



# LWPTSA Council Grant Handbook

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## **Version 1**

NB: This document is a “living” document. Please contact [president@lwptsanet](mailto:president@lwptsanet) with any suggestions or corrections.

## LWPTSA Council Grant Handbook

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## Section 1. Introduction

Grants are a way that PTSAs can support their schools for learning opportunities that they would not otherwise have funding for, with the goal of enriching the student experience at school. PTSAs often grant money for materials, equipment, speakers, and other activities. They grant money to the administration, staff or student organizations. *Having a cooperative and collaborative relationship with the school administration is a key element to a successful grant program.*

This handbook is intended for use by Lake Washington PTA/PTSA Boards of Directors and/or their grant committees to give them guidance on the process of granting money to their schools. We have worked with the LWSD Superintendent's office to get their input on the process from the administrators' point of view. We have solicited ideas for application forms, criteria for decision-making, and written up processes from our local PTSAs. What we present here are suggested "best practices" that PTSAs can take into consideration when creating their own grant program. *Different school districts may have different policies that would affect these recommendations.*

Grants are often a large portion of a PTSA's budget and the giving of grants needs to be done in a thoughtful and deliberate manner. As elected officers, PTSA boards have a legal fiduciary duty to make responsible and "reasonable" choices, and should always keep in mind that they are making decisions that represent the mission and goals of their membership. Having a clear and documented process for your grant program will help ensure that that happens, and it will help assure your membership that you are making reasonable, and not emotional or subjective, decisions.

PTSAs must balance the need to work together with their principals toward shared goals, with the need to donate the money in a way that fits the mission and goals of their particular PTSA.

*This handbook does not include information about PTSAs applying for grants.*

## Section 2. Flowchart of the Grant Process



## Section 3. Types of Grants

### What is a grant?

Grants are funds that are disbursed by one party, i.e. the PTSA, to a recipient, i.e., the school, for a specific purpose.

### What is not a grant?

Activities and programs that the PTA funds and runs itself are not considered grants. Examples might be: staff appreciation, family nights, parent education, the art docent program, etc.

### Why might you have different types of grants?

There are a variety of ways that a PTA may grant funds depending on the situation. Different methods are more appropriate for different situations based on the amount of funds granted, and the conditions and requirements associated with the granted funds.

### Definition of Terms

Here are four different categories of grants, and some suggestions for processes that may be associated with each. Your PTA may use different names for these categories, but for the sake of clarity and creating a common definition for this document, we define these four grant types as follows:

- **Program grants:** Regular, annual, expected “single-item” grants funded through an approved budget line item.
- **Classroom grants:** Multiple, small grants (also known as mini-grants, classroom grants, teacher grants, etc.) allocated in an approved budget line item for a common purpose.
- **Enrichment grants:** Substantial amounts of money set aside for grants that are accessed by application or request during the school year. These grant funds may be awarded all to one project, or divided among several smaller projects in various amounts.
- **Grants from unallocated or surplus funds:** In exceptional cases, a PTSA might have occasion to grant funds from surplus, unallocated funds. This would be money that was not part of the current year’s budget, and would require membership approval.

### 3.1 Program Grants

#### What is a Program Grant?

Program grants are regular, expected “single-item” grants that the PTSA commits to funding each year through an approved budget line item. Examples might be: funding a choir teacher, or library books, or a speaker who returns year after year.

These grants (and associated costs) would be reviewed in the spring when the PTSA budget is being developed, usually in collaboration with the school administration. If the PTSA determines it to be a good use of their resources, then the funding can be approved by the membership as part of the upcoming year's budget. This budget will be re-approved at the beginning of the new school year, but it is likely that the school will already be making plans around that funding, so making changes to this budget item might be problematic at that late date. Officers of both the incoming and outgoing boards should be part of this discussion.

### Paying for Program Grants

In most of these single-item grants, the PTSA will issue a check to the school, along with a restricted donation letter detailing the amount of the donation and the purpose for which it is to be used. There should also be a statement about what should happen with any remaining funds if there is a chance not all of the funding will be spent.

Alternatively, a PTSA may pay for the expense directly, assuming that it falls within the allotted budget. The PTA should discuss the preferred payment protocol with the school administration (principal, office manager, etc.) to make sure everyone is in agreement.

## 3.2 Classroom Grants

### What is a Classroom Grant?

Many PTAs make funds available to individual teachers to purchase supplies or materials that will enrich the educational experience in their classroom. Depending on the size of the school and the PTA funds available, there may be a set amount of funds available for each classroom (example: \$100 per classroom for each of 23 elementary school classrooms for a total budget line item of \$2300). Or there may be multiple grants available that are allocated as needed (example: 40 grants of \$50 each for a total budget of \$2000, provided on a first-come, first-served basis to all high school classroom teachers).

