Opportunity To Learn Project

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

UPDATED AS OF SEPTEMBER 28, 2026

This document summarizes and responds to commonly asked and submitted questions about the Opportunity to Learn Project. It may be updated periodically as necessary.

Indiana Lifelong Learning Projects encourages all interested applicants to carefully review the **Request for Proposals (RFP)** and these **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)** when considering submitting a planning grant request or competitive grant proposal.

Getting Started and General Questions

Are there specific formats to follow for planning grant requests and competitive grant proposals?

Yes. Each must be submitted using the planning grant request form and the competitive grant proposal form via the online portal, Submittable, which may be accessed at **indianalifelonglearningprojects.org**. Prior to establishing an account on the online portal, please review the **Submittable Guide**, which includes instructions and helpful set-up information.

Are there page limits?

A word count limit is provided for applicable fields, and, for the competitive grant proposal, there is a page limit to the attachments that may be included. Please see the RFP for additional details.

May applicants use artificial intelligence (AI) in the preparation of planning grant requests and competitive grant proposals?

Yes. However, ILLP expects that applicants and their consultants, if any, will be the primary authors of their planning grant requests and competitive grant proposals and are responsible for substantial content development.

Eligibility

Who is eligible to participate in the Opportunity to Learn Project?

Please refer to the eligibility criteria on page 7 of the RFP for a complete description of eligible applicants.

Are there types of schools that are ineligible?

Only public school corporations, charter schools, and charter networks meeting the eligibility criteria on page 7 of the RFP are eligible. School corporations or schools not meeting these criteria, including private schools, state-run schools, non-public schools, virtual schools, for-profit schools, schools without the proper tax-exempt status, and homeschool cooperatives are not eligible to participate in the Opportunity to Learn Project.

May an applicant affiliated with multiple schools submit proposals on behalf of or from each of its schools?

No. Each school corporation or charter network, the organization that oversees the affiliated schools, should submit one planning grant request and one competitive grant proposal for its eligible affiliated schools. If a grant is awarded, the applicant, the organization that oversees the affiliated schools, will be the grantee and will be responsible for grant oversight and management.

If a school is affiliated with one or more other schools, can it choose to apply for a grant independently?

No. Schools that are affiliated together for governance or operating purposes (e.g., school corporations and charter school networks) will be viewed as single applicants and should complete one planning grant request and one competitive grant proposal.

If a charter network has schools that are outside of the geographic scope of the Opportunity to Learn Project (for example, in Marion County), may it include those schools in its proposed programs?

The aim of the Opportunity to Learn Project is to help reduce the non-academic barriers that hinder K-12 students' academic success across Indiana, outside of Marion County. Any benefit to students outside of this geography must be merely incidental. For example, if a charter network engages in professional development to help identify mental health risks among its students, it may invite teachers from its schools that are outside of the geographic scope of the Opportunity to Learn Project (i.e., Marion County) to participate.

If an applicant serves students outside of K-12 – for example, pre-kindergarten students or adult learners – or if it serves students virtually, may it include those students in its pupil enrollment for purposes of determining the maximum amount of a planning grant request or competitive grant proposal?

No. The calculation of the K-12 pupil enrollment excludes, if applicable, students who were enrolled in pre-K or post-12 programs and students who were enrolled in virtual or online schools.

May a community-based organization apply for a grant through the Opportunity to Learn Project?

No. The Opportunity to Learn Project is limited to the eligible applicants described on page 7 of the RFP. Many community-based organizations contribute meaningfully to the reduction of various non-academic barriers in their communities ILLP encourages eligible applicants to explore existing programs or activities addressing non-academic barriers in their

community and to consider whether it would enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of their proposed programs to partner with a community-based organization as a collaborating organization.

Are new schools that are planning to open for the 2026-27 school year eligible for participation?

No. To be eligible to participate in the Opportunity to Learn Project, schools must have been open and serving students during the 2025-26 school year. If a new school is part of a school corporation or charter network, its expected enrollment should not be considered when determining the requested grant amount, but the new school may benefit from and be considered in the plans for the programs proposed by its school corporation or charter network.

