

# Office of Community Schools

## Priority and Focus School Quality Improvement Grant Guide

Community schools identified as priority or focus schools are eligible to apply for School Quality Improvement and Innovation Grants (1003). Community schools should consider the following:

- Read instructions carefully. Make sure you understand how to submit the grant application through the Ohio Department of Education's Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Plan (CCIP) system.
- Make sure to read and agree to all assurances and provide necessary signatures. Assurances and the signature page can be found in the document library in the School Quality Improvement folder of the CCIP.
- It may help to align the grant application to your school's overall improvement plan and priorities for improvement.
- Remember to identify one of four target areas.
- Include and clearly identify at **least one Level 1, 2 or 3 evidence-based strategy in the application. Failure to identify strategies can result in rejection of the application.**
- You may wish to reference participation in peer-to-peer networks. All community schools have access to the following peer-to-peer networks for community schools facilitated by the Office of Community Schools: dropout recovery, online schools, literacy, and students with disabilities in addition to networks facilitated by the Office for Improvement and state support teams.
- Some of the same questions are asked in multiple places. Make sure all information supplied is consistent across all sections.
- Check the maximum amounts of the grants included in the application and do not request funding in excess of the grant amount per year.
- Read the rubric in each section and make sure you provide what is requested. Strong evidence must consist of more than just saying you did something. The more detailed and specific the descriptions, the stronger the evidence.
- Don't forget to complete and submit the budget template. The budget template should reflect that this is a four-year grant.
- Upload a job description detailing minimum qualification, job duties and services for activities funded by this grant.
- Use Arial, 11-point font.
- Improvement template pages referenced in this guide are prior to adding content.
- **DO NOT EXCEED LIMITS ON CHARACTERS IN EACH SECTION.**

**SELECT ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TARGET AREAS FOR YOUR GRANT:** (1) Excellent Educators and Instructional Practices, (2) Standards, Assessments and Accountability: Data Use Capacity, (3) Positive Climate and Culture or (4) Research-based Collaboration. *(Only applicants approved by Harvard University can choose Research-based Collaboration as the target area for the grant.)*

Descriptions of the target areas are below. Additional information is available in the grant application [here](#).

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### **Target Area 1 - Excellent Educators and Instructional Practices:**

If you choose this target area, your grant's strategies and goals should address one or more of the following areas to support improved student performance:

- Leadership development for administrators and teacher leaders, particularly use of distributed or shared leadership models;
- Improving facilitation skills related to the Ohio Improvement Process; and
- Improving instructional practices through professional development and coaching of principals.

### **Target Area 2 - Standards, Assessments and Accountability: Data Use Capacity:**

If you choose this target area, your grant's strategies and goals should address one or more of the following areas to support improved student performance:

- Developing knowledge and skills of school leaders and teacher leaders regarding collecting, analyzing and using both student and adult implementation data;
- Developing, aligning and evaluating high-quality curriculum and assessments;
- Tools such as coaching and progress monitoring; and
- Targeted professional development to support evidence-based strategies to improve literacy skills for all students and student subgroups across grade and subject areas.

*Any project selecting this target area should demonstrate how the strategies and action steps help build local capacity for collecting, analyzing and using data to improve instruction and student outcomes.*

### **Target Area 3 - Positive Climate and Culture:**

If you choose this target area, your grant's strategies and goals should address one or more of the following areas to support improved student performance:

- Evidence-based family/community engagement and partnership strategies;
- Utilizing partnerships to provide supportive/wraparound services;
- Professional development to support culturally responsive or trauma-informed practices, PBIS and identified climate issues; and
- Creation of a community learning center or school-based health care services.

Any project selecting this target area should identify the connection between the student goals and improved academic achievement.

### **Target Area 4 - Research-based Collaboration:**

- If an applicant is interested in completing an application for this targeted area, the applicant should contact Heather Boughton, director of the Office of Research, Evaluation & Advanced Analytics, at [Heather.Boughton@education.ohio.gov](mailto:Heather.Boughton@education.ohio.gov). **Schools not already approved by Harvard University should NOT select this target area.**

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### Application Overview

The application overview should briefly describe the grant proposal. The overview **must be no more than one page, double-spaced, one-inch margins, Arial, 11-point font** and describe the project as well as the connection to overall improvement efforts.

### Importance of the Evidence-based Strategy or Strategies

Scoring throughout the application is based on alignment between the evidence-based strategy or strategies identified and the needs assessments, goals, action steps, measures and indicators. We recommend identifying the strategy, level of evidence and, if possible, a link to the clearinghouse or research used to select the strategy and confirm the applicable level of evidence. You may wish to indicate how the grant proposal's student outcome goals align to the state's ESSA plan available [here](#) and [here](#) beginning on page 16.

