INNOVATION FUND
FISCAL YEAR 2019 IMPLEMENTATION GRANT GUIDELINES

ABOUT 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 plan (RT3). To continue the Innovation Fund's work beyond RT3, Governor Deal appropriated state funding in Fiscal Years (FY) 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019. Since its inception, the Innovation Fund has invested over $36 million of state and federal funding through grants to school districts, charter schools, postsecondary institutions, and nonprofit organizations to pilot innovative education programs, ranging in focus from teacher and leader induction and development to STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) applied learning, blended learning, and birth-to-age-eight language and literacy development.

The Innovation Fund invests in programs aligned with the following priority areas. **Definitions of the priority areas are located on pages 15 - 16 of this document.**

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

ABOUT INNOVATION FUND IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS

Implementation grants provide eligible organizations between $200,000 and $700,000 over 2.5 years to pilot innovative programs that meet the following criteria:
- Target the root cause of a challenging and complex problem by utilizing breakthrough, never-before-seen approaches to education;
- Disrupt existing structures and systems;
- Have the potential to permanently transform education;
- Can be objectively evaluated using a comparison group of students, teachers, or leaders; and
- Are strongly aligned with one of the Innovation Fund priority areas.

In addition to the above criteria, GOSA seeks to fund grant programs that are a **Level 3 or 4 Innovation**, as detailed in the chart below. To see examples of Level 4 Innovations visit XQ: The Super School Project.

Level of Innovation	Mindset	Outcome	Example
Level 4: Creator of New Future	Visionary, fully engaged, and entrepreneurial – "Where must we be in ten years?"	Breakthrough approaches to teaching and learning, never- before-seen approaches to education.	A school district creates a mobile school to serve transient homeless students.
Level 3: Continuous Improver	Dissatisfied with the status quo – "Good enough is not good enough"	Incremental changes to teaching, learning, and school models are proposed and implemented	A school district starts a new after school program for homeless students, designed to help them improve their life skills and stay in school.
Level 2: Problem Preventer	Mindful and prepared of potential challenges – "Not on my watch."	Challenges are managed and mitigated.	A district starts an incentive program designed to improve homeless students' attendance.
Level 1: Problem Solver	Practical, competent – "I can do this."	Challenges are resolved.	A district makes sure it provides efficient transportation for all homeless students.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To apply for an FY19 Innovation Fund grant, your organization must be a local education agency (LEA)/School District, 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 postsecondary institutions, **this grant round is exclusively for LEAs**, **RESAs (on behalf of a group of school districts or schools), traditional public schools, or charter schools**. Eligible organizations are *strongly encouraged*, where appropriate, to partner 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.**

APPLICATION PROCESS

WHAT IS THE FUNDING TIMELINE?

August 9, 2018	Webinar Series & Application Opens
October 4, 2018	Implementation Grant Applications Due
Week of November 12, 2018	Interviews with Top Applicants
Early December 2018	Grant Awards Announced
December 2018 – June 2021	Implementation Period for Awarded Grantees

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 an Implementation Grant is the right grant opportunity for you. If it is, proceed to step 2.

2. Carefully review these **GRANT GUIDELINES**.

3. Beginning on August 9, participate in **THE INNOVATION FUND APPLICATION WEBINAR SERIES**. Please note you must complete the **INNOVATION FUND GRANTS 101 WEBINAR, LET'S TALK INNOVATION AND** the **INNOVATION FUND IMPLEMENTATION & SCALING**

GRANT WEBINAR to apply. The webinars will be available on GOSA's website starting August 9, 2018.

4. Once you participate in the webinar series, create an account, or if you already have an account, log in to complete your application at https://webportalapp.com/sp/login/innovationfund.

5. Submit your completed application online, including your answers to the application questions, along with all required documents, **no later than October 4, 2018.**

WHAT QUESTIONS ARE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION GRANT APPLICATION?

The Innovation Fund Implementation Grant Application is divided into five sections, listed below.