### Paying for Classroom Grants

For the best accountability with these types of grants, the PTA will probably provide the funding in one of two ways. Either the teacher will make the purchase with their own money and then submit receipts for reimbursement, or a teacher orders materials with a company that provides an invoice. The PTSA would then pay that invoice directly. (A variation of the former condition may occur if a teacher uses a school credit card to make the purchase, and then the PTA would reimburse the school for the received expense.)

Like the Program Grants, these grants may be part of a budget approved in the spring of the previous year, and school staff may make plans anticipating these funds prior to the budget being re-approved in the fall. In both cases, officers of both incoming and outgoing boards should be part of the discussion and inclusion of these line items to foster the best collaboration with the school staff from year to year.

### 3.3 Enrichment Grants

#### What is an Enrichment Grant?

Enrichment grants exist to help enrich the student experience at school. Staff applies for these grants during the school year and they can vary quite a bit in scope. PTSAs often grant money for materials, equipment, speakers, and other activities. Many PTSAs have a line item in their budget for this type of grant, and in some cases, it might be a very significant amount of funding (\$5,000 - \$20,000 or more). Your PTSA will want to define what Enrichment Grants are for (and what they're not for), as well as how they will be awarded.

#### Paying for Enrichment Grants

After the board, or grant committee, approves a grant and makes a decision about how much of the request to fund (it might be partial or complete funding), there are two ways to proceed with funding – paying in advance, or after the fact.

If paying in advance of the expense, the PTSA would issue a check to the school, along with a restricted donation letter detailing the amount of the donation and the purpose for which it is to be used. (There should always be a statement about what should happen with any remaining funds if not all of the money was spent.)

The second method requires prior communication and approval from the office manager/cashier. This method entails writing a donation letter to the school detailing the amount that the PTSA has committed to spending, and for what purpose. Then after the purchase is made, the office manager/cashier would invoice the PTA for the exact amount spent, up to the PTA's designated amount. The advantage to this is that the PTSA is writing checks for programs or things that have already been spent, and for the exact amount.

A program may initially be funded as an enrichment grant, and then later become a program grant when the PTSA determines its permanence.

### 3.4 Grants from Surplus or Unallocated Funds

Grants in this category would be a rare occurrence, and they have special procedures that need to be followed to comply with PTA Bylaws and Standing Rules and to maintain full accountability and transparency with your membership.

#### In what scenario might you spend some of your surplus?

During the course of the school year, an emergency need (e.g., a classroom is vandalized and materials/property is damaged beyond what insurance will cover) or a special program opportunity (e.g., a new teacher offers to initiate a school-wide Science Fair) arises that exceeds the amount of funding available in any part of the approved budget. The Board would like membership to consider spending some of the surplus on this need or opportunity.

### How can this money be granted?

First, the Board should do its research and homework, just as it would for any other grant application. Talk with school administration to explore all sources of funding and to make sure the need/opportunity is one where the school wants PTA assistance or involvement.

Encourage boards to carefully review budget variances before announcing surplus grants since invoices can be delayed and the "surplus" not really exist. (If unsure, perhaps hold it for the following year as a fall grant.)

Second, an amendment to the approved budget will need to be presented and voted on at the next membership meeting. If a "special" Membership Meeting needs to be called for time's sake, make sure to follow all procedures outlined in the Washington State Bylaws and your PTA's Standing Rules for advertising the special meeting. At the meeting present the budget amendment, allow for discussion and questions, and call for a vote. With the approval of Membership, this additional grant money is now in your approved budget and can be allocated to meet the need/opportunity.

Proceed with caution! Note that as much as emotion or enthusiasm might compel a rash response to an urgent need or opportunity, it is the Board's responsibility to consider the long-term health of the PTA and your school community. Rushing to a decision to commit significant PTA resources may feel right in the moment, but if it damages the trust a community has in its PTA, there could be long-term impact on membership and donations that hinder the PTA from doing its regular work.

## Section 4. Getting Started

### 4.1 Understanding the Goals and Responsibilities of Making Grants

#### Be familiar with your PTSA's goals and the school's goals.

- Review your documented Mission and Goals with your board, and decide what your goals are for your grant program. Consult the previous year's Program Evaluation form (if it exists) and see if there are suggestions for making the program better. Fill out a Committee Plan of Action and present to your board.
- Review with your principal their goals for the year. Knowing the principal's goals might help you decide between different grant applications.

