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WHAT IS THE INNOVATION FUND?

> *The Innovation Fund provides grants for small-scale projects & pilot initiatives proposed by City employees.*

- Funding for unique, creative projects that have the potential to positively impact the services and functions of municipal government

- As of September 2023, the Innovation Fund has $25,000 to award. Projects can request up to $10,000, with most awards ranging from $6,000 - $8,000.

- Managed by Innovation Advisory Group & Philadelphia City Fund

WHY DOES THE INNOVATION FUND EXIST?

Create & sustain a culture of innovation in government

Empower employees to bring their ideas to life

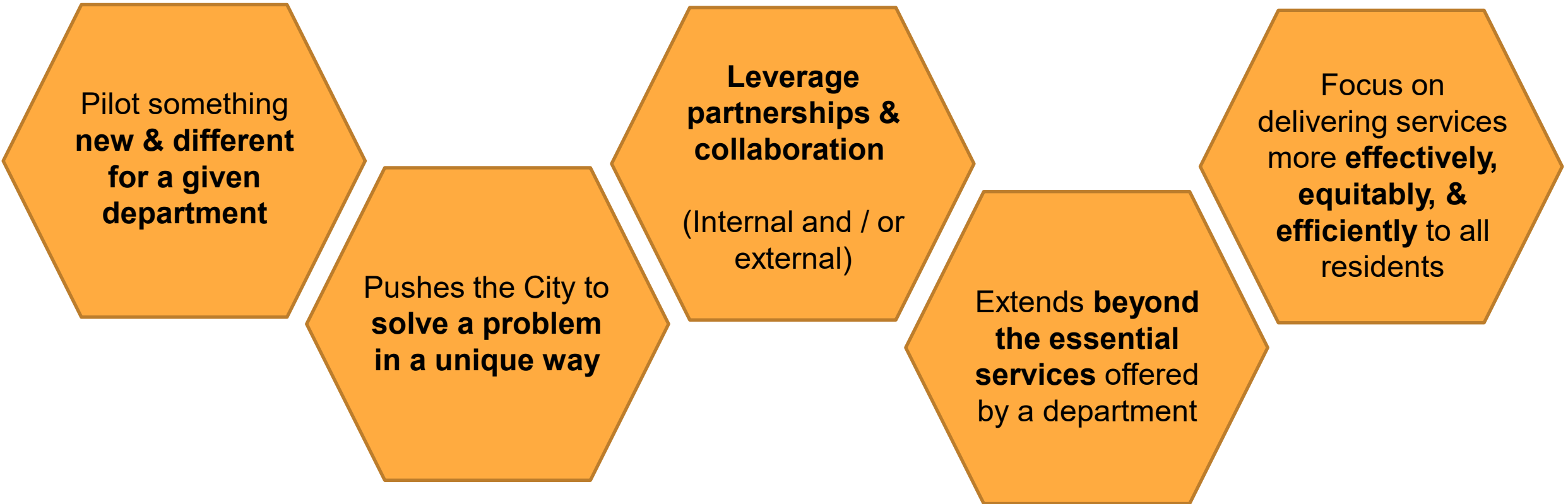Improve government services by challenging the *status quo*

Pilot projects before they are taken to scale

WHAT TYPES OF PROJECTS DO WE FUND?

Pilot something **new & different for a given department**

Pushes the City to **solve a problem in a unique way**

Leverage partnerships & collaboration

(Internal and / or external)

Extends **beyond the essential services** offered by a department

Focus on delivering services more **effectively, equitably, & efficiently** to all residents

EXAMPLES OF PREVIOUSLY FUNDED PROJECTS

Philadelphia Department of Prisons (PDP) – *"Orchard Refrigeration Unit"*

PDP installed a self-contained outdoor refrigeration unit in order to facilitate the safe storage of harvested fruits and vegetables from their orchard during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA) – *"Multilingual Voter Guides"*

OIA used funding to support the creation, testing, and distribution of an illustrated mail-in ballot voter guide. Funding was used to pay immigrant-serving community partners (stipends), potential voters (gift cards for participating in usability testing) and purchasing supplies.

EXAMPLES OF PREVIOUSLY FUNDED PROJECTS

Service Design Studio (SDS) & Mayor's Office of Civic Engagement & Volunteer Service (MOCEVS) –
"Equitable Community Engagement Toolkit"

This collaborative effort used funding to develop Toolkit guidance and training through collaboration with residents, community advisors, and City staff. After receiving an Innovation Fund grant, the project team went on to receive a $500k Operations Transformation Fund (OTF) grant to expand this work.

SPRING 2023 FUNDED PROJECTS

"Sensory Inclusion Project" *(Mayors Office for People with Disabilities)*

The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, in partnership with KultureCity, will lead Philadelphia to become the first certified Sensory Inclusive City in the world. This project will be the first municipal effort to train an entire city workforce and certify Philadelphia as the first certified Sensory Inclusive City, along with supplying mobile sensory inclusive spaces and tools that City departments can use for events and meetings upon request.

"Sexual Health Education Materials" *(Youth Care Team, MCFH Division, Department of Public Health)*

The Youth Care Team will create sexual health education materials that are racially diverse and trans-affirming, and disseminate to city health centers, local healthcare organizations, local youth-serving organizations, and the school district's Student Health Services at no cost to them. YCT intends to hire a local artist who holds one or more of the target identities to create digital illustrations of bodies and body parts that represent the diversity of youth in Philadelphia.