SECTION	# OF QUESTIONS	REQUIRED DOCUMENTS	POSSIBLE POINTS	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL SCORE
What's Your Innovation?	3	Letter(s) of Commitment from Partner Organization(s)	8	25%
Is It *Really* Innovative?	3	n/a	8	25%
What's Your Plan?	1	Scope of Work Letters of Commitment from Key Personnel & Organization Leadership	8	15%
What Will You Do with the Grant Funding?	2	Budget Template & Rationale	8	15%
How Will You Evaluate it?	3	n/a	8	20%

To view the application questions, please click here.

HOW WILL GOSA SCORE MY GRANT APPLICATION?

Reviewers will score each grant application using the Implementation Grant Rubric. Based on this review, GOSA will invite top applicants to an interview. GOSA will determine the grant award winners based on the application as well as the team's answers during the interview.

WHAT WILL A SUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICATION LOOK LIKE?

The following charts: (a) outline what successful answers will look like for each section of the grant application, and (b) provide tips for success. You can also view the Implementation Grant Rubric to see each section's standards for excellent, good, average, and poor answers.

SECTION I. WHAT'S YOUR INNOVATION? (25 PERCENT)	
A Successful Application Will . . .	Demonstrate that your program: • Serves a **specific target population** that was **thoughtfully-selected based on qualitative and quantitative data**; • Has **clearly-defined, realistic but ambitious goals** that **directly relate** to the target population; • Has **relevant and committed partner(s)** with **clearly-defined roles** related to the grant; • Is **strongly aligned** with one of the Innovation Fund priority areas;
Tips for Success	• You should be able to **clearly and concisely** describe your program, its target population, and its goals within the 300-world limit. Think of this section as an **elevator pitch** for your program – providing enough information that the reviewer clearly understands your program at a high level but leaving the nitty-gritty details for other sections of the application. • In this section, you need to justify **why** you are serving a **specific** target population. For example, if your program serves over-aged eighth graders – what data did you use to determine that target population? Why do they need this program? How are you defining over-aged? Why do you want to work with eighth graders rather than ninth graders or seventh graders? • **Successful Innovation Fund programs typically serve a <u>small and specific</u> group of participants** (ex: middle school math students, second grade students not reading on grave level, etc.). Innovation Fund programs are rarely successful when they serve a large group (ex: every teacher in the district, every student in your school). • The partners you describe in this section should be <u>**true partners**</u> in this work – **meaning both parties benefit from participation in the grant**. True partners engage meaningfully and continuously in the grant program (ex: the local university that will provide tutors for your students), not partners that show up occasionally (ex: a company that will provide a guest speaker one time). Remember, more partners are not better. One meaningfully-engaged partner is better than fifteen disengaged partners.

SECTION II. IS IT REALLY INNOVATIVE? (25 PERCENT)	

A Successful Application Will . . .	Demonstrate that:
	• You identified a clearly-defined **problem and root cause** using numerous data points, including qualitative and quantitative data and **direct feedback** from the target population;
	• Your program will:
	    o Directly target the **root cause** of the problem you identified;
	    o **Purposely disrupt** existing structures and systems (Level 4 Innovation); and
	    o Has strong potential to permanently transform education.

Tips for Success	• **Successful Innovation Fund programs target the <u>root cause</u> of a problem**, not the problem itself. For example, if your program is serving third grade students that are not reading on grade level by elevating the quality of language and literacy instruction in your building – are you 100% certain that the quality of literacy instruction is the main reason your students are not reading on grade level? What other factors might be causing low reading achievement? Are there other school or community factors contributing to this problem? How do you know? Successful applicants will demonstrate that they have conducted extensive research – including collecting qualitative and quantitative data and talking with the target population – to identify the root cause of their problem. • Your innovation needs to be **<u>purposeful, not innovation for innovation's sake</u>**. While it may sound "innovative" to create a high-tech learning space or have a one to one ratio of students to 3D printers, ask yourself: "Does my target population *really* need this? Will implementing this program *really* address the root cause I identified?" If your answers to these questions are "no," then your program lacks purpose. Innovation does not need to be flashy, it needs to be smart. • Please be sure to review and internalize the Levels of Innovation Chart on page two of this document. If you want to see examples of Level 4 Innovations, <u>visit XQ: The Super School Project.</u>

