Small Grants Program

Guidelines for Applicants

Effective February 1, 2025

Goal and Purposes of the Small Grants Program

Goal. The Small Grants Program provides strategic investments in programs and projects that help achieve the goals and objectives of the Mississippi Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and promote Grade-Level Reading at the community level.

Purposes. Funding is available to support the planning and implementation of program activities in local communities that address one or more of the Campaign for Grade-Level Learning's Focus or Challenge Areas (School Readiness, Attendance, Summer/Out-of-School Learning). Summer learning can include activities that address intercessions, after-school programs, and other out-of-school learning opportunities.

Eligible Applicants

Applications for planning grants will be accepted only from those communities which have completed a Letter of Intent (LOI) to the Mississippi Campaign for Grade Level Reading, for the purpose of becoming a member of the National Grade Level Reading Communities Network, which has been reviewed and approved by the community, the Mississippi Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, and the National Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

Applications for implementation grants will be accepted only from those communities which have completed a Community Solutions Action Plan (CSAP) that has been reviewed and approved by the community, the Mississippi Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, and the National Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

Geographic Area. Applicants must be located in or directly serve all or part of one or more designated Mississippi Campaign for Grade-Level Reading communities, as determined by their Letter of Intent or Community Solutions Action Plan.

Types of Applicants. Grants will be made only to nonprofit organizations that have a valid 501(c)(3) designation by the Internal Revenue Service, and that are in compliance with the

Mississippi Secretary of State's incorporation and other nonprofit reporting requirements. Applicant organizations will be generally expected to be members of the applying community's sponsoring coalition.

Threshold Factors

Applicants must submit their IRS letter designating their 501(c)(3) status and documentation that they are in compliance with the requirements of the Mississippi Secretary of State.

Each application must be signed by an appropriate individual with authority to submit such an application on behalf of the nonprofit applicant, and the community it represents.

Applications must be complete and submitted in a timely manner.

For implementation grants, each applicant's budget must show the commitment of matching funds equal to 50% of the amount of the grant requested. This match may be in cash or in kind.

No matching funds are required for planning grants.

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a grant agreement that will denote any required legal assurances and certifications.

Applicants for implementation grants that include reading or literacy instruction must state in their application whether project staff have completed or will complete training in evidence-based practices.

Eligible Activities

Planning Grants. Planning grants must be designed to assist communities which have submitted their Campaign for Grade-Level Reading Letter of Intent (LOI) to build community partnerships that lead to the submittal of an acceptable Community Solutions Action Plan (CSAP) as required by the National Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. Eligible activities include:

- Community meetings and planning sessions, including defining the geographic scope of the community and schools to be involved, determining the organizations and individuals to be involved in the sponsoring community coalition, and building community networks and philanthropic support for supporting the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.
- Research into demographics, data, and existing programs and services required to develop the CSAP.
- Program design and planning sessions, including the development of desired outcomes and impact, action strategies to address core challenges, partnerships with existing programs, and resources required for sustainability.
- General development of the Community Solutions Action Plan, including writing and community review/approval of the Plan.

Grant funds may be used to hire consultants responsible for coordinating or performing planning activities, providing a detailed and appropriate agreement for services that includes a specific scope of work is developed for such work.

Implementation Grants. Implementation grants must be designed to assist communities which have a Community Solutions Action Plan (CSAP) accepted by the National Campaign for Grade-Level Reading in the implementation of their CSAP. Proposed activities should address one or more of the following Focus Areas:

1. School Readiness. Grants will support direct program activities and services that improve the readiness of children to enter and succeed in school. The following are examples:
    a. Developing letter recognition, counting, writing and basic reading skills.
    b. Hosting after-school and/or weekend family learning activities.
    c. Creating or expanding a parent resource center that provides opportunities for parents/children to interact with literacy and learning related activities.
    d. Providing evidence-based and research-driven professional development and training for early childhood education teachers.
    e. Increasing the availability and/or utilization of learning resources by parents in providing readiness skills to their children.

