



Hands-on Learning Grants – Information and Application Instructions

Congratulations! You are taking the first step in a very worthwhile process. The Seven Dreams Education Foundation (SDEF) supports innovative and creative education projects delivered with a hands-on learning approach through its grant process. If your grant is selected, you will receive funding for your idea from funds raised through the generous support of District staff, parents, businesses, and community members.

Please note: All grant recipients are required to complete two written reports on the status and results of their grants during the year. The Foundation will ask for this report midway through the year, and at the end of the school year. All new grant recipients or a representative are asked to attend the SDEF annual meeting on Wednesday, May 9, 2012, from 4-6 pm. Details will be announced at a later date.

These instructions have information about the grant program, how to apply for funds, and instructions for the application itself. All of the grant information is available on our website at: www.sevendreamsfoundation.org

Is your idea the right fit?

The purpose of the grant program is to

- Support hands-on learning
- Enhance the sharing of projects between and among teachers, schools and our community
- Enrich the learning environment
- Encourage innovative thinking

Any project that meets the above criteria is eligible for the Hands-on Learning Grants program. SDEF was organized to help the learners of Robbinsdale Area Schools succeed by funding education initiatives that are hands-on, creative and innovative. We especially like to see where students and the community interact.

The program is accountable to our communities who support SDEF through their generous donations. If you have questions about whether or not your idea is the right fit, please call SDEF at 763-504-4088 or attend one of our Grant Writing Workshops.

Who can participate in a grant?

Any staff member of RAS may be a project leader and submit a grant. Non-staff (students, volunteers, parents, etc.) may be involved in the grant, but it must be submitted by an employee. The grant must be co-signed by a supervisor and/or principal of the staff person. Also, you must include your building IT person as a team member, especially if your project has any technology needs.

How big are the grants?

Grants are awarded for projects between \$500 and \$3,000.

What can the grant dollars be used for?

Grants can request funding for any cost associated with the project. Money can be used to reimburse the district for substitutes if necessary. Funds can be used for purchasing equipment if the equipment purchased is part of a new and/or creative approach to instruction. Capital items become the property of Robbinsdale Area Schools.

What are the evaluation criteria?

Grants will be reviewed based on following criteria (more specific information is in the grant application):

- Is the instruction delivered through a hands-on learning methodology?
- Is there a specific and identifiable learner need?
- Is it creative (“resulting from originality of thought or expression; imaginative) and innovative (“to introduce something new; make changes to anything established)?
- Is the project an extension of the classroom work addressing one of the Minnesota state standards?
- Is there an established plan to disseminate the project results and learning to the broader school or surrounding community?
- Is there a set of evaluation criteria to assess the success of the project?
- Is there a detailed, reasonable budget for the project? Is there use of funding in addition to that requested from SDEF?

What is the grant process?

The first thing is to develop an idea. Next, prepare a grant application. Grant writing is not hard, and there are tips and other supports available to help you. Be aware of the deadlines, as they will be strictly enforced with no exceptions! You may even submit a draft for a preliminary review (allow sufficient time to turn it around before the deadline).

The grants will be reviewed against the above criteria. All grants will be prepared to remove any reference to location, author or site – called a blind read. A grant selection committee, comprised of parents, teachers, administrators and other staff, and community members will read all grants and rank them based on those criteria and then will meet and review all grants. Those with the highest rankings will be selected for funding. If your grant is not selected, that does not mean it is not a good idea. There are limited dollars available to fund an unlimited supply of ideas.

The excitement begins if your grant is selected. We have fun awarding the grants and handing out the checks.

At any time during the project if problems or changes come up, the SDEF staff will work with you as long as the initial idea stays the same. Two status reports are due during the grant year to the SDEF staff.

Are substantially similar grant requests allowed?

A substantially similar grant is one which you or your site requested and received in prior years, and which most people would consider the current year's request to be the same or very similar as the previous grant. Such grant requests are allowed. **However**, the current year grant request must clearly state that this is substantially similar to a funded grant and also include the actual results of the previously funded grant.

What are Grant Writing Workshops?

SDEF offers grant writing workshops if project leaders or others need some assistance in writing the grant proposal. Workshops are scheduled for December 14, 2011, from 9:30-11:00 am and January 9, 2012, from 4:00-5:30 pm at Winnetka Learning Center. We also offer onsite grant writing workshops. Yes, we will bring a grant workshop to your school. Gather five or more people interested in learning more about SDEF grants and contact the SDEF Office for scheduling.

When is the grant due?

Grants are due by **Friday, February 10, 2012 at 12:00 noon** at the SDEF office at the Winnetka Learning Center, and may be sent via email, fax, mail or by hand. There are no exceptions to the due date.

Who do I contact if I have a question?

Feel free to contact the Seven Dreams Education Foundation office at 763-504-4088.

