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FAQ for HEF Grant Applications

GENERAL INFORMATION

Eligibility

NEW 26-27: Do you have to be enrolled in Employee Giving in order to be eligible for a grant award?

- **Yes, with the exception of 100% Hays Student Grants.** Starting with the 2026–2027 school year, the **PRIMARY** grant applicant **MUST** be enrolled in Employee Giving in order to be eligible for a grant award.
 - *One point will be awarded towards the final score of your grant for each additional applicant that also participates in Employee Giving.*
 - *Primary applicant is the name of the person who submits the application.*

NEW 26-27: Does the amount that I donate impact my chances for a grant?

- No. The amount of your donation is not considered in the grant awarding process.

NEW 26-27: Do I need to seek approval from my principal in order to submit for a grant?

- Yes. Starting with the 2026–2027 school year, applicants whose positions are associated with a campus will be required to get their principal to sign the [HEF Grant Agreement](#). This requirement is intended to encourage support and collaboration between the principal, secretary and the applicant.

NEW 26-27: Can I apply for a grant to seek reimbursement for a project that I purchased with Title I funds?

- No, grant applications submitted to reimburse Title I projects are not eligible for consideration..

Is my project eligible for funding?

- It depends. In order to be eligible for funding, your project must fit into the requirements and meet the criteria of the each grant as defined below - as well as demonstrate that the project will benefit Hays CISD students and be aligned with our mission to enrich, maintain and expand programs needed to meet the District's stated mission and promote excellence in education.

Who can apply for these grants?

- If you are involved in the education of our students, then you qualify! This includes Principals, Teachers, Directors, Coaches, and Administrative Department staff.

How and when do I submit an application?

- Visit our [website](#) for the online applications and due dates.

Who do I contact if I have questions about grants or need help with the application?

- You can send an email to HEF Office & Programs Manager, Michelle Silva, at michelle.silva@hayscisd.net

FAQ for HEF Grant Applications

Can I or my campus apply for more than one grant during a grant cycle?

- Yes.

If I won a HEF grant award, can I submit an application in a future grant cycle?

- Absolutely. Just make sure you submit your report for your previous award because **grant winners who fail to submit their grant reports are not eligible to be awarded funding for the following cycle.**

Award amount:

How much can I ask for in my grant application?

- **Innovative Teaching Grants:** Funding of up to \$500 per grant.
- **Collaborative Grants:** Funding of up to \$5,000 per grant.
- **Professional Development Grant:** Up to \$3,000 per person listed in the grant application. PD grant award is max per teacher, not per school.
- **Big and Bold Grants:** Funding amount that may be requested is not capped. The amount of grant awarded is at the discretion of the Hays Education Foundation Board.
- **100% Hays Student Grants:** Funding amount that may be requested is not capped but award may be impacted by availability of funds. The amount of grant awarded is at the discretion of the Hays Education Foundation Board.

Will I receive the full amount asked for in the grant?

- **Funds available/budgeted:** We do our best to fund the entire amount requested, but our grant budgets are based on how much money we have been able to raise and budgeted for that cycle as well as how many applications are received. We highly encourage you to submit both full and partial funding options.
- **Applicant demonstration of Due Diligence:** As is stated on the application, the Foundation is a funding source of last resort. The funds raised by the Foundation are intended to 'fill the gaps' of funding not available through other sources, including nonprofit, local, state and federal. The Foundation requires that requests have been made to other sources before seeking assistance from the Foundation. The lack of demonstration that due diligence has been made in seeking primary sources of funding will negatively impact the consideration of an application. Primary sources include district funds, boosters, PTA's, and state and federal grants.

What if the cost of the items or travel have increased from the amounts I had requested and was awarded?

- If the cost of an item increases, the grant will be funded at the amount awarded. This amount may be different from the amount requested, especially in cases when applicants request items that are not funded as per HEF or HCISD policies.

FAQ for HEF Grant Applications

If I have unanticipated costs that I believe are related to my project but that I did not list in my requested budget, can I use the grant to fund those items?

- No. Grant funds must only be used to purchase the items that were included in the original request. Exceptions will be made only for the purchase of a different brand for a similar item or an item that can be substituted to meet the intended purpose that was submitted with the application.

If the grant awardee is no longer employed by HCISD, can the campus still receive the award?

- Yes, if the principal determines that the campus will make use of and benefit from the award as it was defined in the awarded grant application.