Are joint proposals allowed?

No. ILLP will not accept joint proposals for funding through the Opportunity to Learn Project. Applicants are, however, invited to describe collaborating organizations that will be involved in their proposed programs, which may include other eligible school corporations, charter schools, or organizations as described on page 11 of the RFP.

Can an affiliated foundation of a school corporation (i.e. a foundation that exists to support the school corporation) request a grant on behalf of an eligible school corporation or charter school?

No. Please see page 7 of the RFP for complete eligibility requirements. Grants will not be made to affiliated foundations or other organizations. This does not preclude applicants from engaging affiliated foundations to support their efforts in various ways, such as through helping to prepare proposals or grant reports.

*For additional information about eligibility, please refer to **page 7 of the RFP**.*

Determining K-12 Pupil Enrollment

How is K-12 pupil enrollment calculated for purposes of determining the maximum amount of a planning or competitive grant for which an applicant is eligible to apply?

A letter indicating the K-12 pupil enrollment and maximum planning and competitive grant request amounts has been sent to each eligible applicant's most senior organizational leader. For purposes of the Opportunity to Learn Project, the K-12 pupil enrollment is the K-12 pupil enrollment for the school corporation, charter school, or charter network in Fall 2025, as publicly disclosed on the IDOE Data Center & Reports website under "Attendance & Enrollment." Any enrollment for pre-kindergarten, Grade 12+/adult, and any virtual schools (as identified on IDOE's Corporation Enrollment by Grade Level or School Enrollment by Grade Level reports) should be excluded. For purposes of this calculation, a charter network shall use the aggregate K-12 pupil enrollment of its eligible affiliated schools outside of Marion County.

If an applicant's enrollment has increased, may it apply for a larger grant than it would otherwise qualify for based on its 2025-26 enrollment?

No. To provide consistency and fairness, the maximum planning and competitive grant requests will be based on the K-12 pupil enrollment in the applicant's school(s) in Fall 2025, as publicly disclosed on the IDOE Data Center & Reports website under "Attendance & Enrollment," as further described in the RFP.

If an applicant's school network includes schools located inside Marion County, may students from those schools be counted when determining the maximum amount of a planning grant request or competitive grant proposal?

No. A letter indicating the K-12 pupil enrollment and maximum planning and competitive grant request amounts has been sent to each eligible applicant's most senior organizational leader. When determining the maximum amount of a planning grant request or competitive grant proposal, ILLP only included the K-12 pupil enrollment in the applicant's schools that are physically located in Indiana, outside of Marion County.

*For additional information about determining K-12 Pupil Enrollment, please refer to **page 8 of the RFP**.*

Planning Grant

May I still submit a planning grant request even though the deadline has passed? (added 09/28/26)

Yes. ILLP is still accepting planning grant requests and will review requests submitted after the deadline on a rolling basis until November 16, 2026. Planning grants similarly will be awarded on a rolling basis until December 31, 2026. Competitive grant proposals are due no later than 5:00 p.m. ET on Thursday, March 11, 2027.

Will every applicant receive a planning grant?

While ILLP reserves the right to decline a planning grant request, ILLP expects to fund every eligible applicant that fulfills the requirements of a planning grant request.

How may an applicant use planning grant funds?

Planning grant funds may be used to cover a variety of planning activities and resulting expenses related to the aim of the Opportunity to Learn Project, such as research regarding promising practices, consultants, staff time, data analysis, conferences and seminars, travel to gather information and ideas, and preparation of a competitive grant proposal.

If an applicant does not spend all of its planning grant funds, may those funds be used for other purposes?

No. Planning grant funds may be used for a period of up to one year and must be used for planning activities related to the Opportunity to Learn Project. If, after the grant period expires, there are unspent planning grant funds, the applicant should follow the related procedures outlined in their planning grant agreement.

Is submission of a planning grant request required if an applicant intends to submit a competitive grant proposal?

No. An applicant is not required to receive a planning grant in order to submit a competitive grant proposal. However, ILLP believes that thoughtful planning can lead to stronger competitive grant proposals and more successful implementation efforts.