Grant Timetable

Activity

2011-2012 Grant Application on website
Grant Writing Workshops

Onsite Grant Writing Workshops

Preliminary Grant Review
Completed Grant Request Due
Grant Review Committee Ranks Grants
Grant Review Committee Final Decision
Prize Patrol
SDEF Board meeting

Due Date

December 1, 2011
Dec 14 9:30-11:00am
Jan 9, 2012 4:00-5:30 pm
During December 2011 and
January 2012
Before Feb 3, 2012
Noon, February 10, 2012
Post February 10, 2012
March 2012
April 2012
May 9, 2012



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Our goal is to make this an easy and streamlined process for both the writer and the reader. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to call us. It is very important that you follow the directions. It is more effective for our readers to evaluate all grants if the format is the same for each grant. We have tried to set up the grant to make it easy to write and put your project together.

The entire grant application should consist of:

Cover Sheet – one page, to be used by Seven Dreams Education Foundation office only

Technology Representative Approval – required for any request that may remotely be considered technology

Grant Summary Page – one page, summarizes the grant, offers specific information on benefits and cost

Grant Description – no more than three pages, describes the entire project via the grant review criteria

Budget – one page, identifies the costs of the grant and other funding sources

Budget Description – one page, explains and justifies the budget items

Appendices – if needed.

COVER SHEET

This information will be used by the Seven Dreams Education Foundation office to track and process the grant. The review team will not see this information. This is also the form that requires principal/supervisor sign off and the accompanying Technology Representative Approval.

Project Title: Pick a short, descriptive title for your grant. This title will be used when referring to the grant. (The Seven Dreams Education Foundation reserves the right to change project titles.)

Project Leader Name, Title, Phone Number and E-mail: This person is responsible for the overall implementation of the grant. This must be an employee of Robbinsdale Area Schools, but it does not need to be the grant writer.

Other Team Members: Include all those who are instrumental in the implementation of the grant and others associated with the grant, including your technology representative.

Sites: Include all of the sites where the project will take place.

Signature Section: We require signatures of the project leader and all major team members to ensure that all have read and understand the requirements of the grant. To keep projects in line with the general direction of the district and to ensure the project team will do the work described in the grant, we also require the grant to be signed off by the project leader's

supervisor. In the case of teachers, this will be their principal. The grant will not be accepted without the signature of the project leader, all team members and the project leader's supervisor.

GRANT DESCRIPTION

This section describes the entire project and is the most important part of the grant application. You should be clear and concise in your writing. This section may be no longer than three pages, 12 point type, single-spaced text. The length of the sections will vary depending upon your grant. Long sweeping narrative is not necessary, and space does not permit it. Bulleted lists are fine.

The main sections to include are:

Need: Describe the learner or staff need. Describe why the project is necessary. What issues, concerns, or learning gaps will the project address?

Creative and innovative: Describe how this project is doing something different. Innovation and creativity does not mean experimentation, but methods that approach engaging students differently in learning.

Hands-on: Is the project taught with a hands-on/experiential learning methodology? Does the project engage students directly in the experience so they are learning through the experience, in addition to whatever books/lecture are supporting the learning?

State Standards: Describe how the project is an extension of the classroom work and tell us which state standard(s) you are addressing.

Dissemination of project information: How will the project results and learning be disseminated within the broader school community, and/or the surrounding community?

Evaluation: What are the goals of the project and how will you know if you have achieved them?

BUDGET and BUDGET DESCRIPTION

Prepare an itemization of the costs of the project. We have included a sample format, but feel free to use your own as long as the same information is provided. The budget description describes the budget in narrative. The description also explains why the items are necessary. Some of the items you could include in your budget are:

Subs: 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.

Supplies: Supplies required for the project. These costs are above what would be covered by the school or program's normal budget.

Equipment: This includes capital purchases. Include additional information about the equipment and vendor. Don't forget to include all costs, including delivery and installation. Any items that could be considered technology must be reviewed and approved by your site's

technology representative to ensure it complies with current technology requirements and can/will be supported.

Travel: Travel may include busing learners, field trips or travel for teachers to attend conferences or training sessions. All travel by staff members must be explained in the justification section of the budget.

Consultants: List the costs associated with any trainers or consultants involved in the project. This would include other professionals brought in for seminars or training.

Curriculum Development: The cost of paying staff to develop curriculum to support the project. Contact the HR department for current rates.

Other: If none of the above categories work, list a cost in this category. Normally, staff salaries are not included in the grant. If your project requires additional staff time for development or implementation, please contact a Seven Dreams Education Foundation staff member in advance of submitting your grant. The budget also describes additional funding sources that you may have with your grant. Grant reviewers often look more favorably on grants with one or more funding sources in addition to the requested funds from SDEF.

APPENDICES

An appendix is optional and will not be present in most applications. If you include appendices, make the information short and limit it to essential information.

GRANTWRITING TIPS

- Keep your grant short and concise. Reviewers look at a lot of applications, and the harder your grant is to read and follow the less time they will spend looking at it.
- Have a colleague review it.
- Have a non-educator look at it. Does it make sense to him/her? Remember that not all members of the review team have an education background.
- Keep the tone light. No one wants to review a heavy grant. Keeping things upbeat and positive makes it easier to envision the positive results.
- Use a word processor. Hand written grants are harder to read.
- Don't leave it for the last minute. Work on your grant and then let it sit for a while.
- Looking at it after a few days will help clarify information needed to make your grant understandable to the reviewers.

Have fun! This should be a positive experience for all involved.