Talent Innovation Fund – Overview & Proposal Process

Cities across the country continue to struggle with long-term solutions to sourcing and sustaining teacher and school leader talent. High-quality schools and school networks represent a fertile pathway for talent innovation.

In order to not only develop solutions for Indianapolis but also to inspire innovation nationally, The Mind Trust established the Talent Innovation Fund to identify and implement creative approaches to solve the talent challenge over the long term. Funding will be used to provide capital to local schools, districts or networks, and organizations to propose innovative strategies to enhance the talent pool in Indianapolis.

Funding might be deployed to medium and large charter networks creating talent solutions, a local or national organization to support several schools in talent gaps, or convening a consortium of school network leaders to identify and implement collective talent solutions.

The Mind Trust will remain nimble in how it allocates its investments to support classroom and school leadership talent. Additionally, use of the Talent Innovation Fund will be aligned to the larger strategic plan for The Mind Trust's talent investments, and will reflect current priority levels for recruitment, development, and/or retention.

To guide investment decisions, the following goals and metrics will be employed in evaluating proposals.

Goals
1. To increase the number of high quality instructional staff in Indianapolis classrooms
2. To increase the quality of current instructional staff in Indianapolis classrooms
3. To retain a higher percentage of high quality instructional staff in Indianapolis classrooms
4. To increase diversity of instructional staff to better reflect student demographics

Priorities
1. Number of instructional staff members affected (to meet need/demand of HQS plan)
2. Number of students affected
3. Includes external research/evidence-based best practices
4. Includes internally-vetted practices (i.e. survey / focus group feedback from current staff)
5. Sustainability of plan beyond initial funding
6. School resourcefulness (Has the school implemented best practices for recruiting / retaining high quality instructional staff outside of philanthropy? (See examples below)
7. Organizational capacity to implement initiative

To ensure objective review of proposals, the following rubric will be used to evaluate the strength of each proposal, to guide feedback and requests for additional information, and to develop appropriate metrics and outcomes.

Goals (1-3, depending on how many are impacted).	Rating			
	0 (DNMS)	**1 (AS)**	**2 (MS)**	**3 (ES)**
Will this proposal increase the number of high quality instructional staff in Indianapolis classrooms?	The number of high quality instructional staff will not increase.	The number of high quality instructional staff will minimally increase.	The number of high quality instructional staff will meaningfully increase.	The number of high quality instructional staff will significantly increase.
Will this proposal increase the quality of current instructional staff in Indianapolis classrooms?	The quality of current instructional staff will not increase.	A minimal number of instructional staff will move from low performing to high performing.	A meaningful number of instructional staff will move from low performing to high performing.	A significant number of instructional staff will move from low performing to high performing.
Will this proposal increase the percentage of high quality instructional staff remaining in the classroom?	The retention rate of high quality instructional staff will not increase.	The retention percentage of high quality instructional staff will minimally increase.	The retention percentage of high quality instructional staff will meaningfully increase.	The retention percentage of high quality instructional staff will significantly increase.

	Rating			
Priorities (1 for each)	**0 (DNMS)**	**1 (AS)**	**2 (MS)**	**3 (ES)**
How many students will be affected by this proposal?	A minimal number of students will be affected.	A meaningful number of students will be affected.	A substantial number of students will be affected.	A significant number of students will be affected across the city.
Will this proposal increase the diversity of instructional staff in Indianapolis classrooms?	The percentage of instructional staff who identify as people of color will not increase.	The percentage of instructional staff who identify as people of color will minimally increase.	The percentage of instructional staff who identify as people of color will meaningfully increase.	The percentage of instructional staff who identify as people of color will significantly increase.
Does the proposal incorporate evidence-based best practices?	There is no evidence that an investment in this proposal will lead to the documented outcomes.	There is minimal or mixed evidence that an investment in this proposal will lead to documented outcomes.	The proposal includes some evidence that an investment would lead to documented outcomes.	The proposal includes a significant amount of research/ evidence that an investment would lead to documented outcomes.

Did the organization obtain internal feedback to inform the content of the proposal?	There is no evidence that the organization used internal feedback.	It is inferred that the organization incorporated *some* method of informal internal feedback.	The proposal includes evidence that the organization incorporated internal feedback.	The proposal includes evidence that internal feedback was a primary source of direction.
Does the proposal include a method for sustainability?	The proposal does not include a mechanism to become sustainable and will rely on continued philanthropy.	The proposal includes a timeline for sustainability, but no explicit plan to do so.	The proposal includes a timeline for sustainability and a potential method of doing so (potential to fall through).	The proposal includes a timeline for sustainability and a secured method of doing so (likely to occur).
Has the organization exhausted other methods of recruitment, development, and retention that don't require philanthropy?	There is evidence that the organization has not explored other methods to address talent concerns prior to proposing philanthropy.	There is evidence that the organization has incorporated some additional measures, but not others.	There is evidence that the organization has incorporated several measures to address talent concerns, but believes the proposal is a key lever to larger impact.	There is evidence that the organization has incorporated several effective measures to address talent concerns and the proposal will serve to enhance these efforts in a cohesive way.
Does the organization have the capacity to effectively implement the proposal?	The proposal does not include an implementation plan or the plan is clearly ineffective.	The proposal includes an implementation plan but there are significant gaps or concerns about the plan.	The proposal includes a clear and feasible implementation plan.	The proposal includes a clear implementation plan and has a record of effectively executing similar initiatives.

