

GEORGIA RACE TO THE TOP INNOVATION FUND

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

GENERAL:

Q. Where do I access the Innovation Fund RFP?

- A. The Innovation Fund RFP is located on the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) website on the right side of the page under the Related Links section, (http://opb.georgia.gov/00/channel_title/0,2094,161890977_161981058,00.html).

Q. How do I watch previous Innovation Fund webinars?

- A. All Innovation Fund webinars have been recorded and are accessible through Elluminate (<http://elluminate.gavirtualschool.org/doi/recordings.html?s=1302580800000&e=1302667199999>). Use the calendar on the right side of the page to select the date of the webinar you would like to watch. After selecting the date, the link for recorded sessions from that date will appear.

Q. What are the dates of the Innovation Fund webinars?

- A. Innovation Fund webinars have been held on April 12, April 26, and May 10. One additional webinar will be held on Tuesday, June 7, 2011 at 3:00 p.m. EST. That webinar may be accessed through the following link: http://elluminate.gavirtualschool.org:80/doi/join_meeting.html?meetingId=1258875992514.

Q. How can I be notified of news regarding the Innovation Fund?

- A. To be notified of news regarding the Innovation Fund, send your email address to Lauren Wright at Lauren.wright@opb.state.ga.us and ask to be added to the Innovation Fund email distribution list.

Q. What is the different between an Enterprise grant and a Venture grant?

- A. An Enterprise grant is a multi-year (up to three years) grant to implement a program. Venture grants are exclusive to Priority #4 and assist partners in developing a petition for a charter school that focuses on education in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

Q. What is the difference between a small and large partnership for an Enterprise grant?

- A. We have intentionally not set parameters around what constitutes a large or small partnership. It is up to applicants to make this determination based on what is needed for their project.

Q. Innovation Fund proposals must be aligned to Georgia's Race to the Top plan. Where do I locate that plan?

- A. Georgia's Race to the Top plan contains detailed information about Georgia's plans for measuring teacher effectiveness, establishing guidelines for induction programs, collecting

longitudinal student data, among other things. The application may be located at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/phase2-applications/georgia.pdf> and the appendix may be located at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/phase2-applications/appendixes/georgia.pdf>.

Q. Will the four priorities be evaluated equally or does the state have a preference?

A. We do not have a preference for which priority proposals address. The four priorities outlined in the Innovation Fund RFP will be evaluated equally.

ELIGIBILITY:

Q. Who is eligible to apply for an Innovation Fund grant?

A. Be a partnership between a Local Education Authority (LEA) or charter school; Institution of Higher Education (IHE), consortium of schools, business and/or non-profit organization that works to advance the academic achievement of Georgia's K-12 students. At least one partner must demonstrate experience successfully supporting, developing and/or implementing educational programs that led to positive student outcomes. All partners must sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the State, included in the Appendix of this notice.

Q. Is an education management organization eligible to apply as a business?

A. Yes, an education management organization is eligible to apply as a business.

Q. Are after-school programs eligible?

A. As long as the after-school program falls into one of the categories for eligible applicants (i.e. nonprofit organization, business) they are eligible to apply.

Q. Are institutions of higher education (IHEs) that do not have education programs eligible?

A. Yes, all IHEs are eligible to apply.

Q. Does a consortium of schools need to find a partner or is a consortium of schools considered a partner?

A. A consortium of schools is one entity that is eligible to apply for an Innovation Fund grant, therefore, a consortium would need to partner with one or more other eligible entities.

Q. May more than one school in an LEA apply for a grant? May they apply together?

A. More than one school in an LEA may apply for a grant. They may also apply together. It is up to the schools/LEA to determine what makes sense for their proposal.

Q. Are there restrictions on which partner may serve at the Lead Partner?

A. All partnerships must identify a lead partner who will serve as the State contact and assume responsibility for financial, program, and post-award reporting requirements on behalf of the partnership. Lead partners must demonstrate experience managing partnerships.

Q. Is partnership with the private sector required?

- A. Partnership with the private sector is not required but it is encouraged to promote program sustainability.

Q. Is there a benefit to applying as a region?

- A. There is no stated benefit to applying as a region. However, applicants should think strategically about whether applying as a region makes sense for their proposal in terms of sustainability, number of students served and impact.

Q. What do you mean by communities of demonstrated need?

- A. For purposes of the Innovation Fund, preference will be given to communities of demonstrated need. Applicants should describe their community's demographics and explain how their particular program, practice or strategy is needed and will benefit said community.

Q. May a project address more than one priority?

- A. Yes, applicants may address one or more priorities in their proposals.

Q. May an applicant submit multiple proposals?

- A. Yes, an applicant may submit multiple proposals as long as the proposals are different in terms of priorities addressed and/or partners,

Q. How are you defining applied learning?

- A. For purposes of the Innovation Fund, applied learning means the process of integrating one or more subject matter content areas (disciplines) under study with authentic (personal, home, career, community, society) learning experiences. Applied learning emphasizes the importance of what is being learned in the classroom and helps students develop higher order thinking skills. Students and their teachers are able to work with organizations and individuals outside of the school on a variety of project-based learning experiences, which develops the student in a holistic manner. These experiences take into consideration students' varying learning styles, personal strengths, interests, goals and previous experiences. Successful applied learning experiences support the development of strong problem solving, critical thinking, communication, and self-management skills, which ultimately, improves student achievement.