### Needs Assessment Process & Outcome: Pg. 4 CS Improvement Plan

This section is scored. Do not exceed 4000 characters.

Describe the needs of school-level staff, educational needs of students and the community. Includes evidence of collecting and analyzing multiple sources and types of information for the needs assessment.

Describe how the school engaged with staff, families and the community as part of the needs assessment and selection of the target area(s) and evidence-based strategies. Include stakeholders who were part of the process, how input was solicited and how stakeholders' input shaped the plan.

Details you may wish to include:

- Specific sources of data used.
- Multiple sources of data and the same data from at least two points in time.
- Multiple types of data such as state test data (achievement and progress), attainment data (such as graduation rate or prepared for success), local diagnostic or formative assessment data, all students and student subgroup data, survey results, and chronic absenteeism, attendance and discipline data.
- Types of analysis completed and results of analysis.
- Identification of stakeholders (parents, community, business) that were part of the needs assessment process.
- Process used to engage stakeholders (surveys, meetings, inclusion on planning team).
- How stakeholders influenced the needs assessment process and selection of the evidence-based strategy.

**If you are a Focus school, the results of your needs assessment, resulting improvement priority and strategies should align to the student subgroup(s) that triggered identification as a Focus school.**

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### **Level of Evidence-based Strategy:** Pg.6 CS Improvement Plan

This section is scored.

Explain how the evidence-based strategies included in the application align to the applicant's needs assessment and project goals. Applicants should at least explain how the selected strategies are appropriate based on grade level, type of student and content area addressed by the strategy (4,000-character limit).

- Make sure the strategy aligns with a priority identified by the needs assessment. (For example, If the priority identified is early literacy, explain that the research supporting the selected strategy matches the grade level, type of student (all or specific subgroup), and content area of reading or English language arts).
- Describe how the strategy complements other existing initiatives or strategies already in use.
- Describe how the strategy aligns to goals/indicators.

Identify the evidence level (Level 1 ("Strong"), Level 2 ("Moderate") or Level 3 ("Promising") associated with each strategy identified in the application. **(This item is required but not scored.)**

Explain how you know each strategy is an evidence-based strategy and meets the requirements to be identified as a Level 1, 2 or 3 strategy (4,000-character limit).

- Identify the clearinghouse or other source that features the strategy and the associated level of evidence.
- Include the name of a study (or studies) and a link to the text of a study that supports the level of evidence.

### **Impact for Students and Adults (SMART Goals/Indicators):** Pg. 6 CS Improvement Plan **Failure to identify at least two student outcome goals and two adult implementation goals aligned to the selected evidence-based strategy may result in rejection of your grant application.**

Identify at least two goals for student outcomes that meet all requirements of SMART goals that are included as part of the application (4,000-character limit).

- Goals must be aligned to the strategy or strategies and priorities identified by the needs assessment.
- Goals must be specific. Since this is a four-year grant, you may wish to consider short or intermediate, as well as longer-term goals for student outcomes. (for example, student goals related to literacy might include shorter-term goals related to progress as measured by locally administered diagnostic assessments and longer-term goals for state English language arts assessments).
- Goals must be measurable – Can you identify specific measures to monitor progress against goals, is the data for the measures available and useable, was the data or measures part of the needs assessment?
- Goals must be achievable – Are the short- and long-term targets ambitious but reasonable? How do you know?
- Goals must be relevant – How do the goals relate to and align with the needs assessment, identified improvement priority and strategy?

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- Goals must be time-bound. When do you expect to see progress? When will data be collected and available?

Identify at least two adult implementation goals or indicators that meet all requirements of SMART goals that are included as part of the application (4,000-character limit).

- Goals and indicators of adult practice also should meet the criteria for SMART goals (see above).
- Are the adult indicators or goals related to the priority identified by the needs assessment and support action steps necessary to implement evidence-based strategies with fidelity?

**Do all student outcome goals and adult implementation goals/indicators align with the needs assessment results, priority areas for improvement (grade level, content area, type of student, staff professional development, etc.) and each selected evidence-based strategy?**

### **Progress Monitoring:** Pg. 7 CS Improvement Plan

This section is scored.

Describe the **monitoring process** for the project.

- Include how all action steps, implementation indicators/goals and student outcomes will be monitored.
- What data will be collected?
- Who is responsible for collecting each type of data?
- When will data be collected?
- Who reviews and analyzes the data? To whom are the results of the analysis presented?
- How is the data used?
- Explain how the monitoring process will be used to revise the project plan if necessary. (4,000-character limit)

Describe the assessments and instruments used to monitor progress toward meeting **student performance goals** (4,000-character limit). Description must include:

- How assessment or instrument was selected? (How does it align with needs assessment results, priority areas for improvement (grade level, content area, type of student, staff professional development)? Why is the assessment or instrument appropriate?
- What data will be collected? (What is the source of the data?)
- Who is responsible for collecting each type of data?
- When will data be collected? How frequently?
- Who reviews and analyzes the data? To whom are the results of the analysis presented?
- How is the data used?
- Explain how the monitoring process will be used to revise the project plan if necessary.

