INNOVATION GRANTS PROGRAM

Information and Application Instructions

Welcome!

The Bemidji High School Education Fund (BHSEF) Innovation Grants Program supports innovation in the classroom with grants for projects by Bemidji High School teachers and staff members who want to try something new. Lumberjack High School is part of BHS and has the same opportunities. Although BHS is used in wording throughout the documents, know that LHS is included.

If you are a staff member with a good idea, you can apply for funding to make your idea come true. Your application will be read by a grant program review team and if you are successful, BHSEF will fund your idea. The money for the grants comes from the use of Lumberjack Card at local vendors in the Bemidji area.

The mission of the program is innovation and you can help make it happen!

This document has more information about the grants program and detailed instructions on creating a grant application.

What projects are appropriate?

The purpose of the grants program is to:

- Encourage and facilitate innovative ideas
- Enrich learning in the classroom
- Promote collaboration and the exchange of ideas
- Continuous improvement of Bemidji High School

Any project which meets one or more of these objectives is appropriate for the program. BHSEF is interested in projects that ultimately will result in better education for students in Bemidji and beyond. Each project ultimately must show a positive impact on the learning experiences of students. The program exists to fund innovative projects outside the normal operating costs of school programs. The purpose of the fund is to allow you to introduce something that is innovative and different, and not just to fund what you would normally do on a daily basis.

Who is eligible?

Any Bemidji High School employee may be a project leader and may submit a project proposal. The proposal, however, must be co-signed by the project leader's supervisor. For teachers, this will be the principal.

What can project money be used for?
- The project budget can include any cost that is directly associated with conducting the project and can enrich and enhance education activities.
- Award monies may be used for capital outlay purchases if the equipment to be purchased is part of a new and/or creative approach to instruction. All purchased equipment and supplies become the property of the school district.
- Award monies cannot be used to pay salaries or stipends of the grant recipient. Money may be used, however to reimburse the school district for the cost of a substitute teacher if necessary. Money may be used to pay consultant fees or stipends of professionals employed inside or outside of the district.

How much money is available?
- Continue to watch the Friday Notes for updates on the available funds.

What are the grant application review criteria?
Grants are reviewed against the following metrics:
1. **Need**: A specific and significant need for the project must be identified and that need must be tied to student learning.
2. **Innovation**: The project should be innovative. In considering the criteria, is the project new to teaching, education, new to Bemidji, or simply new to your classroom?
3. **Objectives and Work Plan**: The objectives and work plan should be clear, concise and well thought out in relation to a timeline for execution.
4. **Impact and Replication**: Projects that involve teams of teachers, multiple students, grades, are viewed favorably. Many grant project methods and results can be disseminated or replicated by other teachers in the district and if appropriate, to those outside the district leading to greater impact from the project.
5. **Evaluation**: A sound plan to evaluate the project is in place.
6. **Budget**: The budget is reasonable and appropriate. The impact on students per dollar spent is high. Projects where funding is being sought from and shared by several organizations are encouraged.

What is the application process?
Step 1 Develop the Idea
The first step is to develop your idea. Speak with colleagues, your supervisor, colleagues at other sites in Bemidji, parents and students. The more input you get, the better your project will be.
Step 2 Write
Write the grant application. Detailed instructions appear later in this document and on the application itself. Grant writing is not hard and the process of explaining your idea in writing will help focus your project. Be aware of the deadlines and make sure you get the application in on time.

How does the review process work?
Your application will be evaluated on project merit and anticipated results by a Review

Committee. Any review committee member with an actual or apparent connection to the grant application or applicant must excuse him or herself from discussing or voting on that grant to avoid any conflicts of interest.

You will be notified about the result of your grant application shortly after the review meeting.

What happens after I receive an award?

Assuming you are successful and are awarded the grant, the fun begins as you get to do the project. If as you go along, you find that the project starts to deviate from what was in your application, contact Principal Stefanich. Project changes are fine so long as the original spirit of what was described in the proposal is followed and so long as the project will ultimately benefit students.

Before the project actually starts, you will submit a brief, revised budget to Principal Stefanich. Please note that your grant may not be approved for the total amount of money requested. Your revised budget should reflect the actual amount awarded for your grant. At the same time, you will sign a form that commits you to implementing the project and to writing a brief final report within four weeks after the completion of the project.

When are the deadlines?

The program generally has four opportunities per year, typically one per term. This can change depending on funds available. For exact deadlines, see the principal in charge. As a general rule, the applications will be due the week of midterm and the committee will meet two weeks prior to the last day of the term.

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Application Instructions

The complete grant application consists (in order) of the following parts:
1. Cover sheet (one page)
2. Title page (one page)
3. Project Description
4. Budget table (generally 1 page, use more if needed)
5. Attach appendices (optional)

The cover sheet and title page must use the official grant application form. The project description must also use the official application form but additional pages may be attached as necessary. A budget form is supplied, but you can create your own so long as you include the information described below. Staple all application pages together into one package.

1. Cover Sheet

The cover sheet contains the administrative information about the project and will not be seen by the review team. It is the only place in the grant where the project team should be identified by name.

Project title: Pick a short, but descriptive title for your project.

Project leader: The person who will be responsible for the overall conduct and direction of the project. It need not be the person writing the grant but must be a Bemidji High School teacher staff member.

Other team members: List the names and titles of all other key members of the project team. Your project team may include people associated with the project who are not employed by the District, for example, parents.