#### Understand your fiduciary duty as officers of a PTSA board of directors

When you grant money you are spending your members' donated money, and must take care to spend the money in a way that matches your PTSA's stated (and approved) goals and mission. Having a clearly thought out and documented grant funding process will help you

make good decisions.

For more information about what your "fiduciary duty" is, consult Section 3.1 of PTA and the Law on "Duties of the board members".

#### 4.2 Setting up policies

Written policies are a useful tool for any program. Here are some things that you might want to consider before beginning your grant program.

##### Who can apply for your grants?

- For your "classroom grants", what constitutes a "classroom"? Is the librarian, PE teacher, or school counselor eligible for these funds or not? In a secondary school, does a teacher who only teaches 1-2 classes have the same grant eligibility as a teacher who teaches the whole day?
- Who can apply for enrichment grants (teachers, staff, parents, community members, etc.)? Do they have to work at the school full time?

##### How will you allow your grant money to be used?

- Are you going to have any guidelines on how you distribute your grant money? Are enrichment grants only for new programs, or one-time only programs, equipment, etc.? Or could something be funded every year by an enrichment grant? (And if you are doing that, would that program be better served being described as a "program" grant, which would mean you account for it in your budget.)
- What part of your school community will enrichment grants serve; do the grants need to impact all students, an entire grade level, or just a classroom? Are you okay with grants that benefit a small group of students, as long as other grants benefit other students?
- For "classroom grants", are there items that can or cannot be purchased with these granted funds? (Examples include: Consumable classroom supplies, books or equipment, food for class parties or activities, supplemental instruction materials, a guest speaker for a class or continuing education for the teacher.)

##### Who will make enrichment grant decisions – a grant committee or the Board?

There is no right or wrong answer to this question; there are benefits and drawbacks to each method. This would be a good thing to discuss and decide with your board.

##### *Allocating Enrichment Grants by a Grant Committee*

When a large amount of funding is at stake, an application process reviewed by an appointed Grant Committee may be the most objective way to allocate funds. The Committee can consist of a mix of board members and PTA members, as determined by your PTA leadership. (**LWSD recommends that the principal not be part of the grant committee, although principal input at some point in the process is**

necessary.)

If you choose to establish a Grant Committee, your Standing Rules can define how that committee is formed and operates, or a policy document can also describe the process. Because the PTSA Board of Directors still bears the fiduciary responsibility to make sure funds are being applied in a manner consistent with the PTSA mission and approved budget, there should be some defined relationship or process between the Grant Committee and the Board. **No decision by the Grant Committee is final until the Board approves it.**

The **benefits** to awarding grants by committee:

- Offloads this responsibility to a committee, and frees up board meeting time.
- A dedicated committee might make more thoughtful decisions because they are not rushing to make decisions during a board meeting.
- Provides an opportunity for non-board members to be involved with an important program.

Some **drawbacks** to awarding grants by committee:

- Slower, longer process for awarding funds.
- One more activity that requires volunteers.

#### *Allocating Grants by Board Approval*

Some PTAs will choose to review grant applications at their Board of Directors meetings. You will still need a grant chair to shepherd the grant process.

**Benefits** to awarding grants by Board review and approval:

- Boards are often more aware of the PTA's goals and priorities than standalone committees.
- They may have more institutional knowledge about what has been granted in past years.
- They may have greater awareness of other sources of funding available, if a grant is not approved.
- They are likely to have a closer relationship with the principal, which would lead to good input on the value of the various grant applications.
- Boards often have a lot of opinions about how the money should be allocated and like making those decisions.

**Drawbacks** to awarding grants by Board review and approval:

- Takes up a lot of time during board meetings.
- Discussion and decisions might be rushed due to lack of time.
- Someone has to be in charge of the grant process, and it can be time-consuming.
- You lose an opportunity to get others involved in PTA and grow leaders

## How often will you give your grants?

We will discuss three ways that PTAs can offer grants.

- One is using a published “grant cycle”. This means that you have a published deadline at which time all grant applications must be submitted. PTAs might have two grant cycles per school year, one in the fall and one in later winter, for example.
- Another option is to accept grant applications at any time throughout the year. This means that as they get submitted, the applications are considered and awarded (or not) at any time until the grant fund runs out.
- A third option is to have a hybrid that combines both of these methods.

### *Giving Grants using a “grant cycle” process*

#### Benefits of having a grant cycle:

- An equitable process where different grant applications are weighed against each other for the available funds which can lead to a more thoughtful and rounded giving strategy on the part of the board/committee/principal;
- Known deadlines for applications and approval of funds facilitate planning by the staff;
- Deadlines are helpful to people to turn their applications in.

