

Instructional Leadership Accelerator Pilot Fund

The **South Carolina Instructional Leadership Accelerator Pilot Fund** is designed to build **instructional leadership capacity** and establish **intentional leadership development systems** within districts.

I. Purpose

High quality leadership is an essential element in schools that show strong results for all students. That is why elevating the quality and long-term effectiveness of school, district, and board leadership is a strategic goal for the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE). Research suggests, “effective principals impact numerous outcomes, such as teacher satisfaction, turnover and quality, student learning, and school culture and climate” (Goldring et al., 2023). **This opportunity provides funds to pilot systems that grow leaders focused on improving outcomes for students.**

Participating applicants are expected to demonstrate progress toward these outcomes:

- Increased instructional leadership knowledge and practice among school and district leaders
- Improved coherence and consistency of leadership development structures
- Reduced leadership and/or teacher turnover
- Improved instructional quality and academic outcomes over time
- Stronger implementation of continuous improvement strategies

II. Funding Details

A. Eligibility Requirements

- South Carolina school districts
- South Carolina charter authorizers or charter schools
- A consortium of multiple districts, charter authorizers, or charter schools

B. Award Amount: Up to \$300,000 per district (final amounts determined by cohort size and proposed scope)

C. Allowable Uses

- Professional learning and capacity building for school leadership teams implementing high-quality instructional materials
- Instructional leadership coaching or professional development for in-service and aspiring school leaders
- Establishing leadership development pipelines for assistant principals and aspiring administrators

D. Non-Allowable Uses:

- General operating costs
- Capital expenses
- Leadership development professional learning not focused on improving teaching and learning

III. Program Design Priorities

SCDE will only review applications that focus on at least ONE of these required priorities.

Required Priority Option 1: Building Instructional Leadership Capacity

Programs must be designed to grow leaders who can focus on improving outcomes for students. This should include building capacity in one or more of these school leader competencies:

- Implementing high-quality instructional materials to ensure consistent and rigorous tier one instruction
- Setting up systems for teacher collaboration that prioritize skillful implementation of high-quality instructional materials
- Facilitating teacher observation, feedback, and coaching systems that focus on student outcomes
- Using data to create and sustain coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment

Required Priority Option 2: Establishing Intentional Leadership Development Pipelines

Programs must be designed to grow the next generation of school leaders who can focus on improving outcomes for students. This must include explicit focus on leading instruction. This may include establishing or strengthening:

- Teacher leadership pathways
- Assistant principal and principal pipelines
- Mentorship of emerging leaders
- Succession planning systems

Competitive Priority Preferences

Applicants can earn a maximum of 35 additional preference points for applications that meet the competitive priority preferences below.

Competitive Priority 1: Partnership (20 points): Applicants partner with an SCDE-approved vendor or established partner district that clearly demonstrates experience with instructional leadership development and alignment with SCDE's mission to improve student outcomes. See Appendix A for a list of SCDE-pre-approved partners. Districts

seeking to work with other partners will need to provide additional rationale in their application for vetting purposes.

Competitive Priority 2: Demonstrated Need (5-15 points): Applicants that meet any of the following criteria will earn an additional 5 points. Applicants that meet two or more of the following criteria earn an additional 10 points. Applicants that meet three or more of the following criteria earn 15 points.:

- **Percent of teachers returning from previous year, three-year average is lower than the state average** (Source: SC Report Card>Classroom Environment, Note: 2025 State Average, 91%)
- **Applicant demonstrates multiple years of significant principal or assistant principal turnover** (As measured by % of inexperienced school leaders and/or principals, frequency of transitions, number of schools with multiple leaders in a 5 year period, Sources: SC Report Card>Classroom Environment, Local Data, Note: 2025 State Average percent of inexperienced principals, 24.8%, percent of inexperienced other school leaders, 30.2%)
- **>40 % schools in applicant entity have a state or federal support designation** (Source: SC Report Cards> State>School Improvement)
- **District or Charter Sponsor Poverty Index > State Average** (Source: SC Report Card Poverty Index, Note: State Total 2025, 62.6%)

IV. Application Elements | [Link to Application Form](#)

A. Applicant Information

Includes contact information for applicant and/or consortium members and assurance of superintendent approval. Selects required priority option.

Statement of Need (Form has space for 500 words maximum)

How does this funding opportunity align with applicant needs? Is there evidence of meeting a competitive priority? Be sure to include specific data that matters in your context, for example, teacher and principal turnover 3-year trend, state accountability and academic performance indicators, school climate survey results, chronic absenteeism, findings from District Strategic and School Renewal Plans, or context about current or previous leadership development efforts.

