

CTA | Institute *for* Teaching

EDUCATOR GRANT PROGRAM GUIDE

RESOURCES FOR APPLICANTS

2026-2027



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About the CTA Institute for Teaching

History

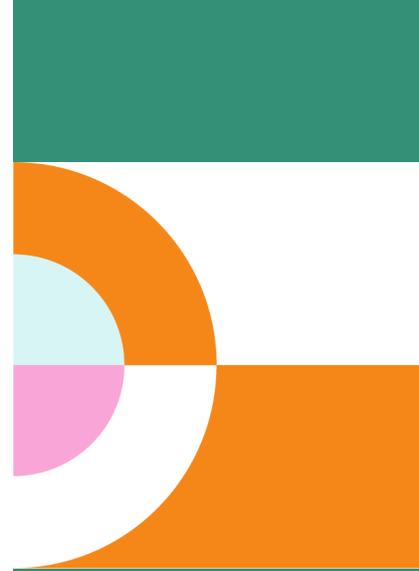
The Institute for Teaching (IFT) was founded in 1967 by the CTA Board of Directors and established as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit foundation to support public education. Since 2002, IFT has been part of the CTA Foundation for Teaching and Learning, which supports scholarships, awards, grants, and disaster relief for teachers and students across California.

Mission

IFT's mission is to enhance, support, and sustain high-quality teaching and high-quality public schools for all California students. Through mobilizing educators, special programs, research, conferences, networking, and community-based coalitions, the CTA Institute for Teaching seeks to advance public education and promote the common good of our students and communities.

Our Impact

The IFT awards grants directly to CTA members and local chapters. To date, CTA members' voluntary dues contributions have funded a total of 643 grant projects totaling more than \$8.9 million. For the 2025-2026 school year, the IFT awarded 100 grants totaling over \$1.2 million to educators across the state to implement projects that will transform their classrooms.



Grant Overview

Grant Overview

The Institute for Teaching offers two different grants. Each applicant may submit one grant per cycle. If you're interested in applying for an IFT grant, you will need to prepare a grant proposal, budget, and timeline. We are seeking grant proposals that are innovative, creative, practical, action-oriented, and student-centered.

Please note, IFT funds **projects**, not **resources**. This means your proposal should describe a specific initiative or set of activities that will be implemented and experienced, not just purchases.

What's the Difference?

Projects = purposeful, organized plans of action with objectives, steps, and a timeline.

Resources = items that support teaching but don't stand alone as an action plan. While resources may be part of your project's budget, the focus of your proposal should be on *what you will do* and *how it will impact students*, not simply on acquiring resources.

Eligibility Checklist

You are eligible to apply if:

- You are an active CTA member and maintain membership throughout grant implementation
- Your local CTA chapter agrees to serve as fiscal agent for IFT funds
- You are applying for only one grant this cycle

You are not eligible if:

- You are currently implementing a 2025–2026 IFT grant
- You have an approved 2025–2026 carryover
- You have not submitted the required reports from a previous grant
- You are not a CTA member. [Sign up to be a CTA member here!](#)

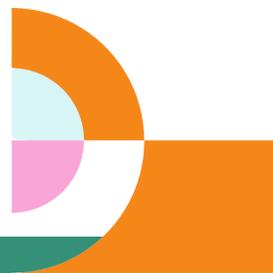
Types of Educator Grants

Grant Type	Award Amount	Led By	Impact
Individual Grant (previously called Educator Grant)	Up to \$5,000	Individual educator	One classroom or single group of students at a school site
Team Grant (previously called Impact Grant)	Up to \$20,000	Team of 2+ educators (3 recommended). All team members must be CTA members.	Multiple classrooms or school sites within the same local union



Application Timeline

Date	Action
January 12, 2026	Application window opens
April, 2, 2026	Application deadline
May 2026	Applications reviewed by IFT Grant Selection Committee & award recommendations made to IFT Board
June 2026	IFT Board votes on funding recommendations
July 2026	Applicants notified of results
August - September 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mandatory Project Coordinator Orientation• Funds disbursed
March 2027	Mandatory Project Coordinator Spring Check-In
July 2027	Financial and Summary reports due



Application Review Process

The IFT grant program is very competitive. Each year, the number of grant applications received exceeds our annual funding.

The IFT Grant Selection Committee will review all applications received by the deadline. The IFT Grant Selection Committee is made up of educators and past recipients from throughout the state, representing various grade levels and subjects.

