

INNOVATION FUND PLANNING GRANT GUIDELINES

About the Innovation Fund

The [Innovation Fund](#) supports local education authorities (LEAs), traditional public schools, charter schools, institutions of higher education (IHEs), and nonprofit organizations in planning, implementing and scaling innovative education programs that advance student achievement throughout Georgia.

Most recently, the Innovation Fund has received \$5 million in 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 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Education
2. Development and Replication of Blended Learning School Models
3. Development and Replication of Innovative Resource Management Models
4. Teacher and Leader Induction and Development

Award Timeline

August 13, 2014	Grant Technical Assistance Day: Central Georgia Convention Center, Forsyth, GA
August 14, 2014	Grant Technical Assistance Day: GTRI Center, Atlanta, GA
August 22, 2014	Intent to Apply and Application Opens
September 12, 2014	Intent to Apply Form Due
October 3, 2014	Planning Grant Proposals Due
December 15, 2014	Awards Announced

** All agencies interested in applying must attend one of the technical assistance days in order for your application to be considered. [Please click here for more information.](#)*



Eligibility Requirements

In order to apply for an Innovation Fund grant, your organization must meet the following eligibility requirements:

1. Be a local education authority (school district) (LEA), traditional public school, charter school, institution of higher education (IHE), state agency, or nonprofit organization.
*The Innovation Fund **cannot** grant awards to private schools, for profit entities, or individuals.*
2. Attend one of the Technical Assistance Days on August 13, 2014 or August 14, 2014.

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 on pages 9-11 the end of this document.
2. Attend one of the Technical Assistance Days on August 13, 2014 in Forsyth, GA or August 14, 2014 in Atlanta, GA.
3. Beginning on August 22, create an account at <http://innovationfund.fluidreview.com>
4. Log into your account and complete the **Innovation Fund Intent to Apply Form**. GOSA will review your organization's Intent to Apply Form and verify that you are eligible to apply for an Innovation Fund grant.
5. Once you receive an email from GOSA notifying you that you are eligible to apply, log into your account at <http://innovationfund.fluidreview.com> to access and complete the planning grant application.
6. Submit your completed application, including your answers to the application questions, along with all required documents, **no later than Friday, October 3, 2014.**

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

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Program Manager, Innovation Fund
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General Information about Planning Grants

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

- Applied Learning with a Focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Education,
- Development and Replication of Blended Learning School Models,
- Development and Replication of Innovative Resource Management Models, or
- Teacher and Leader Induction and Development

Organizations will have one year from the date of the grant award (December 2014) to spend planning grant funds.

Since planning grants will provide organizations one year to determine the details of their intended program, your application does not need to reflect every specific detail of your intended program. Rather, successful planning grants will demonstrate that:

- Your intended program is strongly aligned with one or more of the Innovation Fund priority areas,
- You intended program will directly address a need, determined by data, in your school, district or community,
- Your organization has the capacity, qualifications, governing body and stakeholder support, and time to successfully plan your intended program, and
- Your organization has an intentional and feasible plan to use the grant funds during the planning grant period.

The Innovation Fund planning grant application will include the following sections. Below please find:

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

Section	Number of Application Questions	Required Documents	Possible Points
Program Overview	4	n/a	25 points
Need for the Program	1	n/a	5 points



Capacity to Plan the Program	2	Resumes of Key Personnel, Letter(s) of Commitment	20 points
Proposed Plan	1	Planning Grant Process Table	30 points
Budget	1	Planning Grant Budget Template	20 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

Program Overview (25 points)

This section should provide general information about your intended program. As mentioned before, your organization is not expected to have every detail of your intended program at the time of submission. However; successful program overview sections will clearly describe:

- **The anticipated population 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 information such as demographic information, grade level, subject area, school or district, or educational background.
- **How your intended program will align with one or more* the Innovation Fund priority areas.** Please be sure to review the definitions of each priority area (located on p. 9-11 of this document), to ensure that your intended program matches one or more of these definitions. You may also refer to information about your priority area from the Technical Assistance Day breakout sessions.

**If your intended program will address more than one priority (for example, your program will provide training for STEM induction teachers on applied learning methods) please list both priority areas, and clearly state how your program will align with each priority.*

- **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. 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.



Need for the Program (5 points)

This section should demonstrate that your intended program will address a need and benefit students, teachers or educational leaders in your school, district, or community. You must include the data you used to determine this need, and explain how this data supports the need for the program.

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

Capacity to Plan the Program (20 points)

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

- The individual who will lead or facilitate the planning process has 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 governing body fully supports the planning and possible implementation of your intended program.**

**Please be sure to upload the resume(s) of the planning grant lead(s). You may also upload resumes from other key personnel, if appropriate. More information regarding resumes of key personnel can be found on page 7 in the Information about Required Documents section of this document.*

***You must upload letter(s) of commitment from your organization's governing body. More information regarding letters of commitment can be found on page 7 in the Information about Required Documents section of this document.*

Proposed Plan (30 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. 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 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
<i>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 STEM Academy.</i>	<i>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.)</i>	<i>Grant Lead</i>	<i>December – March 2015</i>	<i>The planning team will be able to incorporate appropriate best-practices from these schools into the Westside STEAM Academy.</i>

Budget (20 points)*

This section must indicate how you will use your planning grant funds (\$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. Please note that you must use the templates provided to you.

When completing this template, please be sure to enter:

- The total amount of grant funds and funds from other sources (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 (see page 8 for more information),
- **Allocable:** the expense is directly related to the purpose and outcomes of your planning grant, and
- **Reasonable:** an objective person outside of your organization would agree that the expense is appropriate and reasonable for the purposes of the grant.

