



Frequently Asked Questions

This document summarizes and responds to commonly asked and submitted questions about the Marion County K-12 Public Schools Initiative, including questions that have been asked at information sessions.

The Endowment encourages all interested applicants to carefully review both the Request for Proposals (RFP) and these FAQs when considering submission of a request for funding under the initiative.

Initiative Eligibility and Design

If a school is affiliated with one or more other schools, can it choose to apply for a grant independently?

No. Schools that are affiliated for governance and/or operational purposes (e.g., school districts and charter school networks) will be viewed as single applicants and should submit a single application for each phase of the initiative.

Will every applicant receive a grant?

The Endowment has internally allocated funds that would accommodate Phase 1 planning and Phase 2 implementation grants for all eligible applicants that request planning funds and submit compelling implementation proposals. Although these phases are not competitive, the Endowment reserves the right to decline grant applications with respect to any phase of the initiative.

Phase 3 competitive grants will be awarded through a two-stage competitive process: (1) applicants submit a concept paper and (2) if invited, applicants submit a full proposal. Not all applicants that submit a concept paper will be invited to submit a full proposal, and the Endowment does not expect that all applicants invited to submit a full proposal will be awarded a grant.

Can an affiliated foundation of a school district or other applicants request a grant on behalf of its school or schools?

No. For this initiative, the Endowment will only make grants directly to the applying school, district or network. Grants will not be made to related foundations or other organizations. This does not preclude applicants from engaging affiliated foundations or other organizations to support their efforts in various ways, such as through helping to prepare proposals or reports to be submitted by applicants.

Are new schools that opened for the 2024-25 school year eligible?

No. To be eligible for the initiative, schools must have been open and serving students during the 2023-24 school year. If a new school is part of a district or network, its enrollment should not be considered when determining the requested grant amount, but the new school may benefit from and be considered in the plans for the programs or projects proposed by its district or network.

If an applicant’s school or schools increase(s) enrollment in 2024, may it apply for a larger grant than what it would otherwise qualify for according to the RFP based on 2023 enrollment?

To provide consistency and fairness in our approach to awarding grants, the funding for which each applicant will be eligible will be based on the number of students enrolled on Monday, October 2, 2023. This number should align with what was submitted to IDOE for the applicant’s average daily membership count.

May an applicant with multiple schools submit proposals on behalf of or from each of its schools?

No. While it is allowable for proposals or concept papers to include multiple programs or projects, a single proposal or concept paper should be submitted by each applicant, regardless of the number of schools it includes. If a grant is awarded, the grantee will be the applicant, the organization that oversees the represented schools. This organization is responsible for grant oversight and management.

If an applicant’s school network includes schools located outside of Marion County, may students from those other schools be counted when determining grant sizes?

No. When determining grant sizes applicants should only count K-12 students enrolled in their schools that are physically located in Marion County.

Are joint proposals allowed?

No. The Endowment will not accept joint proposals or concepts for funding under the initiative. Applicants are, however, invited to describe collaborators that will be involved in their proposed programs or projects, which may include other schools or organizations.

Are applicants permitted to submit more than one grant proposal or concept?

No. Each eligible applicant is invited to submit one application for each phase of the initiative.

Will the Endowment consider funding programs or projects that serve children who are not currently enrolled in grades K-12 in the applicant’s schools (e.g., Pre-K students or recent graduates)?

No. This initiative is in support of programs or projects that serve students in grades K-12.

Are there any types of schools physically located in Marion County that are ineligible?

Even if they are physically located in Marion County, state-run, virtual schools, for-profit schools and schools without the proper tax-exempt status, and homeschool cooperatives are not eligible to participate in the initiative.

For additional information about eligibility, please refer to pages 2 and 3 of the RFP.

Phase 1 Planning Grants

Is participation in the planning grant phase mandatory if an applicant intends to submit an implementation proposal or a concept paper?

No. An applicant is not required to participate in the planning phase to submit an implementation proposal or concept paper. However, the Endowment believes that thoughtful planning can lead to stronger proposals and concept papers and more successful implementation efforts.

How may an applicant use planning grant funds?

Planning grant funds may be used to cover a variety of planning expenses, such as research of promising practices, consultants, staff time, data analysis, conferences and seminars, travel to gather information and ideas, and preparation of Phase 2 and Phase 3 grant proposals and concept papers.

Is it appropriate to use Phase 1 planning grant funds to explore and evaluate multiple options for Phase 2 proposals and Phase 3 concept papers?