Reporting:

What are the reporting requirements?

- 45 days after completing the project, grant recipients will be required to submit a grant report. A reminder and link will be included in your “Grant Winner” email. **As mentioned previously, grant winners who fail to submit a grant report will not be eligible to receive funding for the following cycle.**

Process:

How do you decide which grants to fund?

- Awards are determined using a rigorous and BLIND review process.
 - While all applications require identifiable information, that information is used solely for office administrative purposes.
 - When being reviewed, applications are evaluated without identifiable information, including name or campus information. This best practice is important to the Foundation because it helps ensure fairness in that it ensures decisions are made based on the content or the quality of the work itself.
 - This is why, on the applications, we ask that you **do not include identifiable information in your answers to question prompts.**

Who decides which grants get funded?

- Ultimately, awards and amounts are determined by vote of the Education Foundation Board members. However, applications first go through a rigorous review process:
 - In order to ensure that the items are in compliance and alignment with Hays CISD policies, HCISD Departments conduct the first reviews.
 - The Finance Department reviews each application to determine whether the expense can and should be covered by Hays CISD, rather than the HEF.
 - I.T. Department reviews applications to ensure that there are no issues with technology compatibility or district regulations.
 - Curriculum & Instruction Department, Fine Arts and CTE departments review and score based on the application’s alignment to HCISD

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curriculum priorities.

- Volunteer evaluators review and score applications based on a set of criteria.
- HEF Grant Committee, composed solely of HEF Board members, take all scoring into consideration and provides the HEF Board with funding recommendations.

When will I be notified if I will receive a grant award and receive funds?

- All applicants will be notified as to whether they received an award or not.
- Follow us on social media to know when the Grant Patrol will be delivering awards!

If I am notified that I received a grant, when can I expect my funds to be available?

- Funds will be available through the HCISD finance department within 3-4 weeks of Grant Patrol.
- Please keep in mind that your funding can be held up if you haven't submitted your budget spreadsheet to your bookkeeper!

Can I request feedback if I do not receive a grant award?

- Yes. Applicants who were not awarded funds will be invited to contact the Foundation for feedback. You can also request feedback by emailing haysef@haysef.com.

If I do not use the funds by the deadline, can I roll them over to the next school year?

- No. The grants that are awarded by the Foundation are grants for that fiscal cycle (school year) only. HEF financial policies require that all grant monies not expended by the deadline must be returned to the Foundation. As a registered nonprofit, this practice is an important factor in meeting our fiduciary duty to the Foundation and the District ("grant cycle rule").

CRITERIA:

What criteria is considered in the evaluation?

- In order to ensure that funds awarded provide a strong and meaningful return on investment to HCISD, criteria areas include:
 - The proposal's alignment with and support for the HEF mission, HEF funding priorities, and HCISD curriculum priorities,
 - HEF Funding priorities include funding HCISD priorities for which there is not another source of funding or a lack of funds.
 - Quality and quantity of impact on student learning,
 - Impact in supporting initiatives that improve attendance or raise participation in co-curricular and extracurricular activities, and
 - Quality of professional development and degree of benefit to HCISD from applicant's attendance.

FAQ for HEF Grant Applications

- Demonstration of due diligence that applicant has sought primary sources of funding.
 - The lack of demonstration that due diligence has been made in seeking primary sources of funding will negatively impact the consideration of an application. Primary sources include district funds, boosters, PTA's, and state and federal grants.

What are some of the most common mistakes applicants make that have negatively impacted the consideration of their application?

- Lack of demonstration that due diligence was made in seeking primary sources of funding.
- Using identifiable information
- Not answering the questions asked
- Submitting a first draft
- Not attending P.D. that you were previously awarded
- Not communicating with your Principal
- Requesting equipment that is not compatible or materials not in alignment with HCISD
- Not Submitting a Grant Report

How much budget detail should I provide in the application?

- Applicants are required to complete the budget detail spreadsheet provided by the Foundation. This form must be used and uploaded to Smarter Select where indicated.
- When listing items, applicants should consider if an item will be serving specific populations, such as:
 - Special Ed, GT, Dyslexia, Intervention, Bilingual/ESL, CTE, Athletics, Extra Curricular (Fine Arts, UIL, Afterschool clubs), Library, Nursing.
- The itemized list must include the cost and quantity of each item, total per item, and a total for all items. Website links are highly encouraged. **Applications containing incomplete, incorrect or vague budget information will not be considered.**

I'm requesting software/technology/licenses, do I need to get pre-approval from Hays CISD before submitting my grant application?