Q. Priority #4 references STEM charter schools. What is a STEM charter school?

- A. We intentionally did not define STEM charter schools in the RFP because we want to allow applicants to think broadly about what makes sense for their school. However, all STEM charter schools should have the delivery of STEM education as the mission of their school. For the Innovation Fund, STEM Charter schools should partner with external organizations to provide innovative learning opportunities for students in STEM.

NOTICES OF INTENT:

Q. The letter of intent is due on May 15, 2011, which is a Sunday. Will letters of intent be accepted before close of business on Monday, May 16?

A. Yes, notices of intent may be submitted by Monday, May 16. Letters of intent are not required to submit a proposal. We request them for internal planning purposes and to help troubleshoot proposals that may not fit within Innovation Fund eligibility requirements. Notices of intent may be emailed to Lauren.wright@opb.state.ga.us or mailed to the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, 270 Washington Street, SW, Atlanta, GA 30334.

Q. Are we restricted to the plan/partners that we submitted in our notice of intent?

A: No. Notices of intent are not binding and we understand that partners/plans may change as you develop your proposal.

BUDGET:

Q. Are applicants restricted to the grant sizes outlined in the RFP?

A: No, applicants should craft their budgets based on need. The grant sizes outlined in the RFP are strictly suggestions and are not binding. We expect to award grants for sizes both above and below the outlined sizes.

Q. What is the process for charter schools to apply for bond funds? Is there a cap on bond funds?

A: Partners applying for Enterprise grants to develop STEM charters schools may include an additional funding request in excess of the Enterprise grant funding guidelines to support facility or equipment costs in Section B of the Budget Form. Innovation Fund dollars may not be used for facility costs but the State will set aside bond funds to support requests for facilities or equipment and will award based on need once the school's charter has been approved by an LEA, the Georgia Department of Education or the Georgia Charter Schools Commission. There is not a cap on bond funds that may be requested. The total amount of bond funds available is \$10 million.

Q. If an LEA is the fiscal agent for the partnership, does it still need to submit a financial statement/audit?

A. Yes, an LEA should submit a financial statement or audit.

Q. Can Innovation Fund dollars be used to purchase equipment or classroom materials?

A. Yes, Innovation Fund dollars can be used to purchase equipment or classroom materials. Innovation Fund dollars may not be used to support facility costs.

Q. Does the budget narrative need to be in paragraph form?

A. Yes, the budget narrative should be in paragraph form and provide an itemized budget breakdown and justification by project year for each budget category listed in Sections A and B of the Budget Form.

Q. How are you defining indirect costs?

- A. Applicants may allocate up to ten percent of their budgets for indirect costs. Indirect costs represent the expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with the grant, but are necessary for its general operation. Applicants may include as indirect costs items that they would not include as a direct cost specifically associated with an objective of the grant. Direct costs may include (but are not limited to): equipment; salaries; consultants; training; travel; materials.

Q. Is there a required funding match for the Innovation Fund?

- A: There is not a required funding match for the Innovation Fund, but partners are encouraged to invest their own intellectual, financial resources to demonstrate their ability to sustain the program after the life of the grant.

Q. Can matching funds be in-kind, such as space, staff or unrecovered indirect costs?

- A. Yes, applicants are encouraged to demonstrate in-kind resources to demonstrate their investment and potential for long-term sustainability.

WRITING & SUBMITTING PROPOSALS:

Q. What is included in the 20 page maximum allowed for grants?

- A. The project narrative and all required forms/tables (budget, evaluation and scope of work) are included in the 20 page maximum. Letters of support and required forms form the appendix of the RFP are not included.

Q. Do the goals included in the Scope of Work need to be related to Innovation Fund goals or do you want us to create our own goals related to student achievement?

- A. The goals in the Scope of Work should be the project's student achievement goals.

Q. Does OPB sign the MOU when we submit the proposal or only if we receive an award?

- A. OPB will sign the MOU for proposals that receive awards.

Q. What is the process for submitting a proposal?

- A. Applications must be in the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget by 3:00 PM EST, Thursday, June 15, 2011. Applicants should mail two original applications and one electronic copy on a CD in .pdf form to: Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, Innovation Fund, Attn: Lauren Wright, 270 Washington Street, S.W., 8th Floor, Atlanta, GA 30334. Applications must include the original signature of the Lead Partner on the Application Face Sheet and all members of the partnership on the Memorandum of Understanding.

REVIEW & AWARD PROCESS:

Q. Is there a more defined rubric that will be made available for scoring/reviewing applications?

A. We will not make the scoring rubric public prior to announcing the first round of awards.

Q. Who will review the applications?

A. A cross-institutional Review Committee will be formed to review and select proposals for funding. This Review Committee will be representative of the K-12 and higher education, business and philanthropic communities.

Q. How many awards do you anticipate making this round and how many grant cycles will there be?

A. Proposals will be awarded based on merit and we have not established a pre-determined number of awards. There will be a second grant cycle in the fall with proposals due in October and awards made in January. We anticipate a third grant cycle to follow in the spring.

Q. At what point will awards be released?

A. OPB will notify recipients of their award at the beginning of August and funding will immediately follow.

Q. Will there be a feedback process for those not awarded? Are you required to apply in Round 1 to be eligible to apply in subsequent grant cycles?

A. Yes, there will be a feedback process for those not awarded. Applicants that are not successful in Round 1 are encouraged to use that feedback to strengthen their applications and apply in Round 2. Applicants are not required to apply in Round 1 to be eligible to apply in subsequent grant cycles.