



INNOVATION FUND FISCAL YEAR 2017 PLANNING GRANT GUIDELINES

About the Innovation Fund

The [Innovation Fund](#) supports local education agencies (LEAs) in planning, implementing and scaling innovative education programs that advance student achievement throughout Georgia.

Most recently, the Innovation Fund received Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) state funding to provide grants to eligible organizations focused on planning, implementing, or scaling innovative education programs focused on the following priority areas:

1. Applied Learning with a Focus on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) Education,
2. Birth to Age Eight Language and Literacy Development,
3. Development and Replication of Blended Learning School Models, and
4. Teacher and Leader Development for High-Need Schools.

Award Timeline

June 3, 2016	Innovation Fund Technical Assistance Day Loudermilk Conference Center, Atlanta, GA
June 6, 2016	Application Opens
August 15, 2016	Grant Applications Due
September 12 – 16, 2016	Phone Interviews with the Highest Scoring Applicants
Late September	Grant Awards Announced

Eligibility Requirements

In order to apply for the FY17 grant round, your organization must be a LEA, RESA, traditional public school, or charter school in the state of Georgia.

Please note that while in the past GOSA has awarded Innovation Fund grants directly to nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education, **this grant round is exclusively for LEAs, RESAs, traditional public schools, or charter schools.** Eligible organizations are *strongly encouraged*, where appropriate, to apply in partnership with institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, and community-based agencies to strengthen the quality of their proposed program. **However, the LEA, RESA, traditional public school, or charter school must submit the application and serve as the fiscal agent for all grant funds.**

Submission Instructions

To apply for an Innovation Fund grant, please follow the steps below:

1. Carefully review these Grant Guidelines, along with the definitions of key terms located at the end of this document.
2. Attend the Technical Assistance Day on June 3, 2016 at the Loudermilk Center in Atlanta, GA. If you or a representative from your agency cannot make it to the Technical Assistance Day, be sure to visit the [Innovation Fund Grant Application Toolbox](#), which includes guidance such as funded grant application examples, video presentations from our current Innovation Fund grantees, and research articles related to the Innovation Fund priority areas.
3. Beginning on June 6, 2016, create an account, or if you already have an account, log in to complete your application at <http://innovationfund.fluidreview.com>.
4. Submit your completed application, including your answers to the application questions, along with all required documents, **no later than August 15, 2016.**

If you have any questions during the application process, please contact:

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Types of Planning Grants and Bonus Points

Applicants can use planning grants in two ways:

- A **regular planning grant** is for applicants that would like to plan a new program.
- A **planning to scale grant** is for applicants that have an existing successful program that they would like to scale, but feel that a year of planning time would enable them to scale more successfully.

Current or former Innovation Fund implementation or Race to the Top enterprise grantees that are applying for a planning to scale grant are eligible for five bonus points on their application provided that they meet the following criteria:

- Successfully completed the requirements of their Innovation Fund grant, including submitting all financial and evaluation reports on time and of acceptable quality, meeting all approved grant milestones, and providing the necessary closeout documents by the deadline;
- Were not placed on corrective action at any time during the grant period;
- Meet the eligibility requirements for this funding cycle; and
- Are applying to scale the program they developed with their implementation or Race to the Top enterprise grant.

General Information about Planning Grants

Planning grants will provide eligible organizations between \$5,000 and \$10,000 to plan an innovative education program aligned with one or more of the Innovation Fund priority areas:

1. Applied Learning with a Focus on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) Education,
2. Birth to Age Eight Language and Literacy Development,
3. Development and Replication of Blended Learning School Models, and
4. Teacher and Leader Development for High-Need Schools.

Organizations will have one year from grant award date (September 2016) to spend the planning grant funds.

Successful planning grant applications will demonstrate that:

- You can provide a general description of the program you would like to plan, as well as the anticipated population the program will serve,
- You can describe the types of partners that could help you plan and, eventually, implement the program,

- Your program is *directly aligned* with one of the Innovation Fund priority areas,
- Your program will directly address a need, determined by data, in your school, district or community,
- Your school or district has the capacity, qualifications, governing body support, and time to successfully plan this program,
- Your organization has an intentional and feasible planning process, and,
- Your organization has a strategic budget that is aligned with your planning process.

