



NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NEBRASKA'S INNOVATION GRANT PROGRAM
- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY -

Nebraska's *Department of Education Innovative Grant Fund* and the *Innovation Grant Program* were created with the passage of *Legislative Bill (LB) 519*, effective August 30, 2015. This competitive grant program provides funding opportunities to *Local Education Agencies (LEAs)* to support the development, expansion and investment in innovative best practices that improve:

- Education outcomes for early childhood, elementary, middle school or high school students;
- Transitions between any successive stages of education; or
- Transitions between education and the work force.

As provided in *Nebraska Revised Statute (NRS) §79-1054*, the State Board of Education establishes the grant program, with the Nebraska Department of Education administering the funds which consist of:

- Transfers pursuant to *NRS §9-812 (State Lottery Operation Trust Fund and Nebraska Education Improvement Fund)*;
- Repayments of grant funds; and
- Interest payments received in the course of administering the fund.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION INNOVATIVE GRANT FUND	
FY 2016-17 through FY 2020-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Beginning July 1, 2016, <i>Nebraska Education Improvement Fund</i> receives 44.5% of the <i>State Lottery Operation Trust Fund</i>, after payment of prizes and operating expenses. ▪ 17% of the <i>Nebraska Education Improvement Fund</i>, after actual and necessary administrative expenses, is allocated to <i>Department of Education Innovative Grant Fund</i>.

There is currently approximately \$7.8 million available for use over the next three years for competitive grants through this program. Eligible applicants include a school district, Educational Service Unit (ESU), or combination of entities containing at least one school district or ESU.

The State Board of Education will award *Innovation Grant Program* funds to projects deemed sufficiently innovative, with a high chance of success and statewide significance. Projects must have the potential to be both replicable and scalable, with priority consideration given to those that:

- Serve "High Needs" students;
- Serve students attending "Needs Improvement" schools;
- Focus on the tenets of *AQuESTT System (Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow)*; or
- Leverage technology, in the context of innovation, to support instructional practice and professional development.

Applicants may also choose to seek an optional competitive preference priority of matching funds. The program is fiscally structured on a *Reimbursement Payment* basis, with grantees reimbursed after making project-related expenditures.

Grant recipients will be required to generate evidence of a project's effectiveness through a rigorous independent evaluation, culminating in identification, validation, replication and potential "scale-up" of innovative best practices. Funded projects must be annually evaluated and report progress toward stated goals, measurable objectives and targeted outcomes. Based on those reports, the State Board of Education will submit an *Innovation Grant Program Annual Report* to the Clerk of the Legislature by December 1st of each year. Grantees must also submit a *Summative Evaluation of Progress Report* to the State Board and Legislature's Education Committee by July 1, 2019. Based on that report, the State Board will recommend that the project represents:

- A best practice;
- A model for a State-supported program; or
- A local issue or promising practice for further study.

The State Board of Education may also establish criteria allowing projects recommended as best practices to be included in the *Best Practices Allowance to School Districts*, beginning with aid calculated for *School Fiscal Year 2021-2022*. On or before November 1, 2020, the Department of Education will annually certify:

- To each qualifying school district, the amount of the *Best Practices Cost* for that school district; and
- The *Total Best Practices Cost* for all qualifying school districts to be included in the next fiscal year's State Aid.

Additional information about Nebraska's *Innovation Grant Program* is available on the Department of Education's website: https://www.education.ne.gov/dataservices/innovation_grant.html