand based on Achieving the Dream and Siyaphumelela.

## Design of Siyaphumelela 3.0

### Overview

The design of Siyaphumelela 3.0 closely resembles Version 2.0, with similar components including the Advisory Committee, Backbone Institution, Work stream, Workshops (now labelled as "Evidence-Based Practices for Student Success"), International, National and Regional Networks, Partners and Coaches, as shown in Figure 3. Nevertheless, we have introduced several significant revisions to how workshops are conceptualised, along with minor adjustments have been made to the Convenings and the Advisory Committee. Each of these components is discussed in detail, below.

- 1 **Advisory Board:** Siyaphumelela's Advisory Board will be reconstituted with representatives of national bodies, including NSFAS, DHET, USAF, CHE, SALDRU's Siyaphambili, experts in the field, and other non-profits supporting student success through bursary provision. It will have two virtual meeting each year.

<sup>5</sup> [2020 EDUCAUSE Horizon Report Teaching and Learning Edition](#)



- 2 **Saide as backbone institution:** *Saide* will continue to provide intellectual thought leadership, coordinate and support the services and network coordination, plan and manage the annual conference, support monitoring and evaluation, manage the knowledge portal, manage the South African delegation to the DREAM conference in the USA and support the coaches.
- 3 **Evidence-Based Practices for Student Success:** Siyaphumelela 2.0 required each partner institution to present two **service workshops** to all members annually. Over the past three years, Partners presented over 30 workshops. During 2023, *Saide* clustered workshops into themes such as “Supporting Students”, “Use of Data for Student Success” and “Transforming Institutions. Within these clusters, Saide also drew on the Theory of Change framework, which encompasses “Knowing, Doing and Being-Transforming”.

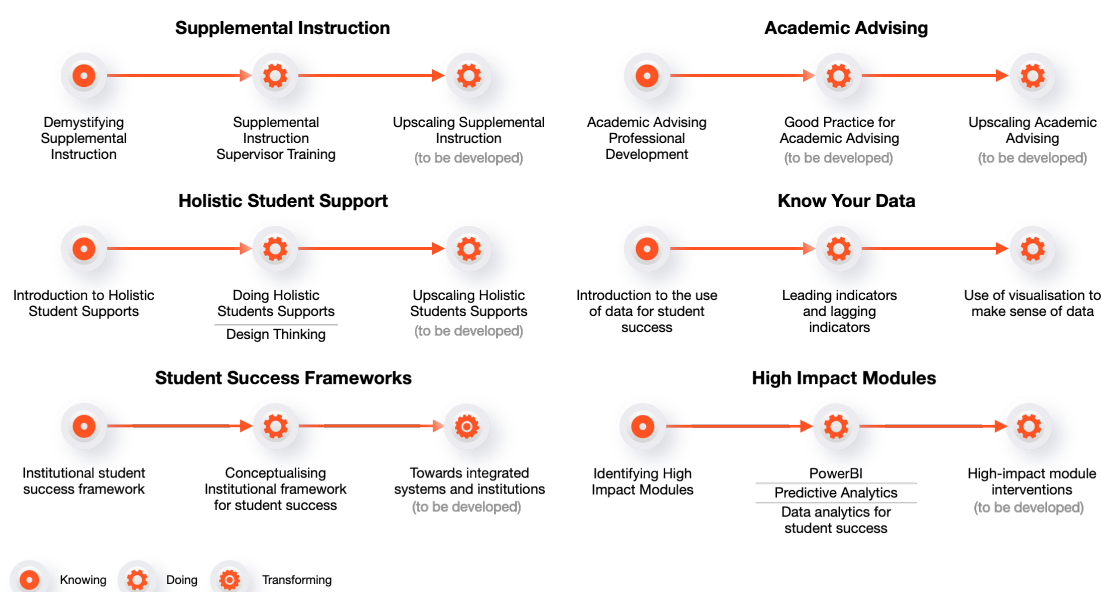
During the 2023 Siyaphumelela conference, *Saide* agreed to introduce a Teaching and Learning theme. Such service workshops will continue, but plans are in process to address some of the shortcomings identified. For example, while workshops were well attended, Participants often lacked opportunities to put their newfound knowledge into practice, nor was it easy for attendees to share their learnings with others in their institution. Other matters to be discussed include managing workshop resources and the potential for issuing certificates, letters of participation, badges or micro-credentials upon completing a workshop.