- **Yes**, you will need to fill out a "Software Approval Request Form". You can find that form by following the steps listed below:
 - IT Portal Icon on your Hays CISD computer desktop
 - Click "Need Help? Report It" button
 - Under "Software Approval Request Form", click "New Ticket"
 - Questions: helpdesk@hayscisd.net or (512) 268-2141 ext. 44357

I'm requesting a project or construction that may alter a building's interior, exterior, or the facility grounds that changes the district property from its original condition. Do I need to notify HCISD Maintenance and Operations (M&O)?

- Yes, you will need to fill out a "Hays CISD Project and Construction Request Form".

FAQ for HEF Grant Applications

You can find that form here: [Hays CISD Project and Request Form](#).

- Examples include gardens, sandboxes, walls, outdoor structures, etc.
- You will need to notate on the form that you are applying for an HEF grant to pay for the project.
- Please know that M&O review time is estimated at 2-3 weeks.

TYPES OF GRANTS

There are several kinds of grants. Which grant should I apply for?

- Visit our [website](#) for specifics about each grant.

Innovative Grants

Are there any restrictions that I should be aware of when applying for items for my classroom?

- Yes. There are certain items that require additional information in order to qualify for funding, including:
 - **NEW 26-27: Printers:** If you ask for a printer, you will need to include in your application how you will fund continued maintenance and supplies.
 - **NEW 26-27: Mobile Planetarium:** Campuses for which a mobile planetarium has been awarded will be ineligible for another mobile planetarium grant award for 4 years. This will allow the Foundation to be able to fund a rotation of campuses while allowing each class of students to experience a mobile planetarium at least once during their time at that campus.
 - **NEW 26-27: PBIS Store:** Funds for starting a PBIS store will be capped at \$1,000.
 - **NEW 26-27: Subscription:** if you are requesting a subscription, in order to be considered for funding, you must include in your application an explanation as to how you will cover costs in future years.

Collaborative Grants

Can more than one campus be included in a collaborative grant application?

- Yes. Collaborative grants are designed to provide resources that impact a Hays CISD program, an entire campus, an academic department or a grade level and that have the potential to significantly impact student achievement. Applications will be accepted that involve a campus, a group of teachers or administrators at a campus, a group of teachers or administrators from different campuses, or a district administrator.

FAQ for HEF Grant Applications

Professional Development Grants

I'm requesting funds for a professional development conference, what do I need to include?

- **Details of the PD:** You must include date(s), location, registration fee, registration deadline, amount, number of people attending, additional costs (lodging, travel, etc.).
- **Budget to attend:** As is required by all applicants, PD applicants will be required to complete the budget detail spreadsheet provided by the Foundation.

Are there any requirements for the travel requested in my PD grant application?

- Yes. If your project involves travel, please note the following HEF & district requirements:
 - **HCISD Travel Form**
 - ALL travel requires the district pre- and post- out of district travel form to be completed and signed.
 - **Out of state travel**
 - Must be approved by Dr. Wright using the district Out of State Authorization Form.
 - If traveling out of state, travelers will have to pay for all taxes.
 - **Hotels**
 - Applicants must not pre-pay for hotels
 - Hotel rate should be GSA, when possible
 - **Transportation**
 - For staff members traveling together by vehicle: only 1 vehicle for every 4 travelers will be reimbursed.
 - **Substitutes**
 - Funds to cover the cost of substitutes may be awarded. Applicants are encouraged to include this cost in their application budget spreadsheet. The funding of the request is dependent upon availability of funds and at the discretion of the HEF Board of Directors.
 - **Food**
 - Grant awards will **not** be awarded to cover food or per diem for food. Purchases for food or per diem will not qualify for reimbursement.
 - **Incidentals**
 - Incidentals will **not** be covered during travel. Example: cabs, extra hotels stay, room service, etc.

What if I am seeking a grant for a professional development opportunity occurring during the following summer?

- We only award PD grants during the grant cycle that is awarded each September. Therefore, we strongly encourage you to plan in advance and

FAQ for HEF Grant Applications

apply for the PD grant during the grant cycle that opens at the beginning of the academic year before the summer in which the PD event occurs.

