Discovery EDUCATION™

Your Guide to K-12 Education Grants

Where and How to Secure Funding

This comprehensive guide is designed to help education leaders successfully prepare and apply for grants. You'll also find links to online resources and a summary of federal grants.

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PART 1: HOW-TO TIPS

What to Do Before Applying for a Grant

When districts and schools need educational tools and experiences beyond current budgets, outside funding from government and private grants can make all the difference.

Here are some first steps to take:

1 **Check in with your administrator**

- Make sure you have support from your principal, superintendent, or other administrator who can approve grant applications. Government grants always require administrative permission.

- Some school districts limit the number of state and federal grants you can apply for, so check with administration before you begin your funding search. They can also verify if there are already grant funds that can be allocated to your cause.

2 **Establish a sustainable funding plan**

- Have a clearly defined goal for the program you want to fund before you apply. Confer with colleagues and think about how the grant will benefit your students over the long term.

- Consider the grant's long-term sustainability and implications beyond the funding period. How long will the funding last and can it be renewed?

- It can be tempting to try to obtain a grant you hear about by retrofitting it to your existing project, but it makes it more difficult in the long run. The grant process is long and involved, so be sure you have a well-defined need and the time necessary to see the process through.

3 **Investigate sources close to home first**

- Find out if there is a grant administrator in your district and establish communications with that person. Be clear about your goals and how you need their help and guidance.

- Contact your PTA/PTO to see if they provide in-house grants or can recommend a local, community-based source.

- Your local Chamber of Commerce or City Council may be able to provide a list of businesses ready to provide grants.

- Try local financial institutions or major employers They may offer their own grants or matching programs to support education initiatives.

How to Match Grant Proposals With Providers

The rubric below can help you narrow search and match the right grant proposals with grant providers. Start by identifying your top criteria for a grant (or use the ones below) and ordering them most important to least important. Then, assign each critera a point value (0 = no match, 5 = near match) as you evaluate grants against your criteria. This process will help you determine if the grant will meet your top needs and if you can establish a strong relationship with the funder for future opportunities.

Rubric to Match Grant Proposals with Grant Providers

Criteria	Points Earned (0-5)	Comments
Matches goals of grant provider		
Matches required demographics		
Able to be completed in timeframe		
Sustainable after allowable grant period		
Necessary funds are available		
Evaluation methods are compatible		

8 Tips for Writing a Winning Grant Application

1 **Ensure you have the right match**

Once you are sure that you need a grant, look for grant opportunities that match your program's goals and objectives. Understand the mission of the grantor, look at previously funded programs, and determine the range of grant awards that agency gives.

2 **Understand guidelines and requirements**

Most funding agencies publish grant guidelines or requirements. Be certain you understand them and follow them. Note the deadline and whether the proposal must be received or postmarked by that date.

3 **Make your mission clear**

Your statement of needs drives your entire grant proposal. The proposed program should be clearly based on the challenges you face. The purpose of the grant is to meet the specific needs you have

4 **Write a persuasive project abstract**

Most proposals, particularly foundation and corporate proposals, require a project abstract. The abstract defines your entire project—needs, goals, objectives, and budget—within a few paragraphs or a page at most. This summary is usually read first. Grant writers often find it helpful to save writing the abstract for last because you can include excerpts from your own text, edited to suit the shorter format. Make the abstract easier to read by using subheads and bullets. Use the active voice in your abstract.

5 Use SMART goals

Smart goals are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Every proposal will require at least one section that describes the broad goals and measurable objectives of your project. Take the time to detail the activities that will be implemented to accomplish the program's goals and objectives. Your budget and budget narrative must closely match the described activities. Your evaluation should carefully measure whether the stated project objectives are being met on a timely basis.

6 Don't do it alone

Work with other educators and parents, especially those who have a passion for the project and grant-writing experience. Working with a team can bring in multiple perspectives and even new ideas to your proposal.

7 Write a standout cover letter

Your cover letter should not simply repeat the information in the proposal; it is different from the abstract or needs statement, which is a concise summary of the complete project/proposal.

The cover letter should bring your project to life and actively engage the recipient in one page with three to four paragraphs. Keep your tone positive.

First paragraph:

Keep it short and focused. Introduce yourself and your district or school. Summarize any recent communication with the funding organization.

Middle paragraphs:

State your purpose, the amount of money you are requesting, and who it will serve. Explain how your request aligns with the funder's mission or funding priorities.

Last paragraph:

Include final thoughts about what this funding partnership can mean, and focus on solutions, not problems.

8 Be grateful and collaborative

If your proposal is not funded, still send a note to the grantor thanking them for the opportunity. Ask if it is possible to receive reviewer comments to understand why your proposal was not funded. Use the comments to improve your proposal writing techniques.

If your proposal is funded, keep your funder informed about the progress of your project. Be sure to document results—it can make it easier to obtain your next round of grant funding!

PART 2: FUNDING SOURCES

Considering Non-Profit Status

If your school or district doesn't already have a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization formed, you may want to consider creating one. There is cost, time, and energy involved but some private foundations, particularly at the state and local level, may provide grant support to nonprofit groups only. To find out about forming a nonprofit entity to raise funds for your classroom, school, and district needs, visit the IRS website.