To address all these issues, Siyaphumelela will:

- Develop more interactive, resource-based ‘short learning courses’ drawing on evidence-based practices for student success.
- Organise short learning courses into a structured learning pathway (see examples below).
- Develop online activity-based engagements that include shareable resources.

*Saide* will take the lead in working with institutions to create learning pathways and to support the development of the activity-based short learning courses using the OpenSaide platform. Discrete grants will be made available for this purpose.

The examples below provide a clear structure for how we can build on the workshop experience and offer more meaningful, practical, and accessible professional development opportunities for all Partners:



- 4 **Work streams:** Work streams, where Partners collaboratively address common student success issues ultimately leading to the collaborative design of interventions, will be



preserved, maintaining the same model as in Siyaphumelela 2.0. Two examples from the first phase of Siyaphumelela are Academic Advising (USF) and the National Student Database (Wits and *Saide*) started as work streams and transformed into national initiatives funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training. Our current work stream on First Year Experience will present shortly a proposed way forward for Siyaphumelela, while the one on Mental Health is moving to that stage. We propose to establish a Workstream on Gender Disparities in Enrolment, Retention, Course Success and Graduation, drawing on any other work that is being done in the field. We will also establish a Work stream to respond to the major concern in John Butler-Adam's review of how to identify, build the capacity of and retain a cohort of Data Managers for the Higher Education System.

- 5 **International and national networks:** Grantees will participate in the annual ATD DREAM conference in the US, the annual Siyaphumelela national conference in South Africa, and engagement with DHET, CHE, and Siyaphambili.

**Convenings:** Each partner will participate in two convenings per year. In the expanded Siyaphumelela network (which may consist of up to 20 Partners), *Saide* will devise a new form of engagement to enhance collaboration within the network, inked to the aims and themes of Siyaphumelela 3.0.

**Regional networks.** Each partner will participate in two regional network meetings to share promising practice. These will be led by a regional partner and be open to all higher education institutions.

- 6 **Siyaphumelela Network 3.0 Partners:** Up to 20 Siyaphumelela partner institutional activities will include: ongoing examination of institutional practices to identify what helps or hinders student success; establishing a broadly representative student committee, if one is not yet in place (new partner institutions); strengthening, standardising and integrating data analytics; participating fully in Siyaphumelela Network activities; reviewing and intervening in high-impact modules and, particularly for previous partner institutions, scaling-up promising student success practices. For existing Siyaphumelela partners, we anticipate creating opportunities to develop educational pathways and associated short learning courses.