Successful applications should also be well written, free of any grammatical or spelling errors, and clearly answer only the questions asked in the grant application.

Below please find the following information regarding the Innovation Fund Planning Grant Application:

- The number of questions per application section,
- The required documents for each section, and
- The possible points for each section.

Section	Number of Application Questions	Required Documents	Possible Points
Executive Summary	2	n/a	20 points
Alignment and Need	2	n/a	25 points
Capacity to Plan	2	Statements of Commitment (from project members and leadership)	15 points
Proposed Plan	2	Planning Grant Process Table	25 points
Budget	3	Planning Grant Budget Template	15 points
Bonus Points	n/a	n/a	+5 points
TOTAL	11 questions	3 required documents	100 points (+ 5 bonus points)

Please refer to the below section for specific information about each section of the planning grant application.

Specific Information about the Planning Grant Application

Executive Summary (20 points)

This section should provide a *concise summary* of your program that is 300 words or less. This description should include:

- **A general overview of the program you would like to plan,**
- **A description of the participants your program will serve,** including the target number (students, teachers, or leaders) and type of program participants. When discussing the type of program participants, you may include general demographic information such as grade level, subject area, school or district, or educational background. Please be sure to *only include information about the participants the program will actually serve*, not information about individuals who live in the same community or students who attend the same school.
- **A discussion of potential partners that could help you plan and, eventually, implement your program.** Potential partners could include, but are not limited to, community organizations, nonprofit organizations, technical colleges, colleges or universities, other schools or districts, businesses, and service providers or contractors. Please note, you are not expected to have confirmed partnerships at the time of submission. However, your answer should reflect that you have a clear understanding of the types of potential partners that will be integral to the success of your intended program. (Please note the partnership answer does not count towards the 300-word limit).

Alignment and Need for the Program (25 points)

This section includes two components:

- **A description of how your intended program will eventually align with one of the Innovation Fund priority areas.** Please be sure to review the definitions of each priority area (located in the *Definitions* section at the end of this document), to ensure that your program matches one of these definitions. You may also refer to information about your priority area from the Technical Assistance Day breakout sessions or the [Innovation Fund Grant Application Toolbox](#).
- **A description of how your intended program will address a need and benefit students, teachers, or educational leaders in your school, district, or community.** You must include the specific data you used to determine this need and explain how these data support the need for the program.

Appropriate data include, but are not limited to: student test scores, teacher or leader evaluation results, county demographic data (poverty rates, unemployment rates, etc.), survey results, etc. Where appropriate, you may also include qualitative data, such as administrator observations of teacher or student needs.

Capacity to Plan the Program (15 points)

This section must demonstrate that your organization has the capacity to plan your intended program. You must address the following items:

- The individual(s) who will lead the planning process has/have both the qualifications and time to plan your intended program, and
- You have a clear understanding of any other individuals (both within and outside of your agency) that will support you in the planning process. Your answer should also demonstrate that your organization's leadership (executive director, superintendent, board, etc.) fully supports the planning and possible implementation of your intended program.
- **Please be sure to upload the statements of commitment from the planning grant lead(s) and your organization's leadership.** If a key member of your grant team will be hired with grant funds and is therefore unknown at this time, please include a job description for this position, along with the desired qualifications, in lieu of a statement of commitment. More information regarding statements of commitment can be found on in the *Information about Required Documents* section of this document

Proposed Plan (25 points)

Successful plans will outline intentional and feasible steps that will lead to the eventual implementation of a program that generates positive student, teacher, or leader outcomes. This section must include a narrative describing the action steps you will take during the planning process and the rationale for each step.

You must also upload a completed **Planning Grant Process Table**. The template for this table will be available on the online application site and in the [Innovation Fund Grant Application Toolbox](#). Please note that you must use the template provided.

When completing this template, you must indicate:

- The goals of your planning process,
- The action step(s) you will take to reach this goal,
- The specific person(s) responsible for taking these action steps,
- The timeline for completing these action steps, and

- The intended outcome from these action steps.

