Accelerate, Transform, Scale Initiative Program Comparison Table

ATS Hub
Accelerate, Transform, Scale

	FY27 From Seedlings to Scale (S2S)	FY27 Transformative Research in Special Education	FY26 ED/IES SBIR Phase IA	FY26 ED/IES SBIR Phase IB	FY26 ED/IES SBIR Direct to Phase II
Best suited for…	Higher education institutions, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and other public or private entities developing early-stage, breakthrough AI- and technology-enabled solutions that help **education leaders use evidence and systems data** to improve policy and practice.	Higher education institutions, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and other public or private entities working to improve **preservice teacher education systems** for preK-12 general and special education teachers who have a responsibility for educating **students with disabilities.**	For-profit small businesses developing an **entirely new** education technology product for which little or no technological development has occurred.	For-profit small businesses developing a **distinct new component for an existing** research-based education technology prototype or product.	For-profit small businesses ready for R&D, evaluation, and commercialization of an **existing researcher-developed, evidence-based education innovation** (product, intervention, or practice) for broader use. A prior Phase I award is not required.
What makes the idea a good fit for the competition?	The solution must be an **AI- or tech-enabled solution** that comprehensively addresses **root causes** of implementation failure across complex education systems, rather than focusing only on a single proximal cause impeding progress, and has the potential to **help education leaders intentionally integrate evidence-based products, processes, and policies** that improve outcomes for preK-12 students at scale.	The solution must be an innovative, **high-risk, systems-level solution** designed to dramatically improve **preservice teacher education systems'** ability to attract, train, and retain preK-12 teachers. The transformative solution should have the potential for high-reward, scalable results.	The product must be **novel and independent** from products previously developed by the company or team and use a **different technological approach** from the one used to develop any previous products.	The new component must be **meaningfully different from existing components**—not simply a continuation or expansion—and use a **different technological approach** from the one used to develop the existing product.	The project aims to translate an evidence-based innovation into a commercial education technology product that is ready for scale and sustainability. **The original evidence-based innovation must have been developed by researchers** at a university, other academic institution, or nonprofit research organization.

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Appropriate starting point	A promising early-stage concept is appropriate. Applicants should be ready to investigate user needs, test key assumptions, create an early-stage prototype, and develop a rigorous R&D plan.	A transformative solution that is new or that fundamentally alters an existing approach to dramatically improve the U.S. preservice teacher education system. Must go beyond incremental or routine refinement or evaluation.	Limited or no technological development should have occurred. Phase IA is not intended to extend, integrate with, or incrementally improve an existing product.	An existing research-based prototype or product, plus an early-stage idea for a distinct new component.	An existing researcher-developed innovation with evidence supporting its impact and sufficient readiness for product R&D, evaluation, and commercialization. Not intended for an untested early-stage idea.
Problem and population focus	Must address the competition's designated focus area: *C-STEP: Coordinating Systems to Translate Evidence into Policy and Practice.* Solutions should help U.S. education systems intentionally integrate evidence-based products, processes, and policies to improve outcomes for **preK-12** students.	Must address the competition's focus to dramatically improve preservice teacher education systems so they can better attract, train, and retain **preK-12** general and special education teachers who are prepared to provide high-quality instruction and substantially improve outcomes for students with or at risk for disabilities.	Must address a pressing education problem and comply with any focus areas or specifications in the SBIR solicitation. **Population focus is open**; the idea does not need to focus on a specific population or grade band unless explicitly stated in the solicitation.	Must strengthen an existing research-based product's ability to address a pressing education problem and comply with the solicitation's specifications. **Population focus is open**; the idea does not need to focus on a specific population or grade band unless explicitly stated in the solicitation.	Must address a pressing education problem and comply with solicitation specifications. The proposed product should translate the underlying evidence-based innovation for practical use at scale. **Population focus is open**; the idea does not need to focus on a specific population or grade band unless explicitly stated in the solicitation.
Who can apply?	A range of **institutions with the ability and capacity to conduct scientifically valid research**, including universities, nonprofits, and other public/private entities. As relevant, teams may include researchers from disciplines not traditionally represented in education sciences and	A range of **institutions with the ability and capacity to conduct scientifically valid research** may lead, but the application must describe a plan for establishing **co-design partners** who are representatives from key groups that will be affected by the transformative solution.	An eligible **U.S.-based for-profit small business**. Applicants should consult the solicitation for the complete federal ownership, control, employee, and registration requirements.	An eligible **U.S.-based for-profit small business** that has—or has appropriate rights to—the existing research-based product.	An eligible **U.S.-based for-profit small business**. The underlying innovation must have originated with researchers at a university or a nonprofit education research organization. Universities/ nonprofits can be subs for up to half, and at least one of the

