



THE ST. LOUIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOUNDATION SCHOOL INNOVATION GRANTS PROGRAM Round III (SY 2017-18)

These grants are made possible with generous support from
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OVERVIEW OF THE SCHOOL INNOVATION GRANTS

The St. Louis Public Schools Foundation is proud to launch its 3rd round of the School Innovation Grants, a program designed to recognize school leadership teams' creativity and vision.

For the 2017-18 school year, the grant format will be slightly adjusted from years past: the Foundation is soliciting school proposals (up to \$12,000) for innovative solutions for one of the three common challenges:

1. **Teacher/Leader Retention:** How can your school increase retention of its strongest teachers, and provide growth opportunities for its aspiring leaders? (up to \$12,000 per school; all grades are eligible)
2. **College & Career Readiness:** How can your school better support students as they identify, prepare for, and pursue their post-secondary paths? How can you help students build essential needed to successfully persevere their post-secondary paths (up to \$12,000 per school; projects supporting grades 6-12 are eligible)
3. **Reading On Grade Level:** How can your school support students in reading on-grade-level? (up to \$12,000 per school; projects supporting grades 2-6 are eligible.)

School teams that earn grants will demonstrate a creative, innovative approach to addressing one of the above challenges in their schools, and will propose a strategy that is designed to advance key goals in the District's Transformation Plan.

The schools that are awarded in each category will come together several times throughout the school year at the SLPS Foundation *Peer Learning Exchanges* to discuss project implementation, share their experiences, trouble-shoot, and ultimately strengthen the overall systems that seek to address each challenge.

Applications for the School Innovation Grants are due on September 29, 2017, for project implementation during the 2017/18 school year.

Additional Opportunity: Inspired STEM Grants.

If you have a classroom-based STEM idea that you want to implement, be sure to apply for the Inspired STEM grants. These grants are made possible through generous support from SPIRE.

Proposals are due September 29th, and should be geared around creatively engaging with science, technology, engineering, and math in ways that garner student interest, and also contribute to measurable gains in these areas.

Up to \$2,000 per classroom; multiple proposals from each school are allowed. Projects supporting grades 6-12 are eligible. Visit www.slpsfoundation.org to view the special application for the Inspired STEM grants.

Please Note: Applications to the Inspired STEM grants will be considered separately from the SLPS School Innovation Grants. Schools are welcome to apply to both grant opportunities.

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

The School Innovation Grants Program is designed to be a retention tool for inspiring and keeping highly-effective school leaders, as well as to discover new ideas to address some of the district's trickiest challenges. In spring 2015, the SLPS Foundation conducted focus groups with principals about leadership needs they had. Below is a sampling of comments we heard from this dedicated and eternally resourceful group:

- "Sometimes I know exactly what I need to do for my students...but I just can't execute on my ideas."
- "If I had some extra funds, I would get my staff together before the school year to do some common planning and visioning for success."
- "It's the small things: new technology, family tutoring before the MAP tests...if I could provide these, I know we'd all perform at a higher level."

Currently, school building principals often have scarce resources to use at their discretion. Research confirms the connection between effective leadership and ability to innovate. Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning International recommends that effective districts: "...allow for and promote innovation at the school level...and they recognize the importance of providing principals with enough latitude to be able to innovate and create a culture of high expectations within their schools." (Jim Eck, School Autonomy).

Principal Deborah Leto, Mason Elementary School, on their efforts to be more inclusive of ELL parents:

"One of the strengths of the program is **the interaction and support we have received from our colleagues**. Ideas are always great and the Foundation funding is giving us the opportunity to make the ideas a reality – but, sometimes you do not get the results you thought that you would and you learn that mistakes can be educational, too."

INNOVATION – A DEFINITION

The Foundation is basing its work on a definition of innovation from the U.S. Department of Education: "*Innovation drives improvement, either incrementally by advancing existing processes or more radically by introducing new practices.*" In the business management world, Peter Drucker defines innovation as: "...change that creates a new dimension of performance." These grants are meant to fuel creativity and new approaches. For purposes of this grant, features that make a proposal innovative include:

- Trying a new approach to an enduring problem/challenge
- Learning from mistakes and course correcting
- Employing staff, students, parents, or volunteers in problem-solving
- Blending ideas/strategies from a couple of new sources
- Initiate an unconventional partnership to solve a problem
- Re-purposing an existing structure or program to address a challenge in a new way

Lindsay Schuessler, AIC, Adams Elementary School, on the impact of their Saturday School Program:

"We have obviously benefited greatly from the funding that the Innovation Grant has provided to our Saturday School program... But what I have been pleasantly surprised by during the experience is how valuable the group sessions have been to me as a school leader. I have received outstanding professional development from experts within education as well as professionals outside the field... **I have been able to problem solve and strategize with other innovative school leaders in a thoughtful and systematic way.** Our time together during the group sessions is inspiring and motivates me to continue to make positive change for my students in innovative ways. Participating in the Innovative Grants program has been an incredibly valuable experience on many levels."