SECTION III. WHAT'S YOUR PLAN? (15 PERCENT)	
A Successful Application Will . . .	• Include a comprehensive scope of work that encompasses **all critical grant milestones** and is **highly likely** to lead to successful program implementation; and • Has a **thoughtfully-selected** and **highly-qualified team** that is strongly committed to implementing the program per the scope of work.
Tips for Success	• Your idea for an innovative program may be fabulous, but if you do not have a detailed and realistic implementation plan, then you are not ready to apply for an implementation grant. **Your scope of work should include enough detail that if another school or district received it, they could implement the program by following the activities in the chart.** • **Be realistic**. If you receive an Innovation Fund grant, GOSA will expect you to complete the activities on your scope of work, unless data collected during the implementation process indicate otherwise. For example, if you know your district's hiring process takes a minimum of two months, do not indicate you will hire someone within three weeks of receiving the grant. If you know it will take six months to adequately train your teachers to implement your personalized learning program, do not say you will begin serving students one month after you receive the grant. • Grants are only as successful as the people involved. Therefore, you should thoughtfully select your grant team to ensure it represents the roles and skill sets needed for the project's success. Similarly, everyone on your grant team should fully understand the grant's purpose, goals, implementation plan, and evaluation plan. If selected for an interview, you will need to demonstrate your team is committed and qualified and that each team member deeply understands the grant and his/her clearly-defined role.

	SECTION IV. WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH YOUR GRANT FUNDING? (15 PERCENT)

A Successful Application Will . . .	• Have a specific budget where all items are: (a) allocable (directly relate) to the project, (b) an allowable use of state funds, and (c) reasonable.
	• Demonstrate others' (district, partners, etc.) commitment to the project by showing you have funding from **multiple sources**.
	• Include a budget rationale that indicates:
	    o All budget items are necessary for the program's success; and
	    o You calculated the total funding request based entirely on the needs of the grant and not the available funding amount.
	• Provide **strong evidence** that you will sustain the program, if successful, after the grant ends.

Tips for Success	• **Do your research**. If you receive an Innovation Fund grant, **GOSA expects that you will spend your full grant award within the funding period**. Therefore, GOSA strongly recommends conducting extensive budget research before applying. This research should include, but is not limited to: (a) getting accurate quotes from vendors for any supplies and equipment you will purchase, (b) making realistic estimates regarding salary and stipends for people involved in the grant, and (c) investigating whether the district or other funding sources will fund any items related to the grant. • **Show your math in your budget and budget rationale.** For example, if you are proposing to spend $25,000 on supplies for your grandparent literacy center, what, specifically, will you buy? How many of each item will you buy? How much does each item cost? If you have done the necessary prep work as outlined above, showing your math is easy. If you find showing your math difficult, you have not done enough research. • **Request only what you need**. The maximum amount for an Innovation Fund implementation grant is $700,000. However, please calculate your budget based on the **actual needs of your program**, not based on figuring out how you can spend $700,000. For example, if you only need $300,000 to operate your program successfully, that should be your funding request.

	SECTION V. HOW WILL YOU EVALUATE IT? (20 PERCENT)
A Successful Application Will . . .	• Include three to six SMART goals that directly relate to the project; • Have at least three SMART goals that relate to academic outcomes (*please see page 15 for the definition of academic outcomes);* • Have **a clear, detailed and feasible plan, and timeline** for collecting multiple qualitative and quantitative data points that will **continuously inform course corrections** throughout the implementation process AND measure the program's impact on students, teachers, and/or leaders; • Identify a **feasible comparison group** of students, teachers, and/or leaders; and • Provide strong evidence that you have identified **a highly-qualified external evaluator.**

