

INNOVATION FUND

FISCAL YEAR 2018 ACCELERATOR GRANT GUIDELINES

ABOUT THE INNOVATION FUND

WHAT IS THE INNOVATION FUND?

The [Innovation Fund](#) invests in schools and school districts that are planning, implementing and scaling radically innovative programs that address our most significant education challenges. The Innovation Fund began as a \$19.4 million fund created under Georgia's Race to the Top (RT3) plan. To continue the Innovation Fund's work beyond RT3, Governor Deal appropriated state funding in Fiscal Years (FY) 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. Since its inception, the Innovation Fund has invested over \$33 million of state and federal funding through 178 grants to school districts, charter schools, postsecondary institutions and nonprofit organizations.

WHAT ARE THE INNOVATION FUND PRIORITY AREAS?

The Innovation Fund invests in programs aligned with the following priority areas. **Definitions of the priority areas are located on pages 8 – 9 of this document.**

- Applied Learning with a Focus on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) Education,
- Birth to Age Eight Language and Literacy Development,
- Blended & Personalized Learning, and
- Teacher and Leader Development for High-Need Schools.



ABOUT THE INNOVATION FUND ACCELERATOR

WHAT IS THE INNOVATION FUND ACCELERATOR?

In 2017, GOSA announced a new Innovation Fund grant opportunity: **The Innovation Fund Accelerator**. The Accelerator's mission is to build the capacity of schools and districts to develop radically innovative programs that directly target the root causes of challenging and complex education problems.

The Accelerator supports schools and districts in developing innovative programs in the following ways:

- **Strategic Development Process:** Schools and districts that are selected to participate the Innovation Fund Accelerator will go through a strategic, six-month development process which will include webinars, in-person workshops, assignments to be completed in-between sessions, and field trips.
- **Grant Funding:** Each school or district that participates in the Accelerator will receive a \$10,000 grant. This grant will cover the cost of expenses **directly related** to the Accelerator workshops, field trips, and assignment(s), including: travel to and from workshops, parking, per diem to cover the cost of food on workshop days, stipends for participating staff, and substitutes.
- **Opportunity to Apply for Pilot Funding:** Participants that successfully complete the Accelerator will have the opportunity to apply for a grant of up to \$45,000 to pilot the program they developed during the Accelerator.
- **Opportunity to Be an Integral Part of an Accelerator Cohort:** Accelerator cohorts will include teams from four to five schools and/or school districts. Schools and districts participating in the Accelerator will have the opportunity to learn from each other, challenge each other's thinking, and collaborate to develop innovative programs that transform education for Georgia's students.

INNOVATION FUND ACCELERATOR FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ACCELERATOR?

To apply for the Accelerator, your organization must be a LEA, RESA, traditional public school, or charter school in the state of Georgia.

Please note that, while GOSA has previously 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 encouraged to partner with other types of organizations, such as postsecondary institutions, nonprofit organizations, and community-based agencies, as they go through the Accelerator process. **However, the LEA, RESA, traditional public school, or charter school must submit the application and serve as the fiscal agent for all grant funds.**

IF SELECTED TO BE A PART OF THE ACCELERATOR, WHO FROM MY SCHOOL/DISTRICT SHOULD PARTICIPATE?

All schools and districts selected to participate in the Accelerator must bring a team **four to eight people** to each Accelerator workshop. These team members should represent diverse perspectives and roles within your school, district, or community. The team should include: district and/or school-level leadership with demonstrated decision-making power, (principal, assistant principal, superintendent, etc.), teachers, other school or district staff that will potentially be involved in your pilot program, and representatives from critical partner organizations. All team members must be prepared to fully participate in the Accelerator process, including all workshops and in-between assignments.

WHEN AND WHERE WILL THE ACCELERATOR WORKSHOPS OCCUR?

The tentative schedule for the Accelerator workshops is below. **Please note this schedule is subject to change.** Unless otherwise specified, all Accelerator workshops will take place in metro Atlanta. **Attendance at workshops is mandatory. Teams that do not send at least four individuals to each workshop will not be eligible to apply for pilot funding.**

DATE	SESSION
November 9, 2017	Session 1: What is Innovation (Webinar)
November 16, 2017	Session 2: So, What's the Problem (or the Opportunity?)
December 2017 (exact dates TBD)	Session 3: Whose Input Matters?
January 11, 2018	Session 4: Sharpening our Innovator Skills
February/March	Field Trips
February 8, 2018	Session 5: Grow Your Idea
March 8, 2018	Session 6: Plan for Action: Prototype It!
April 12, 2018	Session 7: Wrapping it Up
May 10, 2018	Pilot Proposal Due
June 1, 2018	Pilot Funding Award Announcement
June 2018 – June 2019	Pilot Period

INNOVATION FUND ACCELERATOR APPLICATION: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHEN ARE THE ACCELERATOR APPLICATIONS DUE?

The timeframe for the Accelerator application process is below:

August 16, 2017	Webinar & Application Opens
October 5, 2017	Accelerator Applications Due
Week of October 23, 2017	Interviews with Top Applicants
Early November 2017	Grant Awards Announced

HOW DO I APPLY?

