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MINNDEPENDENT STEM Grant Program – Applicant Guide

MINNDEPENDENT is pleased to offer this grant opportunity to member schools, in partnership with the **Schott Foundation** and **Xcel Energy Foundation**.

The **STEM Grant Program** supports projects that:

- Strengthen knowledge of **science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM)**, especially in multidisciplinary contexts.
- Develop **STEM skills and practices**, including investigation, problem solving, design, and use of materials, tools, and technology.
- Highlight the **interdisciplinary nature of STEM**, its relevance to everyday life, and the value of STEM skills in the workplace.
- Increase **awareness of and interest in post-secondary STEM education and careers**.

Over the years, MINNDEPENDENT has funded a wide variety of projects that provide new and impactful STEM learning opportunities for students.

Examples of past funded projects are available on the **MINNDEPENDENT STEM GRANT WEBPAGE.**

Tips for a Successful Application

- Clearly address each question in this guide for the grant type you are applying for.
- Describe your project authentically reflecting your school community and the students it will serve.

Questions?

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MINNDEPENDENT STEM Grant Guidelines

For projects implemented from June 2027 to June 2028

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Please read these guidelines carefully.
Visit **https://minndependent.org/stem-grants/** for all grant program documents and resources.

STEM Grant General Information

Eligibility

All MINNDEPENDENT member schools are eligible to apply with the following restrictions:

1. Your school must be an **active MINNDEPENDENT member** during the academic years of both grant application and project implementation.
2. **Starter Grants** are available only to schools with **no prior history** of STEM Grant funding.
3. Schools with an **outstanding final report** from a previous STEM Grant are **not eligible** to apply.
4. Schools may submit only **one STEM Grant application** of any type per year.
5. Funding is available only for projects that **serve students in grades K-12**; funding is not available for preschool projects.

STEM Grant Types

There are four types of STEM Grants:

1. Starter Grants
2. Innovation Grants
3. Sustainability Grants
4. Community Partnership Grants: We Care Solar (Solar Solutionaries)

Submission Process

The required Letter of Interest and Grant Applications must be submitted via Survey Monkey. PDF copies of the Survey Monkey forms found on the MINNDEPENDENT website are for reference only.

IMPORTANT Survey Monkey entries may be lost if your submission is not completed in one sitting. We strongly recommend preparing your submission using word processing software and pasting your responses into Survey Monkey once you are ready to submit.

Post-Award Process & Requirements

- At least **one representative** from each awarded school is expected to attend the **Minnesota Private and Independent Education Awards on Sunday, April 25, 2027**, to receive their STEM Grant award.
- A **STEM Grant Agreement** will be sent by email and must be signed and returned to officially accept the award and initiate payment.
- Teachers listed on the STEM Grant application are expected to attend the **MINNDEPENDENT STEM Education Conference in August 2027, date and location TBD.**
- All schools receiving STEM Grants must submit a **Final STEM Grant Impact Report** by **June 30, 2028**. Reporting instructions and the SurveyMonkey link will be provided at a later date.

Payment Schedule:

- *Starter and Sustainability Grants*: Paid in full upon receipt of the signed agreement.
- *Innovation Grants*: Paid in two installments—two-thirds upon receipt of the signed agreement and one-third upon submission of the implementation plan (due **September 30, 2027).**
- *Community Partnership Grants*: Paid directly to the community partner organization.

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Application Questions Common to Starter, Sustainability, and Innovation Grants

The following questions apply to **Starter, Sustainability, and Innovation Grants**.
(*Community Partnership: We Care Solar applicants, see your separate question set on page 8.)*

Basic Information
Provide:

- School name and contact information
- Lead teacher/project contact
- Additional participating teachers and school contacts (if any)
- Number and grades of students who will participate

You'll also include a **project title** and submit a **budget form** that lists project expenses.
(*Download the form from the MINNDEPENDENT STEM Grant webpage*.)

Helpful Tips

- Keep answers clear and concise. Most responses can be answered in 100–200 words (some may need even less).
- Reviewers rate responses as POOR, FAIR, GOOD, or EXCELLENT based on how completely they *answer the questions.*

Application Questions

1. Project Description
Provide a short overview of your project, including:

- Grade level(s) served
- Subject areas involved
- The overall goal or purpose
- How the project will strengthen STEM education at your school

(Note: This description – edited or in its entirety – will be shared publicly if your project is funded.)

2. Student Outcomes

- List up to three measurable outcomes you hope students will achieve through this project.