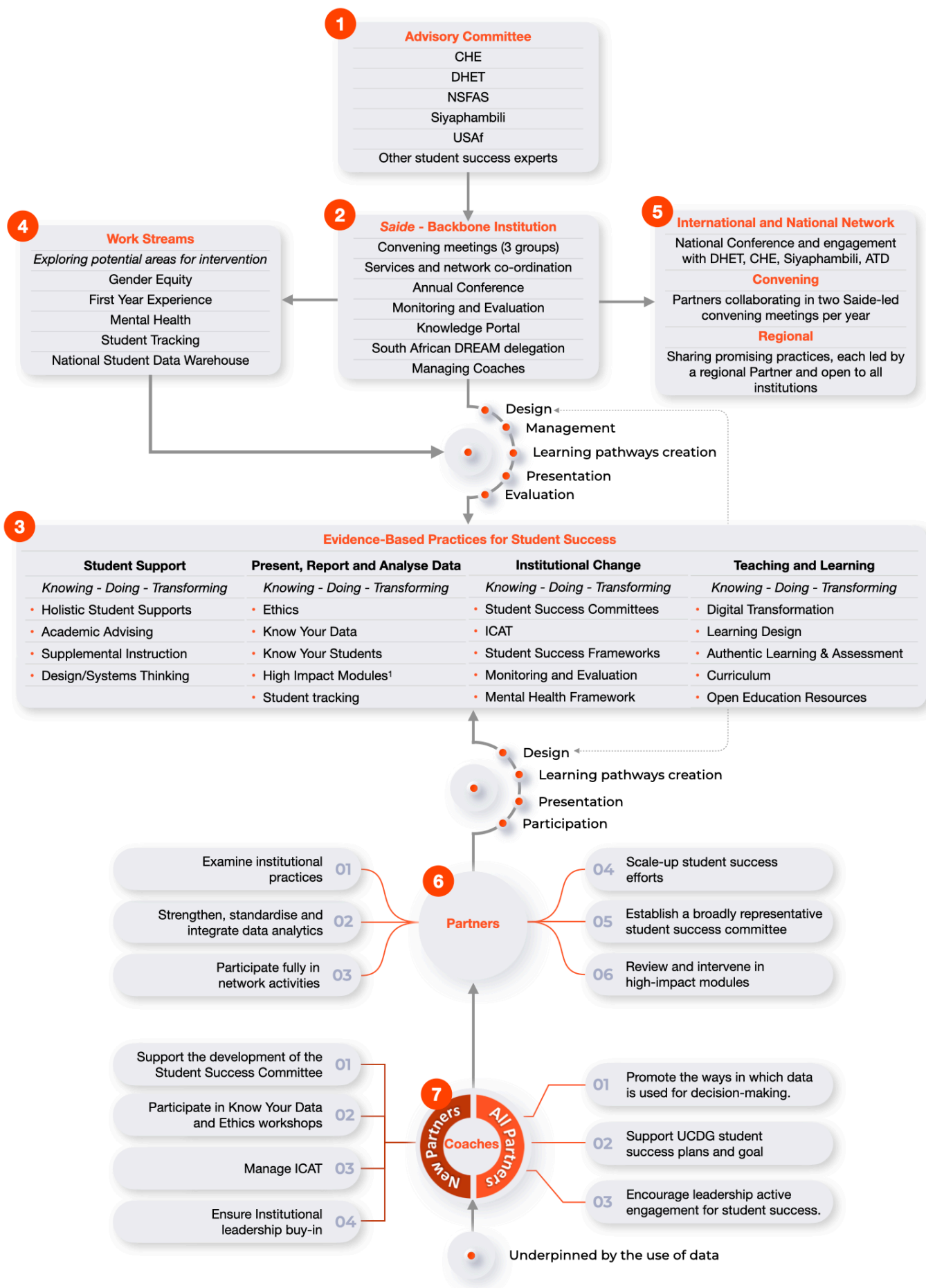
- 7 **Coaches:** Coaches will assist new partner institutions who, over the three year period of Siyaphumelela 3.0, will support the establishment of a Student Support Committee; facilitate engagement with data capacity building and ethics workshops; and manage the implementation of the Institutional Capacity and Assessment Tool (ICAT), which helps universities assess their current practices and abilities so they can build a path forward to make transformation possible. Coaches are also available to previous Siyaphumelela Partners if required and could support the institutional UCDG initiatives.

**Other Adaptations to Siyaphumelela 3.0:** As we move forward into Siyaphumelela 3.0, we plan to continue to sustain the spirit of collaboration, candor and sharing among member institutions to enhance student success. In particular, we plan to introduce and engage executive leadership from newer institutions into the network to ensure their full support for enhancing student success within their respective institutions.

To address Siyaphumelela 2.0 concerns about the need to strengthen learning and teaching efforts to support students, Siyaphumelela 3.0 will provide professional development in relevant evidence-based student success practices. Similarly, in response to concerns about graduate employability, Siyaphumelela hopes to engage the transition to the world of work.

Finally, we anticipate that DHET will again allow universities to use 2024-2027 University Capacity Development grants to provide resources to engage with Siyaphumelela to improve student success.





<sup>1</sup> High-impact modules are defined as those with high enrolments and high failure rates.

Figure 3. Siyaphumelela Version 3.0 design



# Belonging to the Siyaphumelela 3.0 Network - Institutional Benefits

Each Siyaphumelela 3.0 Network partner institutions will enjoy the following member benefits:

- **Achieving the Dream:** Sponsorship of one senior staff member to participate annually in the Achieving the Dream international conference in the USA, including conference registration, travel and accommodation. Additional delegates may attend, but the cost needs to be carried by the university.
- **Siyaphumelela Conference:** Sponsorship for three members (the VC or DVC, the Siyaphumelela Institutional Lead and a student) to the annual Siyaphumelela conference on student success. The conference brings together institutional researchers, academic developers, student advisors, students involved in Siyaphumelela and university leadership to discuss innovations and challenges in student success, in South Africa and worldwide. Conference registration, travel and three nights of accommodation will be covered. Additional delegates may attend, but the cost needs to be carried by the university.
- **Coaching:** New partner institutions, including current participant<sup>6</sup> institutions, will receive a Coach, who over the three years of Siyaphumelela 3.0, will: support the establishment of a Student Support Committee; facilitate engagement with data capacity building and ethics workshops; and support the implementation of the Institutional Capacity and Assessment Tool (ICAT). The ICAT will be used to explore your institution's strengths and weakness as you streamline your student success initiatives. The designated coach will visit institution three times annually. Coaches are also available to previous Siyaphumelela Partners if needed and could play a leading role in supporting the institutional UCDG initiatives.
- **Regional Convenings:** Two staff members (the institutional student success lead and one other staff member directly involved with the student success initiative), will participate in one of three biannual in-person convenings held across South Africa. *Saide* will organise and pay for travel and accommodation costs related to attendance at the convening meetings. The purpose of the convening meetings is for Siyaphumelela institutions to present and share their promising practices, challenges and key learnings related to their institutional student success initiatives.
- **Know Your Data:** In year one, new partner institutions, will be invited to participate in a *Saide* facilitated series of Know-Your-Data online workshops. The purpose of these is to develop student success indicators and to identify institutional barriers that impact student success. These workshops are also open to previous partners, who may wish to attend.
- **Using Data Ethically:** In the first year, new partner institutions will also be invited to participate in a small group workshop related to the ethical use of data for student success, presented by *Saide*, online.
- Participation in network-coordinated workshops.
  - **Evidence-based practices for student success - online workshops:** Free participation in online workshops presented by previous partner institutions and/or new Partners
  - **Evidence-based practices for student success – in-person workshops:** Where workshops are presented in an in-person format, four members from your institution will be invited to participate. Registration, teas and lunch costs for these two members are covered. However, transport and accommodation costs are not included.

<sup>6</sup> In the Siyaphumelela Network 3.0, all member institutions will be classified as partners in the Siyaphumelela Initiative.





- **Online short courses designed and developed within a learning pathway:** During Siyaphumelela 3.0, *Saide* will seek to secure additional funding to work collaboratively with selected partner institutions to consolidate a series of evidence-based practices for student success workshops into short activity-based, online courses structured into a learning pathway suitable for ongoing professional development. Where possible, these courses will be uploaded onto the *OpenSaide* web-based platform and published under a Creative Commons CC-BY license. The courses will thus be freely available for any university staff members to access and work through independently.
- **Work streams:** Participation in work streams where Partners collaboratively address common student success issues and design interventions that are workshopped with the Network Partners. Work stream themes include first-year student experience, gender equity, mental health student tracking and the establishment of a national student data warehouse.
- **Regional sub-network engagement:** Participation on a semester basis with representatives from nearby universities to discuss, agree on, and share student success issues and practices. These sub-network regional meetings aim to spread student success learning beyond the Siyaphumelela Network, to reach all 26 South African public universities. Four members from your institution will be invited to participate, although transport and accommodation costs, if any, are not included.
- Access to the Siyaphumelela website repository of articles and resources related to student success. See <https://siyaphumelela.org.za/>

## Request for Participation

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### Process for Selection of Partner Institutions

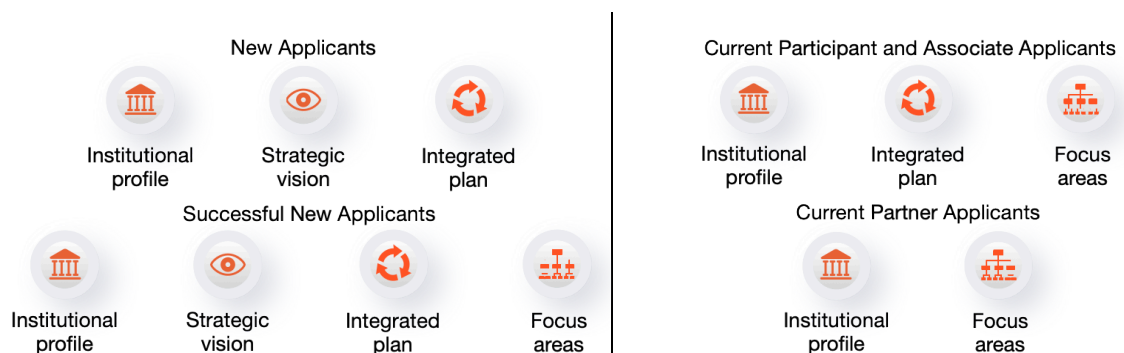
There are four sections in the Request for Proposals: Institutional profile, Strategic vision, Integrated plan and Focus areas. Depending on your previous engagement with Siyaphumelela there are different requirements to complete (See Fig. 4 and Table 1 overleaf):