You may include more than one planning activity for each goal. However, each goal should align with the intended outcome. Please see below for an example:

Goal	Planning Activity	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline	Outcome
To compile a list and description of at least fifteen best-practices from other STEM-focused elementary schools in Georgia that could be implemented at the Westside STEAM Academy.	The grant lead will visit, and interview staff at five STEM-focused elementary schools throughout Georgia (ABC STEM Elementary, the K-3 STEAM Academy, Full STEAM Ahead Charter, Franklin STEM Elementary, and Highlands STEM Magnet School.)	Grant Lead	October 2016 – January 2017	The planning team will be able to incorporate appropriate best-practices from these schools into the Westside STEAM Academy.

Budget (15 points)

This section must indicate how you will use your planning grant funds (\$5,000 to \$10,000) to plan your program. For this section, you must upload the **Planning Grant Budget Template**, which will be available on the online application site or in the [Innovation Fund Grant Application Toolbox](#). Please note that you must use the template provided.

When completing this template, please be sure to enter:

- The total amount of grant funds and funds from other sources, if applicable, (other grants, federal funds, district funds, etc.) that you plan to spend in each budget category,
- The specific items and cost of these items included in each budget category, (you may enter additional line items as needed), and
- A description and rationale for each of these items. You may include the description in the template provided, or upload additional information as needed.

Successful budget sections will demonstrate that you have a feasible and reasonable plan to spend your planning grant funds, as well as indicate you have potential plans to secure funding for the implementation of your program.

. In addition, all proposed expenditures must meet the following criteria:

- **Allowable:** the expense is not a prohibited use of state funding.

- **Allocable:** the expense is directly related to the purpose and outcomes of your grant, and the amount of the expense is proportional to the benefit the program will receive from the expense.
- **Reasonable:** a prudent person outside of your organization would agree that the expense is reasonably priced and necessary to accomplish the grant objectives.

Please be sure to review the *Financial and Other Expectations* section of this document prior to completing your budget.

Information about Required Documents

In addition to the application questions, **Planning Grant Process Timeline** and **Planning Grant Budget Template**, please remember to upload the following documents:

- **Statements of Commitment** (*statements of commitment will be considered in the Capacity to Plan score*): You must upload signed statements of commitment from the planning grant lead(s) and your organization's leadership.

An effective statement of commitment should describe, in 300 words or less:

- The specific roles and responsibilities the person writing the statement will have during the planning grant period,
- The resources the individual will contribute to the project (if applicable), and
- That the individual writing the letter has the capacity and commitment to ensure a successful planning process.

Financial and Other Expectations

Allowable Expenses

Planning grant funds may be used for personnel, fringe benefits, materials, equipment, travel, contractual, and indirect costs. Allowable expenses in each category are outlined below. Please note that this list does not include every allowable expense, but rather, will give you an idea of the types of allowable expenses.

- **Personnel:** Staff salary, or a portion of salary, provided compensation is paid specifically to individuals working towards the grant objectives, AND the percentage of each individual's salary paid from grant funds is commensurate with the amount of time that the individual will dedicate toward the grant objectives.
- **Supplies** for activities directly related to the grant, such as binders, notebooks, pens or pencils, post-it notes, iPads, computers, tablets, or other supplies for students, teachers, leaders, or personnel involved in grant activities.

- **Equipment** for activities directly related to the grant that cost over \$5,000, such as lab equipment, or other equipment necessary to accomplish the grant objectives.
- **Travel** expenses directly related to the grant, including the cost of mileage, lodging, airfare and per diem amounts. Please note travel expenses must be in accordance with the State Travel Policy, available here: https://sao.georgia.gov/sites/sao.georgia.gov/files/related_files/site_page/SOG_Statewide_Travel_Policy-Effective030116.pdf.
- **Contractual** services with qualified individuals or organizations, such as service providers or evaluators that will directly serve the purposes of the grant. Please note that all organizations awarded grants must adhere to the State of Georgia Procurement Manual, available here: http://pur.doas.ga.gov/gpm/MyWebHelp/GPM_Main_File.htm.
- **Indirect Costs**, such as administrative assistance, of up to no more than 10% of your overall grant budget.

