Ascend INDIANA



# Student-Led Business Microgrant FAQ

**Application deadline: November 30, 2026 | Funding available: Up to $5,000 per school**

## 1. WHAT IS A STUDENT-LED BUSINESS (SLB)?

An SLB is a work-based learning (WBL) experience in which students help run a real business or a simulated workplace. Students build practical skills while meeting Indiana Department of Education WBL requirements.

## 2. WHY SHOULD OUR SCHOOL START AN SLB?

An SLB can help your school:

- Offer hands-on learning that helps students build job and career skills.
- Provide WBL experiences that support Indiana's new high school diploma readiness seals.
- Connect classroom learning to real work.
- Build relationships with local employers and community partners.

## 3. WHO CAN APPLY?

This microgrant is for schools that do not currently operate an SLB and want to plan and launch one that can continue over time.

## 4. HOW MUCH FUNDING CAN OUR SCHOOL REQUEST?

Schools may request up to $5,000 for reasonable, necessary costs directly related to starting and running their SLB.

## 5. WHEN IS THE APPLICATION DUE?

Applications must be submitted by November 30, 2026.

## 6. WHEN WILL SCHOOLS RECEIVE FUNDING?

Selected schools will receive grant funds in spring 2027.

## 7. WHEN DO WE NEED TO LAUNCH OUR SLB?

Schools planning to launch by fall 2027 will receive priority consideration. Include your expected launch date in the application.

## 8. CAN MORE THAN ONE SCHOOL IN THE SAME DISTRICT APPLY?

Yes. More than one school within a school corporation may submit an application.

## 9. WHO SHOULD COMPLETE THE APPLICATION?

The people who will help plan and launch the SLB should work together on the application. This may include school or district leaders, the SLB teacher or advisor, other school staff, and employer or community partners.

## 10. WHAT MAKES A STRONG APPLICATION?

Strong applications explain:

- School support: How school or district leaders will support the SLB.
- Student learning: What students will learn and be able to do.
- Employer involvement: How local employers or industry partners may support students.
- Business plan: How the school will launch and operate the SLB.
- Budget and sustainability: What the SLB will cost and how the school plans to support it over time.

## 11. WHAT CAN GRANT FUNDS BE USED FOR?

Grant funds can pay for reasonable, necessary expenses directly related to launching and operating the SLB. Explain the planned expenses in your application budget.

## 12. DO WE NEED OTHER FUNDING TO APPLY?

No. Additional funding is not required to apply. However, the application asks you to estimate the full cost of your SLB, identify any other funding sources, and explain how you plan to support the business after the microgrant is spent.

## 13. WHAT WILL SCHOOLS RECEIVING A GRANT NEED TO DO?

Selected schools will be expected to:

- Participate in regular check-ins with Ascend Indiana, including group meetings and individual support sessions. Most meetings will be virtual.
- Use the SLB Toolkit and support sessions to help plan and launch the business.
- Lead the design and launch of an SLB that fits their students, school, and community.
- Participate in site visits and share results, successes, and lessons learned.

## 14. WHO SHOULD ATTEND MEETINGS WITH ASCEND INDIANA?

Each school should identify a small team of one to three staff members who will lead the SLB project and attend required meetings.

## 15. DO WE NEED EMPLOYER PARTNERS BEFORE APPLYING?

No. You do not need confirmed employer partners when you apply. The application asks you to describe any existing partnerships, identify employers you might work with, and explain how they could support student learning. If you do not have employer partners yet, you can explain that in your application.

## 16. DOES OUR SLB HAVE TO ALIGN WITH ONE OF INDIANA'S ADVANCED INDUSTRIES?

No. Alignment with an advanced industry is NOT required to apply or receive a microgrant. Schools proposing an SLB that connects to one or more of Indiana's advanced industries will receive additional consideration during application review. We encourage all eligible schools to apply, whether or not their SLB has this connection.

**What could this look like at a high school?**

- **Advanced Manufacturing and Logistics:** A student-run spirit wear shop that prints or produces T-shirts, tracks inventory, fills orders, and manages deliveries.
- **Technology:** A student-run graphic design or digital marketing service that creates logos, websites, social media content, or promotional materials for school groups or local organizations.
- **Agbiosciences:** A student-run greenhouse or plant sale where students grow plants, manage production, set prices, and sell products to the community.
- **Life Sciences:** A student-run plant-growing or hydroponics project that applies biology and lab-style practices, tracks growing conditions, and sells produce.

**These are examples, not required business models.** If your SLB connects to an advanced industry, briefly explain what students will do and which related skills or careers they will explore. If it does not, you can still apply.