

Q&As: Innovation in Learning Fund (ILF)

1. What is the Innovation in Learning Fund (ILF)?

The ILF is ongoing funding for district school boards, school authorities and provincial schools to:

1. Provide professional development opportunities that help to equip educators to facilitate experiences that will foster deeper learning and global competencies in students.
2. Implement innovations in learning and teaching (“innovation projects”) that will help to foster deeper learning and global competencies in students.

The ILF provides one standard allocation of \$109,000 per year to each district and \$23,200 per year to school authorities. A minimum of 50% of the ILF allocation must be invested in educator professional development. However, the entire allocation may be spent on professional development.

2. What is meant by “deeper learning” and global competencies?

Deeper learning refers to a person’s ability to effectively take what he or she has learned in one situation and apply it to a new situation. This is commonly known among educators as “learning for transfer”. Deeper learning involves the interplay of the cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal domains.

In 2016, the ministry released a [21st Century Competencies Foundation Document for Discussion](#) that outlined a draft set of global competencies that reflect the kinds of higher order knowledge, skills and attitudes that students of all ages need in order to succeed in an economy and world that is marked by ever-increasing change, technological acceleration and complexity. These “global competencies” build on solid foundations in literacy and numeracy and include:

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship
- Learning to Learn/Self-Aware & Self-Directed Learning
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Global Citizenship

In 2017, the ministry provided school boards with a national set of competencies agreed to by all Canadian Ministers of Education as a further resource to inform their

understanding. Descriptions of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) global competencies are available here: <http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/CODE-TLF/tel.html>.

3. Why does a minimum of 50% of the ILF allocation have to be used for educator professional development?

International research supports the importance of pedagogy-driven innovations and the idea that the modernization of education needs to place teaching practice (rather than technology) in the driving seat. The ILF aims to build upon the strong innovation work that has occurred across districts through the three-year Technology and Learning Fund by purposefully focusing on supporting the evolution of teacher practice. For that reason, a minimum of 50% of the ILF allocation is to be invested in locally-determined, educator professional development. Empowering the learning of our teachers is imperative for maintaining a high-functioning, relevant and responsive education system.

4. What are effective educator professional development activities that the ILF can be used for?

Supporting the learning of our teachers is imperative for maintaining a relevant and responsive education system. Examples of professional development activities include:

- Co-teaching through release time for teacher mentors
- Professional learning community (PLC) sessions integrated within the school day
- Online and blended learning opportunities
- Online professional learning networks (PLN)
- Collaborative digital tools to share ideas and resources
- Leveraging PA Days to do large-scale work with external presenters (including virtual presenters)
- Connecting school boards for learning opportunities (e.g. northern regions)
- Including students with educators in professional learning opportunities, thereby empowering students to carry the learning forward back into the classrooms
- Job-embedded collaborative inquiry
- Internal and external partnerships for job-embedded school/classroom-based learning/teaching/research activities, including at-the-elbow coaching models

5. What types of innovations in learning and teaching (innovation projects) should we be implementing?

All innovations should be aimed towards fostering deeper learning and global competencies in students, by focusing on, for example, real-world, authentic learning tasks; inquiry and experiential learning; innovative learning spaces; and inter-disciplinary learning.

Outlined below are three focus areas that can be used to guide innovation projects. International research evidence indicates that focusing on these areas of practice help to foster deeper learning and the development of global competencies. The goals are intended to be broad and inclusive of a variety of practices that may look different from K-12, across subject disciplines and are supported by diverse technologies.

Innovation Project Focus Areas:

1. **Creating teacher-student and peer-peer learning partnerships** (e.g. students co-designing learning tasks; new teacher - student partnerships)
2. **Transforming assessment practices** (e.g. differentiating assessment as, of, and for learning; ongoing formative assessment by teachers and peer, global competencies assessment frameworks)
3. **Expanding professional learning models** (e.g. online/blended learning, job-embedded, external learning/teaching/research partnerships)

Educators are encouraged to think broadly about variety of innovations. For example, innovations could include projects:

- That focus on pedagogical innovation (e.g. project-based learning)
- To build innovative classrooms with green technologies that support collaboration (e.g. with environmental not-for-profits)
- That enhance entrepreneurship and creativity among peers
- That connect and engage teachers and students around the world on relevant issues and ideas
- That address specific challenges (e.g. Renewed Math Strategy) or specific groups of students (e.g. special needs, Indigenous).

Further resources to help guide ILF implementation will be made available in the Fall of 2017.

6. How can I spend my ILF funds to support my Innovation Projects?

A minimum of 50% of the ILF allocation is to be invested in locally-determined, educator professional development. The remaining dollars can be spent on:

- **Research & Design** (e.g. designing new innovations, documentation and data collection of innovations, data analysis and measurement of innovations)
- **Partnerships** (e.g. working with a not-for-profit to introduce students to global citizenship)
- **Supporting Resources** (e.g. system-level leadership learning, communicating innovation work for knowledge integration across the system)

7. How might we leverage our ILF partnerships to optimize the efficacy of our research and innovations?

Designing, measuring, implementing and scaling-up innovations in learning may require the services of external partners. To optimize the efficacy of your innovation work, consider working with:

- University researchers
- International organizations
- Academic institutions
- Community-groups
- Not-for-profit groups

8. How will the ministry be supporting the ILF?

The ministry will provide ILF-related resources in the Fall of 2017 to support implementation. In addition, ministry staff will be available to provide advice on effective practices and make connections between boards involved in similar initiatives.

The ministry will also continue to support innovation work through documenting and sharing current innovative school board transformations and practices across the province through videos, research summaries and board artefacts; an annual Innovation in Learning Conference and facilitating networked learning communities. The ministry is also continuing its holistic investment in innovation, through:

- Continuing funding for the purchase of technology and digital tools via Grants for Student Needs (GSN);

- Technology Enabled Learning and Teaching contacts for each board (these contacts, previously funded through the TLF, are now part of the annual GSN allocation);
- Providing all school boards with a Virtual Learning Environment to support online learning for both students and educators;
- An extensive array of digital resources, including licensed software and resources such as eLearning courses produced by the ministry; and
- Investing in broadband modernization to improve access in schools across the province.

9. How is the ILF different from the TLF?

The main focus of the ILF is investing in educator professional development to empower educators to foster global competencies in students. The ILF can be considered an evolution of the TLF: designed to shift the focus from technology to teacher practice. For this reason, a minimum of 50% of the ILF allocation is to be invested in locally-determined, educator professional development. Supporting the learning of our teachers is imperative for maintaining a high-functioning, relevant and responsive education system. Other ways in which the ILF differs from the TLF include:

- the ILF will be administered by the ministry directly; and
- there is no allocation for technology acquisition as part of the ILF.

10. Who can I contact for more information about the ILF?

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