Yes. It is permissible to use Phase 1 planning grant funds to explore and evaluate multiple ideas and potential programs or projects that further the aim of the Marion County K-12 Public Schools Initiative. Applicants can use the planning period to choose and propose what they determine are the best ideas, programs or projects to include in a Phase 2 or Phase 3 grant proposal or concept paper.

Does the Endowment favor or discourage the use of consultants in the planning phase?

Applicants should determine, based on their own circumstances, whether it would be of benefit to them to utilize a consultant in the planning process.

If an applicant does not spend all of its planning grant funds, may those funds be used for other purposes?

No. Planning grant funds may be used for a period of up to one year (through October 31, 2025) and may be used for planning activities. If after the grant period expires there are unspent planning grant funds, the applicant should contact Endowment staff regarding the remaining funds.

For additional information about planning grants, please refer to pages 5 and 6 of the RFP.

Phase 2 Implementation and Phase 3 Competitive Grants

Must an applicant's proposed programs or projects for Phase 2 or Phase 3 impact all students in its school, district or network?

No. An applicant may, based upon analysis of its challenges and opportunities, choose to propose programs or projects that impact all students or specific groups of students, such as students in specific grade levels.

If an applicant's school or schools serve(s) students in grades K-8, may programs or projects support students in grades 9-12, even if students will be enrolled at other schools for those grades?

Programs or projects proposed through the initiative should be focused, first and foremost, on supporting K-12 students enrolled at that applicant's school or schools. A proposal that also includes some benefits for the applicant's students after they transition to other schools may be considered, provided that it aligns with the initiative's aim, meets RFP requirements and includes convincing research or other evidence.

How is the Endowment defining post-secondary success?

The Endowment is interested in helping schools better prepare their students for post-secondary success through programs or projects that enable students to earn college degrees or industry-recognized credentials and certificates and develop skills necessary for success in their future careers, which will help promote a full and meaningful life.

May different programs or projects be proposed for different schools that are part of a school district or network?

Yes, however, if proposals or concept papers describe multiple programs or projects to address the identified challenges or opportunities, those programs or projects should, to the extent that it is relevant, be complementary and cohesive. Proposals or concept papers that indicate that the school district or network has engaged in thoughtful analyses to determine the highest priority use of grant funds for their schools are likely to be viewed more favorably than those that submit disparate programs or projects that are not based upon a thorough analysis of opportunities and challenges across the applicant’s district or network. The applicant will be responsible for grant management and oversight of all programs or projects funded through the initiative.

For Phase 3 competitive grants, will the Endowment only fund a set number of proposals?

No. The Endowment does not have a set number of grants it seeks to approve in Phase 3. While up to \$375 million has been allocated for Phase 3 grants, only compelling and promising proposals will be approved.

If a school network includes schools outside of Marion County, may students from those schools benefit from the proposed programs or projects?

The focus of the initiative is the academic achievement and prospects for post-secondary success of Marion County K-12 students, and proposed programs or projects should reflect this focus. Provided that no grant funds are spent to support schools or students outside of Marion County, it is conceivable that an applicant’s proposed programs or projects may provide ancillary benefits to schools or students outside of Marion County.

May a proposed program or project include a benefit to the broader community or to students enrolled at other schools?

Programs or projects proposed through the initiative should be focused, first and foremost, on supporting K-12 students enrolled at the applicant’s school or schools in Marion County. A proposal that includes ancillary benefits to students in other schools or to the broader community may be considered if it aligns with the initiative’s aim, meets RFP requirements and includes convincing research or other evidence.

Should an applicant seek collaborations with other organizations to implement proposed programs or projects?

Schools, school districts, or school networks may determine that the programs or projects that they propose to implement as part of this initiative should involve collaborations with other organizations that serve school-aged youth in Marion County. If this is the case, applicants should describe these collaborations in their proposals or concept papers, as noted in the RFP. Applicants should also consider whether allocating a portion of funds from the proposed grant to compensate collaborating organizations for relevant expenses incurred would enhance the effectiveness of the proposed program or project. Applicants should determine whether the collaborating organization will have the resources to engage effectively in the collaboration if it does not receive funds from the proposed grant.

Is the initiative only for new programs or projects, or could the grant support a program or project already underway?

As noted in the RFP, grants may be used to initiate, enhance or expand compelling programs or projects

that align with the initiative's aim. Accordingly, applicants may propose using a grant to enhance or expand an existing program in some way, provided the applicant addresses all other requirements and criteria in the RFP.

