

Request for Applications: Libraries Accelerating Learning

The purpose of this Request for Applications (RFA) is to solicit proposals from Ohio public library systems to receive grant funds to address learning disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This RFA is a program-specific guide that outlines the Ohio Department of Education's purpose, goal, eligibility and general guidelines in offering this grant program and information needed to complete an application for the opportunity.

Background

[Data from the 2021-2022 school year](#) show the negative impact the pandemic had on student learning in Ohio. The pandemic more significantly affected learning for Ohio's historically underserved students and decreases were more marked for students in districts that primarily used a remote or hybrid education delivery model.

Ohio is taking a multifaceted approach, as evidenced by [Future Forward Ohio](#), to accelerate learning for students who have been impacted by the events of the past few years. The Ohio Department of Education is utilizing federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to further the strategies of Future Forward Ohio: (1) Overcoming obstacles to learning; (2) Accelerating learning; and (3) Preparing students for future success. These strategies have the potential to decrease the academic impact of lost instructional time due to the pandemic and increase opportunities for Ohio's students.

Libraries can play a critical role in accelerating learning. Public libraries can act as "partners to enhance the learning systems across a community."¹ Building on the success of traditional library reading programs, libraries can afford students additional opportunities for experiential and hands-on learning. For example, according to the Urban Library Council, "Public libraries are emerging as key leaders in closing the summer opportunity gap by moving beyond traditional summer reading to more integrated, intentional summer learning programs that focus on a variety of academic and developmental areas."

Public libraries can support student academic achievement in a variety of ways, such as²:

- Accelerating learning;
- Keeping students engaged when schools are closed;
- Helping schools and community organizations provide support to those who need it most;
- Fostering a love of reading and learning;
- Providing students with exposure to career and college opportunities; and
- Helping families overcome technology challenges and ensuring students have access to online learning platforms

The Department will award up to \$5 million to support library programming designed to accelerate learning for students and help students recover from the impact of lost instructional time due to the pandemic, with a focus on improving literacy.

¹ Association for Library Service to Children. 2021. Learning Beyond: 21st Century Summer and Out of School Time Programs for Youth.

² Institution of Education Sciences. 2009-2012. Structuring Out of School Time to Improve Academic Achievement.

Purpose

The Department invites Ohio's public library systems to express interest in receiving American Rescue Plan ESSER funding to help accelerate learning between the time of award and Sept. 30, 2024. Applicants may serve students entering prekindergarten through 12th grade in activities designed to address learning loss and accelerate learning. The library funding is meant to complement other programs that are part of [Future Forward Ohio](#), including the [Summer Learning and Afterschool Opportunities](#) grant, [Regional Education Partnerships](#) grant, and [Statewide Mathematics and Literacy Tutoring](#) grant. Applicants may serve students through similar types of programming (for example, summer learning, after-school learning), particularly if there are not funded program in their regions or if they can demonstrate the programs are not being offered in sufficient scale. While the primary goal is to address learning loss and accelerate learning, *with a focus on literacy*, applicants may offer programming that embeds learning alongside other needs and interests to increase engagement. Programming that also addresses preparing students for future success is encouraged. Please note that funds are provided on a reimbursement basis. Responses should be received by Sept. 23, 2022, at 5 p.m. The Department will announce grantees shortly thereafter.

Design Requirements

This grant opportunity will fund effective programs to support students in overcoming learning disruptions caused by the pandemic, with a focus on supporting literacy. Programs that also prepare students for future success will receive preference, but it is not a requirement. Preparing students for future success is defined as college and career awareness and/or preparing students for their nearest transition, such as preschool to kindergarten or elementary to middle school.

Programs through public libraries may include, but are not limited to:

Expanded Learning Opportunities

- [“Acceleration academies”](#);
- Creating programs to support families in accelerating learning for their students;
- Organizing student enrichment programs;
- Offering after-school and/or summer enrichment.

Literacy Programs

- Strengthening summer and schoolyear reading programs;
- Offering programs specifically designed to support student transitions (preK to kindergarten, elementary to middle, middle to high school, high school to college).

21st Century Skills Related to STEM/STEAM Programs

- Providing interest-driven and project-based learning opportunities that require literacy, problem-solving and strategic and/or mathematical reasoning;
- Building on schoolyear learning with access to experiential learning;
- Developing critical-thinking skills related to digital literacy, collaboration, creativity, communication and growth mindset;
- Pairing STEM/STEAM experiences with reading.

