



# Enhancing School Quality

## 2025–26 Funding Priorities

At The Opportunity Trust, our mission extends beyond just incubating new schools. We also collaborate with existing school networks and districts with three or more years in operation. We aim to elevate school quality and expand the availability of high-quality educational opportunities *in pursuit of increasing student academic outcomes*.

All partnerships with grantees—schools, networks, or districts—are forged based on alignment with The Opportunity Trust’s [Five Dimensions of School Quality](#). Our Schools Team is currently prioritizing funding for initiatives focused on the key areas listed below.

Our funding commitments are contingent upon adherence to grant agreement terms and the achievement of monthly milestones specified in the grant agreement. Our funding cycle begins in spring (April/May) and concludes in summer, with grant agreements finalized by July/August.

One of our main priorities with our grant process is to ensure that we are supporting our partners in reaching the goals established in our grant agreements. There are many resources that we provide as support along the way. For further details on all our initiatives and fellowship opportunities, please visit [bit.ly/school-improvement-grant](https://bit.ly/school-improvement-grant).

### Spring 2025 Grant Cycle Timeline:



## **Funding Priorities:**

### **1. Building Systems of Accountability for Lasting Impact**

- Defining Roles & Responsibilities
  - Clear delineation of who is responsible for what, documented in a leadership playbook or accountability tracker.
  - LEAs and senior leaders clearly define responsibilities of each stakeholder group as it relates to priorities outlined within their annual strategic plan.
- Alignment with Accountability Systems
  - Strategic plan priorities and initiatives are outlined for each stakeholder group (i.e., instructional staff, campus leaders, regional leaders, support staff, etc.).
  - Coaching and professional development establish clear systems and structures to ensure leadership accountability, with evidence of follow-through mechanisms (a plan to inspect what you expect).

### **2. Building Systems for Lasting Impact**

- Instruction-enabling Systems:
  - Strengthening curriculum and improving student outcomes for a specific grade level or content area (e.g., early lit, math).
  - Strengthening instructional planning and intellectual preparation.
  - Supporting remediation (e.g., high-dosage tutoring and summer acceleration programs) particularly if targeted at populations whose academic growth doesn't mirror their peers.
- Broader School Enabling Systems:
  - Ensuring school structures (i.e., master schedule, leadership schedules, comprehensive calendars) support instructional and culture-enabling systems to thrive.

- Implementing effective data meetings, student work audits, and daily and weekly feedback mechanisms (i.e., daily/weekly leadership walkthroughs, observation feedback, practice clinics).
- Planning and implementing year-round professional development that follows a clear and predictable cadence based on the season.
- Developing assessment and DDI systems that ensure interim assessments are aligned to the EOY state test and more frequent, weekly assessments to ensure teachers are analyzing student data weekly and biweekly and responding to it intentionally to close gaps in student learning.
- Supporting stakeholder surveying and feedback cycles to strengthen school-wide systems.

### **3. Driving Excellence with Data**

- Enhancing strategic multi-year and annual planning focused on organizational development for emerging schools, and intentionally aligned with intended improved outcomes and timelines for improvement that will sustain schools.
- Setting high-quality SMART goals and identifying monthly milestones to track progress towards annual goals.
- Developing leaders and teachers skilled in data-driven planning and instruction.
  - Ensuring a cogent assessment structure (interim assessments, unit assessments, weekly assessments, daily assessments)
  - Supporting the effective implementation of instructional systems aligned to a cogent assessment structure (full data days, unit assessment analysis, weekly data meetings)
- Upgrading data infrastructure to ensure data is easily accessible, including developing data analysis cycles that include analyzing, sharing out, and developing next steps.

#### 4. Innovative Staffing Models for Retention & Growth

- Introducing innovative staffing structures to enhance teacher, supporting staff, and leader retention.
  - Funding key roles a year in advance of the role being fiscally achievable. Grantees must prove that the role is financially viable in the concurrent years (Primarily for new schools or school expansion).
- Addressing challenges such as overburdened roles, time constraints, and limited leadership opportunities.
- Providing comprehensive, high-quality summer and ongoing professional development for all staff, including teachers and leaders.
- Implementing staff evaluation processes to support ongoing professional development and increase accountability around quality instruction and leadership in pursuit of improved student outcomes.
- Developing and implementing accountability structures aligned to annual goals

#### 5. Expanding Teacher Pipelines with the new [Gateway Teaching Fellowship](#)

- The Gateway Teaching Fellowship is aimed at supporting teacher recruitment, retention, and the development of a robust pipeline of high-quality educators. [Read more here](#) if you are interested in partnering with us on this initiative.
  - Please specify (1) the number of fellows, (2) the subject areas and grade levels to which they will be assigned, and (3) whether funding is required for the fellows or if only their placement is needed.

#### 6. Strengthening School Governance for Long-Term Success

- Creating infrastructure for leadership accountability as it relates to key outcomes.
- Training the board to better understand the core functions of the executive vs. the board.
- Establishing high-functioning committees (e.g., Governance, Finance, Academic, etc.).