



Linewize
by Qoria



K-12 Funding: How to Create a Winning Grant Application

In this article, we'll guide you through the grant application process, provide essential tips for developing competitive applications, and share valuable resources.

Every year, schools miss out on crucial funding due to complex requirements, lengthy paperwork, and limited resources.

Many applications are left unfinished, leaving much-needed funds untouched. In fact, \$1.3 billion in ESSER funds alone went unused when the legislation expired this September. Your school shouldn't have to leave dollars behind because of complicated criteria or lack of grant guidance and support.

What Types of K-12 Grants Are Available?

The most common types of K-12 grants are Competitive, Formula, and Private.

Competitive grants

Competitive grants are awarded based on how well a school's proposal aligns with the grant goals. Because competitive grants are limited and highly selective, applications need to stand out.

For example, the [School Violence Prevention Program \(SVPP\)](#) typically requires the following in its competitive grant proposal:

- **Detailed plan** on how funds will improve school safety
- **Evidence** that the proposal was developed with input from mental health professionals, educators, law enforcement, or other experts
- **Compliance documentation** showing adherence to federal and local safety standards
- **Sustainability framework** outlining the project's long-term success plan

Formula grants

Formula grants provide funding to schools based on specific criteria, such as student enrollment, poverty levels, and district financial need. These funds are allocated to eligible schools according to state formulas.

Private grants

Private grants may come from foundations, nonprofits, corporations, or individual donors. These usually have more spending flexibility and fewer requirements than other types of K-12 grants, though they may not be as lucrative.

Private Grants

- [Verizon Innovative Learning](#), with a mission to support digital learning
- [Target Field Trip Grants](#), with a mission to support experiential learning
- [Michael & Susan Dell Foundation](#), with a mission to prepare students for college & career success
- [Kaiser Permanente Thriving Schools Grant](#), with a mission to support mental health initiatives in schools

The right grant for your school district depends on numerous factors; for most schools, a balanced approach is best. Formula grants give schools stability with ongoing funds, federal grants cover large-scale initiatives, and competitive grants are ideal for niche projects.

How to Choose the Right K-12 Grant

The following tips guide you in selecting the right grant opportunity for your district:

1. Identify your baseline needs

Identify your school's challenges, the resources required to solve them, and how you'll prioritize to target grants that match your goals.

Your grant needs might include:

- Technology infrastructure
- Media & digital literacy education
- Parent & community engagement programs
- Mental health & counseling services
- Teacher training & professional development
- Student safety & security technology or hardware

2. Get stakeholders involved

Early stakeholder involvement paves the path for smooth project approval when it's time to officially start your application.

Use these three steps as a foundation for stakeholder cooperation:

1. **Deliver** a formal presentation to introduce your grant proposal and generate initial interest.
2. **Gather** input from district leaders and keep them informed on how their feedback has been incorporated.
3. **Maintain** rapport by sharing regular progress updates.

Remember: engaged stakeholders are more likely to stay invested and become valuable advocates throughout the application process.

3. Review grant requirements

Every grant has its own set of requirements, eligible expenses, and expected outcomes. Review them carefully to avoid investing time in grants your school may not qualify for.

"Reviewers will evaluate your proposal with a form that lists the agency's criteria and leaves space for us to comment on how well your project fits each measure," says [Jude Mikal](#), a grant writer and consultant at the University of Minnesota.

As you evaluate the criteria, start outlining the main points of your proposal.

"You can make it easier for reviewers to complete the form and advocate for your proposal by organizing your project description around the agency criteria, spotlighting each one in a bold heading."

Utilize any application assistance on grant sites.

Keep an eye out for:

- Informational sessions & webinars
- Contact info pages for outreach
- State Education Agency resources

4. Align your mission statement & needs

Now it's time to shortlist grants that match your focus areas.

Examples of Grant Alignment

Example A: Infrastructure

- **School Goal:** Expand technology infrastructure
- **Applicable Grant:** FCC's E-Rate or Cybersecurity Pilot Program.
- **Needs:** Web filter solutions, routers, networking equipment, and other internet-related services
- **Alignment Messaging:** Outline how improved or enhanced edtech tools will reinforce online safety objectives and better cater to hybrid learning environments.

Example B: Safety & Security

- **School Goal:** Facility upgrade to improve safety
- **Applicable Grant:** Michigan Major Infrastructure Grant
- **Needs:** Secure entry and enhanced security systems
- **Alignment Messaging:** Highlight how upgrades make students and staff feel safer, reduces violence, and puts parents at ease.