Does ILLP require or favor the use of consultants in planning?

No. Applicants are encouraged to determine whether it would benefit them to engage consultants and, if applicable, which consultants they will engage. ILLP does not endorse any particular consultant, nor does it require the use of consultants.

What can I expect after I submit my planning grant request?

ILLP will make a planning grant determination and, will notify the most senior organizational leader and the project contact identified by the applicant in the online portal. ILLP will also send a planning grant agreement via DocuSign to the signatory indicated on the planning grant request form submitted by the applicant. For approved planning grant requests, ILLP expects to distribute funds by October 22, 2026.

*For additional information about planning grants, please refer to **pages 8-9 of the RFP**.*

If an applicant receives a planning grant, are they required to submit a competitive grant proposal? (added 08/19/26)

No. An applicant that is awarded a planning grant is encouraged, but not required, to submit a competitive grant proposal.

How much detail should an applicant include in a planning grant submission? For example, if an applicant hires a consultant, should the applicant include the name and dates of engagement in their planning grant request? (added 08/19/26)

As described on pages 8-9 of the RFP, planning grant requests are expected to provide brief summaries of the currently known non-academic barriers to academic success an applicant's students may experience and of the planning activities the applicant might undertake. An applicant does not need to include specific details, such as particular consultants or dates associated with planning activities; however, an applicant may include such information if the applicant determines that the information may strengthen the applicant's planning grant request.

May an applicant submit a competitive grant proposal if the applicant has not spent an entire planning grant award? (added 08/19/26)

Yes. Planning grant funds may be used for a period of up to one year, which extends past the timeline for submitting a competitive grant proposal.

Can planning grants be used to pilot strategies or initiatives to help inform the programs proposed in a competitive grant proposal? (added 08/19/26)

Planning grant funds may be used to support a variety of planning activities and related expenses associated with preparing a competitive grant proposal that advances the aim of the Opportunity to Learn Project. Applicants interested in exploring a particular program are encouraged to consider whether consulting with experts, other schools, or community-based organizations that have implemented similar strategies could strengthen their planning process and inform the

programs proposed in a competitive grant proposal. Given the timeline for submitting competitive grant proposals, in-depth or extended pilot efforts may be difficult to complete during the planning phase; however, applicants may determine that it is feasible to test strategies on a more condensed timeline. Such tests are allowable planning activities.

Competitive Grant

Will every applicant receive a competitive grant?

No. This is a competitive grant opportunity and ILLP will only fund compelling proposals that clearly align with the aim of the Opportunity to Learn Project, are grounded in evidence-based strategies, and are demonstrably feasible. While not all applicants will be funded, ILLP expects to make awards to a significant number of eligible applicants. Please see page 13 of the RFP for additional information.

Are applicants permitted to submit more than one competitive grant proposal?

No. Each eligible applicant is invited to submit one competitive grant proposal. A competitive grant proposal may, however, include multiple programs. Each proposed program must address the aim of the Opportunity to Learn Project and be designed to reduce one or more non-academic barrier(s).

In preparing a competitive grant proposal, must an applicant only pursue the activities or address the non-academic barriers discussed in its planning grant request?

The summaries provided in the planning grant request do not limit the planning activities an applicant may undertake or the programs an applicant may propose in its competitive grant proposal. ILLP expects that the brief summaries of currently known non-academic barriers and planning activities an applicant might undertake set forth in the applicant's planning grant request may be changed by the planning process.

If an applicant would have been eligible for a planning grant but failed to request one by the deadline, may it still submit a competitive grant proposal?

Yes. Any applicant meeting the eligibility requirements on page 7 of the RFP may submit a competitive grant proposal, regardless of whether the applicant submitted a planning grant request.

May applicants propose programs that serve children who are not currently enrolled in grades K-12 in the applicant's schools (e.g. pre-K students or adult learners)?

The Opportunity to Learn Project is designed to support programs that serve K-12 students. However, applicants are not required to exclude a population that has merely an incidental benefit from a proposed program. For example, pre-K students may participate in a school-wide transportation initiative alongside older children.