If the Endowment determines that one or more of the programs or projects proposed does not merit funding, will the entire proposal be declined?

It is allowable for a proposal to include multiple programs or projects. After Phase 2 implementation proposals are submitted, the Endowment may request additional information or clarification from applicants. Feedback on specific proposed programs or projects may also be provided. In these cases, applicants may be given the opportunity to provide additional information to be considered with their proposal or modify their requests. Phase 3 concept papers will be reviewed competitively, and feedback will only be offered to those applicants invited to submit a full proposal. The Endowment will evaluate concept papers according to the requirements and criteria provided in the RFP.

Are health and wellness or athletics programs or projects allowable under the initiative?

Yes. All proposals and concepts, regardless of the type of programs or projects proposed, should include citations and references to, and descriptions of, convincing research or other evidence that demonstrates that those programs or projects show promise to improve students' academic achievement or prospects for post-secondary success.

Must Phase 2 proposals and Phase 3 concept papers address the same challenge and/or opportunity?

No. The programs and projects proposed in these two phases may relate to the other, but it is not mandatory. The Endowment's review of Phase 3 concept papers will be done independently of Phase 2 proposals consistent with the requirements and criteria described in the RFP.

The RFP notes that Phase 2 and Phase 3 grants may be used for periods of up to five years. If a project or program is shorter in duration, should an applicant propose a shorter grant period?

Yes. Applicants should indicate the timeline for each project or program in their proposals and concept papers. The Endowment may request reports that extend beyond the project timeline in certain circumstances.

For additional information about implementation and competitive grants, please refer to pages 7 through 13 of the RFP.

General

Will a scoring rubric for evaluating grant proposals be provided to potential applicants?

No. The Endowment will not provide a scoring rubric to applicants. We encourage applicants to review the requirements and criteria in the RFP for factors that the Endowment will consider in grantmaking decisions.

Are there any formatting requirements?

Applicants should format materials using a 12-point font and one-inch margins. Materials may be either single- or double-spaced as long as page limit requirements detailed in the RFP are followed.

Will funding be disbursed on a reimbursement basis?

No. Funding will be disbursed in due course after a grant agreement is signed by both the grantee and the Endowment.

Are additional information sessions planned?

The Endowment has not scheduled additional information sessions at this time.

Is this a one-time initiative?

Currently there are no plans for an additional Marion County K-12 Public Schools Initiative.

May an applicant engage with Endowment staff to discuss proposal or concept ideas before submitting applications for each phase? How can applicants obtain further clarification about the initiative?

Given the size and competitive nature of part of the initiative, Endowment staff cannot provide feedback on ideas or proposals prior to submission deadlines. Clarifying questions may be submitted to Endowment staff at K12initiatives@lei.org. Additional FAQs may be provided to make responses to submitted questions available to all eligible applicants.

How often will grant reports be required and what will reports require?

Program and financial reports for Phase 2 and Phase 3 grants will be due every six months. The details of reporting requirements will be outlined in grant agreements and other reporting guidelines the Endowment will provide, but in general grantees will be asked to report on the progress of the programs and projects funded by the grant, including progress toward expected performance indicators and outcomes. Financial reports should detail how grant funds have been spent against the grant budget and other funding that has been received to support the programs or projects during the reporting period.

Are applicants expected to engage an external evaluator?

No. Applicants may engage external evaluators but are not required to do so. It is important that applicants describe a strong plan with respect to how they will measure progress toward performance indicators and outcomes and how they will evaluate the overall success of proposed programs or projects.

Grant Budgets and Expenses

If an applicant has done significant planning work already, may it use the \$50,000 planning grant to reimburse for those expenses?

No. The expenses must be incurred within the grant period that will be outlined in a planning grant agreement. Grant funds may not be used to reimburse the applicant for previously incurred expenses.

For Phase 2 implementation grants, is the funding described in the RFP a one-time grant or will an applicant receive that amount every year for five years?

Eligible applicants may apply for a one-time grant in the amount described in the RFP. That one grant may be used for a period of up to five years.

Is there a limit to the amount of grant funds that can be spent on capital projects?

No. Provided that the total grant request does not exceed 80 percent of the total expense for the proposed capital project, and it does not exceed the limit based on the applicant's enrollment as outlined in the RFP, there is no limit to the amount of grant funds that an applicant may request to spend on a capital project.

May grant funds be used to pay down debt?

No. While grant funds from the initiative may be used for a variety of expenses required to conduct proposed programs or projects, including the expense examples described in the RFP, grant funds may not be used to pay down any kind of debt held by the applicant.