B. Program Narrative (Form has space for 500 words maximum)

Describe your vision for implementing one of the required priorities to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of school leadership. The narrative must include:

- A description of the proposed leadership development program, target participants, and structures

- Goals for the program
- Proposed partnerships and how the partnerships will develop instructional leadership capacity
- Required and preference priorities included in the application

C. Collaboration Plan (if Applicable)

Districts collaborating with other South Carolina LEAs should:

- Identify partner districts and rationale for collaboration; only one application needed
- Describe vision for shared leadership development activities
- Explain how collaboration increases capacity and sustainability

D. Sustainability Plan

Applicants must outline how leadership development systems will be:

- Institutionalized within district structures
- Aligned with ADEPT and PADEPP standards and processes where applicable
- Initial ideas for how the work will be supported beyond initial funding

E. Required Reporting and Assurances

Districts will submit required annual reporting using SCDE-designated templates. Annual reporting may include data related to expenditures, participation, placement, implementation, and perceived growth of participants. Data will be reported in aggregate by applicant for evaluation and reporting.

V. Application Scoring

Final awards will be determined based on total application scores, availability of funds, geographic diversity, and alignment with SCDE strategic priorities. A scoring rubric is attached as Appendix B.

Appendix A: Pre-approved Partner Organizations

Based on results of previous partnerships and a focus on implementing high-quality instructional materials, strengthening tier-one instruction, focusing teacher collaboration on skillful implementation, and instructional improvement, the SCDE pre-approves partnership with the following organizations: Instruction Partners (HQIM implementation), the Leadership Academy (Principal Capacity), the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (HQIM Implementation), Relay Graduate School (Principal Capacity) and UVA's Partnership for Leaders in Education (Principal Capacity).

Appendix B: SC Instructional Leadership Pilot Fund Application Scoring Rubric

Applicant Name: _____

Partners: _____

Required Priority: Priority 1, Instructional Leadership Capacity _____, Priority 2: Leadership Pipelines _____, No priority _____

Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging	Insufficient
Statement of Need: Competitive Priority 1 _____/20	Selects a pre-approved partner or a district partner with a proven record of school improvement (20-15 points)	Selects a partner with strong evidence of alignment with instructional leadership. (10-points)	Selects a partner with limited explanation or evidence of alignment (5 points)	Not working with a partner (0 points)
Statement of Need: Competitive Priority 2 _____/15	Evidence of 3 or more categories of need (15 points)	Evidence of 2 categories of need (10 points)	Evidence of 1 category of need (5 points)	Limited evidence that needs match priority (0 points)
Program Narrative: Design and Structures _____/25	Clear, aligned description of instructional leadership development program with coherent structures and target audience (25-18 points)	Program description aligned with instructional leadership; defines structures and target audience (17-10 points)	General description of program describes some information about alignment, structures, or audience (9-2points)	Limited description of program and structures (1-0 points)

Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging	Insufficient
<p>Program Narrative: Goals _____/15</p> <p>Pilot outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased instructional leadership knowledge and practice among school and district leaders ○ Improved coherence and consistency of leadership development structures ○ Reduced leadership and/or teacher turnover ○ Improved instructional quality and academic outcomes over time ○ Stronger implementation of continuous improvement strategies 	<p>Goals are specific, measurable with reliable data, aligned to district needs and pilot outcomes, and tied to improved student outcomes (15-11 points)</p>	<p>Goals are specifically aligned with district needs, at least one instructional leadership pilot outcomes, and improved student outcomes (10-6 points)</p>	<p>Goals are specifically aligned with improved student outcomes (5-1 points)</p>	<p>Goals are present but have vague or loose connection with district needs, instructional leadership pilot outcomes, or improved outcomes (0 points)</p>
<p>Partnerships _____/15</p>	<p>Partnership rationale clearly aligned with district needs pilot outcomes, and sustainability (15-11 points)</p>	<p>Partnership rationale includes justification aligned with district needs and pilot outcomes (10-6 points)</p>	<p>Partnership rationale includes some connection to district needs and pilot outcomes (5-1 points)</p>	<p>Partnership rationale includes limited explanation of district needs or pilot outcomes. (0 points)</p>
<p>Sustainability Plan _____/10</p>	<p>Strong explanation of long-term capacity and sustainability (10-7 points)</p>	<p>Adequate explanation of capacity and sustainability (6-4 points)</p>	<p>Limited connection to capacity or sustainability (3-1)</p>	<p>Insufficient or no evidence of sustainability (0)</p>