



## INNOVATION FUND 2015-2016 PLANNING GRANT GUIDELINES

### About the Innovation Fund

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

Most recently, the Innovation Fund received 2015-16 Fiscal Year state funding to provide grants to LEAs 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. 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

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>July 8, 2015</b>      | Grant Technical Assistance Day:<br>Monroe County Conference Center, Forsyth, GA |
| <b>July 9, 2015</b>      | Grant Technical Assistance Day:<br>GTRI Conference Center, Atlanta, GA          |
| <b>July 10, 2015</b>     | Application Opens   |
| <b>September 3, 2015</b> | Grant Applications Due  |
| <b>October 5, 2015</b>   | Grant Awards Announced  |



## Eligibility Requirements

**In order to apply for the 2015-16 grant round, you must be a LEA 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.** LEAs 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 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 one of the Technical Assistance Days. If you cannot make it to a 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 July 10, 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 Thursday, September 3, 2015.**

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

**Rebecca Ellis**  
**Governor's Office of Student Achievement**  
**Program Manager, Innovation Fund**  
[rellis@georgia.gov](mailto:rellis@georgia.gov)  
404.596.3651

## General Information about Planning Grants



Planning grants will provide LEAs 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 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering 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 the date of the grant award (October 2015) to spend 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 the 2015-16 Innovation Fund priority areas,
- Your program will directly address a need, determined by data, in your school, district or community,
- Your LEA 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 will also be well written, free of any grammatical or spelling errors, and clearly answer only the questions asked in the grant application.

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

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

| Section | Number of | Required Documents | Possible Points |
|---------|-----------|--------------------|-----------------|
|---------|-----------|--------------------|-----------------|



|                              | Application Questions |   |                   |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|---|-------------------|
| Executive Summary            | 1                     | n/a   | 20 points         |
| Alignment and Need           | 2                     | n/a   | 25 points         |
| Capacity to Plan the Program | 2                     | Resume(s) of Key Personnel<br>Letters of Commitment | 15 points         |
| Proposed Plan                | 2                     | Planning Grant Process Table                        | 25 points         |
| Budget                       | 3                     | Planning Grant Budget Template                      | 15 points         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                 | <b>10 questions</b>   | <b>4 required documents</b>                         | <b>100 points</b> |

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. 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 or more the Innovation Fund priority areas.**<sup>1</sup> 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 or more 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 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, 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 (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 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 LEA's governing body fully supports the planning and possible implementation of your intended program.

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<sup>1</sup> If your intended program will address more than one priority (for example, your program will provide training for STEM teachers in high-need schools on applied learning methods), please list both priority areas, and clearly state how your program will align with each priority.



**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 in the *Information about Required Documents* section of this document.

**You must also upload letter(s) of commitment from your LEA's governing body.** More information regarding letters of commitment can be found 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 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 – December 2015 | 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 (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 LEA 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:

- **Resumes from Key Personnel** (*resumes will be considered in the Capacity to Plan score*): You must upload the resume of the grant lead along with any other individuals that will play an integral role in the planning process. These resumes should demonstrate that the individuals involved in the planning process are highly-qualified to do this work.



- **Letter(s) of Commitment** (*letters of commitment will be considered the Capacity to Plan score*): You must upload a letter of commitment from any listed partners, as well as your LEA's governing body (superintendent, board chair, executive director, or other appropriate official).

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

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 is not intended to be inclusive of every allowable expense, but rather, to 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:  
[http://sao.georgia.gov/sites/sao.georgia.gov/files/related\\_files/site\\_page/SOG\\_Statewide\\_Travel\\_Policy\\_012414\\_031214.pdf](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 or evaluators that will directly serve the purposes of the grant. Please note that all LEAs awarded grants must adhere to the State of Georgia Procurement Manual, available here: <http://doas.ga.gov/assets/State%20Purchasing/GPM%20Documents/GeorgiaProcurementManual.pdf>
- **Indirect Costs**, such as administrative assistance, of up to no more than 10% of your overall grant budget.

Innovation Fund grant funds can only be used for proposed expenses as outlined in the approved grant application, unless GOSA staff approves 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.

**The Innovation Fund is a reimbursement-based grant program.** LEAs awarded grants will request reimbursement on a quarterly basis, after the expenses have been liquidated. In order to receive reimbursement, LEAs must incur all approved costs on or after the grant award date and prior to the project closeout. In addition, all expenses must be included in the grant application as part of the project or must be approved by GOSA staff in writing during the grant period.

### **Auditing Requirements**

LEAs 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 LEA 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, and planning grant update reports that include all requested information,
- Submitting any budget or milestone 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.

**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.

**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.”

**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](#))*

**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.