Signatures: Read the signature section carefully because by signing the application, you are taking responsibility for the project should it be funded. If you are signing as a principal or supervisor, you are assuring that the project team will do the work described in the application. By signing as a supervisor, you also are assuring there will be fiscal oversight of the project. *The application will not be accepted without the signatures of all project team members and their principals or supervisors.*

2. Title Page

This is the front page of the application that will be seen by the review team. Make sure that it contains no information that identifies you.

Project title: Repeat the title you put on the cover sheet

Project summary: In 100 words or less, provide a succinct summary of your project. Avoid jargon and use of terms that would not be understood by non-experts. You will have done a good job if someone reading the summary knows exactly what the project is all about.

Impact: List the total number of students that will be impacted by the project and the grade levels (9-12) of those students. Please be reasonable in your estimate. Putting down "every child in the high school" will not aid your application unless you can explain why in the descriptive section of the proposal. Not every proposal will impact a large number of students so do not be discouraged by this criteria. Many grants are approved that impact a grade or even a classroom.

Budget: List the total project budget in dollars, and then the amount being requested from BHSEF in this grant application. These two numbers may be different because some of the project may be funded from other sources such as an outside foundation. You only need to put down the totals because the details go in the budget section of the application.

Project Dates: List the start and end dates of the project. Projects should take no more than 12 months.

3. Project Description

The project description should describe your grant in detail using the following categories. Be clear and concise in 250 words or less.

Need:
- Describe the student, teacher or program need(s) that your project will meet.
- Why is this need significant and why is your project necessary?

Innovation:
- Innovation and creativity involve bringing a lesson to life; using new skills and learning; introducing new methods, devices or customs, or changing the way of doing things.
- The project will identify ways in which the above characteristics are being met.

Objectives and Work Plan
- Be brief. A numbered or bulleted list is fine.
- What are the specific objectives of your project?
- The work plan specifics depend on the nature of the project. For example, if your project involves equipment purchase, here is where you describe the equipment.
- Or, if the project involves training, here is where you describe the format and content of

the training.
- If the project involves more than one classroom, describe how that will work.
- Provide a timeline and list the key dates associated with major project milestones and deliverables.
- Provide sufficient timeline information so that it can be used as a planning chart to track project progress.

Impact and Replication
- Describe how the project methods and results will be shared with other teachers in the high school, and if appropriate, to those outside the district.
- Note that projects that have potential impact outside of Bemidji High School are encouraged to request travel funds for team members to present at regional or national teaching conferences.

Evaluation
- Describe how the project will be evaluated.
- List the criteria involved.
- If applicable, use quantitative (measurable) criteria and define a rating system for each Criteria. Example: Survey Criteria: Increase in participation 1 = LOW (no increase) to 5 = HIGH (increase of 50% or more).

4. Budget Table
- The budget should list the entire project costs. If a sub is needed, please figure on $100+ per day. The bottom of the table has a section to list the amount being requested from BHSEF and the amount and source of any matching funds.
- Please be as clear as you can. The budget can make or break a project.
- Designate which categories the costs fall under (see descriptions below). Use the following categories to describe the costs included in the budget.

Training: The cost of hiring substitutes so that staff members can work on the project, attend training sessions, or do whatever else is appropriate for the project. List number of days and number of subs required if applicable.

Supplies: The supplies required by the project. These should be over and above what the school would be reasonably expected to provide from normal operating funds.

Equipment: A large purchase for a piece of capital equipment. Include one page about the equipment from a product ad or brochure or web site, and a vendor quote in the appendix you should attach. If the equipment requires installation, don't forget to include any necessary installation costs in the budget.

Travel: Travel may include bussing students or travel for teachers to attend conferences or training sessions. If students are traveling, parent permission forms must be completed before a student can travel. All travel by staff members must be explained/justified in the appendix that you attach at the end of the application. Reimbursement for fuel will be based on the receipts provided, there will not be a reimbursement per mile.

Consultants: List the costs associated with any trainers or consultants involved in the project. For example, here is where you would put down the costs associated with bringing in a professional trainer or other expert. If your proposal includes other teachers from our district in a collaborative effort, you should note that here.

Other: If none of the above categories work, list a cost in this category. The budget table should include the total project costs and then the amount being requested from BHSEF. If these two

numbers are different, state the amount of matching funds. List the organizations that have committed to providing matching funds and the amount of their match.

5. Appendices (optional)

Your application may have an optional appendix containing materials that you think may help the reviewers understand what you are proposing. For example, if you are proposing to purchase a piece of equipment or a curriculum development program, you might want to include a page or two about the product from the manufacturer's brochure or web site. Please be respectful of the reviewers' time and limit any appendix to the very few pages that you think are essential to the application. An appendix is optional and will not be present in most applications.

Proposal writing tips

1. Follow the instructions. Again this is to make it easier on the reviewers. The last thing you want to do is annoy a reviewer because he or she can't find where critical information is located.
2. Write as if you were addressing an audience of noneducators. Eliminate jargon and explain any terms you use that are familiar to those in the teaching profession but may not be familiar to parents.
3. Have a descriptive title.
4. Describe very clearly what you will be doing on the project and what the money will be spent on. Note that this is different than telling the reviewers how wonderful the project is.
5. You probably bug your students about spelling errors. Enough said…
6. Relax. Your project *is* terrific and your proposal will be too. Even if you have never written a proposal before; go for it!