3. Evaluation & Assessment

- Describe how you will determine whether your student outcomes were met.
- What data, observations, or student work will you collect and review?

4. Planning & Implementation

- Outline the key steps and timeline for your project.
- Include the major activities and when you expect to complete them.
  (Example: "October–December: curriculum design and materials purchase.")

Application Questions Common to Starter, Sustainability, and Innovation Grants, continued

5. Academic Standards

- Explain how your project connects to **STEM-related academic standards** (no need to copy them directly).
- Also describe the **STEM skills** or practices students will develop and how your project will support them.

6. Diversity, Inclusion & Access

How will your proposed project promote access, meaningful participation, and success in STEM for all students, particularly those who may face barriers to STEM learning or are underrepresented in STEM fields?

Describe how your project will promote engagement, access, and success in STEM for all students, especially those from underrepresented or underserved groups such as girls, students of color, low-income students, English language learners, students with learning differences, and those in rural schools.

This question reflects MINNDEPENDENT's commitment to equitable, high-quality STEM learning for all students. Funded projects should include **intentional strategies and practices** that make STEM learning inclusive and accessible to all.
(See "Resources for Inclusive STEM Learning" on the MINNDEPENDENT STEM Grant webpage)

Types of STEM Grants: Starter, Sustainability, and Innovation Grants

Starter Grants — Up to $1,500

Starter Grants are for schools that have **not received prior funding through the MINNDEPENDENT STEM Grant Program.** Please note that schools are *NOT required* to begin with a Starter Grant—if you have a well-developed project, consider applying for an Innovation Grant.

Additional Starter Grant Questions:

- No additional questions. Only questions on pages 4 and 5 of this document are required.

Sustainability Grants — up to $1000

Sustainability Grants provides **one-time funding** for materials or supplies needed to **continue or refresh** a previously funded STEM project. Schools may request up to $1000.

Additional Sustainability Grant Questions:

1. **Past Project Successes:** Describe the key successes of your previous project and provide evidence of its impact on teaching and learning.

2. **Sustainability:** Explain how this funding supports your school's long-term STEM goals.

Innovation Grants: up to $5,000

Innovation Grants support development and implementation of promising new STEM-related programs, designed to promote lasting improvement to STEM education at member schools. Conditions that support program sustainability are required elements of Innovation Grant applications, including:

- The project must involve two or more teachers to help ensure the program has buy-in and persists even in the face of staffing changes.
- Applications must include at least one Letter of Commitment from a community partner (e.g., nonprofits, higher education, other schools, STEM professionals, or businesses). Strong community partnerships help schools secure additional funding and help ensure project relevance and real-world connections.

A specific project is only eligible to receive Innovation Grant funding one time. The project you are proposing now must be meaningfully different to any project that has received Innovation Grant funding in the past.

Strong Innovation Grant projects typically accomplish most or all of the following:

- Offer authentic STEM learning using engineering design and/or scientific discovery frameworks.
- Expand and improve the school's STEM offerings.
- Include evaluation to guide implementation, measure success, and identify improvements.
- Support teacher professional development, for example through training, mentoring, or planning stipends.
- Are multidisciplinary.
- Connect STEM learning to real-world applications or careers.
- Plan for long-term continuation and sustainability.
- Build meaningful community partnerships.

Additional Innovation Grant Questions:

1. **Improvement & Sustainability**
   - How will project learnings inform improvements during and after the grant term?
   - How does funding support long-term STEM goals?
   - How will the project continue beyond the funding period?
2. **Cross-Disciplinary Connections**
   - How does the project connect science, technology, engineering, and/or math with other STEM or non-STEM disciplines?
3. **Connections Outside the Classroom**
   - Describe how your project helps students apply STEM learning to their own lives, communities, and the broader world.
   - Include ways the project may introduce students to STEM careers and post-secondary opportunities, using approaches appropriate to the students' age and developmental level.
4. **Community Partners**
   - Identify at least one community partner or mentor who will be involved in your project and describe the role they will play.
5. **Community Partner or Mentor Letter of Commitment (please keep to one page)**
   - **You MUST submit a Community Partner or Mentor Letter of Commitment by the application deadline. Incomplete applications will not be considered.** Please see **"Guidelines for Your Project's Community Partner or Mentor"** for information about the letter requirements and expectations.