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Describe the assessments and instruments used to monitor **progress of adult implementation goals** (4,000-character limit). Description must include:

- How assessment or instrument was selected? (How does it align with the action steps?) Why is the assessment or instrument appropriate?
- What data will be collected? (What is the source of the data?)
- Who is responsible for collecting each type of data?
- When will data be collected? How frequently?
- Who reviews and analyzes the data? To whom are the results of the analysis presented?
- How is the data used?
- Explain how the monitoring process will be used to revise the project plan, if necessary.

### **Strategies and Activities:** Pg. 7 CS Improvement Plan

This section is scored.

Describe the key activities/action steps and person primarily responsible (4,000-character limit).

- What are the key action steps that support implementation of the selected strategy?
- Who (individual or group) is primarily responsible for completing each action step?
- Make sure the action steps support the strategy and are aligned to the identified improvement priority.

Describe the implementation process, including timeline for proposed strategies and accompanying action steps (4,000-character limit).

- What is the timeline for implementation of the action steps?
- In what order do steps take place? Why?
- Are there points in the timeline for review and reflection before proceeding?
- How does data inform each of the action steps in the timeline?

Describe the professional development and other activities for educators, leadership and support personnel (4,000-character limit).

- What are the specific opportunities for professional development for school staff?
- Why were they chosen?
- How do they support the evidence-based strategy? Align to the identified priority?
- How will you determine impact/efficacy of the professional development?
- Are there implementation indicators associated with the professional development?

Describe the resources requested by this grant in the budget worksheet and how the funds requested coordinate with the school's other improvement plans and funds.

- Explain the connection between funds requested and specific action steps included in the proposal. (Why you are requesting the amount of funds each year?)
- How much does each activity cost?
- How do you know the cost amount is correct?

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- What other improvement efforts and strategies is your school planning or already has implemented? How do those activities align and coordinate with this grant proposal?
- How does this proposal complement activities funded by other federal or state funds?
- Will activities included in this grant proposal build on previous or existing improvement efforts? How?

### **Impact Evaluation and Reporting:** Pg. 7 CS Improvement Plan

This section is scored.

Describe specific activities that will be used to evaluate success in meeting progress indicators and goals detailed in this application (4,000-character limit).

- Explain how you will determine if the project was implemented as planned.
- Will there be a project manager for this grant? Who?
- Will there be a project plan?
- Will there be an outside evaluation conducted? By whom?
- How will data be used to evaluate success?
- Do you have a process for making course corrections if necessary? Describe it.
- How does the evaluation of this project align to the needs assessment, identified priorities and evidence-based strategy?

Provide a description of internal and external staff and internal and external resources used for program evaluation (4,000-character limit).

- Who will be involved in evaluating the success of this project?
- Why are these the right individuals to evaluate the success of the project?
- Will you conduct periodic formative evaluations of progress in addition to a more summative evaluation at the conclusion of the project? When? How frequently?
- What costs will be incurred to support evaluation activities?

### **Integration into the Continuous Improvement Plan:**

Describe how this application aligns with the applicant's other improvement plans, including the comprehensive plan for improvement submitted to the Office of Community Schools and how resources from this grant will be coordinated with all other revenue streams, resources and partnerships with outside organizations (4,000-character limit).

- Make sure the description matches similar description under 'Strategies and Activities.'

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**Budget Description:** Pg. 11 CS Improvement Plan

**This item is not scored but must be completed. This question is in addition to submission of the budget template.**

Provide an itemized listing of anticipated allowable expenditures that align with the allocation budget grid for this grant.

**Please check to make sure the list of budget expenditures here and on the budget, worksheet do not include any expenditures that are prohibited for this grant. Do not include any construction or other unallowable costs as part of this grant.**

**Sustainability:**

**This item is scored.**

Describe how the **activities detailed in this application will be sustained beyond the grant period**. Identify funding needs beyond the term of this grant, potential source(s) of funding, staffing that will need to be funded, partnerships with outside organizations, reallocation of existing resources and ongoing communication with stakeholders (4,000-character limit).

- Explain how ongoing/recurring expenditures will be funded beyond the term of the grant. State funding? Private funding? Reallocation of existing funding?
- Describe ongoing, regularly scheduled communication and engagement with stakeholders, which may include newsletters, emails, surveys, meetings, annual reports, etc.
- Avoid including any expenditures for licenses that extend beyond the term of the grant.

Identify funded activities and resources of the application that will not continue beyond the application funding and how those activities or resources will not be needed beyond the grant application window (4,000-character limit).