Tips for Success	• Your goals must be SMART goals – **<u>S</u>pecific, <u>M</u>easurable, <u>A</u>chievable/Ambitious, <u>R</u>elevant, and <u>T</u>ime-<u>B</u>ound.** For example:
	    ○ *<u>SMART Goal</u>:* The percentage of third grade students scoring proficient or above on the English Language Arts Milestones Assessment *(specific, relevant)* will increase by three percentage points per year *(specific, measurable, attainable/ambitious, time-bound)* over baseline. (2018 Baseline: 50% percent of students scoring proficient or above; 2019 goal: 53% scoring proficient or above; 2020 goal: 56% scoring proficient or above).
	    ○ *<u>Not a SMART goal</u>:* Students *(not specific - what students?)* will increase their ELA milestones score by 25% *(not specific, measurable, or timebound – increase what? The percentage of students scoring proficient or above? When will this increase occur by?)*
	    ○ *<u>Also not a SMART goal:</u>* Students will increase their ELA milestones score by 25%.
	    ○ *<u>Definitely not a SMART goal:</u>* Students will develop a new love for reading.
	
	• Successful Innovation Fund grantees are constantly collecting reliable and valid qualitative and quantitative data to measure their grant's impact, rather than waiting until the end of the grant to see what worked. This continuous data collection process allows them to iterate, tweak, and ultimately strengthen their programs. For example, one Innovation Fund grantee used beginning and mid-year MAP data to determine its program was boosting achievement for sixth and seventh graders, but not for eighth graders. Based on these data, the school administrator reorganized his teacher teams to more effectively impact eighth grade achievement. Your evaluation plan should provide enough reliable and valid data to allow you to make mid-grant changes like this principal did.

Tips for Success	• Successful implementation grant applicants will have identified a feasible comparison group that they can use to determine the actual impact of their program. A **comparison group** is a group of students/teachers/leaders that did not receive the intervention/participate in the program but is as similar as possible to the group that does. For example, a middle school that is implementing a sixth-grade math, personalized learning program, might use a comparison group of similar sixth graders that are from a similar, neighboring middle school.
	• External evaluators are an essential component of Innovation Fund implementation grants. Please note that the quality of external evaluators varies greatly. **Do <u>NOT </u>assume that because an evaluator has worked with Georgia schools and districts before that they are highly-qualified to serve as your evaluator.** We strongly encourage applicants to conduct a thorough search for evaluators, both in and outside of Georgia, that can **show evidence** they are capable of:
	o Designing a **quasi-experimental, mixed methods** evaluation that:
	▪ Collects baseline data related to your program's SMART goals;
	▪ Collects valid and reliable data that directly measures your program's progress towards those goals;
	▪ Collects valid and reliable qualitative and quantitative data at **regular intervals** throughout the grant to inform course corrections;
	▪ Includes a comparison group of students, teachers, and/or leaders to determine your program's actual impact;
	o Implementing the evaluation plan as designed;
	o Completing mid-year and end-of-year evaluation reports; and
	o Hosting site visits from GOSA to discuss the progress of the grant.

HOW WILL I RECEIVE MY GRANT FUNDS?

The Innovation Fund is a reimbursement-based grant program. Grantees will receive reimbursement quarterly. Innovation Fund grantees will submit a quarterly expense report no later than 30 days after the end of each quarter. This expense report will include a summary of the funds liquidated during that quarter as well as supporting documentation for each expense. Please note, GOSA will not reimburse unallowable expenses or expenses with missing or insufficient documentation.

WHAT CAN I USE MY GRANT FUNDING FOR?

All expenses covered by Innovation Fund grants must be:

- **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; and
- **Reasonable**: a prudent person outside of your organization would agree that the expense is reasonably priced and necessary to accomplish the grant objectives.

Implementation Grant funds may be used for personnel, fringe benefits, supplies equipment, travel, contractual expenses, and indirect costs. The chart below provides examples of allowable items within each budget category. Please note that this list does not include every allowable expense but should give you an idea of typical allowable expenses.