#### Drawbacks of having a grant cycle

- If an interesting opportunity comes up between the grant cycles there isn't a way to make a grant. (See "Hybrid Option" below.)

### *Giving Grants on a case-by-case basis:*

Usually these grant decisions would be made by the board. If you have a committee, it might be hard for them to convene on short notice.

#### Benefits of using the case-by-case method

- Potentially a quicker response to funding requests
- Allows staff to apply for grants for interesting opportunities that come up throughout the year

#### Drawbacks of using the case-by-case method

- The “first come, first served” nature of this process may mean a “lesser” project gets approved earlier in the year while a “better” application is denied because the funds are no longer there;
- Adds additional discussion and business items to the Board agenda, possibly every month;

- Grant applications may not be as thorough or as complete in an effort to "get it done" by the upcoming board meeting;
- Need to meet with the principal each time to discuss the merits of each application.

*Hybrid option – combination of grant cycle and ad hoc "case-by-case"*

Consider having a fall and late winter/spring grant cycle with set amounts of money, and then put aside another sum for "ad hoc" grants. Publicize that, although you prefer that teachers submit their applications during the formal grant cycles, you will have some money set aside for opportunities that present themselves between the grant deadlines. Applicants will need to notify the board that the application is being made, and the board/committee can determine the merits of the application at that time.

*Other details to consider*

- What is the protocol if a teacher spends slightly over their allocated classroom grant amount (e.g., a teacher turns in receipts totaling \$103 when the approved grant amount is \$100)? Can these grant funds be used toward a larger expense (i.e., a teacher wants to purchase a \$200 piece of equipment for use in their classroom, but the grant is \$100)? Are teachers allowed to pool their grants toward larger expenses?
- If some of the classroom grant funds remain "unclaimed," what is the protocol for allocating those funds (or do they just return to the general budget)?

### 4.3 Know your Budget

Be sure you understand your budget and how much money you have available for grants. (See Section 7 FAQs for information about the difference between "surplus" funds and "reserve" funds.) If you have what appears to be a surplus, make sure that all of your expected expenses have been paid. If you do, in fact, have a surplus, be thoughtful about how you spend it. If it is a significant amount of money, consider spending it down over multiple years.

Often the PTSA will have to fundraise in the fall to raise funds for the grant program. Be prepared to prioritize your spending if you don't raise enough money.

*Do you have questions about your budget? Your PTSA Council has many experienced board members that can provide guidance!*

#### 4.4 Working with your principal and office staff

Foster a communicative and collaborative relationship with your principal and office staff. Make sure that both the PTSA and the principal understand your individual roles in giving input and making decisions about grants. (Refer to the district document "Policies, Procedures and Guidelines for Working with Parent Organizations.")

##### Getting input from principals

It is always recommended that the Principal or school administration be involved in the discussion about how grant funding would best serve the school community.

Principals are required to ensure that events/programs are of high quality and align with the school and district goals and policies and therefore need an opportunity to provide input and deny grant requests that they deem inappropriate for their school community. Principals are also aware of other sources of funding for equipment and projects that may match or preclude the need for PTA funds.

##### Equipment

In the case of granting money to pay for equipment, it is especially important for PTSAs to discuss this with their principal. There might be issues associated with that type of equipment that the PTSA is not fully aware of, e.g., the school district does not support Apple products, or there is no capability to install a new drinking fountain.

##### How can the principal be involved?

LWSD requests that principals not be on grant committees. However, they can and should have an opportunity to provide input on the submitted grant applications. This might happen in a meeting between the budget committee and the principal, or between the president and the principal. There should be a discussion that results in recommendations that can be brought before the board.

*The principal and the president should never allocate grant money between them!* Neither the principal nor the president has the authority to make these decisions on their own. Per Washington State PTA Bylaws, and individual PTA Standing Rules, the Board of Directors bears the fiduciary responsibility for applying PTA funds, according to a budget approved by the PTA membership. Which means that it should be a vote of the Board, at a minimum, that approves the distribution of those funds to specific projects and purposes.

##### What about our Principal's 'discretionary funds'?

Some PTSAs have customarily funded a 'discretionary fund' for their principal, e.g., the PTSA grants \$3000 for the principal to spend at their own discretion. This seems like a handy way to provide your administration with financial support, and while they very likely spend the money thoughtfully, we don't recommend this practice. Funding a discretionary fund means that your PTSA is granting money in such a way that you do not have control or accountability over that money. As officers, you have a duty to your members to spend the organization's money in a

thoughtful and considered way. If you do not know how they are spending the money you cannot guarantee that it is being spent in a way that is line with your PTA's mission and goals.