- Identify any items that have a one-time cost and explain why the item will not require funding beyond the term of the grant.
- For those activities supported by a one-time expenditure, if applicable, explain how the impact of the activity or item continues beyond the term of the grant.

**Multi-year Planning Process:**

This item is scored.

Describe activities, spending and timeline for implementation for **Year 1** (4,000-character limit).

Describe activities, spending and timeline for implementation for **Year 2** (4,000-character limit).

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Describe activities, spending and timeline for implementation for **Year 3** (4,000-character limit).

Describe activities, spending and timeline for implementation for **Year 4** (4,000-character limit).

**Make sure to align the response here with previous sections addressing activities, spending and timelines.**

### COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

**1. Does the governing authority need to sign off on the application?** Yes. As a competitive grant, the governing authority is the party that has ultimate responsibility in the requesting for and spending of School Quality Improvement Grant funds. As such, a governing authority is required to sign off on all applications. The governing authority should vote on the application, and there should be a record of the vote as part of a board meeting or other formal action taken by the governing authority.

**2. Can an operator spend School Quality Improvement Grant funds on behalf of the governing authority?** No. As a federally funded competitive grant, the governing authority must maintain total control of these funds. If the school contracts with a CMO/EMO, there must be a process to document that the governing authority ultimately is making decisions as it relates to the spending of competitive federal funds. The school must show an “arms-length” relationship between the governing authority and the CMO/EMO. A recommendation would be to have all activities related to the grant be approved by the governing authority as a separate agenda item at each governing authority meeting. **Check existing operator contracts to ensure no federal funds are paid to or ‘swept’ by the operator.**

### Important Dates

Date	Activity
Dec. 19, 2018	Application opens in the CCIP (Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Plan)
Friday; Jan 11, 2019, 11:59 a.m.	Application closes and application review begins; late applications will not be accepted. <b><i>The applicant should plan to submit the grant proposal two to three days before the deadline to avoid technical issues or system delays due to the high volume of applications expected.</i></b>

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**NOTE:** A grant will not be awarded to schools that have an unresolved finding for recovery. The Auditor of State established a database pursuant to Ohio Revised Code Section 9.24 to list all persons who have unresolved findings for recovery, dating back to Jan. 1, 2001. Please check the database [here](#).

### REMEMBER:

- 1) **Alignment:** A successful application demonstrates alignment across all sections of the proposal.
  - a. Expenditures, action steps/activities, goals/indicators, strategies, improvement priorities and the results of needs assessment and sources of data all should be aligned.
  - b. Grant proposals for schools identified as focus schools should align with the student subgroup(s) that triggered identification.
  - c. It is recommended applicants reference how the school's goals align to and support Ohio's improvement goals outlined in ESSA.
    - i. **All students achievement:** *Ohio established long-term achievement goals for all students of 80 percent of students scoring proficient or better on all state assessments and a state Performance Index of 100 or better. The interim (annual) progress targets for both measures are established by dividing the difference between the long-term goal and the baseline by 10 and increasing the prior year's benchmark by that amount to provide for consistent annual increases.*
    - ii. **Student subgroup achievement:** *The long-term goal for each of the other nine federally required subgroups was set to reduce by 50 percent the gap between the baseline and 100 percent by the end of the 2025-2026 school year.*
    - iii. **All students graduation:** The long-term state-level graduation goals for Ohio are a four-year cohort graduation rate of 93 percent or better and a five-year cohort graduation rate of 95 percent or better.
    - iv. **Student subgroup graduation:** The long-term state-level graduation goals are set to cut the gap between the baseline and 100 percent in half by the end of the 2025-2026 school year (using a similar methodology as described above for the academic achievement measures). In one case (Asian), the percentage of the class of 2014 graduating was such that it would have had a long-term goal higher than 95 percent by cutting the gap in half. For this subgroup, a long-term goal of 95 percent was established. The interim targets were set by dividing the difference in the long-term goal and the baseline by 10 to provide for consistent annual increases.
- 2) **Evidence-Based Strategies:** Make sure to identify at least one evidence-based strategy that clearly meets the requirements for a Level 1, 2, or 3 strategy under ESSA. Explain why the strategy meets the requirements and how you know it meets requirements.

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- 3) **Sustainable:** A successful application demonstrates how improvement efforts can continue after the term of the grant is over. **Consider talking about how strategies and action steps build capacity in the short, intermediate AND long term.** Avoid including activities with costs that continue beyond the term of the grant without an explanation of the source of funds. Identify partnerships that will help sustain improvement during and after the grant.
- 4) **Readability:** Make sure reviewers can easily find or identify all required elements of the grant proposal. Reviewers should be able to see the proposal met the required elements.
- 5) **Complete Application:** Make sure to complete all required sections.