Example C: Mental Health

- **School Goal:** Support student mental health needs
- **Applicable Grant:** Project AWARE
- **Needs:** Mental health staff, professional development
- **Alignment Messaging:** Detail how additional counseling staff or wellness programs will address students' mental health needs.



You can make it easier for reviewers to complete the form and advocate for your proposal by organizing your project description around the agency criteria, spotlighting **each one in a bold heading**.”

Jude Mikal
Grant writer



Cultivate Community Support

To strengthen your grant proposal, connect with local professionals and organizations who value your mission. Local backing adds credibility and makes your application more competitive to funders. Here are three ways you can cultivate support in your community.

Letters of support

Letters of support improve the persuasiveness of your application through the power of social proof. Ask for letters of support from people or organizations who have backed similar projects, share similar values, or shown a vetted interest in the success of community initiatives, such as:

- Local officials
- District leaders
- Educators
- Nonprofit groups

Partner with a local business or organization

A local partnership builds your grant's credibility. For example, Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) partnered with Sixteenth Street Community Health Centers to support its mental health initiatives.

This partnership helped MPS secure funding from the Healthier Wisconsin Partnership Program (and fulfilled the grant's requirements for community-based support and expertise).

Community engagement

Community endorsements add credibility to your application and show grant reviewers and panelists the potential impact.

Reach out to your local Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) or community college(s) to share your goals and ask them to get involved. Host an informational session to explain your funding objectives, listen to feedback, adjust your plan accordingly, and set actionable next steps. Leverage local media to help spread the word and, potentially, lead to additional support and opportunities.

Did you know?

Community endorsements add credibility to your application and show grant reviewers and panelists the potential impact.



Demonstrating Need in Your Grant Application

Demonstrating financial need is the cornerstone of a strong K-12 grant application. Funders look for evidence of financial need, substantiated by detailed budgets, forecasts, and other documentation.

A strong need assessment consists of three core components:

Research Method	Sources	Example
Quantitative Data (Facts & figures)	Surveys, Crime and safety reports, Public health records, School records, Local demographics, Incident reports, Community data from social services.	Security: “Last year, we saw a 40% increase in physical altercations.”
Qualitative Evidence (Descriptive information)	Testimonials, observations, insights.	Parent: “My child was bullied online for over 6 months before anyone caught it.”
Comparative Analysis (Comparison against State/National Averages)	Comparison of relevant local quantitative data against averages.	Educator: “Our school has a student-to-counselor ratio of 750:1, more than three times the recommended 250:1 ratio.”

Use each of the aforementioned research methods to identify gaps, craft a hard-hitting needs narrative and give valuable context to your “why” statement.

Simple research starts in your school

Your school is a strong starting point for collecting information specific to your proposal.

1. **Survey your staff** to gather information from various teams about classroom needs, facility and operational challenges, and student sentiment.
2. **Pull reports from existing technology.** According to a report from LearnPlatform, the average district **uses 1,400 tech tools every month**; your own tech stat might hold vital details that back your needs.

Similarly, your school's web filter reports may shed light on under-resourced areas. A bandwidth utilization report could illustrate the need for enhanced internet connectivity.

For instance, with **Linewize Filter**, IT teams can use Red Flag reports, for example, to show a spike in substance abuse-related searches, underscoring the need for drug prevention programs, while an AI usage report might emphasize the importance of media literacy and digital citizenship.

3. **Host focus groups** to hear firsthand accounts of common obstacles and shared struggles. Focus groups are a reliable way to uncover underlying nuanced issues that might not be reflected in your data.

Get a free Student Safety Audit

Download 

Explain how you'll spend grant funds.

Create a budget divided into major category sections (i.e., technology, staffing). Include the following details:

- Spend for each major line item
- Description of how proposed spend addresses your challenges
- Measurable goals for success
- Timeline of fund allocation
- Supporting data
- Visual aids (tables, graphs, etc)



"Make sure that the project budget is a direct translation of the narrative in fiscal terms," advises Maria-Veronica Banks, NEEF's Director of Grants Administration. "Additionally, if the grant would only partially support the project, show where the rest of the funding will come from."

K-12 Grant Applications: Tips for a Successful Start

Writing a winning grant requires careful planning, attention to detail, and collaboration. For a successful start, begin by putting together a grant committee and establishing a peer review process.

1) Assemble a grant team

Grant writing takes a village. Gather a diverse group that includes stakeholders with different perspectives and areas of expertise. An in-house grant application team keeps costs low, fosters cross-departmental teamwork, and allows for quicker planning and decision-making.