To ensure an effective program, grant applications should prioritize meeting **design requirements**. These include:

- Overall Program: A thoughtfully designed program that has a clear plan and considers how to best engage students and families.
- Strategy for Accelerating Learning in Literacy: A strategy for accelerating learning in literacy that is likely to be effective. There should be a clear rationale for selection of the strategy.
- *(Optional)* Preparing Students for Future Success: A strategy for preparing students for future success that is likely to be effective. There should be a clear rationale for selection of the strategy.
- Needs of the Community: A demonstrated knowledge of community needs (with at least one documented source such as a stakeholder meeting or library patron survey or Ohio School Report Cards) and a clear connection between those needs and the program design.
- Capacity and Readiness of Library System: Program likely to succeed due to library capacity and previous programming experiences.
- Student Needs: Program considers at least one population that has been most impacted by the pandemic (for example, low-income students, students with limited access to broadband, students with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and foster youth) and has designed the programming to address the need of that population.
- Program Outcomes: A commitment to ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the program. All programs should develop specific outcome goals and provide a way of measuring the extent to which the program achieves results.
- Timeline: There is a realistic timeline for accomplish the program that includes relevant monthly milestones.
- Budget: There is a plan to use funds responsibly in a way likely to ensure outcomes for students.

Eligibility

- Ohio's public library systems are eligible to apply for these funds.
- Collaboration between Ohio's public library systems is permitted. One system must serve as the fiscal agent.
- To receive a grant, an applicant must have a valid UEI and System for Award Management (SAM) registration. SAM is an official website of the U.S. government found at <https://www.sam.gov/>.
- The applicant also will need an IRN (Information Retrieval Number) from the Department in order to access funds. Libraries without an IRN may apply for one after announcement of award.

Awards

- Up to \$5 million will be awarded. We expect requests will vary based on the number of students anticipated to be served and the majority of requests will be within the range of \$25,000 to \$250,000.
- If an applicant believes circumstances merit additional funding, present the rationale in the application and make the desired request (for example, collaborative grant, scale of program).

- Budget adjustment may be required prior to making an award.
- Final budget approval will be completed after the notice of grant award to ensure planned expenditures are reasonable and necessary and allowable with these federal funds.
- Expenditures must occur prior to Sept. 30, 2024.
- This is a reimbursement program; organizations may request funds monthly after activities are completed.
- Awardees will be expected to submit reimbursements no less than every three months. Requests will be submitted via the Department's Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Plan (CCIP), and documentation must be provided.

Eligible Expenses

As the funding for this program comes from the federal ARP ESSER funds, funds should be used to address the effects of lost instructional time due to COVID-19, and meet the student wellness and academic needs of students. These funds are subject to federal Uniform Guidance, which in general requires that grant expenses are reasonable, allocable and necessary to accomplish the goals of the federal program. Gifts, souvenirs, door prizes, etc., are not permitted. Please see “Appendix: Grant Management—Grant Assurances” for additional guidance.

Additional Grant Requirements

- Grantees will be required to submit interim and final grant activities reports to the program office. The Department reserves the right to request revisions for clarity or ask for additional information as necessary.
- Grantees will be required to participate in state evaluation activities.
- Grantees may be asked to participate in various forms of technical assistance.

Selection Process and Criteria

All applications will receive a technical review to ensure they have responded to required grant components. Applications that meet the technical review will receive a quality review by two independent reviewers who are Department staff. The highest-scoring applicants that meet a minimum threshold as determined by the Department will be awarded.

Applicants will be scored on Design Requirements on a rubric as follows:

1	No to little evidence
2	Some evidence; there is some information provided that suggests the application meets this expectation.
3	Convincing evidence; the information provided suggests the application meets this expectation.
4	Strong evidence; the information provided suggests the application has thoroughly met this expectation.

Some items in the Application Narrative will be weighted. See below for points available per each section of the application.

Organizational Information	Unscored
CCIP Account	Unscored
Overall Program	Double-weighted; up to 8 points
Strategy to Accelerate Learning in Literacy	Double-weighted; up to 8 points
Preparing Students for Future Success	Up to 4 points
Needs of the Community	Up to 4 points
Capacity and Readiness of Library System	Up to 4 points
Student Needs	Up to 4 points
Students Served	Unscored
Proposed Outcomes	Double-weighted; up to 8 points
Timeline	Up to 4 points
Budget Request	Unscored
Budget Detail	Up to 4 points

Application:

To receive full consideration, submit an application by 5 p.m. on Sept. 23, 2022. To submit an application, email acceleratinglearning@education.ohio.gov with: (1) a complete narrative (see guidance below under “Application Narrative”); (2) the budget template (see guidance below under “Budget Template”).

Application Narrative:

Please use the chart below. Bullet format is welcome. There is no page limit.