To prepare applications for review, all identifying information is removed (including your name, school site, and local union) to ensure a fair process. Each application will be reviewed based on its own merit using the Strength-Based Equity Matrix as a framework.

Common reasons that applications are not selected for funding include:

- Not student-centered
- No clear implementation plan
- Focuses only on supplies/resources
- Responses don't address the Equity Matrix factors

All applications are scored based on the **Strengths-Based Equity Matrix**.

Agency:

- **Student Centered Learning:** How does your project empower students to thrive at school?
- **Future-Oriented:** How will your project enhance students' skills and build their capacity for future success?

Equity:

- **Student Equity:** How does your project promote learning opportunities and access for all students?

Advocacy:

- **Student Advocacy:** How will your project advance student voice, support team building, and student collaboration?

Solidarity:

- **School-Wide Relations:** How will your project increase teamwork and camaraderie among your colleagues?
- **School-Family Relationships:** How does your project integrate parents' strengths and positive experiences into the teaching and learning environment?
- **Community Solidarity:** How will your project enable networking and coalition building with community groups and organizations utilizing a lens of racial and social justice?

Grant Recipient Responsibilities

If awarded, recipients must:

- Implement the project fully
- Track and report all expenses
- Meet regularly with local Treasurer
- Attend at least two check-in meetings with the IFT Program Organizer
- Submit required reports on time

Funding Guidelines

IFT funds may **NOT** be used for:

- Gift Cards
- Items or services the district already provides
- District-required professional development
- Employing staff
- Conferences or travel expenses related to conferences
- Scholarships
- Retroactive funding (funding for items you have already purchased)
- Release time and stipends that equal 30% or more of your total budget

IFT funds **MAY** be used for:

- Supplies and resources tied directly to the project
- Student field trips and transportation
- Substitutes and release time
- Stipends up to \$1,000 per team member (\$500 per calendar year, one payment in 2026 after attending Project Coordinator Orientation and one payment in 2027 after attending Spring Check In).
- Student-focused educational experiences

Note: All field trips, out-of-school experiences, and permanent infrastructure changes must follow all district rules and procedures.

Application Checklist and Reminders

Application Timeline: January 12, 2026 - April 2, 2026

Awarded IFT Grants will be implemented during the 2026-2027 school year.

- Verify your CTA Membership. Remember, all team members must also be active CTA members.
- Discuss your interest in applying for a CTA grant with your union president. You will need your president's email address for the grant application. If your project is being considered, IFT will send your president a Fiscal Agent Agreement.
- Consider discussing your grant project with your site administrator.
- Review the project coordinator's responsibilities. If applying for a Team Grant, designate the project coordinator in your team of two or more (we strongly recommend teams of three).
- Use the Strengths-Based Equity Matrix as a framework for developing your IFT grant proposal. Ensure your proposal addresses all seven factors.
- Create a budget with clear and specific line items. *The application has a built-in budget for you to fill out during the application process.*
- Create a timeline that outlines your plan for implementing the project. *The application has a built in timeline for you to fill out during the application process.*
- Complete the IFT application online. Do not wait until the last minute, as you may encounter technical issues or require additional support.

Tips for Success

- Start early and apply before the deadline to avoid tech issues
- Keep projects student-centered and action-oriented
- Use the Equity Matrix as your roadmap
- Talk with your union President early
- Ask for support through office hours and trainings

FAQ

Eligibility

Who is eligible to apply for IFT grants?

All active CTA members are eligible to apply, provided they maintain their membership throughout the grant period. Your local union must agree to serve as the fiscal agent for your funds.

Can I apply if I already have an IFT grant?

No. If you are currently implementing a grant, have an approved carryover, or have not submitted required reports for a previous grant, you are not eligible to apply until those requirements are complete.

Can I apply for more than one grant per cycle?

No. Applicants may only submit one grant application, per cycle.

Can team members come from different school sites or districts?

For Team (previously called Impact) grants, team members can be from different school sites, but they must work within the same district **and** belong to the same local union.

Types of Grants

What types of grants are available?

Individual Grants (previously "Educator Grants"): Up to \$5,000 for one classroom or group of students.

Team Grants (previously "Impact Grants"): Up to \$20,000 for teams of two or more educators (all CTA members), impacting multiple classrooms or sites.

What kinds of projects are funded?

IFT funds projects (plans of action with objectives, steps, and timelines) that are student-centered, equity-driven, and action-oriented. Projects may include resources but cannot be solely about purchasing items.