2. School Attendance. Grants will support direct program activities and services that increase attendance and reduce chronic absence by students in schools. The following are examples:
    a. Creation and implementation of a messaging system for sharing the importance of attending school (call outs, texts, etc.).
    b. Development of a Community Attendance Task Force that monitors attendance, motivates students to attend school, rewards good attendance, and addresses the needs of those with chronic absences.
    c. Plan an event during Attendance Awareness Month or throughout the school year to celebrate good attendance for all students.
    d. Develop and implement a tracking system for chronic absentees.

3. Summer Learning. Grants will support direct program activities and services that engage children in summer reading and learning activities at home or in the community, and other work that supports such activities. The following are allowed:
    a. Activities listed under Section 1 that will serve to reduce summer reading skill losses, increase readiness for school in the following year, and expand learning opportunities for children consistent with the objectives of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.
    b. Community-wide messaging to raise awareness about the importance of summer learning; to encourage parents, caregivers and services; and to support families in reading to and with children over the summer months.
    c. Practices, programs and policies that expand access to books and integrate literacy skills development in order to help children continue reading and learning over the summer months.
    d. Expanding access to summer meals, physical activity, and health and nutrition information in a variety of settings and programs over the summer months.
    e. Cross-sector coordination and partnerships around data sharing, collection, and analysis that result in joint commitment and accountability for making measurable progress on student outcomes.

Applicants for implementation grants are also encouraged to address and include, in each of the above Focus Areas, activities and services that:

1. Include parents in the provision of support and services to children, and to maximize parental involvement in the educational process,
2. Take into account the role that good health, including general health, vision and hearing, and dental health, plays in achieving positive learning outcomes,
3. Utilizes technology to provide more effective and efficient services, and
4. Consider the needs of children in public housing.

Applicants for implementation grants that include reading or literacy instruction must state in their application whether project staff have completed or will complete training in evidence-based practices.

Ineligible Activities

Grant funds may not be used for the acquisition of any interest in real property, or to support ongoing annual campaigns, capital campaigns, endowments or scholarships.

Grant funds may not be used for general operating costs (administration, fundraising, other general overhead).

Grant Award Information

Range of Grants. Planning grant requests shall not exceed $5,000. Implementation grant requests shall not exceed $10,000.

Limitations – Planning Grants. No participating community shall receive more than $5,000 in total support for planning purposes.

Limitations – Implementation Grants. No participating community shall receive more than $22,500 in total support for implementation purposes. Grant support shall be limited to $10,000 in the first year of implementation, $7,500 in the second year of implementation, and $5,000 in the third year of implementation.

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements. Applicants for implementation grants must provide a cash or in-kind match equal to at least 50% of the grant requested. Additional matching funds are encouraged. No matching funds are required for planning grants.

Number of Applications. Each community that has an approved Letter of Intent may submit only one (1) application for a planning grant. A community that successfully completes a planning grant and gets its CSAP approved may then apply for an implementation grant.

Each community that has an approved Community Solutions Action Plan may submit multiple applications for implementation grants in any calendar (January-December) or school (September-August) year, subject to the limitations of the amount of support available.

Application and Submission Information and Process

Availability of Application Packets. An application packet and forms are available from the Mississippi Campaign for Grade-Level Reading or the Mississippi Alliance of Nonprofits and Philanthropy. The application packet and forms may also be downloaded from the Mississippi Alliance of Nonprofits and Philanthropy website at www.alliancems.org.

Pre-Application Assistance. A conference call may be held with prospective applicants prior to the submittal of any application. Communities developing applications are strongly encouraged to consult with the Mississippi Campaign for Grade-Level Reading at amhobart@olemiss.edu.

Content and Form of Application. Each application will consist of a Cover Sheet, Narrative Statement (not to exceed 3 pages), Budget Form, Budget Narrative, and any Attachments necessary to provide documentation of eligibility or support the Narrative Statement.

Deadlines. Applications for planning or implementation grants will be accepted at any time, but should be submitted at least two (2) months before funding is needed to implement proposed activities to allow time for the review of the application and the negotiation of a grant agreement for funded applications (June 1 for activities beginning in the fall, November 1 for activities beginning in the spring, and April 1 for activities beginning in the summer).