"OVA Community Investment Microgrant Project" *(MCFH Division, Department of Public Health & OVA)*

Organized Voices for Action (OVA) is a multi-sector action team that includes representatives from PDPH. This project will launch a mini-grant program to provide community-based organizations (CBOs) with technical assistance funding. These small-scale grants aim to fill a funding gap that CBOs currently experience, helping them to grow their capacity, address pressing maternal health needs, and provide support for their organization's sustainability.

INNOVATION FUND APPLICATION PROCESS

INITIAL ONLINE SUBMISSION

- Serves as LOI

- "Elevator pitch" concept … short responses provide brief overview of idea

- Must have departmental approval

VIRTUAL PITCH SESSION

- Presented to Innovation Advisory Group

- 5 min. pitch, followed by 20 min. Q&A

- Feedback & support ahead of proposal stage

FINAL PROPOSAL

- More robust, detailed

- Full budget plan

- Opportunity to incorporate feedback from pitch sessions

FALL 2023 TIMELINE

September 20th
Initial online application form due

Week of October 2nd
Applicants notified

October 16th – 19th
Mandatory Virtual Pitch Sessions

Week of October 23rd
Applicants notified

November 28th
Final proposal due

* Applicants notified of final funding decisions mid-December

WHAT MAKES A STRONG INITIAL APPLICATION?

- **Give it thought.** The initial application might be short, but you still want to make a strong first impression! Be clear, concise, and complete in your responses. Think through how you can convey the innovative and creative essence of your idea with limited space, and make sure the questions are fully answered.

- **Check your spelling!** Make sure to proofread your application and ensure spelling & grammar is accurate. One helpful tip ... type your responses in Word, and then copy / paste into the online form.

- **Make sure you have department approval.** You'll be asked to certify that leadership is committed to implementing / testing this project + provide contact information.

- **Be clear about the budget.** You don't need to provide a detailed budget at this point but be sure to outline what the funding will be used for / why you can't get it from your dept.

WHAT MAKES A STRONG INITIAL APPLICATION?

- **Do your research.** Show that you've done your due diligence in researching similar efforts in Philadelphia or beyond. Reach out to other departments if you think there might be ways to collaborate (see below) OR note where you might need help with making connections.

- **Collaborate with others, if applicable.** For some projects, a collaborative effort might make more sense than an individual team leading the charge on their own! If you think it makes sense to work with another City department and / or outside organization, be sure to communicate with them before submitting your initial application.

Need additional support?

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City of
Philadelphia

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do you "define" innovation? What if my project isn't "flashy" enough?

Innovation looks different for everyone! We typically avoid providing an explicit definition of what is or isn't innovative since every circumstance is different, and we don't want to put parameters on what could be transformative for a given team or department. Also, municipal innovation often looks a lot different from innovation in the private sector, where you might see higher-cost, large-scale, tech-driven projects and assume that since they're "flashy," it automatically makes them more innovative. For government, sometimes innovation has nothing to do with technology!

You can read through some previously-funded Innovation Fund projects on the Innovation Fund website to get a better idea of what might be considered innovative in this space.

How many Innovation Fund cycles are there per calendar year? When will the next Innovation Fund cycle be?

We currently hold two cycles per calendar year. We anticipate sticking to this structure, in which case the next cycle (after the current Fall '23 cycle) would be in Spring 2024.

How many projects are awarded per calendar year?

The number of projects chosen per cycle is determined by a) the amount of total funding available, and b) the amount of money requested by applicants.

During this Fall 2023 Innovation Fund cycle, we have a total of $25,000 to award. This means we could fund 2 projects at $10,000 each plus one $5,000 project ... or split evenly among 3 projects ... or any other combination!

Can two or more departments apply jointly for the same project? If so, should it be in one application, or should each department apply separately?

We love collaboration! If you're partnering with one (or more) departments and / or external orgs, you only need to submit ONE application. Please note: If you're partnering with outside orgs, the actual project submission needs to come from a City employee. You should determine within your project group which City department will be responsible for filling out and submitting the initial application. *At least one* representative from each City department (and any outside orgs, if applicable) should attend the pitch session.

On the initial application there is a question that asks us to certify that we have leadership approval -- is there a specific role / person that this approval needs to come from?

No, there is not a specific role / person that needs to approve your project; however, we need to be confident that someone within department leadership is aware of & supportive of the implementation of your project. In most cases, this person would likely be a director / commissioner / etc.

Can my department submit more than one application?

You are welcome to submit more than one application, but it is highly unlikely that you would be awarded more than one grant.

If I've been funded in the past, can I apply again? Similarly, If I applied in the past, but wasn't selected, can I apply again?

Yes, of course! Applying to previous cycles and / or receiving previous Innovation Fund grants does not preclude you from applying again.

What are the reporting requirements or other expectations from project teams that receive funding?

Grantees will be asked to meet with the Innovation team for an informal mid-year check-in and must submit a final report at the culmination of their grant term. Grantees may also be asked to submit quarterly data submissions to provide status updates. Aside from these deliverables, project teams are expected to communicate any significant changes, updates, and / or delays in their project in a timely manner.

Can you receive an Innovation Fund as one part of other funding streams?

Technically, yes, you can use an Innovation Fund grant to fund part of a project that has other funders as well. There is space in the initial submission form where you are asked to list any other funding sources *and* the status of that funding. However, since our grant amounts are smaller size, we would likely consider the "impact" our grant would have on the overall project if we were not the only funder. For example, if we provided $10,000 of a $20,000 project, that's a much bigger Innovation Fund impact than if we were $10,000 of a $100,000 project.

RELEVANT LINKS & RESOURCES

- [Innovation Fund Homepage](#)

- [Initial Submission Form](#) *(open through Sept 20)*

- [Fall 2023 Grant Guidelines](#)