Community Partnership Grants: We Care Solar

Eligibility:

- Schools interested in launching We Care Solar (Solar Solutionaries) Program - hands-on solar education and service-learning program in one or more grades 6–12. LEARN MORE
- Schools that have not previously received MINNDEPENDENT funding to implement We Care Solar

Award Details:

- Participating teachers attend in-person training
- Schools receive access to We Care Solar's virtual learning platform and up to 10 solar suitcases
- Grants are paid directly by MINNDEPENDENT to the Community Partner upon receipt of your school's grant agreement

Application Questions

Applicants should answer the common grant questions (**Diversity & Inclusion** and **Cross-Disciplinary Connections**) plus the following:

1. **Why Interested in the Program**
   - Explain in 1–3 sentences how participation will enhance STEM learning at your school

2. **Logistics**
   - Grade(s) in which you plan to teach this program: 6-12
   - Whether the program be delivered during the school day or after school
   - Subject or after-school theme the program will be taught during or part of
   - Required course, elective, or enrichment opportunity

3. **Cross-disciplinary Connections**
   - How will your implementation of We Care Solar connect disciplines within STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)?
   - How will your implementation of We CareSolar connect STEM to other subjects (e.g., language arts, social studies, creative arts, religion, etc.)?

4. **Connections Outside the Classroom**
   - How the program helps students connect learning to their lives, communities, and the world, including STEM careers and post-secondary opportunities

5. **Ability to Attend Training**
   - Priority given to teachers/teams who can attend 1–1.5 day in-person professional development in the Twin Cities, August 2027 (date TBD)

Use of Funds: How STEM Grant Funds May [and May Not] Be Used
Does not apply to Community Partnership Grants: We Care Solar

Allowed and non-allowed grant expenses are described below. We recommend that you contact us before submitting your proposal if you have any questions about what can and cannot be included. Grant funds must be used between the time of grant award, June 2026 and June 2027, unless an extension or alternate plan is approved.

Allowed Grant Expenses

Equipment, Materials & Supplies

- **Non-consumable materials**: Tools, lab equipment, and reusable learning materials essential to the project, with the following considerations:
  - **High-cost equipment** must be clearly justified as essential to the project.
  - **Project-specific technology or equipment** such as computer software or makerspace tools may be included if directly relevant to STEM learning (e.g., not general use).
- **Consumable supplies** may include up to 20% of Starter and Innovation Grant requests; there is no limit for Sustainability Grants.

Professional Development

- **Teacher professional development** directly related to the project is encouraged.
- **Stipends at a rate of** $30/hour, up to $900 per teacher for planning or project development for time outside of and in addition to contracted hours.
- **Workshop or training fees** directly connected to the project
- **Conference registration fees** are allowed only if directly relevant to the proposed project
- For **Sustainability Grants**, professional development funding is allowed only if it supports the original project

Prohibited Uses

- **General-purpose technology** (computers, tablets, projectors, smartboards) or furniture
- **Student expenses** such as field trips, camps, competitions (fees, registrations, tuition, room/board, transportation)
- **Fees or stipends** for guest speakers, chaperones, etc.
- **School-budgeted expenses** such as teacher salaries, building renovations
- **Travel expenses** such as transportation, lodging, meals, car rental for teachers attending conferences/workshops
- **Fees for programs** from community organizations unless they include a teacher professional development component
- **Registration** for the MINNDEPENDENT STEM Education Conference

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Submission Instructions

All **Letters of Interest** and **Grant Applications** must be submitted **via SurveyMonkey**.
PDF copies of the forms are available on the **MINNDEPENDENT STEM Grant webpage** for reference (do not use the PDF forms to submit your application).

We **strongly recommend** drafting your responses in a word processing document and when ready to submit pasting them into SurveyMonkey in one sitting.

Key Dates & Links

Letter of Interest – Due Tuesday, January 12, 2027, by 6:00 p.m.

- Required for all schools intending to apply.
- Describes your preliminary project concept and allows MINNDEPENDENT to provide guidance if needed before the final application due date.
- Submit online: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MFFZTRF

Grant Application – Due Tuesday, February 9, 2027, by 6:00 p.m.

- Submit online: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Z5CR5K8
- Upload required documents: Budget Form and Letter(s) of Commitment (for Innovation Grants)
- All required materials, including the Letter of Commitment for Innovation Grants, must be submitted by the deadline

Additional Information Provided on the MINNDEPENDENT STEM GRANT WEBPAGE:

- STEM Grant Calendar
- Budget Form
- Letter of Interest PDF & Survey Monkey Link
- Grant Application PDF & Survey Monkey Link
- Academic Standards & STEM Resource List
- Resources for Inclusive STEM Learning
- Reference List of Academic Standards
- We Care Solar Program Overview
- Descriptions of previously funded STEM grant project

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