HOW TO APPLY FOR THE GRANTS

SLPS school leadership teams are invited to submit short applications that describe a new, innovative effort that responds to one of these three challenges:

1. **Teacher/Leader Retention:** How can your school increase retention of its strongest leaders, and provide growth opportunities for its aspiring leaders? (up to \$15,000 per school; all grades are eligible)
2. **College & Career Paths:** How can your school support students as they identify, prepare for, and pursue their post-secondary paths? (up to \$15,000 per school; projects supporting grades 6-12 are eligible)
3. **Reading On Grade Level:** How can your school support students in reading on-grade-level? (up to \$15,000 per school; projects supporting grades 2-6 are eligible.)

The application form is available on the SLPS Foundation website or [by clicking here](#) and should be submitted via email to dwallis@slpsfoundation.org no later than 5pm on Friday, September 29, 2017.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROCESS

Who Can Apply for The School Innovation Grants?

- Anyone on a school leadership team can apply, with approval from the school principal
- Preference will be given to proposals that have been developed collaboratively with community input (e.g. consultation with students, parents, staff, etc.)
- Each school's Principal and Network Superintendent must sign off on an application.
- Two schools (i.e. feeder schools) may join together for larger grant of up to \$25,000 in the areas of College & Career Paths or Teacher/Leader Retention.

Can One School Apply for Multiple Grants?

No. Each school may only submit one proposal for the School Innovation Grants.

However, schools are also invited to submit separate proposals to the InSPIRE STEM Grants, which is a separate application process. Schools are welcome to submit multiple InSPIRE STEM proposals. Visit [XXX](#) for more information on this separate grant opportunity.

How Much Can I Ask For?

Up to \$12,000; additionally, smaller grants (\$2,000) related to STEM are available through the InSPIRE Grant Program.

How do these grants relate to the Transformation Plan?

This program exists to advance the goals of the Transformation Plan. To view the Transformation Plan, go to: <http://www.slps.org/plan>.

What is a Peer Learning Exchange? Do All Awarded Schools Need to Attend?

An important component of the program is an opportunity for school innovators to get to meet each other, discuss what they are working on, problem solve together and advance each other's learning. The peer learning exchanges, mandatory for all awardees, will meet four times (5-7:00 PM, dates TBD) and may also include guest speakers with content expertise. Schools should send between 2 and 5 representatives from their schools who are central to project implementation, and who can attend all peer exchanges (barring extenuating circumstances). Appetizers and beverages will be served.

Sara Martens, AIC, Northwest Academy of Law, on piloting a restorative justice model:

"The School Innovation Grant experience has been amazing! So often we sit in meetings with our colleagues, stand in the hallways chatting, or even sit at dinner parties talking about what we could do if only we had the money. We're right: we can do so much more with available money. **The School Innovation Grant allows you to take an idea about what you "could only do" and gives you the money to actually do it!"**

What Can Funds Be Used For?

The list below is not exhaustive – if you have a question about whether something will be considered for funding, please contact Danielle Wallis, Senior Project Manager.

YES, the following requests will be considered:

- Curricula material that aligns w/ Transformation Plan
- Field trips/Site Visits/Retreats/Transportation
- Staff training/Professional Development
- Partnerships with outside organizations
- Extra service pay for teachers (payments managed through SLPS Foundation)
- Extracurricular program/club supplies
- Technology (note: tech is only funded if it is being used as a tool to accomplish something innovative)

NO, the following requests will not be considered:

- New staff
- Capital improvements (anything requiring construction workers)
- Technology not approved by District
- Efforts that are already being funded by the District
- Projects that will require additional funding from other sources, if that additional funding has not yet been secured.

Applications for the School Innovation Grants should be submitted via email to dwallis@slpsfoundation.org no later than 5pm on Friday, September 29, 2017.

*For any questions regarding the School Innovation Grants Application Process, please contact Danielle Wallis, Senior Project Manager.
314-331-6179 or dwallis@slpsfoundation.org*