**Please be sure to review the Financial and Other Expectations on page 8 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:

- **Resumes from Key Personnel** (*resumes will be considered in the Capacity to Plan your Program score*): You must upload the resume of the grant lead. You may upload other resumes, as well, if you feel they will help demonstrate your organization's capacity to plan the program.
- **Letter(s) of Commitment** (*letters of commitment will be considered the Capacity to Plan Your Program score*): You must upload a letter of commitment from your organization's governing body (superintendent, board chair, president or president's designee, executive director, or other appropriate official). You may upload letters of commitment from other stakeholders or partners, as well, if you feel they will help demonstrate your organization's capacity to plan the program.

A letter of commitment is a statement of active participation in the project. An effective letter of commitment should:

- Be succinct, usually less than a page in length,
- Identify the project,
- Specify the roles and responsibilities of the governing body or partner,
- Specify the resources the governing body or partner will contribute, and
- Convince the reader that the governing body or partner has the capacity to fulfill its responsibilities and is committed to achieving success.



Financial and Other Expectations

Allowable Expenses

Funds disbursed through the planning grant may be used for personnel, fringe benefits, materials, equipment, travel, contractual, and indirect expenses. Allowable expenses in each category are outlined below. Please note that this list is not intended to be inclusive of every allowable expense, but rather, to give you an idea of the types of allowable expenses for this grant.

- **Personnel:** A portion of staff 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.
- **Materials** for activities directly related to the grant, such as binders, notebooks, pens or pencils, post-it notes, chart paper, or other supplies for teachers, leaders, or personnel involved in planning activities.
- **Equipment** for activities directly related to the grant, including computers, tablets, printers, or keyboards for teachers, leaders, or personnel involved in grant activities.
- **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:
http://sao.georgia.gov/sites/sao.georgia.gov/files/related_files/site_page/SOG_Statewide_Travel_Policy_012414_031214.pdf
- **Contractual** services with qualified individuals or organizations, such as service providers, that will directly serve the purposes of the grant.
- **Indirect Costs** of up to no more than 10% of your overall grant budget.

Innovation Grant funds can only be used for proposed expenses as outlined in the approved grant application, unless GOSA staff approve these expenses in writing prior to the expenses being incurred. GOSA reserves the right to approve or reject specific items requested that are not aligned with the grant program's intent.

In order to be reimbursed, all eligible activities' costs must be incurred by the recipient on or after the grant award date and prior to the project closeout. The Innovation Fund is a reimbursement-based grant program. Requests for reimbursement will be made on a quarterly basis, after services have been performed or procurement has been made and paid for by the recipient. In addition, all



eligible activities must be included in the grant application as part of the project or must have been approved by GOSA staff in writing.

Auditing Requirements

Organizations that receive an Innovation Fund grant must follow all applicable financial reporting and audit requirements set forth by the State of Georgia.

Grant Expectations

If your organization is awarded an Innovation Fund grant, you must adhere to the below expectations during the grant award period:

- Completing and submitting, in a timely manner, additional forms and certifications required for the use of state funding,
- Adhering to all provisions in your Innovation Fund grant contract,
- Completing and submitting, in a timely manner, quarterly expense and progress reports that include all requested information,
- Submitting any budget or planning process amendments to GOSA for approval prior to making those changes,
- Arranging for GOSA staff to make site visits, when requested by GOSA, to your program
- Responding to emails and phone calls from GOSA staff in a timely and professional manner,
- Clearly communicating to GOSA both the successes and challenges of your grant work, and
- Attending a yearly conference with other Innovation Fund grantees to share your work.

Failure to adhere to 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.

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](#))*

A Charter school is a public school of choice that operates under the terms of a charter, or contract, with an authorizer, such as the state and local boards of education. Charter schools receive flexibility from certain state and local rules in exchange for a higher degree of accountability for raising student achievement. Charter schools are held accountable by their authorizer(s) for upholding the terms of their charter. *(Definition from [the Georgia Department of Education](#))*

Induction means the phase of a teacher or leader's career that begins upon hire. During this two to five-year development phase, new teachers and leaders:

- Learn to select and employ effective instructional strategies and student assessments,
- Adapt to the professional norms of a school, its district and the profession, and
- Receive on-the-job training through a specific program that addresses the unique needs of new teachers or leaders.

An Innovative Resource Management Model involves a school or LEA piloting new systems that restructure the relationships between and drivers of decisions regarding human and financial capital, as well as other available resources. This priority is designed to encourage schools and districts to reallocate existing funds in innovative ways in order to meet the individual needs of students and to maximize student achievement.

Institution of Higher Education (IHE) means a public or other nonprofit institution that:

- Is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association,
- Admits as regular students only persons having a certificate of graduation from a school providing secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such a certificate,
- Is legally authorized within such State to provide a program of education beyond secondary education, and
- Provides an educational program for which the institution awards a bachelor's degree or provides not less than a two-year program that is acceptable for full credit toward such a degree, or awards a degree that is acceptable for admission to a graduate or professional degree program, subject to review and approval by the State;
- or any institution within the Technical College System of Georgia. *(Definition adapted from the [United States Department of Education](#))*

Intended Program refers to the program that your organization is proposing to plan during the planning grant period.



Local Education Authority (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.”

A Nonprofit Organization is:

- An organization that does not distribute its surplus funds to owners or shareholders, but instead uses them to help pursue its goals,
- Formed by incorporation and is registered to work in the State of Georgia,
- Has a 501 (c) tax exempt status (such as religious, educational, charitable, scientific, or literary organizations; civic leagues, social welfare organizations, and local associations of employees; labor, agricultural, and horticultural organizations; and business leagues, chambers of commerce, real estate boards, etc.)

STEM Education is defined as an integrated curriculum (as opposed to science, technology, 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](#)*)