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

1. Take the [WHICH GRANT SHOULD I APPLY FOR? QUIZ](#) to ensure the Accelerator is the right grant opportunity for you. If it is, proceed to step 2.
2. Carefully review these **GRANT GUIDELINES**.
3. Beginning on August 16, participate in [The Innovation Fund Application Webinar Series](#). Please note you must complete both the **INNOVATION FUND GRANTS 101 WEBINAR, LET'S TALK INNOVATION** AND the **INNOVATION FUND ACCELERATOR WEBINAR** to apply. The webinars will be available on [GOSA's website](#).
4. Once you participate in the webinar, create an account, or if you already have an account, log in to complete your application at <http://innovationfund.fluidreview.com>.
5. Submit your completed application, including your answers to the application questions, along with all required documents, **no later than October 5, 2017**.

WHAT QUESTIONS ARE ON THE ACCELERATOR APPLICATION?

The Innovation Fund Accelerator Application is divided into three sections, listed below.

SECTION	NUMBER OF APPLICATION QUESTIONS	REQUIRED DOCUMENTS	POSSIBLE POINTS	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL SCORE
What's Your Idea?	4	n/a	8 points	10%
Who Is Involved?	1	Statements of Commitment	8 points	40%
Other Questions	5	n/a	8 points per question	50% (10% per question)

[To view the application questions, please click here.](#)

WHAT SHOULD A SUCCESSFUL ACCELERATOR APPLICATION LOOK LIKE?

Successful Accelerator applications will demonstrate that the applicant:

- Has a well-articulated problem they would like to address;
- Can think logically about the link between problems, root causes, and potential programs;
- Has a dynamic and diverse team with decision-making power that will fully participate in the Accelerator process; and
- Has a mindset that will enable them to succeed in the Accelerator.

HOW WILL YOU SCORE THE ACCELERATOR APPLICATION?

Two reviewers will score each Accelerator application. Based on this review, GOSA will invite top applicants to an interview. GOSA will determine admission to the Accelerator based on the application as well as the team's answers during the interview process.

THE *WHAT'S YOUR IDEA?* SECTION OF THE APPLICATION IS ONLY 10 PERCENT OF THE APPLICATION. DON'T YOU CARE MORE ABOUT OUR IDEA FOR AN INNOVATIVE PROGRAM?

While we are absolutely interested in reading about your program idea, the Accelerator will take participants through a rigorous process that will challenge their assumptions and support them in developing a program that directly targets the root cause of a complex or challenging problem. We expect that pilot programs developed during the Accelerator will look drastically different than the programs participants envisioned at the start of the process.

DO I NEED TO INCLUDE QUALITATIVE OR QUANTITATIVE DATA IN MY APPLICATION?

While it is not a requirement to include qualitative or quantitative data as part of your application, strong applications will back up statements with evidence, rather than just opinions.

THE QUESTIONS IN THE *OTHER QUESTIONS* SECTION ARE VERY BROAD. WHY ARE YOU ASKING ME THESE THINGS? AND HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO ANSWER THEM?

Successful Accelerator participants must be willing to stretch their thinking about what is possible in education and be comfortable internalizing positive and critical feedback from multiple stakeholders. These questions are designed to assess if your team is a good fit for the Accelerator and vice versa. Therefore, you should answer these questions honestly.

DO I HAVE TO APPLY WITH A SPECIFIC PRIORITY AREA IN MIND?

The Innovation Fund invests in programs aligned with STEAM Applied Learning, Birth to Age Eight Language & Literacy, Blended & Personalized Learning, and Teacher & Leader Development for High-Need Schools. Therefore, your idea should be related to one of these priority areas. We anticipate, however, that you might shift your priority area focus during the Accelerator.

PRIORITY AREA DEFINITIONS

Programs in the **Applied Learning with a Focus on STEAM** priority area will:

- Provide students with a rigorous curriculum that seamlessly and authentically integrates science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics;
- Provide opportunities for students to apply classroom content to authentic, real-world (personal, home, career, community, society) experiences. These opportunities should be a part of a rigorous academic curriculum, not just “fun” projects.
- Build students’ 21st Century Skills, including but not limited to: critical thinking, problem solving, grit, collaboration and communication.

Programs in the **Blended and Personalized Learning** priority area will transform the way teachers teach and students learn by:

- Providing students with agency over the place, path, and pace of their learning;
- Where appropriate, using online learning to allow for student agency over the pace, path, and pace of their learning;
- Allowing students to progress based on mastery of content, rather than a pre-determined timeline;
- Appropriately differentiating instruction for all types and levels of learners; and
- Utilizing rigorous learning experiences that appropriately challenge students.

Programs in the **Birth to Age Eight Language and Literacy** priority area will:

- Provide children, birth to age eight, with access to language-rich child and adult interactions both inside and outside of school;
- Provide children with rigorous, evidence-based instruction aimed to ensure that, by 3rd grade, students are active consumers and critical thinkers of written texts;
- Leverage strategic partnerships with social service and community agencies, non-profit organizations, parents, and families to address children’s learning, health, and social-emotional needs.

Programs in the **Teacher & Leader Development for High-Need Schools** priority area will:

- Equip teachers and leaders with evidence-based practices to improve student achievement at high-need schools; and
- Test innovative approaches to recruiting, retaining, or developing high-quality teachers and leaders.

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.

Innovative Programs:

- Target the root cause(s) of challenging and complex problems by utilizing breakthrough, never-before-seen approaches to education;
- Disrupt existing structures and systems; and
- Have the potential to permanently transform school.