It is not good fiduciary practice for PTSAs to fund money to anyone, including the principal, without going through a grant process. Presidents should have a conversation with their principals about their PTSA's fiduciary responsibilities. (See district document on "Policies, Procedures and Guidelines for Working with Parent Organizations" in the Appendix. This will help the PTSA and the administration understand how LWSD schools and PTAs can work together effectively.)

#### [Discussing payment options with the Principal](#)

It's important that the PTA and the principal and office staff agree ahead of time on a payment method that works for everybody. See the discussion in Section 5.4 on "Payment Options".

### Section 5. The Grant Process – How do we do this?

#### 5.1 The Grant Chair's Responsibilities

Regardless of whether you make decisions by committee or by the board, you will need someone to be the grant "chair". This person might be responsible for tasks such as:

- Creating/procuring the grant forms and other documents (see below)
- Advertising when grants are due
- Collecting the grant applications
- Discussing the applications with the principal
- Creating a summary for the board/committee
- Leading the discussion
- If there is a committee, the committee and/or chair will need to present their proposal to the board
- After decisions have been made, coordinate with the treasurer the payment process
- Determine who will write the designated donation letters (might be done in conjunction with the president and/or treasurer)
- Write letters of acceptance/rejection to the applicants
- Follow-up with grant winners later in the year for an accounting of how the grant impacted the student experience.

#### 5.2 Communicating Your Grant Program – Forms & Letters

Having clear forms and documentation is worth the effort. Following are some forms and documents you might want to incorporate into your process. See the Appendix for examples.

- **Application announcement letter** – explains what the PTSA's grant program is, what the process is, information on deadlines. You might give examples of ideas that won grant

approval in the past.

- **Application form:** Have a clear form that gathers all of the information that you will need. Information you might want to ask for:
  - Applicant contact information
  - Explanation of what they are applying for
  - Who and how many it will benefit
  - How will it benefit
  - How will the applicant be able to measure the success of their project
- Ask if they have already exhausted other sources of funding, like their departmental budget, or building budget. (Asking for their department head or principal's signature can help to ensure that they have had a conversation with their administration about their proposal.)
- **Evaluation rubric** - Choose criteria to help you determine the relative merits of the different applications. Your criteria might change from year to year based on what the PTSA and school goals are for that year.
- **Restricted donation letter:** Have a restricted donation letter to send with your check, and be sure to include in the letter the agreement that you have made with your administration about what happens with any unspent, leftover money.
- **Response letter to your grant applicants:** Communication process with potential grant applicants/recipients. Letters of award/rejection.

### 5.3 Publicize to the staff your process and the goals of your program

Giving out money can be surprisingly hard! You might have to do some promoting to get the level of participation you want. Consider the following ideas:

- Ask your principal if you can attend the back to school staff meeting in August meeting so you can present your grant program directly to the teachers.
- Ask the principal to email the teachers your Application Announcement letter with grant application attached.
- Have forms accessible online.
- Have examples of previous grants funded in the past, to give them inspiration.

### Pick out dates and divvy up your budget

- If you are going to have an established grant cycle you will need to pick deadline dates. You'll want to give teachers time to get settled into their year, but not wait too long. Parents want the money they donated to be used as soon as possible. If you have the funds, consider having a second deadline in late winter,

which would give the staff a second opportunity to apply for a grant. Your principal likely has good insight into what would be good timing for the staff.

- Allow time to publicize your grant deadlines, and coordinate these deadlines with your board meetings and principal meetings. Your board will need to be able to discuss (either by themselves or with the grant committee), and vote on the grant applications.
- Decide on dollar amounts for each grant cycle. Fall grants campaign often get significantly more applications than spring grant campaign, so you might allocate more funding for this grant cycle. It might be useful to get advice from prior presidents to see how grant programs have been run in the past and learn what expectations the staff has about the program. Or survey the teachers and get their input!

#### 5.4 Evaluating the Grant Applications

The Appendix of this handbook has samples of grant application forms and evaluation criteria that can be used by committees. Any of these examples can be modified to fit the needs and unique characteristics of your school community.