Does a school corporation or charter network have to propose programs benefiting each of its affiliated schools or all students?

No. Based on the specific non-academic barriers it seeks to address, an applicant may determine which schools, student populations, and activities to target through its proposed programs.

May different programs be proposed for different schools that are part of a school corporation or charter network?

Yes. Based on the specific non-academic barriers it seeks to address, an applicant may determine which schools, student populations, and activities to target through its proposed programs.

How does ILLP define academic success?

ILLP defines academic success as students gaining the knowledge and skills required to advance toward their educational and career goals. ILLP recognizes that academic success may vary by student, but considers the following to be important benchmarks in evaluating whether academic success has been achieved: acquiring foundational skills such as math, literacy, and critical thinking, completing courses in a timely manner and graduating from high school, earning satisfactory grades and/or performing well on standardized assessments, and gaining entry into a college or career pathway of the student's choosing.

What makes a barrier "non-academic"?

Non-academic barriers refer to factors outside of an academic or instructional context that detract from learning. Several examples of non-academic factors, including the lack of transportation, mental health challenges, and the lack of out-of-school time activities and care, are outlined in the RFP on pages 5-6.

May an applicant address non-academic barriers that are not specifically outlined in the RFP?

Yes. Each applicant should consider the non-academic barriers its students may experience. These may include the example non-academic barriers outlined in the RFP and/or others specific to the applicant's student population.

Should an applicant seek collaborations with other organizations to implement proposed programs?

Collaboration is not required, but ILLP encourages applicants to consider whether it would enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of their proposed programs to partner with a collaborating organization which may be local, regional or national organizations and might include program or service providers, community foundations, United Ways, social service organizations, faith-based organizations or other eligible school corporations, charter schools or charter networks. If an applicant identifies other eligible school corporations, charter schools, or charter networks as collaborating organizations, those school corporations, charter schools, or charter networks are still eligible to submit their own competitive grant proposal to initiate, enhance, or expand programs to address non-academic barriers experienced by their students. Applicants should clearly describe the anticipated contributions or roles of any collaborating organizations and include expenses for any related activities in the applicant's budget.

If I am collaborating with another organization, do I have to include a letter of intent from that organization as part of the application process?

Yes, an applicant must provide a detailed letter of intent from each collaborating organization, if any, that will play a significant role in carrying out the proposed programs confirming the organization's willingness and capacity to undertake such activities and summarizing the expenses that the organization will incur by conducting such activities.

Is the Opportunity to Learn Project only for new programs, or could the grant support a program already underway?

Applicants may propose initiating new programs or enhancing or expanding existing ones. Grant funds should not merely replace other sources of funding for an existing program but rather should enhance or expand the program.

What is an acceptable evidence-based program or project?

For purposes of the Opportunity to Learn Project, programs will be considered evidence-based if they are drawn from convincing research or related documentation that shows the program is feasible to implement in a similar setting and achieves the desired outcomes. For example, among other things, an evidence-based program might be documented through formal evaluation by an independent researcher, shown through positive results achieved by a neighboring school corporation, or observed through the outcomes of a pilot initiative undertaken by the applicant. Applicants should ensure that the evidence supports the proposed program and does not simply describe the nature of the non-academic barrier or its connection to academic success.

Are applicants expected to engage an external evaluator?

No. Applicants may engage external evaluators but are not required to do so. It is important that applicants describe a strong plan with respect to how they will identify performance indicators, measure progress toward anticipated outcomes, and evaluate the overall success of proposed programs.

If a program is shorter in duration than the maximum three-year grant period, should an applicant propose a shorter grant period?

Yes. Applicants should indicate the timeline for each proposed program, up to a maximum of three years.

Will ILLP only fund a set number of competitive grant proposals?

No. There is not a specific number of competitive grant proposals that ILLP intends to fund, and proposals may be funded up to the competitive grant limit of $373M. While not all applicants will be funded, ILLP expects to make awards to a significant number of eligible applicants.