Organizational Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of Lead/Fiscal Agent • Primary Contact • Contact Information (Phone/Email) • Entity DUNS number <p>If a collaborative grant proposal, include the names of partnering library systems and their primary contacts.</p>
CCIP Account	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Our organization can access CCIP.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Our organization currently cannot access CCIP but understands that establishing a CCIP account in a timely fashion is essential for reimbursement. <i>To determine whether the organization has access to the Department’s CCIP, visit https://ccip.ode.state.oh.us, hover over “search” and click on</i></p>

	<p><i>“Organizations.” Search for the organization by typing the organization name OR organization IRN in the appropriate field and search.</i></p>								
Overall Program	<p>Describe the programming that will be offered and provide sufficient detail to understand the program. Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What will be offered; • When the programming will be offered; • How students/families will learn about the program; • How student/family engagement will be maintained. 								
Strategy to Accelerate Learning in Literacy	<p>Describe how the program will accelerate learning in literacy and why the program is likely to be effective. Indicate the key strategies that will be used to increase student outcomes and provide a brief rationale for the selected strategies/activities/services. Innovation is encouraged, as is use of known best practices. Applicants must be able to explain how and why a particular strategy is likely to be effective. Cited sources are welcome, including Ohio’s Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement, but not required.</p>								
Preparing Students for Future Success	<p><i>(Not required; provides preference points.)</i> If applicable, describe how the program will prepare students for future success through career and college connections and/or preparation for upcoming transitions (for example, preK to kindergarten, middle school to high school). Explain the rationale for the approach taken.</p>								
Needs of the Community	<p>Discuss the needs of the community that have informed the program design. This may include utilizing state resources such as Data Insights and school report cards; conversations with students, families, schools and community stakeholders are encouraged.</p>								
Capacity and Readiness of Library	<p>Discuss factors that make the library prepared to implement its proposed plan. Describe the library’s focus on supporting student learning to date and/or the relationship with potential schools/students being served. List key personnel who will provide leadership for the programming and facilitate its success.</p>								
Student Needs	<p>While activities may be open to all students, indicate how activities have been designed to meet the unique needs of students most impacted by the pandemic. These students could include the following populations: low-income students, students with limited access to broadband, students with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and foster youth.</p>								
Students Served	<p>Indicate the estimated number of students the program intends to serve.</p>								
Proposed Outcomes	<p>Indicate outcomes that will be measured and the targets that will be set. Describe the plan for tracking those outcomes.</p>								
Timeline	<p>Provide a high-level timeline with anticipated monthly milestones.</p>								
Budget Request	<p>Provide the overall budget request. If requesting more than the suggested threshold, please explain why.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">2022</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2023</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2024</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total request</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	2022		2023		2024		Total request	
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Budget Detail	<p>Please attach the required spreadsheet. (See “Budget Spreadsheet” on website.)</p> <p>In the Budget Detail section of this narrative, provide enough detail to understand how the funds support the strategies and underlying assumption(s) and how the amount was calculated. Use a chart like the one below or any format of preference.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 30%;"></th> <th style="width: 35%; text-align: center;">Cost Description (for example, staff time for one-on-one workshops)</th> <th style="width: 35%; text-align: center;">Assumption (baseline for cost estimate; for example, salary x hours; cost x number of items)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Salaries + Benefits</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Purchased Services</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Supplies</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Capital Outlay + Replacement</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Cost Description (for example, staff time for one-on-one workshops)	Assumption (baseline for cost estimate; for example, salary x hours; cost x number of items)	Salaries + Benefits			Purchased Services			Supplies			Capital Outlay + Replacement			Other		
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Send questions regarding this opportunity to acceleratinglearning@education.ohio.gov.

Answers, along with a copy of these guidelines and other information, will be posted publicly on [the Departments website](#).

Appendix: Grant Management—Grant Assurances

Conflicts of Interest

Grantees must avoid conflicts of interest when entering contracts for equipment and services. State law regarding conflicts of interest is strict. It is the responsibility of the grantee to be in compliance with the [Ohio Ethics Law, ORC Chapter 102](#), ORC 3314.03 regarding conflicts of interest.

Misuse of Funds and Grant Termination

The Department may terminate the grant award immediately if it is determined the grantee staff or any individuals connected with the credential program have used grant funds for personal gain, performed criminal activities or broken any of the agreed-upon assurances. If it is determined that any grant funds have been misused, the Department reserves the right to request the grantee return the full amount of awarded funds.

Equipment Inventory

Federal requirements specify that all equipment purchased under this grant must be inventoried. Equipment is any tangible, nonexpendable property having a useful life of more than one year. The subgrantee's inventory control policies and procedures should be aligned to the Auditor of State bulletins and made available upon request by the Department.

Grantees must maintain an inventory of equipment purchased with grant funds until disposition takes place. The inventory of records must include the following:

1. Description of the item including:
 - a. A serial number or other identification number;
 - b. Funding source of the item (name of funding title/grant);
 - c. Name of holder title;
 - d. Acquisition date;
 - e. Acquisition cost;
 - f. Percentage of state participation in the cost of the item;
 - g. Location of the item;
 - h. Use and condition of the item; and
 - i. Any ultimate disposition data including date of disposal and the sale price of the item.
2. An inventory control system and equipment maintenance procedures.
3. An ability to maintain equipment records for three years following submission of the final grant activities report. If there is an audit exception, the subgrantee must keep the records until all litigation, claims or audit findings have been resolved and final action is taken.