Consider the following questions when evaluating grant applications:

- Do you have any guidelines on how you distribute your grant money? Are enrichment grants only for new programs, or one-time only programs, equipment, etc.? Or could something be funded every year by an enrichment grant?
- Have you gotten your principal's input? They will help you prioritize the requests. They are also aware of other sources of funding available, which might preclude the necessity of PTA funding. Keep in mind that they have the right to veto any grants that don't align with the school's or the district's goals and policies, or that they feel is not appropriate or of high quality.
- What part of your school community will your grants serve; do the grants need to impact all students, an entire grade level, or just a classroom? Are you okay with grants that benefit a small group of students, as long as other grants benefit other students?
- Is that grant request in line with your purpose as a PTA, as stated in your articles of incorporation? Does it further your mission and goals, or that of the school?

#### 5.5 Funding the Grants

Determine, along with your principal and office staff, your payment methods.

There are a few things to consider about your payment options. If you make a payment before the expense has been incurred, it is possible that your payment will be larger than the actual

expense. What then happens to that leftover money? What if the expense is never incurred at all?

This is where it is important to discuss with your principal and office staff at the beginning of the year how they would like to deal with leftover money.

***After this discussion with your principal and office staff be sure to accompany your grant check with a restricted donation letter that spells out how much money you have granted, for what specific purpose, and what is to happen in the event of money being left over.***

### Payment Options

In selecting the best way to fund an approved grant, the PTSA can consider the amount of money involved, efficiency, whether there are other funding sources involved, and accountability to their membership in documenting the actual expenditure of those funds.

Some options lend themselves to certain types of grants more than others:

- Payment by purchase order or invoice from the supplier/service provider, i.e., the PTSA writes a check to the supplier for the exact amount.
- Payment by reimbursement to an individual, i.e., the PTSA cuts a check to a person for the exact amount after the purchase is made. (This is often used in classroom grants, where the teacher has made a purchase, submitted a reimbursement form to the PTSA, and the PTSA reimburses them.)
- Payment by reimbursement to the school, i.e. the PTSA writes a check for the exact amount to the school/district after the purchase has been made by the school. This can be very handy for the PTSA, as the checks are written and the funds are spent only after the expenses have been incurred. This arrangement has to be made with the school, and requires that the PTSA first submit a donation letter to the school, detailing the amount of money that the PTSA has committed to spending, and for what purpose.
- Payment in advance to the school (building/district)...

...when grant payment is covering part of the expense (in which case the entire check likely will be spent and there would no funds left over);

...when grant payment is covering the entire expense, in which case the check would possibly be MORE than the expense and money would be left over. This is the case where there would need to be some process for how the PTSA can find out how much money is left over, and how that money would be reimbursed or kept in a reserved fund for the PTSA for future use.

### What if there is leftover PTSA money in the schools accounts?

You will need to discuss with your principal and office staff how they will keep track of leftover, unspent PTSA money, and what process they will use to return it to the PTSA. They might want to wait until the end of the school year, or even the beginning of the next school year to return it.

In any case, having a "restricted donation" letter with your grant check is important. This is where you would spell out how you want any unused funds returned to you. You might want to follow up with the office staff during the spring to discuss how this will take place.

### What is the process for payment and management of PTA grants?

This funding should be handled as a donation to the Lake Washington School District. Restricted donation forms should always accompany these donations. Checks and donation forms may be sent to Sara Peterson at the LW Resource Center. The funds will be transferred to the individual school building budget account. Office managers will work with human resources to allocate stipends and process pay for hourly time in the payroll. As with all restricted donations, the PTA may request an accounting of funds spent and a full refund of any funds not spent within the time specified by the Restricted Donation Form. PTAs should work with the school office manager or bookkeeper to receive this information.

### 5.6 Feedback from your grant recipients

Your organization may want to evaluate the success or impact of the grant by following up with an evaluation questionnaire. For a small classroom grant, the evaluation may be as simple as emailing teachers a question like, "How did this classroom grant positively impact the educational environment in your classroom this year?". Program grants may be evaluated informally during budget committee discussions in the spring, or you may have a short evaluation form that assesses the breadth and quality of the grant-funded program. For new programs or significant expenditures, it is strongly recommended that a PTSA follow up with both an evaluation and a financial accounting of the grant-funded project.

### 5.7 Publicize your completed grant program

Communicate to the community how your PTSA has spent its money. Be sure that they are aware of the value that your PTSA adds to your school!

- Put nameplates, labels, or some kind of identifying information on the donated goods. Get a stamp made that says "Funded by the PTSA" and stamp inside of books.
- Promote in newsletters, Facebook posts, membership meetings, what you have spent on grants.
- Ask staff to mention things they have received at Curriculum Night, or in emails/letters to parents. (Consider asking the staff to do this as a condition of receiving the grant!)
- If it's an event, put up a sign or banner saying "Funded by a grant from the PTSA".
- Be creative!

