




# Spring 2024 Innovation Fund Information Session




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Philadelphia



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***Drop your email address into  
the chat and I'll send you the  
slide deck after this call!***

*You can also find it on the Innovation Fund website after today*  
<https://philacityfund.org/grantmaking/innovation-fund/>





# What is the Innovation Fund?




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## WHAT IS THE INNOVATION FUND?

*The Innovation Fund provides small grants to launch 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 March 2024, 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
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## 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*



Encourage space for testing concepts before scaling up







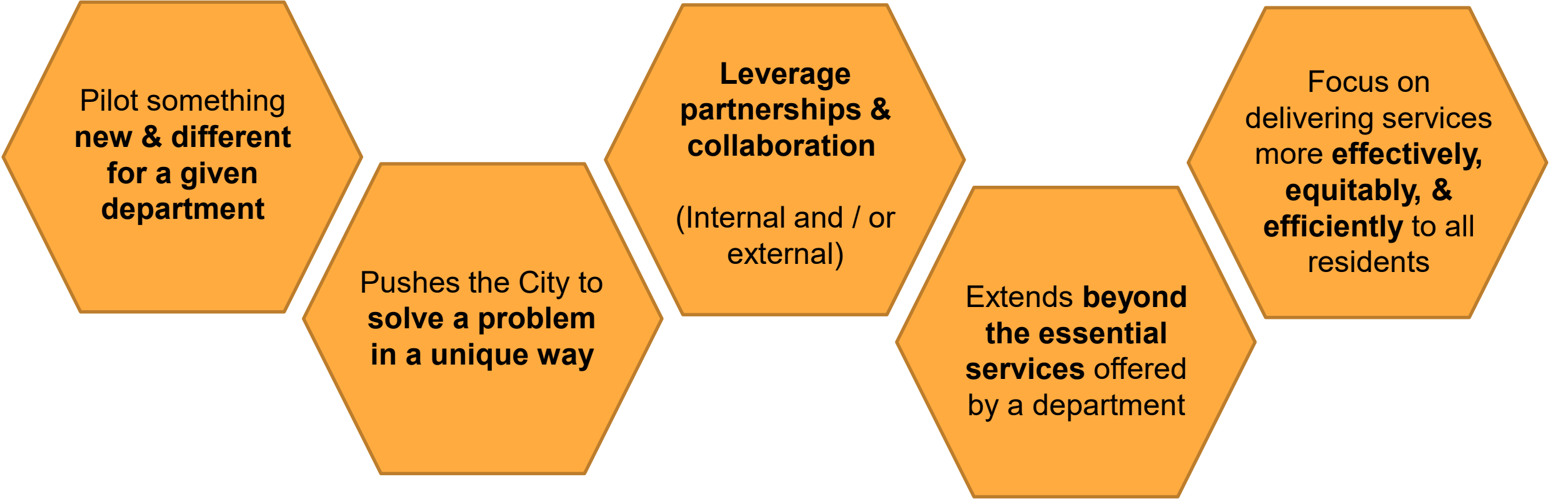
# What types of projects do we fund?



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# 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



## Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities - "Sensory Inclusion Project"

*This project – a partnership between the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities and KultureCity – was the first-ever municipal effort to train an entire city workforce and led Philadelphia to become the first certified Sensory Inclusive City in the world. The first phase of the project rolled out a virtual employee training program, and the second phase will launch a sensory lending program that City departments can request for events and meetings.*

# EXAMPLES OF PREVIOUSLY FUNDED PROJECTS



## **Philadelphia Juvenile Justice Services Center (PJJSC) - "Healing Garden"**

*This was a collaborative project between PJJSC, Artemisia Orchard, and Down North Foundation. The team worked with youth to design their outdoor space, which now houses a pollinator garden, raised beds, fruit trees, and a koi pond. Upcoming installations will include a sensory garden, labyrinth, and edible landscaping.*

*The carpentry program at PJJSC leads classes for youth to build structures for the garden including benches, planters and storage. The team also began piloting a series of culinary and horticulture education classes on a weekly basis for residents. Classes are led by an agriculture educator from Artemisia Orchard, a professional chef from Down North Pizza who was formerly incarcerated, and a farmer / permaculture designer with expertise in meditation and self-compassion facilitation*