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	individuals from tech companies or small businesses.				original researchers must be part of the project team.
What must the project be prepared to do?	Deliverables for Phase I include 1) a proof-of-concept report, 2) an early-state prototype, and 3) a Phase II R&D plan. To produce these deliverables, teams will: engage users; test the problem, solution, and theory of change; develop a viable prototype; plan for a fully functioning solution; and prepare for rigorous evaluation and generation of evidence of effects on student outcomes in Phase II (if awarded).	During Phase I, teams will produce deliverables and quantifiable metrics that provide evidence the project is meeting its objectives, including examining outcomes for teachers with a responsibility for educating students with or at risk for disabilities, and assessing adaptability for different contexts and scaling potential; establish co-design partners by the end of Year 1; secure cost sharing of at least 5% of federal funds by the end of Year 1; and prepare for high-quality research on the potential for substantial impact on students' education outcomes in Phase II (if awarded).	Develop and evaluate a prototype; demonstrate technical feasibility and usability; and establish a foundation for full development, evaluation, and commercialization in Phase II.	Develop and evaluate a prototype of the new component and establish a foundation for integrating, fully developing, and evaluating it with the existing product in Phase II.	Conduct R&D and evaluation to ready a new education technology product based on the existing innovation for use at scale, and develop a commercialization plan.
Scale or sustainability expectation	Applicants should adhere to SEER 27, including Domain 2: Design for Scale. The solution should be feasible to implement broadly and with fidelity while minimizing technological, human, and system-level barriers. Teams should be prepared to address the solution's potential for scale as part of their Phase I proof-of-concept deliverable.	Applicants should adhere to SEER 27, including Domain 2: Design for Scale. Teams are expected to iteratively assess the transformative solution's potential for adaptability for different contexts and potential for scaling in Phase I.	The company must identify a plausible customer, market, and commercialization pathway that could sustain the product beyond federal funding.	The company must identify a plausible market and commercialization pathway for a new version of the existing product that incorporates the component.	The company must identify a plausible pathway for transferring the research-based innovation into a commercial product that can be adopted at scale and sustained over time.

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Probably not a fit if…	The idea is an incremental improvement, focuses only on a proximal cause instead of addressing root causes of implementation failure, is not AI- or technology-enabled, lacks credible potential for substantially better outcomes, does not have a clear pathway to scale, or falls outside the competition's focus area: *C-STEP: Coordinating Systems to Translate Evidence into Policy and Practice*.	The transformative solution does not focus on preservice teacher education, teacher outcomes, and a plausible link to outcomes for students with or at risk for disabilities; does not address U.S. education systems; or lacks plans for required co-design and cost sharing.	The applicant is not an eligible small business; the proposed product builds on or integrates with an existing team-developed product; it uses the same technological approach as an existing product; or it lacks a commercialization pathway.	The applicant is not an eligible small business; there is no existing research-based product; the proposed component is merely an extension of an existing feature; it uses the same technological approach as the existing product; or it lacks a commercialization pathway.	The applicant is not an eligible small business; the underlying innovation is not evidence-based or was not originally developed by researchers at an eligible academic or nonprofit education research organization; the work is still at an early concept stage; or there is no credible pathway to commercialization and scale.

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The ATS Hub, an Institute of Education Sciences-funded project, supports the Accelerate Transform Scale (ATS) Initiative by building a strong field of education innovators. This field will develop use-inspired, evidence-based products that harness emerging technologies to address urgent educational challenges. The project envisions creating an infrastructure that fosters a community of innovators, enabling the rapid development and scaling of breakthrough educational solutions.

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