## 5.8 Document your process

Have the grant committee chair fill out a Committee Plan of Action for the entire grant program at the beginning of the school year. This form asks the committee chair to map out how their program will work (how many volunteers do they need, how will money be spent, how will they promote the program), and then present the form to the Board of Directors for review. At the end of the grant program a Program Evaluation Form should be filled out to provide feedback and ideas on how to improve the process that was used to provide grants to your school. Consider creating a policy document that spells out how you run your grant program. If things went well, you want to be able to easily repeat the process. If things didn't go well, this will allow you to document how it should go in the future.

## Section 6. Stipends & Paying for Staff

### 6.1 Definition of a Stipend

**Stipend:** A stipend is compensation for a certificated staff member taking on additional responsibilities. This payment is not tied to a specific number of hours; it is tied to specific tasks or objectives. The amount of the stipend is set in the teacher contract with the district; it may vary slightly year-to-year, but will change most significantly with a new contract adoption (approximately every 4 years).

- **Full Stipend:** Full stipends are usually paid for activities that last the full school year, or which are associated with a major event (e.g., a drama production).
- **Half stipend:** Half stipends may be appropriate for shorter time frames or smaller projects.

### 6.2 Types of Stipends

There is a Stipend Schedule included in the negotiated teacher contract with the district. It specifies the amount of a stipend. Stipend amounts vary by school level (elementary, secondary) and by the purpose/activity for which the stipend is being given (athletic, music, general). The two most common stipends for PTA programs are optional stipends and elementary music stipends. Principals are responsible for determining whether a half-stipend or a full stipend is required for a specific program. Your principal may also determine that another type of stipend is applicable, and can provide your PTA with the appropriate information.

See the Appendix for this year's stipend schedule in the two LWSD documents referenced. Always make sure that you are using the current year's schedule.

### 6.3 Paying for Staffing

PTSAs cannot provide grant money to pay for staffing that is considered "necessary". A good rule of thumb is that stipends may be paid for activities that are "nice to have", not "necessary to have." If an activity is "necessary to have", it should be paid by the district.

Paying a staff member a stipend to help run a "nice to have" before or after school program (or even a during-lunch program) is allowable, but must be paid through the district's payroll process. PTSAs (or parents) should never directly pay a staff member.

Refer to the Appendix for the "Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines for Working with Parent Organizations."

## Section 7 FAQs

### How can we fund a field trip?

There is nothing inherently wrong with funding field trips. It is the liability risk surrounding the transportation that makes funding field trips problematic for PTAs. If your insurance is provided by AIM, then transportation is not covered in your general liability policy, so if there was an accident or injury to a participant that occurred during the transportation portion of the evening, your PTA would not have insurance coverage for that situation through your regular policy. (If your coverage is with a provider other than AIM, you should check with them to see how your coverage would address transportation claims.)

So what can PTAs do? There are a number of options, and each PTA, as its own association, needs to decide what makes sense for their organization.

The best situation is if the PTA can grant funds to the school to support the non-transportation costs of the event – entrance fees, tickets, etc.

Another option that some PTAs have found is to fund the buses after the field trip is over. This would likely involve providing a letter before the event to the school pledging that you will be financially supporting the experience, but keep the language non-specific. Then when the event has safely passed, the office staff can "bill" the PTA for an exact amount.

Another option your PTA can look into is to talk to AIM about an additional "rider" on your policy that would cover extended medical claims for this event. This rider would carry an extra charge, but would cover medical claims resulting from transportation incidents.

Another option is for your PTA to continue funding grants for field trips the way we have been, i.e. for “enrichment”, with the understanding that the PTA is giving the funds to the school to make the decisions about transportation, so that distances the PTA from the responsibility for those decisions should something happen that results in a liability claim.

WA State PTA has suggested that PTAs can work with their principal to find a different (non-transportation) expense that the PTA can fund. The idea is that this would free up funds for the school to pay for the transportation for the field trip, thus eliminating the need for PTA to be involved with any liability risk.

### **What are "reserves", "surplus" and "unallocated funds"?**

In taking care and responsibility for the health and viability of a PTA, each Board of Directors makes sure to have a budget approved by membership, and to operate within that budget for their fiscal year. In seeing to the long-term sustainability of a PTA, part of that budget will include some amount of funds set aside as “**reserves**.” These reserves are there to maintain the viability of a PTA in the face of extreme circumstances. Often, a PTA will start the year with assets that exceed a determined amount of reserves. These funds could be “**surplus**” funds, or funds **unallocated** in the current year’s budget.