# 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.*







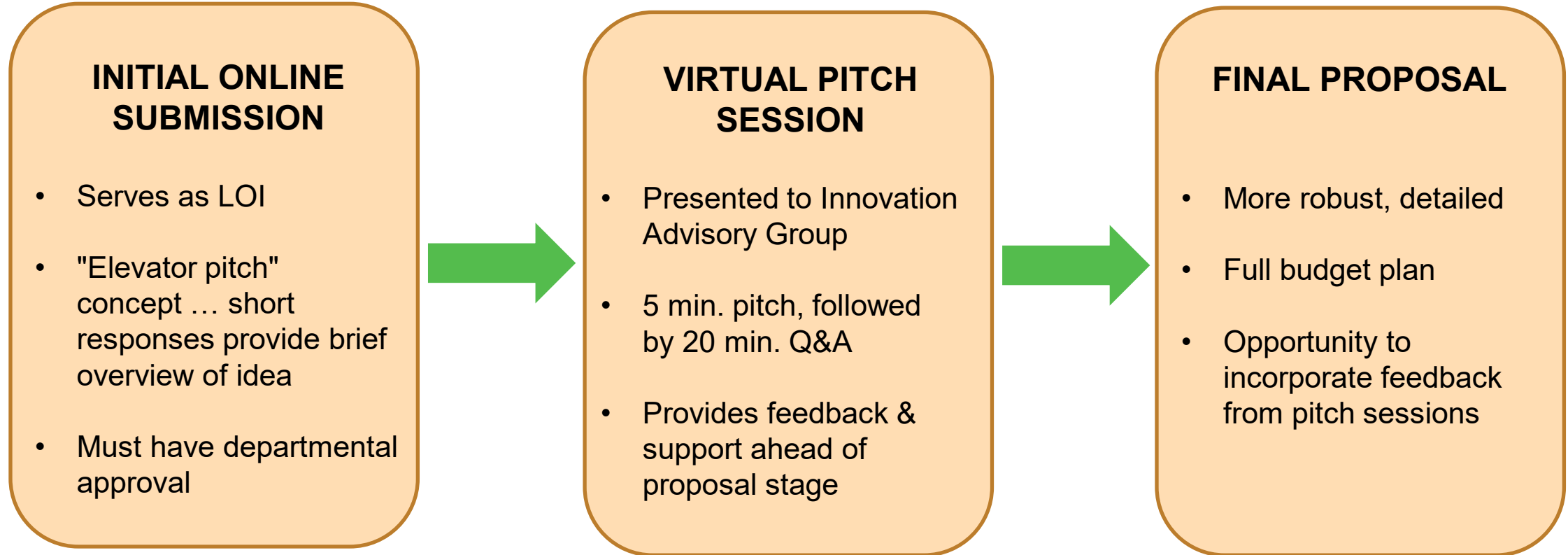
# Application process & timeline



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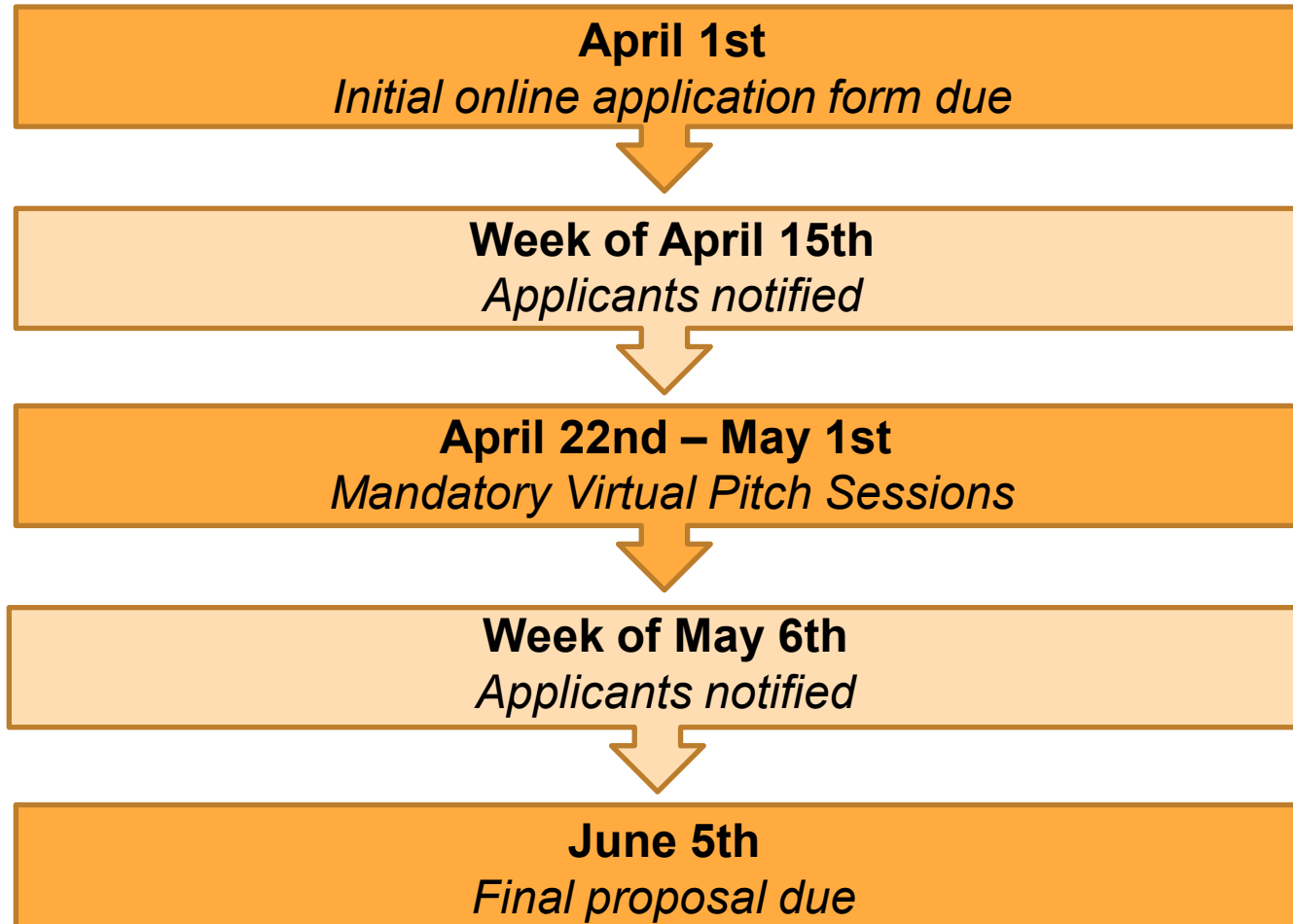


# INNOVATION FUND APPLICATION PROCESS






# SPRING 2024 TIMELINE



*\* Applicants notified of final funding decisions late-June*



## A FEW REMINDERS:

- **Make sure you have department approval.** You'll be asked to certify that leadership is committed to implementing / testing this project + provide contact information. Make sure you've had the necessary conversations with your department leadership ahead of submitting your application.
  - **Applicant must be directly involved with project implementation.** You'll be asked to confirm that the person / department submitting the application will be actively involved in leading / implementing / overseeing the project. In other words, you may not apply on behalf of another department or project team.
  - **Start thinking about fiscal administration.** Applicants will not be required to submit a fiscal administration plan unless they are invited to later stages of the application process. However, applicants are encouraged to reach out to their department's fiscal administrator and begin thinking about these details as early as possible. You can read more about the Innovation Fund fiscal administration policies in the [grant guidelines](#).
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# What makes a strong initial application?



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# WHAT MAKES A STRONG INITIAL APPLICATION?

- **Emphasize the innovative elements.** Be sure to really highlight what *specifically* makes your proposed project / idea unique and innovative. You want to clearly communicate how this concept is something new and different, how it deviates from the norm, and how it would be a truly unique approach to addressing municipal challenges.
  - **Be clear about the budget.** You don't need to provide a line-item budget at this point but be sure to outline in as much detail as possible what the funding will be used for, and why this couldn't be supported by your department's budget.
  - **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 next slide) OR if you know they have led a related effort and might have context to share ahead of your application.
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# WHAT MAKES A STRONG INITIAL APPLICATION?

- **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. Any other project partners should also be present at the pitch session, if you're invited to move forward.
  - **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 essence of your idea with limited space, and make sure your 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.
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# Need additional support?

[Innovation@phila.gov](mailto:Innovation@phila.gov)



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# Q & A



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# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## How do you "define" innovation?

Innovation looks different for everyone! We try to 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!





## **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 Spring '24 cycle) will be in Fall 2024. New cycles are announced in the Employee Newsletter and on the [Innovation Fund website](#).

## **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 Spring 2024 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 involved (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 your department's 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 fill out a short update form on a quarterly basis 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 April 1)*
- [Spring 2024 Grant Guidelines](#)

*Want to learn more about the City's Innovation Team? [Read the report here!](#)*