Scoring
Proposals earning scores in the following ranges may receive the corresponding next steps:

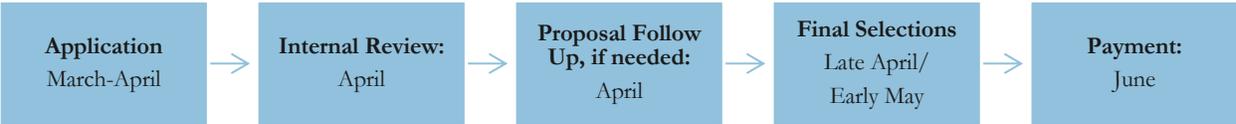|		
0-9	Applicant is informed that the proposal will not be funded	
10-15	Applicant may be contacted to request additional	If revised proposal does not meet the rubric guidelines, see above.

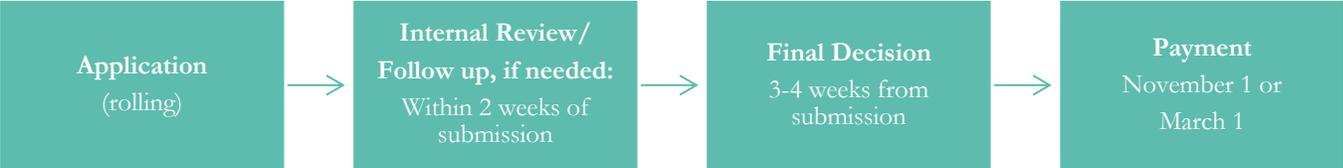|		
	information or proposal revisions	If revised proposal meets the rubric guidelines, see below.
16-22	Applicant may be contacted to discuss the proposal, mainly to confirm strengths of the proposal and to answer questions and minor concerns from the review.	If follow up meeting raises concerns about the proposal, see above.
		If follow up meeting confirms or adds to strength of proposal, see below.
23-30	Applicant is informed that the proposal will be moved forward to final selection for funding and a meeting is scheduled to determine agreed upon implementation timelines, measures of success, and methods of reporting and to formulate contract/MOU.	

Sustainability

Funding streams are dependent upon awards specific to The Mind Trust talent initiatives. Since funding may include varying award periods, funding has been allocated to each proposal cycle to reach the specified total amounts. However, given that several awards overlap proposal cycles, The Mind Trust staff may reallocate available funds, as necessary. This may be due to deciding to invest a significantly larger amount in one proposal and, thus, needing to add additional funds to a cycle. Or this may occur due to the lack of approved proposals in one cycle, and moving remaining funds to the next.

Proposed funding streams and cycles are based on a semi-annual application cycle with rolling deadlines. The Mind Trust Staff will accept proposals throughout the year with a guaranteed review at the start of each cycle. An example review process and period is captured below.

NEW TALENT INNOVATION FUND PROPOSALS

Application March-April	→	Internal Review: April	→	Proposal Follow Up, if needed: April	→	Final Selections Late April/ Early May	→	Payment: June

RENEWAL INVESTMENT PROPOSALS

Application (rolling)	→	Internal Review/ Follow up, if needed: Within 2 weeks of submission	→	Final Decision 3-4 weeks from submission	→	Payment November 1 or March 1

The example timeline allows staff to review proposals against current goals and priorities with a window of time to seek out additional proposals, if necessary. This may occur if the proposals submitted were not approved or if those approved did not sufficiently address the established need (for example, approved proposals may have all targeted development, but there is a clear need for recruitment strategies). Additionally, while this is the general time frame, The Mind Trust staff reserves the right to review proposals as they are submitted and move through the process as deemed appropriate.

Research-based Best Practices (non-exhaustive)

Methods of recruitment
Job boards
Hiring fairs (independent or collaborative)
Selective/thorough hiring practices
Advertisements
Relationships/partnerships with local universities
Relationships/partnerships with alternative talent pipelines
Multi-level staffing (paras, teaching aids, classroom teachers, teacher leaders, master teachers, etc.)
Competitive pay or benefit packages

Methods of development
In-house professional development (creation and delivery)
Creative staffing practices to allow for peer development
Use of technology to access resources
Individualized growth plans and development
Use of Title 4 or other grants to access meaningful opportunities
Collaboration with other schools or networks
Use of community resources (including local and state-wide, such as DOE)

Proven methods to retain *high quality* teachers
Clear evaluation systems
Performance-based, competitive pay
Opportunities for growth, promotion
Professional team/collaborative systems and cultures
High quality leadership:
- Consistent constructive feedback and development loops
- Recognition for performance
- Providing resources for meaningful development
- Building a strong instructional culture

Opportunities for transparent communication at leadership levels (surveys, etc.)
HQ talent retention goals