

School Library Access (SLA) Mini-Grants

Best Practices in Grant Implementation

Start off on the right foot...by keeping track of the details!

6 detail-oriented steps you can take on Day 1 to stay organized and on track for success:

1. Upon completing School Library Access for All training, establish a location where you will keep all grant-related documents. Place the grant materials provided by ICfL in your secure location along with your own docs, and share that location with others on the grant team.
2. **Read the full grant application/agreement and review the preview questions to prepare for the Interim and Final Reports.** Be sure you understand the requirements and what data should be collected.
3. Add the various grant deadlines (from agreement or the provided timeline) to your calendar (paper or electronic) and then add pre-deadline reminders for yourself, as well.
4. We recommend you bookmark the following web page as it is full of grant-specific resources, including a vetted book list for your use: <https://libraries.idaho.gov/school-libraries/elementary-school-grants/>.
5. Contact your School District finance office. Determine who you will work with throughout the year to order books, pay book vendors, request grant balances, and provide your interim and final expenditures report for this grant. **Make sure the district office has a copy (keep your copy) of the award letter and the grant agreement.**
6. **Use your ICfL Contact Sheet to call or email ICfL if have any questions or concerns about policy implementation or grant expenditures (or anything else!).**

Some things you *maybe* didn't know:

- This grant is awarded to the school district, making the district the official grantee, not the school, the principal or the librarian. When the grant report requests the initials of the "Grantee," an authorized representative from the school district should sign this section of the report. It's usually the librarian, but double check.
- Since the district is the Grantee, the grant funds will be sent electronically to the district office. Be sure the district is expecting the funds to arrive as an EFT.
- The grant funds will be distributed to the district via direct deposit through its account with the State of Idaho vendor system.
- ALL grant funds should be spent. *Every last penny!*
- If the primary or secondary contact leave the school or library, you will need to pass on the grant materials to a replacement, and contact ICfL with the name, email and phone number of the person who will replace you. If you do not know yet who will replace you, please contact ICfL anyway to let us know that you are leaving and are no longer a contact for this grant.

Over the years, our most successful grantees have. . .

...spent all the funds and received all the books within the first semester, or shortly thereafter.

...educated their parents and teachers about this grant with its requirements, and taught a specific routine to their youngest students about caring for their books; we recommend Books and Backpacks are Buddies. Often a letter was sent home to parents providing them with tips on how their child could best keep track of their library book (“In their hands while reading, or in their backpack.”) and how this exposure to print will help their child become a better reader. (ICfL provides a parent letter template on our website). Some schools held a family reading night or similar activity to introduce the concept and the new opportunity to families.

...utilized the school’s older books as their first several practice rounds of checking out and taking home library books. That way, when the shiny, new books come in, your pre-K, K and 1st graders (and older grades) have improved by leaps and bounds with this new responsibility and your library will experience less book loss.

...displayed the new books, covers facing out, in a specific area of the library for the target students. These displays helped get kids excited to check out a book, helped them to easily see their choices, and prevented the wasting of valuable time roaming throughout the library in search of a book selection on limited time.

Try these best practices at your library!