



FFT 2023 INNOVATION CIRCLE GRANT APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Deadline: Thursday, April 20, 2023, 5:00PM CST

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Teachers are most effective, and improve in their practice, when they are problem solvers and innovators, who take risks, learn, reflect, and collaborate. As a Fellow, you understand how Fund for Teachers' transformational learning experiences catalyze these problem-solving experiences for yourself and your students, ultimately changing schools and communities.

To seed innovation in topics that are key priorities in education, Fund for Teachers is now offering Innovation Circle Grants exclusively for past Fellows. These grants are grounded in your unique problem of practice, testing solutions, and creating impact in your classroom. Different from our flagship Fellowship grant, Innovation Circle grants are designed around a predetermined topic. Fellows will still design a learning experience but will also participate in a 'circle' of Fellows to stimulate and support innovation. Circles will meet for approximately 20 hours over the course of the year to design innovative solutions to their problems of practice.

The 2023 Circle topic is "Centering Students". As an experienced teacher, centering students is probably not new to you; however, making it happen at a time of intense pressure and mandated curriculum is big work! To be student centered is to organize the curriculum, teaching practices, and classroom structures in ways that affirm students' interests, assets, abilities, and needs. With this grant, you don't need to innovate in all these areas; choose something focused and strategic that you think might help you change students' experience in affirming ways.

To get started, reflect on one or two of the following questions regarding your classroom & school community?

- Are students struggling to see how learning is relevant to their lives/lived experience?
- Do students seem unmotivated or less motivated than you want them to be?
- Are you struggling to build relationships with students or parents? Are students struggling to build relationships with each other?
- How are students performing academically? What kind of growth are students making? Does it vary across demographic groups?
- What does student engagement look like?

Then, be strategic! Identify one teacher learning topic that you think might help you shift the patterns you just named. We trust you to develop the just-right learning experience that will help you design solutions. If you are feeling stuck, below are some topics that we think we might see in your applications, but don't feel constrained by this list.

- Culturally sustaining curriculum or pedagogy
- Project- or problem-based learning
- Student discourse (e.g. Socratic seminar, debate)

- Family partnership and engagement
- Making curriculum relevant
- Mastery/competency-based learning
- Self-directed learning
- Subject, art, or technology integration
- Developing students' habits of mind
- Social-emotional development
- Differentiation
- Student leadership

ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- A Fund for Teachers Fellow, in good standing with the organization.
- A full-time preK-12th grade teacher who spends at least 50% of your time directly providing instruction to students; and
- Applicants must have plans to return to a classroom or teaching environment the year following their fellowship and demonstrate the ability to incorporate what they learn into their teaching.

Teaching staff that do not provide instruction to students for at least 50% of their full-time position are not eligible. One-on-one instructional time does not count toward the 50%-time requirement described above. Administrators, such as principals, may not apply. Please contact Fund for Teachers if you have specific questions about your eligibility.

Innovation Circle Grants have a one year waiting period between awards and **cannot** be earned in fellowship years. Receipt of an Innovation Circle Grant does not affect the five-year waiting period between Fund for Teachers Fellowship grants.

Open to US teachers who live and work in the continental United States and Hawaii.

Fellowships should begin after the last day of school and be completed by the first day of school in the fall, with all fellowship related expenditures made by December 15, 2023.

Innovation Circle Grant applicants may apply for up to \$1,000 for your summer learning experience, with an opportunity to apply for an additional \$500 for implementation **after innovation design**. For the purposes of this initial grant application, you will only document the costs for the learning experience.

Fund for Teachers is interested in your ideas, only. Any indication of borrowed text will disqualify your application. Additionally, we know your time is valuable and discourage using it to submit proposals that do not fall within funding guidelines. In this spirit, we aim to be transparent about what our grant making does not support: Fund for Teachers does not make grants to support student travel, the completion of post baccalaureate degrees, university/college credit hours, courses for graduate credit, licensing, or licensure, onsite (or campus) professional development at your school or by the district, compensation for substitutes, stipends and requests that only include classroom supplies, such as books, technology, or other materials. All project eligibility is at the discretion of Fund for Teachers.

APPLICATION

The entire application is completed online and will require digital signatures. As part of the application process an email will be sent from info@fundforteachers.org to your principal to verify your employment.

All applicants must apply online between March 2 and April 20 with final submission made by **5PM CST, on April 20, 2023**.

As a past grant recipient, you have an existing online account. If you used an email address that is no longer working, please call 1-800-681-2667 or email info@fundforteachers.org and we can update your account.

Part One: Coversheet

- Create a 1-2 sentence project description (350-character limit).
- Sign your coversheet. Once signed, an email will be sent to your principal asking for a digital signature to verify your employment. Edits to signed coversheets are not permitted, except for revisions to the project description.
- Use the formal name of your district and school. Ex: Houston Independent School District instead of HISD and John F. Kennedy Elementary School instead of JFK Elem. School.

Part Two: Proposal

Consists of four sections and should articulate creative, thoughtful activities or projects that demonstrate potential for innovative solutions to your problem of practice.

