



## First Book's Impact and Innovation Platform

**Statement of Need.** As funders and policymakers at the national and state levels work to both stabilize and transform the childcare and public education sectors, it is critical to engage and harness the energy and knowledge of the extraordinary providers who are performing innovative and impactful work with underserved children daily. However, it is extremely difficult to manage a comprehensive system to identify, evaluate, and elevate these creative models so that best practices can be shared with the entire field.

**The Solution: First Book's Impact and Innovation Platform.** First Book has built a proven model that comprehensively manages competitive grant processes to identify, evaluate, and accelerate the most innovative ideas. The First Book platform is very flexible – and can be tailored to focus geographically (national, state, region, or locality), or on a specific topic area (e.g., social-emotional development, literacy, or parent/family engagement – to name a few). This initiative leverages First Book's national breadth and hyper-local reach to identify and catalyze local innovation. First Book's platform provides a unique approach to identify and elevate game-changing innovations that are designed and built at the local level and can be adapted statewide or nationwide to address education equity.

**The Components of the Platform.** First Book's platform is a refined and proven process that has been used to evaluate and reward community innovators across the country. The process includes:

- A system for soliciting thousands of applications simultaneously;
- A powerful rubric for comprehensive evaluation;
- A rigorous, multi-phased evaluation process to select finalists and winners;
- A process to award winners and provide consolation funding;
- A critical impact evaluation process to ensure that goals are met; and
- The ability to share best practices nationwide through the First Book Network of educators and beyond.

**Record of Success.** First Book has employed this model to distribute cash grants as well as many types of needed educational resources – books, puzzles, manipulatives and beyond. Some examples include:

- **33-State Book Distribution.** In 2019, First Book launched an initiative to distribute \$4.7 million in books to programs and schools to more than 1.5 million children through 80 organizations across 33 states. Through a competitive 'request for proposals' (RFP) process, First Book solicited over 500 applications detailing original and innovative programs for using books to unlock new opportunities for children in need. Most critically, through this massive effort, community champions raised local and national awareness of the need for and value of more equitable access to critical educational resources.
- **COVID-19 Technology Distribution.** In 2020, recognizing the tremendous impact COVID-19 had exacerbating the technology and educational inequities in communities in need, First Book, Intel Corporation, the LEGO Foundation, CDW-G and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving partnered to provide much needed resources to innovative districts most in need of these



resources. First Book leveraged its platform to evaluate the needs and capacities of school districts across the country in order to distribute more than 17,000 laptops, 7,500 LEGO Education Solutions and more than \$200,000 in internet connectivity stipends to 52 school districts across 16 states to better support virtual learning.

**Specific Offer: First Book's Impact and Innovation Platform Stands Ready to Help.** As states, counties, and communities race to strengthen and rebuild their childcare and education systems in the post-COVID era, the First Book platform stands ready to design customized strategies to assist in evaluating needs and innovations, in order to elevate the impact that is so critical during this period. The First Book platform can be deployed to assist in grant evaluation as well as funding requests being fielded by state and local leaders.

Please contact us for additional information.

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**About First Book:** At First Book, we are building a path out of poverty through educational equity. Our purpose is as bold as it is urgent: To create systemic change. To ensure equal access to quality education. To empower *every* educator and *all* the children in need who they serve.

*How do we do it?* First Book is a social enterprise, applying proven strategies of the private sector to fuel our work as a non-profit with a growing ecosystem of models that work both individually and together to create impact. We have aggregated the **First Book Network**, North America's largest group of educators serving kids in need – more than 500,000 professionals – a Network that is growing by nearly 1,000 new members each week, 90,000 serving children ages 0-6.

**Original Research Harnesses the Voice.** Through **Research & Insights**, we conduct original research that amplifies the voices of our Network members and identifies their needs. We then engage field experts to create tools and resources to address those needs through the **Accelerator**. We curate culturally relevant educational resources that resonate with our membership and the diverse children they serve and leverage the power of aggregated buying to make these books and resources free or affordable through the **First Book Marketplace**, an award-winning e-commerce site.

**Continual Innovation to Elevate Impact.** We drive constant innovation and collaborate with field-leading organizations, to continually elevate our models and bring the best insights and new practices to the field of education, while generating sustainable revenue to continue our work. We form win-win relationships that benefit those we serve, as well as the publishers, suppliers, purposeful corporations, governments, and other key stakeholders committed to improving educational equity.

**System-changing Models Addressing the Whole Child.** Finally, we address the needs of the whole child supporting their education, basic needs, and wellness – all of which are essential to educational equity. Through our sophisticated distribution system, we efficiently deliver help where it is needed. The First Book educator-centric integrated design, grounded in rapid-cycle feedback, and powered by innovation and entrepreneurial thinking, provides hope and promise to children living in poverty and the educators who serve them.