Method of Submittal. Applications and supporting materials may be submitted electronically to amhobart@olemiss.edu, by fax to (601) 321-5599, or by mail or other delivery method, including hand delivery, Alissa Hobart, MS Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, The University of Mississippi, Kinard Hall, 261, P.O. Box 1848, University, MS 38677

Format and Copies. Only one copy of the full application is required. Submit only those forms and required narrative statements included with the application packet. All materials submitted should be printed on one side only (no double-side printed materials). Do not submit video materials, generic brochures or other promotional materials, or electronic media.

Application Review Process

Initial Review. Staff and/or consultant(s) representing the Mississippi Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and/or Mississippi Alliance of Nonprofits and Philanthropy will perform an initial review of all applications to determine conformance with these guidelines and applicable threshold factors. Should any application be found not to be in conformance with the guidelines and/or threshold factors, applicants may be contacted and given an opportunity to correct any non-conforming provisions of their applications.

Evaluation of Proposals. Staff and/or consultant(s) representing the Mississippi Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and/or Mississippi Alliance of Nonprofits and Philanthropy will review all applications to determine whether they are fundable. This decision will be based primarily on an assessment of whether the proposal effectively addresses the goals and objectives of the Mississippi Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and these guidelines, sets forth programs and

activities that are eligible for funding, proposes a plan of work that is reasonable, measurable, and cost effective, and promises to have a positive impact within the community served.

Additional Factors. The Mississippi Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and Mississippi Alliance of Nonprofits and Philanthropy retain discretionary authority to recommend the funding of all or any part of any application. Full funding of every proposal is not required.

Grant Awards and Requirements

Grant Awards. All proposals determined to be eligible and fundable will be forwarded, with a recommendation on the appropriate level of funding, to the Mississippi Campaign for Grade-Level Reading's Funders Committee, which includes representation from those foundations and other organizations providing funding for this grant program. The Funders Committee may either approve each application for funding as presented, decline to fund an application as presented, or ask for more information before making a final funding decision.

Grant Agreements. When an application is approved by the Funders Committee, the applicant will be notified and forwarded a written grant agreement incorporating the application received and all applicable Federal and State laws and regulations. Grant agreements will include all reporting requirements and applicable administrative policies, including those on the promotion of grant supported activities.

Grantees may be required to attend a workshop or conference call on grant implementation procedures. Grantees that include, as a project activity, the provision of instruction in reading and/or literacy skills are strongly encouraged to require project personnel (staff and volunteers) involved in administering or providing such activities to complete training in evidence-based literacy practices.

Reports. A final report will be required, and will include a narrative, as well as other documentation, including photographs and web links, as appropriate to demonstrate the completion of funded work. One copy of the final report will be submitted.

Site Visits. All funded projects are subject to site visits by Mississippi Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and/or Mississippi Alliance of Nonprofits and Philanthropy staff or consultants prior to funding, during the time in which project activities are being performed, and/or following the completion of the final report.

Notice of Awards. No public notice of awards will be made until grant agreements are executed.

Award Credit and Recognition. Grantees will be required to acknowledge the support from the MS Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and the Mississippi Alliance of Nonprofits and Philanthropy, in all announcements and other literature used to promote grant-supported activities, as well as in all materials developed for publication as part of any grant-supported activities, including print materials, online materials, exhibits and signs.

Payment of Grants. Grant amounts awarded will be paid in full upon the execution of the grant agreement, subject to disbursement policies and procedures of the Community Foundation of Greater Jackson, which administers the fund.

Agency Contact Information

Questions concerning these guidelines should be directed to:

Ellen Collins, Executive Director
Mississippi Alliance of Nonprofits and Philanthropy
2600 Lakeland Terrace
Jackson, MS 39216

ellen.collins@alliancems.org

(601) 968-0061 (office)

Questions concerning the Mississippi Campaign for Grade-Level Reading should be directed to:

Alissa Hobart, Director
MS Campaign for Grade-Level Reading
The University of Mississippi
Kinard Hall, 261
P.O. Box 1848
University, MS 38677

amhobart@olemiss.edu

(920) 257-3345 (cell)