

5 WAYS

to Kick-Start Your Grant Planning

Grants are an essential source of funding for schools and districts—but when a grant application is released, applicants typically only have six weeks to prepare a quality grant proposal. In addition, most grant applications are due during a narrow window of time between February and June. This can be a busy time of year for everyone involved in the grant process!

However, you don't have to wait until a grant application is released to start planning and preparing for a successful grant season. Here are five ways you can kick-start your grant planning in advance and make applying for grants easier than ever.

1 | Review last year's grant applications

Many grants are released annually—and these often follow the same format from year to year. Rereading last year's application can help prepare you for this year's application process. Be sure to review any past grant reviewers' notes to identify any opportunities to strengthen this year's proposal.

Even for grants that aren't released annually, rereading last year's applications can still be helpful. You may find language or data that you're able to reuse or repurpose for this year's applications.

Look over successful applications with an eye toward the elements that made them successful, and check over unsuccessful applications with the goal of identifying areas where improvements could be made this year.



2 | Begin collecting data

One of the most time-intensive parts of grant-writing can be gathering strong needs assessment data. This can be particularly challenging because many grants require recent data—often less than one or two years old.

The start of the year is a great time to check in with your regular data sources to see if more current data might be available to help you document compelling needs. Be sure to check state-level data so you can compare your school district to state averages.

3 | Form a planning committee

Grant projects created with input from all concerned stakeholders have a better chance of being funded and successfully implemented. Referencing activities and decisions of this committee within your grant application will help to show the reviewer your broad support for and investment in your grant project.

Depending on the grant, the committee may take on an advisory role—for example, evaluating curriculum or giving input on desired interventions—or may take an active role in helping to complete portions of the grant application.

Common data sources include:

- **National Center for Education Statistics (NCES):** Provides data on graduation rates, enrollment, and per pupil expenditures: www.nces.ed.gov/ccd
- **U.S. Census Bureau:** Publishes community information such as population, housing, economic, and geographic information: www.census.gov/programs-surveys.html
- **ED Data Express:** Provides public access to participation and performance data from major K-12 federal programs, such as Title I and Title III: eddataexpress.ed.gov/
- **National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP):** Shows state-level results of most recent NAEP assessments: nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard

Stakeholders in your planning committee might include:

- Curriculum Director
- Title I Director or Federal Programs Director
- Special Education Director
- English Learner/Multilingual Learner Director
- Professional Development Director
- Technology Director
- Principals of targeted schools
- Literacy Coaches and/or teachers
- Representative(s) from the teachers union
- Representative(s) from non-profit early childhood partners like Head Start
- Parents



TIP

Stakeholders from community partnerships may have access to grants outside of traditional K-12 funding programs, but may be able to include a collaboration activity that addresses K-12 needs in their own grant applications.

Your planning committee may include representative(s) from local community organizations, such as:

- Libraries
- Local Universities
- Big Brothers, Big Sisters
- Hospitals
- Community and Youth Centers
- Boys and Girls Clubs
- YMCA

4 | Schedule meeting times

Calendars can get busy—by scheduling grant meetings in advance, you have a better chance of getting time on everyone’s calendars. Even if you haven’t determined which grants you’ll be applying for or which stakeholders to include in those grants, you can still start scheduling your grant meetings with your potential planning committee members.

As early as January, schedule regular monthly meetings through the end of June to be sure you will have enough collaboration time.



TIP

Set up a shared folder, server, or other digital storage option so that everyone on the team can contribute files and documentation. Creating sub-folders will help keep data organized. For example, you may have separate folders for the Planning Team documents, Needs Assessment, Project Plan, Budget, Background Research, etc.

5 | Use guiding questions to build an agenda for each meeting

Meetings go more smoothly when they have clear agendas. For each one of your planning committee meetings, prepare an agenda in advance.

One of the most effective ways to create an agenda is to use guiding questions that can help initiate and guide discussions about key issues. The next two pages provide a printable list of Discussion Questions and Action Items that you can use during your initial planning committee meeting.



Guiding Questions for Grant Meetings

Discussion Questions and Action Items	Notes
<p>? Who will become our local expert on the upcoming grant requirements?</p> <p><i>Assign an individual to be responsible for keeping up with all documents on the federal, state, or foundation grant website, as well as attending any technical assistance sessions.</i></p>	
<p>? Who will take the lead on gathering data for the project needs assessment?</p> <p><i>Identify and list key data sources for the project needs assessment.</i></p>	
<p>? Who will take the lead on writing the grant application? Or: Who will write each section, and who will coordinate merging all sections together?</p> <p><i>This person (or persons) should also plan to attend any technical assistance sessions from the state.</i></p>	
<p>? Who will be responsible for creating the grant budget?</p> <p>Tip: <i>Keep all vendor and cost estimates in one folder so it is easily available when writing the budget.</i></p>	
<p>? Who will keep the district superintendent informed of our grant planning process?</p> <p><i>Determine if you will update the superintendent on a regular schedule, or when specific milestones have been met.</i></p>	
<p>? Who needs to review and approve our final application?</p> <p><i>It may be helpful to create a RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) for a clear list of expectations.</i></p>	
<p>? Who will be responsible for submitting our final grant application?</p> <p><i>This person should become familiar with the federal, state, or foundation grant submission process.</i></p>	

Discussion Questions and Action Items	Notes
<p>? How often and when should we meet to develop our grant project? Who can schedule meetings and provide reminders?</p> <p><i>Establish a schedule for future meetings, and identify one person to be responsible for scheduling meetings.</i></p>	
<p>? Given the timeline, by what date do we need to have a rough draft?</p> <p><i>Aim for at least one week before the actual deadline so there is time for revisions and final approval.</i></p>	

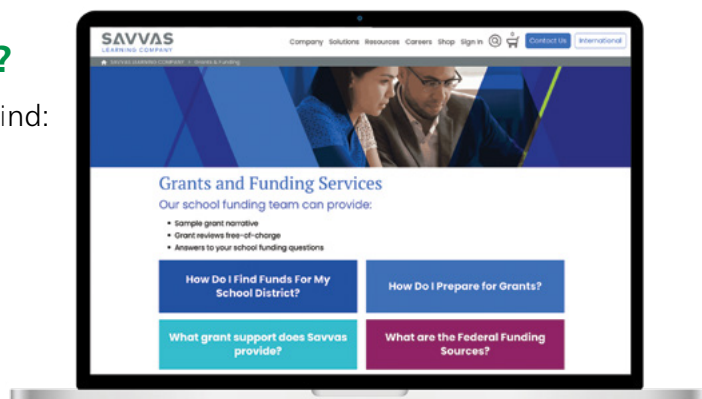
Prepare for Success

It can be a challenge to pull together a comprehensive, compelling grant proposal in a short window of time—but the funding grants provide is essential for many school and district programs. By following these five steps, you'll start this year's grant season better prepared to create and submit successful proposals, and ultimately gain the funds needed to help set students up for success in school and in life.

Looking for more helpful grant resources?

Visit the [Savvas Grants and Funding Resource Page](#) to find:

- An overview of federal funding sources
- Tips for finding funding for your school or district
- Advice on preparing for grants
- Services offered by the Savvas Grants Team



Savvas Learning Company programs qualify for a wide range of funding and grant sources, including ESSER stimulus funding!

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