



**Teacher Leadership in Action
A Grant Opportunity for Massachusetts Educators
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

NOTE: A completed application, video and budget summary is due no later than 5:00pm on Friday, March 23. Please submit your video by email to cdiaztorres@education-first.com.

OVERVIEW

1. What is the purpose of this grant?

This funding is intended to provide teams of Massachusetts educators with the initial funding and coaching support they need to clearly identify some of the core challenges preventing forward progress in their schools, and develop creative and effective solutions they will either pilot or fully implement by the end of the grant period.

2. Who is eligible?

All licensed Massachusetts educators currently employed at a public school (including charter and vocational-technical schools) are eligible to apply for this grant as part of a team. Team members can include other teachers, administrators, school or district leaders, and/or support staff. Applications require support from the team's school leader (and district leader if the project includes district staff).

3. Why the focus on equity?

Overall, Massachusetts students are at the top of the nation, but our state also has some of the largest and most persistent racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps in the country. (See [this article](#) for more.) For that reason, the Teacher Leadership in Action grant will prioritize awarding grants to teams of teacher leaders who will identify and address challenges in their schools and districts using an equity lens.

APPLICATION

4. Can I apply as an individual or do I need to be part of a team?

All applicants need to apply as part of a team that includes at least two people (including the lead applicant). Each team should have one lead applicant who will be the primary contact, but all team members will be expected to participate in coaching calls and attend the in-person meetings.

5. Do I have to submit a video application?

Yes. All applications require three components: (1) A video of up to two minutes in length (ideally featuring multiple members of the team) emailed to cdiaztorres@education-first.com; (2) a completed online [application](#); and (3) a completed online [budget form](#) (which should be submitted as a link as part of the application form).

6. What are the requirements for the video, and how should I send it?

Videos can be shot with a smartphone and do not need to be professionally scripted or edited. We are using video as a way to get to know our applicants, so focus on describing the challenge facing your school or district, and describing your initial thinking on solutions. The videos should be no longer than two minutes and can be sent by email to cdiaztorres@education-first.com. Please send a follow-up email immediately after submitting your video so we can confirm that it was received.

GRANT AWARDS

7. Are all grants for the same amount? How many will be awarded?

We will award up to five grants of \$3,000 each.

8. Can I apply for more than one grant?

No, each team is eligible for only one award.

9. How and when will I receive the funding? What is the grant period?

All grant awards will be sent to the recipient team's school and/or district for distribution. Grants will be awarded in April 2018, and the grant period will conclude December 31, 2018.

10. Are there opportunities for additional funding when this grant concludes?

Not at this point, but we are hopeful that additional funding will become available. We will notify recipients if and when additional funding is secured.

11. What happens if I change positions or schools before the grant period ends?

Grants will be awarded to teams to address challenges that are specific to a school or district. Recipients who leave that school or district before the grant period ends will most likely be asked to hand off their role on the team to someone else who will be remaining with the school or district. Each case will be handled individually and can be discussed with the team's coach.

12. Do I need to submit a budget?

Yes, using this [budget form](#). Your budget doesn't need to be overly detailed and can be based on your best current estimates of how you anticipate you will spend the grant funding.

13. What types of expenses are allowable?

The grant funding can be spent on a range of things, including materials, professional development or travel. The funding cannot be used as a personal stipend, but can be used to pay teachers for their time in accordance with your contract.

COACHING

14. Who are the coaches? What experience do they have?

The coaches will be educators who have completed the Teach Plus fellowship, and who have experience in the specific issue or set of issues you are trying to resolve. All coaches will be guided by a

pre-determined curriculum that incorporates a design thinking framework, but will work closely with the grantees to develop the most appropriate support based on their unique problem of practice.

15. How frequently will we meet, and what will we do?

You will connect with your coach either in person or virtually at least once each month. Your coach will help you integrate design thinking principles to address the problem you are trying to solve. Your coach will provide feedback and serve as a critical thought partner throughout this process.

16. What is design thinking and why is it applicable to my school site?

Design thinking is a process that can be used by innovators in any field to identify and address problems with creative solutions. It typically consists of five steps: Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype and Test. Design thinking is particularly useful when confronting problems that involve diverse groups of stakeholders—such as in schools—because it is grounded in empathy and encourages an experimental approach. You will learn how to “fail fast” and keep trying until you find a solution that works. See [this article](#) for more about design thinking.

17. Will this work continue through the summer?

Yes, but at a slower pace. Teams will meet with their coaches monthly throughout the grant period, with the exception of July. Teams and coaches should work out a schedule that will keep the work moving but still allow for some rest over the summer.

OUTCOMES

18. What outcomes are expected?

We expect that every recipient will land in a different place, since each applicant will be working through a problem or issue that is unique to their school or district. That said, we expect that by the end of the grant period, recipients will have worked with their coaches to: (1) clearly identify the challenge; (2) develop a clear, actionable solution and implementation plan; and (3) begin either a pilot or full implementation.

19. What should I be prepared to present at the final convening later this year?

The details will depend on what you accomplish with your coach, but all recipients will be asked to present a set of slides (or other presentation format) highlighting: (1) the challenge they addressed; (2) the solution they developed; (3) any outcomes from the pilot or initial implementation; and (4) planned next steps.

ABOUT US

20. What is Education First?

Founded in 2006, [Education First](#) is a national, mission-driven strategy and policy organization with unique and deep expertise in education improvement. We help education system leaders and policymakers cultivate the conditions—people, knowledge, resources, policies and programs—that ensure equity and excellence for all educators and students. Our mission is to deliver exceptional ideas, innovative solutions and real results to help ensure that every student educated in the United States, regardless of race or income, will be prepared for success in college, careers and life. We work closely

with practitioners, advocates and funders to design and accelerate policies and plans that support outstanding educators, engaged students, and effective organizations & investments.

For the past three years, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, we have been working to better understand the teacher leadership landscape in Massachusetts, identify areas of need, highlight best practices, and help to make the case for why teacher leadership is a smart investment at the school, district and state level. Our past Teacher Leadership in Action publications, including [research, videos and case studies](#), a [guide to creating teacher advisories](#) we co-designed with the Teacher Collaborative, and a [state teacher leadership toolkit](#) we co-designed with Leading Educators are all posted [here](#).

21. What is Teach Plus?

Teach Plus was founded in 2009 with its inaugural cohort of 16 Teacher Policy Fellows and has grown into a network of more than 26,000 solutions-oriented teachers nationwide. The mission of Teach Plus is to empower excellent, experienced teachers to take leadership over key policy and practice issues that affect their students' success. Through mobilizing and leading teams of their peers, and connecting directly with policymakers, our teachers have directly improved teacher practice and influenced education policy at the school, district, state and level.

Teach Plus currently supports over 75 teachers in Massachusetts and Rhode Island and 682 teacher leaders nationwide. In the past year, these teacher leaders were supported by Teach Plus to mobilize over 14,995 educators to take an advocacy action, such as meet with a legislator, write an op-ed, participate in a flash poll, participate in a focus group, and more. Collectively, their actions resulted in 41 recommendations that were included into state ESSA plans, historic funding reform in Illinois, and over 924 teachers forming a network teacher-led professional learning to improve their instruction.

Still have questions? Contact us directly—send an email to Heidi at hguarino@education-first.com. We look forward to hearing from you!