If ILLP declines to fund one or more of an applicant's proposed programs, will the entire proposal be declined?

ILLP may fund none, some, or all programs proposed in a competitive grant proposal. If ILLP awards partial funding, ILLP staff will coordinate with the applicant during the grant agreement process to ensure that implementation of the funded programs is feasible at the reduced funding amount.

*For additional information about competitive grants, please refer to **pages 10-16 of the RFP**.*

What types of activities may an applicant propose to undertake to address a lack of access to out-of-school time care and programming? Would after-school tutoring be an acceptable strategy to include in a competitive grant proposal? (added 08/19/26)

An applicant seeking to address a lack of access to out-of-school time care may propose a variety of effective before- or after-school programming activities. Several examples of related programs applicants might propose are described on page 12 of the RFP. These examples are not an exhaustive list of the programs that may be proposed. Addressing an identified non-academic barrier might also enhance academic supports. For example, a school seeking to improve access to out-of-school time programming might propose activities that include the implementation of after-school tutoring.

May an applicant include a program to expand public school preschool offerings in its competitive grant proposal? (added 08/19/26)

No. The Opportunity to Learn Project is designed to support programs that serve K-12 students. Applicants are not required to exclude a population that receives merely an incidental benefit from a proposed program, but populations outside of K-12 students should not be the intended beneficiaries of a proposed program.

Budget

How can an applicant confirm that it has correctly calculated the maximum planning and competitive grant amounts for which it may apply?

A letter indicating the K-12 pupil enrollment and maximum planning and competitive grant amounts has been sent to each eligible applicant's most senior organizational leader. Additionally, the calculations for maximum planning and competitive grant amounts are described in the RFP at pages 8 and 12. If you have questions, please contact ILLP by sending an email to **info@indianalifelonglearningprojects.org**.

May an applicant allocate funds to a collaborating organization?

Yes. Grant funds should be planned and allocated to cover the related expenses of both the applicant and its collaborating organizations, if any. Any such expenses should be detailed in the budget that is submitted with the competitive grant proposal, as described on pages 15-16 of the RFP.

May applicants propose a capital project?

Yes. Applicants may propose capital projects, including facility construction or renovation, only if such projects meaningfully enhance the compelling nature of a proposed program and its furtherance of the aim of the Opportunity to Learn Project. Capital projects that exceed 50% of the total project budget must present an especially compelling description of how the project will address non-academic barriers. Applicants proposing capital projects must describe, among other things, how the organization plans to sustain the ongoing expenses associated with maintaining the capital project beyond the grant period.

*For additional information about budgets, please refer to **pages 15-16 of the RFP**.*

Proposal Evaluation and Grant Administration

What can I expect after submission of a competitive grant proposal?

ILLP will undertake a robust adjudication process and will announce competitive grant awards in late 2027.

Will ILLP provide a scoring rubric for evaluating grant proposals to applicants?

No. However, a summary of the factors that ILLP will consider in evaluating the proposals is provided at page 13 of the RFP.

Will funding be disbursed on a reimbursement basis?

No. Funding will be disbursed via one payment in due course after a grant agreement is signed by both the grantee and ILLP.

What data will applicants be required to track and report during the grant period?

Applicants will be required to provide financial and activity reports at regular intervals during the grant period.

What other requirements will grantees have to fulfill?

ILLP seeks to learn more from Opportunity to Learn Project grantees and for grantees to learn from one another. From time to time throughout the grant period, grantees may be invited to participate in convenings or discussions with other grantees or experts. Grantees will be expected to actively participate in these opportunities whenever possible.

More Information

What resources are available to help me?

ILLP has assembled a number of resources to assist in the planning and proposal writing process. These resources are available under “Additional Resources” at **indianalifelonglearningprojects.org**.

Where can applicants ask clarifying questions about the Opportunity to Learn Project? (added 09/28/26)

Please submit questions to **info@indianalifelonglearningprojects.org** and visit the Opportunity to Learn Project webpage at **indianalifelonglearningprojects.org** to stay up to date about information related to the Opportunity to Learn Project.