



A Union of Professionals

AFT Innovation Fund

2012 Letter of Interest

AFT Innovation Fund Overview and Priorities

In 2009, the AFT created the Innovation Fund, a unique, nonprofit venture fund designed to support and share successful union-led, collaborative reform efforts in public school systems across the United States. The fund seeks to identify, nurture and promote educator and union-led innovations in public education.

The Innovation Fund seeks proposals that are “cutting edge” and nationally significant; improve teaching and student learning; tackle criticisms of teachers and their unions head on; collaborate with other critical stakeholders; signal new ways to solve old problems through collective bargaining or collaboration; and align with the Fund’s 2012 priorities.

Specifically, the Fund will support the development of innovations in the following priority areas:

- Expanding learning time for both students and teachers
- Ensuring that teachers have a voice in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and are prepared to teach them
- Cultivating effective teaching

These three priorities reflect areas where union, management/school district and community leaders need new approaches for working together to improve student learning, as well as where changes to the union-district contract may need to be identified and negotiated.

Purpose of the Letter of Interest

The Letter of Interest is the first step in the grant application process. The Letter of Interest should describe the innovative idea, how it relates to Fund priorities (listed above) and what intended outcomes and objectives will be fulfilled through this initiative. Please consider the following questions when writing your Letter of Interest:

- What is the innovation you propose?
- What problems does it solve?
- How will you know if your innovation is successful?
- What new partnership will you build, or how will you expand current partnerships through this initiative?
- What is the capacity and willingness of the district and/or other partners to support your idea with resources?
- Who will staff this effort?
- How much time can your union (officers, members, and staff) devote to this new endeavor?
- How much will the initiative cost in the first year?

Application Instructions and Deadline

Letters of Interest will be accepted from Jan. 4 until 11:59 PM CST on Feb. 2, 2012. To submit a letter:

1. Log on to www.aft.org/innovate
2. Click on link under “Apply Now for 2012”
3. Click on “Start the application process here.”
4. Click on “Create New Account.” This will show you the new applicant registration page.
5. Go back to the login screen and enter your username and password.
6. Once logged in, click on the blue **AFT Innovation Fund 2012** link to start the grant application process.

Notification

Applicants will be notified of the status of their Letter of Interest in mid to late February. Those whose ideas are judged to be the most promising will be invited to submit a full application to the Innovation Fund by mid to late March. (Further information on the process will follow.) Please note that prior to notification, an applicant may be asked to submit additional information that explains and supports the proposal.

Contact Information

If you have questions regarding the AFT Innovation Fund 2011 grant application process, please e-mail Danielle Hawkins at dhawkins@aft.org or call 202/879-4524.