What other expenses are not allowed?

Grants awarded through the initiative may not be used for student tuition scholarships of any kind or to provide, for student recruitment purposes, any incentives to prospective students or their families. Additionally, grant funds may not be used to fund endowments or rainy-day funds or, as noted previously, to pay down debt of any kind.

May applicants use grant funds to cover fees for students to participate in various programs or receive various services? Is this permitted under the initiative?

Yes. Although applicants may not use grant funds to pay student tuition or provide student tuition scholarships, applicants may use grant funds to pay fees that enable students to participate in various programs or receive various services.

May grant funds be used to pay for the expenses of a collaborating organization?

Yes. If the applicant is collaborating with another organization to implement programs or projects as part of the proposed grant or concept, it is permitted and appropriate for the applicant to include in its grant budget funding that would compensate the collaborating organization for relevant expenses incurred. An applicant's grant request that includes funding for a collaborating organization may not exceed the grant amount for which the applicant is eligible as noted in the RFP.

May grant funds be used for marketing?

Yes, provided the marketing is not focused on recruiting new students to enroll in the applicant's school or schools.

May an applicant use its own budget template?

No. Applicants should use the provided Line-Item Budget Format and Summary Budget Format found in the Application Packet.

In a Phase 2 implementation grant proposal, may an applicant request funding for indirect costs or administrative expenses? If this is permissible, is there a limit?

Yes. Applicants may include in their Phase 2 implementation grant proposals and Phase 3 concept papers funding for indirect costs; however, those costs may not exceed 10 percent of the direct costs. For example, if an applicant requests a \$1.25 million grant, the maximum allowable indirect costs would be \$113,636 (approximately 10 percent of \$1,136,364 in direct costs.)

May a request for funding carry across multiple fiscal years? Is the funding required to be spent by a certain period?

Phase 2 implementation and Phase 3 competitive grants can be used for up to five years with an anticipated start in 2025. Grant-funded expenses may be incurred within one or multiple years depending on the project type and expenses. It will be up to the applicant to determine how to budget and expense grant funds, but it is expected that all grant funds would be expended by the end of the five-year period.

How should applicants address sustainability? Is it required that funding to sustain programs or projects be committed or secured by a certain date?

The Endowment expects that applicants will address sustainability differently depending on the nature of their proposed programs or projects. Some programs or projects may be of an intentionally short-term nature, such as capital projects. In these cases, a sustainability plan may not be necessary. Alternatively, applicants that intend for programs and projects to continue beyond the life of a five-year grant should describe convincing approaches to sustainability. A variety of approaches could be appropriate.

Will the Endowment consider in-kind contributions as part of other sources of project funding that may be applied to the 20 percent project funding requirement?

No. Applicants must describe sources of funding, amounting to at least 20 percent of the proposed program or project expenses, that have been identified, awarded or will otherwise be obtained or provided by the applicant to support the proposed activities. These sources of funding should include monetary resources, not in-kind contributions. Sources could include government, philanthropic or other private funding. Funding does not need to be secured or committed at the time of the proposal submission, but the expectation of and plan for receiving funds when they are needed for the proposed programs or projects should be realistic and feasible.

For Phase 2 grants, how does the \$500 per student enrolled relate to the 20 percent funding requirement?

To determine the grant amount that they are eligible to request, applicants should multiply \$500 by their K-12 Marion County enrollment on October 2, 2023. Applicants may request grants of up to that amount, provided it does not exceed 80 percent of the total cost of the proposed programs or projects. For example, if an applicant's school or school district enrolled 600 students, they may request a grant of up to \$300,000 ($\500×600). To request a grant of that amount, the total budget for the proposed programs or projects would need to be at least \$375,000, with \$75,000 or more being covered by other sources of funding (80 percent of \$375,000 is \$300,000).

After Phase 2 and Phase 3 grants are awarded, how will the Endowment verify that the 20 percent funding requirement is achieved?

Financial reports for Phase 2 and Phase 3 grants will be due every six months and, in addition to requiring applicants to report how grant funds were spent against the grant budget, will require grantees to report on other funding that was received to support the programs or projects. Failure to meet the 20 percent funding requirement may jeopardize successful implementation efforts of a project or program and may affect the applicant's prospects for future funding from the Endowment.

For additional information on grant budgets and expenses, please refer to the RFP and the Guide to Budget Preparation. The Endowment invites eligible applicants to submit questions that are not answered in this document to Endowment staff at K12initiatives@lei.org.