- Create and save your proposal using a word processor, avoiding any formatting.
- **Limit your proposal to 9,000 characters, including spaces**, (approx. two, single spaced, typed pages) cumulative for all four sections.
- Avoid identifying references.
- Avoid using hyperlinks and web addresses.
- Refer to the Scoring Criteria when addressing each of the four proposal sections.

Sections:

A response to each application question is required. However, applicants should not feel limited by these questions and should provide selection committee readers with any information they feel is helpful in articulating their fellowship goals. Additionally, we strongly encourage you to review the Scoring Criteria (found under Quick Links) to understand what criteria selection committee members are looking for in a highly scored proposal.

Section I: Fellowship Purpose

What is your genuine professional problem of practice?

- What aspect of the student/community/family experience are you hoping to change or disrupt? Use data, examples and/or stories to support your points.
- What is your area of needed learning to address this pattern?

Section II: Learning Plan

What is your learning plan? Note: This is NOT a description of what you will do with your students.

- Outline the details of your summer learning experience. Include details about the workshops, books and/or experiences in which you plan to engage.
- Describe what you hope to learn in each portion of your learning plan.
- If applicable, describe how your learning might help you create more equitable student learning experiences.

Section III: Innovation Mindset

After your learning experience, you will join other teachers in live circle meetings and asynchronous collaboration spaces designed to help you envision and implement your innovation. What strengths/assets will you bring to the Circle that will help you and your peers be successful?

- Explain why you think collaboration with other teachers around this topic will help you and/or your students?
- Describe your strengths and assets in terms of Collaboration and Innovation.
- If applicable, describe an experience with design thinking.

Section IV: Budget Narrative

Provide a brief narrative showing evidence of thoughtful planning and research supporting your specific itinerary.

- Outline any expenses expected during the learning phase of your fellowship. This should not exceed \$1,000. Costs over \$1,000 will be at the applicant's expense.
- Stipulate a time frame and approximate costs as closely as possible.
- Familiarize yourself with Fund for Teachers' non-allowable expenses when designing and ultimately planning how to your fellowship funds.
- **Note:** You do not need to include a request for implementation or innovation expenditures at this time. A formal request, not to exceed \$500, will be made in the fall after envisioning what you will do with your learning.

Part Three: Itemized Budget Sheet

Unlike your Budget Narrative, the Itemized Budget is a listing of your fellowship expenses by category. In addition to fellowship related expenses, you will also be asked for the length of your fellowship and the related destinations.

Please be aware of the following:

- Use whole numbers, rounding up to the nearest dollar when necessary.
- Certain products and services may not be purchased using grant funds. [A full list of non-allowable expenses may be found under Quick Links or here.](#)
- The following are the categories to be itemized:
 - PARTICIPATION COSTS: Tour, registration, and course/program fees including online workshops and conferences.
 - EQUIPMENT: Includes, but not limited to, cameras, recorders, laboratory equipment and computer hardware necessary for fellowship and classroom implementation. Please consider borrowing these pieces of equipment from your school, if available. Any equipment purchased with the grant funds must be accessible to entire school upon return.
 - TRANSPORTATION: any fare to and from destination. Estimate rental car cost based on current gasoline prices. For personal vehicles, calculate the mileage at a rate of \$.585/mile. Grant funding can only cover mileage or gasoline, not both.

- LODGING: Seek moderately priced motels/hotels or, if applicable, home stays.
- FOOD: Food costs should reflect actual destination rates and cannot exceed \$50 per day/per person.
- OTHER: Specific costs of your fellowship not outlined in the preceding categories.

SELECTION PROCESS

To avoid creating bias for or against an applicant, the coversheet and any identifying information is removed from your proposal prior to the selection process. Please refrain from using your name, your school or district names within your proposal to ensure a fair selection process. Your proposal may be reviewed in a geographic region other than your own. When describing where you teach it is permissible to acknowledge your city and state.

Often, foundations want to know more about who we serve. The survey questions on your coversheet are for that purpose only and are in no way used in our selection process.

Applicants will be notified by email of the selection committee results on May 18, 2023, by email.

CIRCLE REQUIREMENTS

1. In our experience, Fellows who actively participate in Circle meetings produce better innovations. Please plan to attend $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Circle meetings.
2. Fellows are required to submit several post-fellowship deliverables to Fund for Teachers. Deliverables may include:
 - An expense report;
 - Passport (a public, written reflection of your experience/innovation);
 - Fellow Surveys; and
 - Documentation of your innovation shared with Fund for Teachers (e.g., series of lessons, student project, curricular unit, or resource you created for students/other teachers, documentation of a professional development you led, blog or professional article you would like to publish).

Fellows who fail to attend the circle meetings, complete post-fellowship reporting and/or use fellowship funds in manner not consistent with their grant proposal will be deemed, "Not in Good Standing." Fund for Teachers, at its discretion, may refuse future applications from individuals listed as "Not in Good Standing."

Fund for Teachers reserves the right to review the terms and conditions of this grant program, and to make changes at any time, including termination.