

## **Innovation Fund: Information for Districts**

### **Background**

As a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), \$650 million has been set aside in the Innovation Fund to be administered by the U.S. Department of Education (ED). Grant funds will be available for direct release to local districts or to partnerships between nonprofit organizations and local districts or consortia of schools, to support practices that close the achievement gap or significantly improve educational outcomes. Specifically, the grants are intended as “academic achievement awards” to support scale-up and documentation of best practices. District and school partnerships may include those with philanthropies, the private sector, or a combination. ED will announce its formal application process for disbursing the funds. The announcement is expected soon, but no specific dates have been provided.

### **Eligibility**

Applicants need to have evidence that either they have, or their nonprofit partner has, demonstrated success with closing the achievement gap, increased achievement to meet state standards, and improved other areas such as graduation rates or the placement of highly qualified teachers. Applicants must also have established partnerships with the private sector (which can include philanthropies) to provide matching funds to help bring the results to scale. Please consult the legal language on page 2 on this point.

### **Ideas for Innovation Fund Grants**

Learning Point Associates is a nonprofit organization with a proven track record of working with schools and districts to build capacity for lasting change. If you believe your district or a school consortium would be eligible under this program, we encourage you to consider some of the following strategies as grounds for your Innovation Fund application:

- Implementing innovative approaches at the district and school level for data use and interpretation to inform instruction
- Implementing innovative practices in staffing and compensation at the district and school level
- Implementing high-quality expanded learning opportunities, in partnership with community-based organizations, to engage high-need students in a range of academic and youth development activities
- Partnering with private-sector innovation experts to improve services to high-need populations

For more information, visit [our website](#).

If you would like further information on the work of Learning Point Associates, please contact Jessica Johnson by phone (630-649-6512) or e-mail ([jessica.johnson@learningpt.org](mailto:jessica.johnson@learningpt.org)).

# Legal Language From the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

## SEC. 14007. INNOVATION FUND.

### (a) In General.

(1) Eligible entities. For the purposes of this section, the term “eligible entity” means—

(A) a local educational agency; or

(B) a partnership between a nonprofit organization and—

(i) one or more local educational agencies; or

(ii) a consortium of schools.

(2) Program established. From the total amount reserved under section 14001(c), the Secretary may reserve up to \$650,000,000 to establish an Innovation Fund, which shall consist of academic achievement awards that recognize eligible entities that meet the requirements described in subsection (b).

(3) Basis for awards. The Secretary shall make awards to eligible entities that have made significant gains in closing the achievement gap as described in subsection (b)(1)—

(A) to allow such eligible entities to expand their work and serve as models for best practices;

(B) to allow such eligible entities to work in partnership with the private sector and the philanthropic community; and

(C) to identify and document best practices that can be shared, and taken to scale based on demonstrated success.

(b) Eligibility. To be eligible for such an award, an eligible entity shall—

(1) have significantly closed the achievement gaps between groups of students described in section 1111(b)(2) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(2));

(2) have exceeded the State’s annual measurable objectives consistent with such section 1111(b)(2) for 2 or more consecutive years or have demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement for all groups of students described in such section through another measure, such as measures described in section 1111(c)(2) of the ESEA;

(3) have made significant improvement in other areas, such as graduation rates or increased recruitment and placement of high-quality teachers and school leaders, as demonstrated with meaningful data; and

(4) demonstrate that they have established partnerships with the private sector, which may include philanthropic organizations, and that the private sector will provide matching funds in order to help bring results to scale.

(c) Special Rule. In the case of an eligible entity that includes a nonprofit organization, the eligible entity shall be considered to have met the eligibility requirements of paragraphs (1), (2), (3) of subsection (b) if such nonprofit organization has a record of meeting such requirements.