Application Process

When is the application window?

Applications open January 12, 2026, and close April 2, 2026. Applicants will be notified if their projects were awarded in July 2026.

How are applications reviewed?

Applications are reviewed anonymously by the IFT Grant Selection Committee using the Strengths-Based Equity Matrix. Common reasons for rejection include a lack of student-centered focus, unclear plans, or proposals that focus solely on resources.

What is required for a complete application?

You must:

- Verify your CTA membership
- Secure your union President's agreement to act as fiscal agent
- Develop a budget and timeline
- Address all factors of the Strengths-Based Equity Matrix

Funding & Use of Funds

When are funds disbursed?

Funds are disbursed in August–September 2026 through your local union, which manages and reimburses expenses. Each local union will have its own reimbursement process. *Tip: Meet with your Treasurer before applying to understand local union procedures.*

What can grant funds NOT be used for?

Funds cannot be used for gift cards, district-provided items/services, required Professional Development, staff employment, conferences/travel, scholarships, retroactive purchases, or more than 30% of the budget on stipends/release time.

What can grant funds be used for?

Funds may be used for project-related supplies, student-focused experiences, field trips/transportation, substitutes, release time, and limited stipends.

Can leftover funds carry-over to the next year?

No, leftover funds must be returned. Carryover is only allowed in extraordinary cases with IFT approval.

Support & Assistance

What support is available during the application process?

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:00–5:00 p.m. (by phone or video conference booking)

Training: Offered at some CTA conferences

Email: IFT@cta.org

<u>SUPPORT</u>	<u>DETAILS</u>
Training/Presentations 	We offer training at CTA conferences. Visit the CTA Website for more information.
Office Hours 	Tuesdays 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Schedule a video conference through our online IFT Booking Site.
Online Booking Site 	IFT Booking Site Use this site to schedule a one-on-one session during our regular office hours. Click Here
Email 	Contact Us Anytime IFT@cta.org

Budget

School Year 2026-2027

Project Name	Outdoor Garden
Project Coordinator	Jane Doe
Local Association <i>Please write out your local, no abbreviations</i>	Sacramento City Teachers Association

✦ Your budget is a guide. You can include approximate amounts, but make sure the total reflects the grant funds you're requesting. Be clear and specific. Don't forget, stipends should be no more than \$1000 per person, and no more than \$500 in a calendar year.

Budget Item - Description	Quantity	Amount	Item Total
Raised garden bed kits (cedar or composite)	4 kits	\$150	\$600
Soil, compost, and mulch	Bulk purchase	-	\$300
Science lab materials (pH test kits, magnifiers, thermometers)	10 sets	\$40	\$400
Art materials (weatherproof paint, brushes, sealant)	Class set	-	\$200
Student journals & clipboards	30	\$15	\$450
Outdoor signage materials (wood posts, plaques, laminating)	-	-	\$200
Watering cans, gloves, and small tools	Class set	-	\$300
Plants, seeds, seedlings	Bulk Purchase	-	\$350
Total			\$2,800

If you need more entries, leave this total blank and continue on the next page. Should you need more entries, duplicate page 2.

Timeline

School Year 2026-2027

Project Name	Outdoor Garden
Project Coordinator	Jane Doe
Local Association <i>Please write out your local, no abbreviations</i>	Sacramento City Teachers Association

✦ Your timeline can be weekly, monthly or quarterly but should reflect activities for the entire grant implementation year. Be sure to include the specific activities your students will engage in throughout the year and possible events that IFT could attend, should schedules permit.

Date	Activity or Event Description
August/September	-Attend mandatory Project Coordinator Check In -Meet with local union treasurer
September	- Student introduction to project -Science baseline data (soil, sunlight) -Art/design planning sketches
October	- Build raised beds & install signage posts - Plant first round of seedlings - Begin STEAM data collection
November–December	- Continue experiments (pH, temperature, growth rates) - Create data visualizations in art class
January	-Mid year check in with teacher team to reflect on progress and make changes
February–March	- Replant seasonal crops - Integrate math lessons (measurement, graphing) -Student reflections
April	- Garden “Open House” event - Invite families and community partners
May	-Spring Check-in with IFT
June	- Final harvest & art installation - Student presentations & reflection essays -Prepare financial + final reports

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Timeline (continued)

Date	Activity or Event Description
July	-Submit final financial and summary reports to IFT

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