



THE ST. LOUIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOUNDATION SCHOOL INNOVATION GRANTS PROGRAM Round II (SY 2016-17)

Made possible by  **EMERSON** with additional support from Boeing and Wells Fargo Advisors.

OVERVIEW

The St. Louis Public Schools Foundation is proud to launch its 2nd round of the School Innovation Grants, a program designed to recognize school leadership teams' creativity and vision. The grants will be disbursed after a selective grants process to approximately 10-15 schools and will range in size from \$5,000-15,000. The Foundation has secured funding to offer this program for at least the next two years. School teams that earn grants will demonstrate an innovative approach to addressing a challenge in their schools, and propose a strategy that is designed to advance key goals in the District's Transformation Plan.

Applications are due on Tuesday, June 7th for project implementation during the 2016/17 school year.

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. 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."
- "What if I could jumpstart our civil rights studies by taking my kids to Memphis and the Civil Rights museum?"
- "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](#)).

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 challenge in a new way

How Have School Innovation Grants Made a Difference?

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."

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."

Dr. Susan Viviano, Principal, Cleveland High School, on a trip to the Naval Academy in Washington D.C.:

"Cleveland is extremely grateful for the opportunity provided for 20 of our students. We believe it was a life altering experience for them; we hope it expanded their world view. **We know they saw things they had never seen; learned things they might never had had the opportunity to learn;** and created dreams for their futures as a result of those experiences..."

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!**"

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

SLPS school leadership teams are invited to submit short applications that describe a new, innovative effort that is aligned with one of the goals in the Transformation Plan. Funding requests should range from \$5,000 to \$15,000. Real-time results of the projects will be publicized by the Foundation with the intention of incubating or scaling projects that show especially impactful results.

Who Can Apply?

- 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. Only one application per school.
- Two schools (i.e. feeder schools) may join together for larger grant of up to \$25,000.

Alignment with the SLPS Transformation Plan

This program exists to advance the goals of the Transformation Plan. When applying, schools must articulate how the work they are proposing impacts a specific goal in the Transformation Plan. To view the Transformation Plan, go to: <http://www.slps.org/plan>.

Peer Exchanges for Awardees

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 exchanges, mandatory for all awardees, will meet four times (Wednesdays, 5-6:30 PM, dates TBD) and may also include guest speakers with content expertise. Schools can send up to two participants for the peer exchange. Appetizers and beverages will be served.

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 (314-331-6179 or dwallis@slpsfoundation.org).

<p>YES, the following requests will be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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) 	<p>NO, the following requests will not be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
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IMPORTANT DATES FOR SLPSF SCHOOL INNOVATION GRANTS 2016

WHAT	WHEN
Application Posted Online	April 4, 2016
Application assistance from SLPS Foundation begins	Friday afternoons in April, May, & early June call 331.6179 (Danielle Wallis, Senior Project Manager) between 2- 4 PM
<p>Brainstorming Session (Attendance is optional – RSVP REQUIRED) If applicants plan to attend: please RSVP to by clicking here or visiting http://goo.gl/forms/h8CBcZwdaF. Schools are encouraged to bring teams (no more than 3). Participation will be capped at first 20 schools to sign up.</p>	<p>Monday, April 25, 5:30pm-8:30pm at Central Office (room 108) This session will include a brief introduction to the role of innovation in education, and the opportunity for participants to bring an idea and finesse their strategy with help from workshop leaders.</p>
<p>“Nuts and Bolts” Application Assistance (Optional) SLPS Foundation staff will walk through application requirement and provide guidance.</p>	<p>Thursday, May 12, 8:00am in the PD Loft <i>Application guidance offered during Principals’ professional development day.</i></p>
<p>Applications that include requests for technology need to be submitted for approval to Cheryl VanNoy, Interim Associate Supt., Technology & Accountability.</p>	<p>Tuesday, May 31 Email a copy of Section One (overview) & Budget worksheet to Cheryl.VanNoy@slps.org. She will approve or revise via email or conversation with applicants.</p>
<p>Application Due Email applications to dwallis@slpsfoundation.org by 5 PM</p>	<p>Tuesday, June 7th by 5 PM/CST Applications can be accepted via email (dwallis@slpsfoundation.org), or hand-delivered to the Foundation (located in Central Office, on the third floor).</p>
Application are reviewed	<p>June 2016 Applications will be reviewed by Grant Review Team including leaders from the St. Louis Public Schools Foundation, and the District’s Academics and Talent Strategy and Management offices.</p>
Announce & Award Grants	<p>Wednesday, July 13 All schools who submitted an application will be contacted via email with information on whether their proposed project will be funded.</p>
Feedback available to schools that are declined	<p>After August 1: Contact Danielle Wallis @ 331.6179 or dwallis@slpsfoundation.org to set a time to discuss.</p>
<p>Peer Exchange Begins <i>Mandatory for all awardees</i></p>	<p>Wednesday afternoons, 5-6:30 PM, dates TBD</p>
Lessons Learned Report	Date TBD – June 2017