1. **New applicants seeking to join the Siyaphumelela Network** must submit a concept paper including an Institutional profile, Strategic vision and Integration plan, which SAIDE and Kresge will review. **If successful**, members of the Kresge Foundation and *Saide* will arrange a site visit for further discussion of the concept paper. Following this visit, your institution may be invited to complete the final proposal that includes providing more detailed information about proposed Focus Areas, Objectives and Budget.
2. **Current Participant and Associate Institutions** must complete a proposal that includes an Institutional Profile, Integration Plan, Focus Areas, Objectives and Budget.
3. **Current Partner Institutions** must complete a proposal that includes an Institutional Profile, Focus Areas, Objectives and Budget.



**Table 1. South African Universities**

New Applicants	Participant and Associates Applicants	Partner Applicants
Central University of Technology	Cape Peninsula University of Technology	Durban University of Technology
Mangosuthu University of Technology	North-West University	Nelson Mandela University,
Tshwane University of Technology	Rhodes University	University of Cape Town,
University of Fort Hare	Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University	University of Free State,
University of Limpopo	Sol Plaatje University	University of KwaZulu-Natal,
University of Mpumalanga	University of Johannesburg	The University of Western Cape
University of South Africa	University of Pretoria	University of the Witwatersrand
University of Stellenbosch	University of Venda	
University of Zululand	Vaal University of Technology	
	Walter Sisulu University	



**Figure 4: Required Sections (as described below) in the RFP to complete for New Applicants, Current Participant and Associate Applicants, and Partner .**

The final selection process will be based on the quality of concept papers submitted, the practicality of the outlined plans, and the demonstrated commitment of university leadership to the aim of improving student success through the use of integrated data analytics.

## Requirements for Concept Papers and Proposals

Concept papers and full proposals should provide a narrative that demonstrates the university's commitment, capability, and alignment with broader national goals in the context of improving student success through data-driven approaches.

**1. Institutional profile (all applicants):** An overview of your institution within the South African higher education system and its responses to the challenges surrounding student success. The applicant should provide a brief introduction to the university and a candid assessment of the challenges it faces regarding student success given its unique context in a differentiated higher education system.

The institutional profile should also include:

- A discussion of the registered student profile for 2023, including the percentage of students from traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds (NSFAS funded and school quintiles 1 to 3, if available), the percentage of first-generation university students (if first-generation data is collected through surveys, or at registration, then include those percentages and state which surveys (BUSSE, SASSE, etc.) were used to collect the first-generation data), gender (male, female, unspecified) and the percentage of students in university-sponsored residence halls.



- A discussion of what your university feels are its most significant challenges to student success, and how these challenges have been identified, including a discussion and analysis of audited student success data, including retention, success and throughput rates (n, n+1 and n+2) for 3- and 4-year diplomas and degrees.
- The amount, nature of activities and duration of support that your university has sought from the DHET's University Capacity Development Grant, other funding entities, and your university itself, to support student success.

All applicants must provide a cover *Letter from your Vice-Chancellor* confirming their commitment to the Siyaphumelela initiative and its requirements. New applicants must commit their availability for site visits between 29 January and 9 February 2024.

**2. Strategic vision and leadership commitment (for new applicant seeking to join):** Applicants must provide a vision that builds a coherent and institution-wide agenda and strategy for student success. In addition to your institution's Vice Chancellor cover letter requesting support, this section should describe what the Vice Chancellor/Senior Executive Leadership team has done to give practical expression to student success as an institutional priority. It should also address your institution's strategic vision for improving student success in the future.

- Outline the Vice-Chancellor's/Executive Leadership's overall institutional goals for the university (and how student success fits into this broader vision), and discuss how much time the Vice Chancellor/Executive Leadership will likely have to commit to implementing this vision.
- Discuss your institutional commitment to breaking down barriers to student success and designing evidence-based interventions to mitigate impediments to student success including, but not limited to, admission requirements, financial aid, academic advising and support, non-academic support, first-year experience, provision of developmental mathematics and literacy skills courses, and student mental health services.
- Discuss how participating in Siyaphumelela could benefit your institution and the national Siyaphumelela network, and what specific steps your institution would take to use this opportunity to strengthen the South African student success movement.