Choose a Grant Coordinator

Appoint a grant coordinator to manage the application process, monitor deadlines and milestone dates, establish a meeting cadence, and track progress.

Designate Writer(s)

Choose team members with strong writing skills for the writing component of your grant application. Your writer is responsible for translating data, research, and ideas into a persuasive proposal.

Elect a Budget Specialist

Bring in a staff member familiar with school funds to help track and manage the financial components of your grant application. As K-12 grants require a thorough spending plan, you'll need an expert on deck to develop accurate financial documentation.

Partner with Subject Matter Experts

Work closely with experts on your team — like counselors for mental health-related grants — to add depth to your application. They can share insights, provide essential knowledge, and back up your proposal with credible resources.

2) Establish a Peer Review Process

A thorough peer review process can significantly improve your application's chances of success. Your peer review process should include:

- 1. Constructive feedback process:** What exactly do you want your peer review team to focus on and why? Do you need more support with the grant compliance portion, defining measurable objectives, or articulating the story? Ask for feedback in specific areas to give reviewers a focused direction.
- 2. Criteria checklist:** Provide your team with a structured checklist to guide the peer review process. Outline key sections, what to look for in each, and use a rating system or rubric for feedback.
- 3. Peer review timeline:** Launch the review process well before the submission deadline and set dates for milestones (First Review, Feedback Collect, Final Edits, etc).
- 4. Feedback session:** Host a session for reviewers to share insights. Use open-ended questions to encourage thorough feedback, summarize takeaways, and discuss next steps.

How to Find K-12 Grant Application Support

With limited time and staff, a little outside help goes a long way. Here are a few ways you can get grant writing support beyond school walls:

District grant writers

Most districts have a grant writer or funding specialist whose role is to help schools identify and apply for funding opportunities. Check your district website or contact the district office directly.

Educational nonprofits

Organizations like [America's Promise Alliance](#) collaborate with schools on grants aimed at fostering safe, supportive learning environments.

Mentors/volunteers

If you know teachers or administrators who have won grants, ask for their advice.

Don't have anyone in mind? Connect with local educational organizations or tap into social media. Many organizations have Facebook groups where members can request and share advice.

Financial support for grant assistance

If you're struggling to hit the mark with free grant assistance, there are several programs that fund school efforts to get grants off the ground:

- The [Greenlights Grant Initiative](#) offers free resources to aid school districts in applying for student safety-related grants.
- The [Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program](#) allocates \$10 million to support external grant-writing assistance for underserved districts.
- The [Grant Professionals Association](#) (GPA) helps K-12 schools secure funding for application guidance and maintains a network of certified grant professionals.



Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs)

RESAs provide grant workshops, hands-on application help, and tools to help schools find funding opportunities.

Lastly, many of the programs, agencies, and organizations mentioned above host grant writing workshops throughout the year. Keep an eye out for announcements.

Pro tip:

Set up alerts to receive notifications when new grants are announced.

Attend Education Conferences and Workshops

Education conferences provide sessions on grant funding, where attendees can learn about new opportunities, connect with grant representatives, and improve application strategies.

- [American Association of School Administrators \(AASA\) National Conference on Education](#)
- [National School Boards Association \(NSBA\) Annual Conference](#)
- [Grant Professionals Association \(GPA\) Annual Conference](#)
- [National ESEA Conference](#)

K-12 Grants & Funding Resources

Whether you're looking for federal grants, local community support, or crowdfunding options, use these resources to find the best K-12 grants for your needs.

- [Grants.gov](#): Leading federal grants database
- [Linewize Funding Resource Center](#): Browse grants by state
- [Community Foundation Locator](#): Find community foundations
- [Foundation Directory Online/Candid](#): Database of private foundation and corporate grants, searchable by education and other specific fields.
- [DonorsChoose](#): Crowdfunding platform for teachers to connect with donors for their classroom projects
- [GrantWatch](#): Subscription listing services for education grants from local, state, federal, and private sources.
- [NEA Foundation](#): Grant resource tailored to academic success and professional development.

Conclusion

K-12 grant applications take teamwork, planning, and persistence, but the payoff is worth it! Plan smart, communicate clearly, and stay focused on the end goal. Even if one grant doesn't come through, each application builds skills and brings you closer to finding — and winning — the perfect funding fit.

Linewize is the leading provider of digital safeguarding solutions in the US. For more information, visit our website or get in touch with our team of experts.

Web: www.linewize.com
Tel: 844 723 3932
Email: inquiries@linewize.com