CATEGORY	EXAMPLE
Personnel	Salary, or a portion of salary, provided the salary is for individuals working towards the grant objectives, AND the percentage of each individual's grant-funded salary is commensurate with the amount of time that the individual will dedicate toward the grant objectives.
Supplies	Materials, under $5,000 in value, for activities directly related to the grant, such as classroom materials, office supplies, iPads, laptops, etc.
Equipment	Equipment, over $5,000 in value, for activities directly related to the grant, such as lab equipment or other equipment necessary to accomplish the grant objectives.
Travel	Travel expenses for activities directly related to the grant, including mileage, lodging, airfare, and per diem amounts. Please note travel expenses must be in accordance with the State of Georgia Travel Policy and per diem amounts.
Contractual	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 and their district procurement policies.
Indirect Costs	Indirect costs related to the grant, such as administrative assistance, of up to no more than 10% of the overall grant budget

WHAT REPORTS ARE REQUIRED IF MY PROGRAM IS FUNDED?

Innovation Fund implementation grantees are responsible for submitting the following reports:

- **Monthly Expense Reports** that provide a snapshot of expenditures by month;
- **Quarterly Budget and Progress Reports**; and
- **Mid-Year and End-Of-Year Evaluation Reports**.

GOSA will send more information regarding these reports to funded grantees.

WILL GOSA CONDUCT SITE VISITS?

Yes, GOSA staff conduct annual site visits to all grantees. GOSA may conduct additional site visits as needed depending on each grantee's progress.

ARE THERE OTHER EXPECTATIONS I NEED TO BE AWARE OF?

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 and satisfactory manner, monthly expense reports, quarterly expense and progress reports, and mid-year and end-of-year evaluation 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 and honestly communicate to GOSA both the successes and challenges of your grant work;
- Attend the annual Innovation Summit, which occurs in June; and
- Allow other Innovation Fund grantees, schools, districts, etc. to visit your program.

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

PRIORITY AREA DEFINITIONS

Programs in the **Applied Learning with a Focus on STEAM** priority area will**:**
- o Provide students with a rigorous curriculum that seamlessly and authentically integrates science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics;
- o Provide opportunities for students to apply classroom content to authentic, real-world (personal, home, career, community, social) experiences. These opportunities should be a part of a rigorous academic curriculum, not just "fun" projects.
- o Build students' 21st Century Skills, including but not limited to: critical thinking, problem solving, grit, collaboration, and communication.

Programs in the **Blended & Personalized Learning** priority area will transform the way teachers teach and students learn by:
- o Providing students with agency over the place, path, and pace of their learning;
- o Where appropriate, using online learning to allow for student agency over the pace, path, and pace of their learning;
- o Allowing students to progress based on mastery of content, rather than a pre-determined timeline;
- o Appropriately differentiating instruction for all types and levels of learners; and
- o Utilizing rigorous learning experiences that appropriately challenge students.

Programs in the **Birth to Age Eight Language & Literacy** priority area will:
- o Provide children, birth to age eight, with access to language-rich child and adult interactions both inside and outside of school;
- o Provide children with rigorous, evidence-based instruction aimed to ensure that, by 3rd grade, students are active consumers and critical thinkers of written texts;
- o 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:
- o Equip teachers and leaders with evidence-based practices to improve student achievement at high-need schools; and
- o 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.

Academic Outcomes are targets related specifically to increased student achievement, including, but not limited to:

- Graduation rates,
- For tested grades and subjects, a students' scores on the state assessments, and
- Other measures of student learning and performance — provided that they are both rigorous and aligned with the goals of your grant – including district benchmark data, student growth data, and student performance on English language proficiency assessments.

Comparison Group: A group of students/teachers/leaders that did not receive the intervention/participate in the program but is as similar as possible to the group that does.

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.

Problem: the complex challenge – supported by qualitative and quantitative data – that students, teachers, leaders, a school, or a school district is facing (ex: low graduation rate).

Root Cause: the circumstances or events – supported by qualitative or quantitative data – that have created the problem students, teachers, leaders, a school, or a school district is facing (ex: a school's curriculum is not engaging or relevant, so students are dropping out after the 9th grade).

Quasi Experimental Design: A quasi experimental evaluation design compares the outcomes of the group receiving the intervention – in this case those participating in the innovative program – with a similar group (comparison group) that does not receive the intervention.