Grant Resource Websites

Finding the right grant can be a bit daunting. However, there are numerous support systems and websites that curate grants. Many of these sites you can search by region, state, need, grade levels, student groups, and more. Start with the list below that includes some of the top sources.

Website	Details
Candid.	A subscription-based service, Candid is a non-profit that provides information to help nonprofits find funders, as well as funders to verify and research nonprofits aligned to their priorities.
Grants.gov	A free resource that serves as a central location for grant seekers to find and apply for federal funding opportunities.
Grants for Teachers	A free resource for teachers, search for K-12 grants by category, location, or grade, as well as grants for schools, districts, and libraries.
GrantWatch	A subscription-based service, search thousands of grants available to nonprofits, businesses, and individuals and get access to IRS 990 reports.
Inside Philanthropy	A subscription-based service that helps nonprofits connect with funders and grant opportunities. Search by issue, donor, or geographical area.
The School Funding Center	A comprehensive grant database you can search by state, program category, and institution type with a free subscription.
GrantForward	A platform that provides a dynamic search engine and personalized funding recommendations using a vast database of sponsors and funding opportunities.
Instrumentl	A reliable source for nonprofits and grant writers, it offers free and paid options for grant research and management.

Federal Grants

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

ESSA was signed into law in 2015 to replace and update the No Child Left Behind Act and went into full effect in 2017. It provides states with more control over their accountability systems with the ultimate goal of closing the achievement gap by providing all children with an equitable, high-quality education.

ESSA provides flexible funding streams through consolidated grant programs, yet the law also incorporates the concept of "evidence-based" into the legislation as a way of validating that programs effectively improve educational outcomes and close achievement gaps. With a number of independent studies, Discovery Education has the data to prove it's impact.

Stay updated on changes as federal budgets are consistently shifting and therefore affecting ESSA funding. To understand the budget proposal in-depth, explore the following websites:

✓ [Department of Education](#)   ✓ [Grants Overview](#)   ✓ [Budget Summary](#)

Federal Formula Grants

[Federal formula grant programs](#) are non-competitive awards based on a predetermined formula. These programs are sometimes referred to as state-administered programs. Check with the administrator in charge of grants at your district to see if you already receive formula grants like Title I. There may be opportunity to adjust the language in the grant application to fund new areas or programs.

Federal Discretionary Funding And Grants

Unlike federal formula grants, a discretionary grant awards funds on the basis of a competitive process. The Department of Education reviews applications in light of requirements and selection criteria established for a program. There are hundreds of grants available, each with its own criteria and dollar amounts. Discretionary grant information is periodically updated, so check frequently, starting with [The Office of Discretionary Grants](#).

Website	Details
[Charter Schools Program](#)	This program provides funding for creating and replicating high-quality charter schools, including helping with facilities, and sharing information about effective practices.
[Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) and Striving Readers Grant](#)	These discretionary grants aim to create a comprehensive literacy program to advance pre-literacy skills, reading, and writing for students from birth through grade 12, including limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities. (Select states only)
[Early Childhood Educator Professional Development](#)	This program seeks to improve children's school readiness by offering high-quality professional development to early childhood educators who work primarily in low-income communities.
[Innovative Education State Grants](#)	This is a discretionary grant under Title V that stimulates educational innovation by encouraging broad-based reform efforts. The funds may be used for technology, professional development software, or curricular materials.

Non-Federal Grants

There are many grants not provided by the federal government that give K-12 schools the opportunity to meet their teaching and learning needs. These grants can come from a number of entities dedicated to supporting K-12 education, starting with state-specific grants that support local education initiatives and residents. Other non-federal grant sources usually cater to specific demographics, fields of study, and career training.

State-Funded Grants

State-funded education grants make up a vast majority of funding for school districts. While federal funds can supplement these sources, state grants are a strategic source of funding since they are often tailored to meet specific needs, priorities, and initiatives for the state, which often align to those of districts within the state.

The types of grants at the state level typically include:

- General Education Grants are broad-based to support general education needs, like faculty salaries and infrastructure.
- Specialized Grants target specific subgroups of students such as special education or English Language Learners.
- Innovatiion and Research Grants promote innovative instructional practices and research aimed at improving student outcomes.

Check your state's department of education website for state-funding opportunities and how to apply for them.

Philanthropic and Private Grants

Grants awarded by philanthropic and private organizations can be a game-changer for school districts, offering flexibility and the chance to innovate classrooms in ways that traditional funding might not allow. Here's how these grants can make a difference:

- Flexibility: Offers adaptable funding to address specific district needs, unlike government funding.
- Innovation: Enables piloting of new programs and ideas.
- Community Focus: Helps address local issues and supports underrepresented groups.
- Supplementary: Complements traditional funding sources, filling gaps.
- Partnerships: Encourages collaboration with local businesses and organizations.

Search for philanthropic grants, starting with Inside Philanthropy and its curated list of top education funders.

Regardless of the grant source, K-12 institutions have a wealth of options from which to choose funding support. By doing thorough grant research and following the tips outlined in this guide, you can set your school or district up for success—academically and financially.

Learn More About Education Funding

DiscoveryEducation.com/Grant-Guide