The Innovation Fund is a reimbursement-based grant program. Organizations awarded grants will request reimbursement on a quarterly basis, after the expenses have been liquidated. In order to receive reimbursement, grantees must liquidate all approved costs on or after the date the grant contract is executed and prior to the project closeout.

Auditing Requirements

Organizations that receive an Innovation Fund grant must follow all applicable state of Georgia financial reporting and audit requirements.

Grant Expectations

If your organization receives an Innovation Fund grant, you must meet the following expectations during the grant period:

- Complete and submit, in a timely manner, additional forms and certifications required for the use of state funding;
- Adhere to all provisions in your Innovation Fund grant contract;
- Complete and submit in a timely manner, quarterly expense and progress reports, and planning grant update reports;
- Submit any budget or milestone amendments to GOSA for approval prior to making those changes;
- Arrange for GOSA staff to make site visits, when requested by GOSA, to your program;
- Respond to emails and phone calls from GOSA staff in a timely and professional manner;

- Clearly communicate to GOSA both the successes and challenges of your grant work; and
- Attend a yearly summit with other Innovation Fund grantees to share your work.

Failure to meet these expectations may result in GOSA withholding funding from your grant award.

Definitions

Applied Learning is the opportunity for students to integrate classroom content with authentic, real-world (personal, home, career, community, society) experiences. Through these experiences, students develop and strengthen their problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and self-management skills. Applied learning not only supports students in mastering content standards, but also equips them with the skills they need to be successful students and adults.

Birth to Age Eight Language and Literacy focuses on creating high-quality and productive learning environments – both inside and outside of the classroom – where children, ages birth to eight, have access to the resources necessary to fully develop their language and literacy skills. This priority area focuses on both in-school learning, and on leveraging community partnerships with social service and nonprofit organizations to address each child’s learning, health, family, and social-emotional needs.

In alignment with the Get Georgia Reading Campaign, programs aligned with this priority area must address these four pillars:

- *Language Nutrition*: All children receive language-rich child and adult interactions.
- *Access*: All children and their families have access to high-quality social services that support healthy development.
- *Productive Learning Climate*: Children have access to home and school environments that foster their social-emotional development, school engagement, and academic achievement.
- *Teacher Preparation and Effectiveness*: Early childhood educators provide high-quality, evidence-informed instruction tailored to the needs of each child, regardless of background. (Definition from [Get Georgia Reading](#))

Blended Learning is a formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online learning with some element of student control over time, place, path and/or pace, and at least in part in a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home. In addition, the modalities along each student’s learning path within a course or subject are connected to provide an integrated learning experience. Blended learning is NOT simply placing technology in the classroom or providing students access to online courses. Blended learning utilizes technology

to restructure traditional school models, promote data-driven and individualized instruction, leverage the strengths of effective educators, and advance student achievement. *(definition adapted from [The Clayton Christensen Institute](#))*

High-Need Schools are schools that face challenges in ensuring success for all students. Examples of high-need schools include, but are not limited to: (a) consistently underperforming schools, (b) schools located in rural areas that have difficulty recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers and leaders, and (c) schools that serve a high percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch, special education students, or English language learners.

An **Innovative Program** solves an existing problem in a new and inventive way, has the potential to dramatically improve student achievement, is replicable, and can be objectively evaluated. (Definition adapted from [The Walton Family Foundation](#))

Local Education Agency (LEA) means a government agency which supervises the provision of instruction or educational services to members of the community. LEAs are also often referred to as “school districts.”

STEAM Education is defined as an integrated curriculum (as opposed to science, technology, arts, engineering, and mathematics taught in isolation) that is driven by problem solving, discovery, exploratory project/problem-based learning, and student-centered development of ideas and solutions. *(Definition from the [Georgia Department of Education](#))*

Teacher and Leader Development for High-Need Schools focuses on building teacher and leader capacity to improve student achievement in high-need schools. This priority area may include programs targeted to: (a) build the pipeline of effective teachers and leaders for high-need schools, (b) recruit and retain effective teachers and leaders for high-need schools, and/or (c) provide professional development opportunities to boost the capacity of current teachers and leaders in high-need schools.