



THE ST. LOUIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOUNDATION SCHOOL INNOVATION GRANTS PROGRAM, SY 2018-19

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OVERVIEW OF THE SCHOOL INNOVATION GRANTS

The St. Louis Public Schools Foundation is proud to launch its 4th round of the School Innovation Grants, a program designed to recognize school leadership teams' creativity and vision.

For the 2018-19 school year, the Foundation is soliciting school proposals for innovative solutions for one of the three following challenges:

- 1. Student Leadership:** How can your school elevate student voice and leadership through student-led experiences or projects?
Grant requests may be for up to \$8,000 - \$10,000 per school; projects supporting any grade are eligible.
- 2. Transition-Readiness** How can your school prepare students for transitions through coordination across schools, and/or building students' sense of confidence/self-efficacy/belonging/agency? Consider transitions such as: elementary school to middle school; middle school to high school; or the middle school years as a transitional period in itself.
Grant requests may be for up to \$8,000 - \$10,000 per school; two schools may collaboratively apply for a grant of up to \$15,000. Projects supporting grades 5-9 are eligible.
- 3. Reading On Grade Level:** How can your school support students in reading on-grade-level, with a particular focus on students who are currently scoring basic or below basic on literacy assessments?
Grant requests may be for up to \$8,000 - \$10,000 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.

The first two months of the grant will represent a "Research and Development" incubation period, where awarded school teams will workshop their ideas, engage in additional information gathering to refine their project plans, identify specific indicators to track the success of their projects.

The first two Peer Learning Exchanges, which are required and are scheduled for October 17th and November 14th (5-7pm), will provide support for this R&D incubation period. All applicants should hold these dates on their calendars.

Applications for the School Innovation Grants are due on September 27, 2018 via email to event@slpsfoundation.org, for project implementation starting the second semester of the 2018/19 school year.

For any questions regarding the School Innovation Grants Application Process, please contact Danielle Wallis, Program Director at 314-331-6179 or dwallis@slpsfoundation.org

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](#)).

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 the three challenges outlined on page 1:

1. Student Leadership
2. Transition-Readiness
3. Reading On Grade Level

The application form is available on the SLPS Foundation website or [by clicking here](#); you will download the application (a Word document), fill it out, obtain the needed signatures, scan the completed application, and submit the application via email to event@slpsfoundation.org no later than 5pm on Thursday, September 27, 2018.

TIMELINE FOR THE GRANTS

August 22: Grants are announced.

September 20: Any new technology requests must be approved via email by Cheryl VanNoy.

September 27: Completed grant applications are due via email to event@slpsfoundation.org

October 11: Grant awards are announced via email.

October 17: Peer Exchange #1, 5-7pm

November 14: Peer Exchange #2, 5-7pm

December 15: Implementation plans complete

} Research & Development Period

January: Project implementation begins.

February (TBD): Peer Exchange #3, 5-7pm

April (TBD): Peer Exchange #4, 5-7pm

June 7: Final reports due.

} Implementation Period

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

"We have obviously benefited greatly from the funding that the Innovation Grant has provided to our grant 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."

-- SLPS Academic Instructional Coach

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, Program Director

YES, the following requests will be considered:

- Staff training/Professional Development
- Consultants to work with school staff
- Partnerships with outside organizations
- Extra service pay for teachers (on a limited basis)
- Extracurricular program/club supplies
- Curricula material that aligns w/ Transformation Plan
- Field trips/Site Visits/Retreats/Transportation
- Technology (note: tech is only funded if it is being used as a tool to accomplish something innovative. Technology is not, in itself, 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.
- While not prohibited, we strongly encourage applicants to avoid incentives/consumables as a core expense.

"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!"**

-- SLPS Academic Instructional Coach

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.

Can One School Apply for Multiple Grants?

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

How Much Can I Ask For?

Up to \$8,000 - \$10,000. Collaborative proposals (2 schools) applying for the "Transition-Readiness" topic can be for up to \$15,000.

If I received a School Innovation Grant in previous years, can I/my school still apply for this year?

Yes, all schools may apply; please note that we will likely not fund the continuation of a previously funded project. If your school has received an innovation grant three years in a row, we ask that you take a hiatus year and not submit an application.

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 on Wednesday evenings including Oct 17 and Nov 14; other 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.

"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."
-- SLPS Principal