NEW 26-27: I will be attending professional development with colleagues from my campus / department. Do we need to each apply separately?

- No. In fact, we encourage you to apply together. The Foundation values collaboration whether that be within your vertical team or across grades or subjects.

Do HEF professional development grants cover International professional development tours/excursions?

- No. Grants awarded by the Hays Education Foundation may not be used for international travel or events, even if they do involve or provide professional development.

Do HEF professional development grants cover Continuing Education Units (CEU's)?

- No. Grants awarded by the Hays Education Foundation may not be used to cover the cost of CEU's.

Are there any limitations on how frequently I can apply for a PD grant?

- Yes, there are limitations. At least at this time, Foundation funds do not allow us to say 'yes' to everyone that applies for a PD grant. In order to give as many teachers as possible the opportunity to receive a PD grant, the Foundation will:
 - Give priority to teachers who have not yet received a PD grant, and
 - Limit funding of the same teachers for the same conference no sooner than every other year.

Can I apply for a grant to attain my National Certification, Master's Degree, or college degree?

- No. There is no reliable way for the Foundation to recoup funds should a teacher decide or need to leave HCISD. It is our understanding that HCISD does have such a program. Therefore, we encourage you to contact the District.

Student Grants

Do I need to be aware of any of the rules under Excellence in Education Grants listed above?

- Yes. All General Information rules listed above are applicable to student grants.

Do you have to be enrolled in Employee Giving in order to be eligible for a student grant award?

- *No, this requirement does not apply to Student Grant awards.*

Is there more than one type of student grant?

- Yes. There are 2 types of student grants:

FAQ for HEF Grant Applications

- **100% Hays Student Grant:** for any Hays CISD student in need of financial assistance and for which there is no other source of funding available (including activity funds, booster organizations, and PTA's)
- **100% Hays Student Relief Fund Grant:**
 - Limited to MKV, Foster and students with financial hardship with needs that Federal Funds cannot cover or for which booster clubs or PTA's do not typically set aside funds.

Is there a cap on the amount of funding I can request?

- No. Student grants are not capped; they are based on need. **However**, it is important to the Foundation that funding be prioritized to help support students in need for which there is no other funding source or funding available – for example:
 - Activities, clubs, etc for which there is no booster organization
 - Programs with boosters that weren't able to raise the funds needed
 - Fees, etc for programs that have done their "due diligence" (i.e. conducted fundraisers) but just weren't able to raise enough to cover the need
- The lack of demonstration that due diligence has been made in seeking primary sources of funding (District, Boosters, PTA) will negatively impact the consideration of an application.

How does someone apply for a student grant?

- For students that do not qualify as MKV or foster students,
 - Applications must be filled out by the HCISD employee that oversees the student(s) activity, such as the teacher, director, or sponsor.
 - Find the **100% Hays Student Grant application** on the Foundation website at <https://www.haysef.com/grants>
- For MKV or foster students only:
 - The Principal or Counselor at which the student attends submits a request through the **100% Hays Student MKV and Foster Fund google form**. If you have questions about eligibility or requests, contact Deann Holzman, HCISD MKV Support Specialist.

What if a student finds themselves in financial hardship or an MKV student moves into the District outside of the grant application window?

- Not a problem. Unlike Excellence in Education grants listed above that must be submitted during the grant application window, applications for student grants are considered year-round.

What types of costs will student grants cover?

- 100% Hays Student Grants:
 - Some examples include:
 - Program, Club, and Activity participation fees and associated costs,
 - Equipment needed for student to participate or compete,

FAQ for HEF Grant Applications

- 100% Hays Student Relief Fund grants (MKV, Foster Student, and students with financial need)
 - Some examples include:
 - School social events,
 - Senior yearbooks,
 - Student class trips,
 - Costume/uniforms or fees for UIL academic activities or advancement,
 - Participation fees.

Are there any considerations I should be aware of before applying?

- Yes. if your request It is important to the Foundation that funding be prioritized to help support students in need for which there is no other funding source – for example:
 - Activities, clubs, etc for which there is no booster organization
 - Programs with boosters or PTA's that weren't able to raise the funds needed
 - Fees, etc for programs that have done their "due diligence" – i.e. conducted their 2 allowable fundraisers but just weren't able to raise enough to cover the need.

If I am notified that I received a grant, when can I expect my funds to be available?

- Funds will be accessible through a budget code made available by the HCISD finance department within 3-4 weeks.