**3. Integration plan and stakeholder agreement (for new applicants seeking to join and for current Participants):** Describe how your institution would use this grant opportunity to make improvements to its data collection tools that can be of value to your own and other institutions to support student success. Applicants should plan to take into consideration the activities suggested below. Indicators to monitor institutional development for student success need to be clearly articulated.

Discuss how your university will:

- Strengthen, standardise and integrate data analytics, including data on high-impact modules and utilise data to design evidence-based student support interventions.
- Encourage typically disconnected Information and Communications Technology, Institutional Research, Academic Development, Student Services, Planning and Academic units to work together to improve student success and what incentives it might employ.
- Sustain changes that occur during the life of the grant after it is concluded.
- Incorporate student views and voices into this work (this might include participation on a university student success task force, surveys and focus groups with students when evaluating high-failure courses).
- Make use of open-source approaches to support the development of tools for the wider Siyaphumelela network.



- Integrate a robust Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework to measure the impact of initiatives.

**4. Institutional Focus Areas (for successful new applicants seeking to join and current Participants, Associates and Partners):** Identify at least three or four student success objectives for the next three years. For each objective provide a:

- *Description and motivation*  
Provide a description of the problems/challenges/developmental needs that the objective seeks to address and how the objective aims to address these challenges or problems.
- *Goal/s and indicators*  
Provide a succinct statement of the objective and what it wishes to achieve, and what activities will be undertaken in pursuit of the objective. Indicate how the activities will contribute towards the objective. Include indicators for knowing whether the objective has been met.
- *Target group*  
Provide a precise description of the intended target group or beneficiaries of the objective.

## Applicant commitments

To become a partner in the Siyaphumelela 3.0 Network of South African public universities, your institution needs to commit to:

- Setting and achieving institutional targets and implementing strategies to improve retention, course success and throughput rates for degrees and diplomas, and to eliminate differences based on race, gender and socio-economic status.
- Providing annual data on the above disaggregated based on race, gender and socio-economic status, using the templates provided.
- Participating fully in Siyaphumelela 3.0 Network activities by sharing data and experiences with other grantees on student success; providing unaudited student data to the National Student Data Warehouse to support reporting and the development of student success dashboards; and providing required reports and participating in evaluation and dissemination activities within the Network.
- Including student success in your institutional strategic and operational plans.
- Establishing a broadly representative student success committee or task force (if not already in-place) comprising representatives of institutional research, information and communications technology, academic development, student services, planning, academic divisions, students, and a senior member of the university's executive team.
- Communicating and disseminating information about the student success initiative in your institution.
- Having either your institution's Vice-Chancellor or appropriate Deputy Vice-Chancellor to attend the annual student success conference.
- Setting in motion plans to scale up student success efforts across the university based on evaluation and other evidence of effectiveness.
- Providing information on how your institution could support both the sub- and national networks, for example by providing services to the Siyaphumelela Network to build capacity in particular areas, developing new tools and resources for the Siyaphumelela Network, and leading or supporting a Siyaphumelela regional network that shares promising practices, and insights and learns how to support student success better.

Previous Partner and Participants commit to present at least two short courses or workshops per annum. New applicants will be required to use the SASSE tool to assess student engagement.



## Competitive Application Features

When reviewing proposals for Siyaphumelela 3.0, SAIDE and Kresge will look for institutions that can demonstrate:

- A commitment to Siyaphumelela's goals and student success.
- Consistent leadership.
- A clear vision for student success within their own institutional context.
- Good institutional performance in Siyaphumelela 1.0 or 2.0 (if previously a partner or participant institution).
- Participation in prior Siyaphumelela activities (for participants and new applicants).
- Their institution is not currently under DHET administration.

## Application Packs and Proposal Submission

The Request for Proposal needs to be completed using the web-based forms. Three different application forms are available at the following links: [New Applicants](#), [Participant and Associate Applicants](#), and [Partner Applicants](#).

Navigate to the form you wish to complete. To support your development of your proposal download the Word Document available in the application form. In addition to the narrative components, budgets for each objective are required. Once you have completed the form, generate a PDF document and forward it to *Saide* (email address). Once a new applicant proposal is accepted, *Saide* will add the additional information to the form for you to complete the proposal (objectives and budgets).

## RFP Timeline