For example, a PTA may have a balance of \$10,000 in their bank accounts on July 1. They have an approved budget for expected income of \$25,000, expected expenses of \$25,000, and their Standing Rules require reserves of \$6,000. Because the budget expects to have equal income and expenses, none of what is in the bank of July 1 should be used for the coming year. With reserves of \$6,000, the remaining \$4,000 is defined as “surplus” or “unallocated” funds.

### **If we have a line item for a grant as an every year distribution, do we need to have a "request" for the funds or can we just write a check at the beginning of the year?**

If it is a line item in an approved budget you can just treat it as any other expense.

### **What kind of things should we be careful granting money for?**

- Field trips/transportation
- Donations to individuals suffering a hardship
- Booster clubs
- Technology
- Equipment
- Professional Development

**What if the staff member spends more than they were granted?**

If you have written a designated donation letter with the amount specified, it is not the responsibility of the PTSA to cover costs over and above that amount. PTSAs can certainly entertain requests for additional funds, but that would require a board discussion at a minimum, and funding would need to be available.

**Should we have a teacher on our grant committee?**

We recommend that teachers not be part of the grant committee. Because teachers benefit from grants, there can be conflict of interest, or an appearance of conflict of interest.

**Our principal would like to be on the grant committee. Is this okay?**

Both LWSD and PTA guidelines ask that principals not be on grant committees. Be sure to include your principal at some point in the process, though, their input is important. (See Section 4.4 "Working with your principal".)

**Can we consider a grant that would benefit a board member's child's class?**

Yes, if that person recuses himself or herself from the discussion. Leaving the room where the discussion is happening would be helpful. It should be noted in the meeting minutes that that person recused themselves.

**We would like to fund a grant application, but our principal is not in agreement. What can we do?**

Principals are required to ensure that events/programs are of high quality and align with the school and district goals and policies and therefore need an opportunity to provide input and deny grant requests that they deem inappropriate for their school community. Principals are also aware of other sources of funding for equipment and projects that may match or preclude the need for PTA funds. And remember that having a good relationship with your principal is an essential part of a successful PTA!

**Can we donate money to a family that has a seriously ill child?**

Although PTSAs and their members often want to help out an individual family, donating PTSA funds to benefit a family in this way mostly likely does not match the stated reason for your 501-c-3.

**Can we donate money to the counseling office to help out students with expenses like yearbooks, prom tickets, AP classes, activity fees, class fees?**

Yes, if you have a budget line item for donations to the counseling office, they can use that money to benefit individual students.

**We've been asked to pay for professional development. Is that appropriate?**

This is a decision that your particular PTA should make. Some PTAs feel that because professional development benefits only one person it is not a good use of their grant dollars. However, in cases where the teacher is learning something that they have committed to training their fellow staff members on and the benefit gets passed on to a larger group of people, then PTAs might feel like that is money well-spent.

**Can we require a teacher to be a PTSA member to apply for a grant?**

No. As a nonprofit organization, a member of that organization **may not** benefit directly. This is called *inurement* and is referenced in the *PTA & the Law\** handbook (page 24). By requiring that staff be members in order to receive a grant from your PTA, this becomes a form of inurement, as the grants were only made available if they became a member. It is certainly okay to offer grants as long as they are made available to all teachers and one does not need to be a member in order to benefit.

**We hear that in some districts PTAs fund aides. Can we pay for teachers or aides?**

LWSD does not allow PTAs to fund staffing, with these exceptions:

- PTAs can fund money for release time (substitutes), if the principal is in agreement.
- PTAs can fund stipends for staff for before/after school activities (or lunchtime activities) if the principal is in agreement.

A good rule of thumb is that the PTAs can fund for activities that are "nice to have", not "necessary to have". Refer to the LWSD document "Policies, Procedures and Guidelines for Working with Parent Organizations" in the Appendix.

**We're not sure how much money we will have for grants, how do we budget for that?**

A grant line item is a flexible and easy place to adjust a budget. A budget is a plan for how your PTSA is going to raise and spend money for the year. When you pass an initial budget in the spring, it is a plan for how you will operate based on projections of income and expenses. That budget should have an amount allocated for grants that is reasonable and sustainable given the other assumptions of your budget. If your fall fundraiser falls short of its goal, you can revise the amount available for grants. On the other hand, if your fall fundraiser far exceeds its goal, you may be able to increase the funds available for grants. Your standing rules govern the process your PTA should

follow for amending your budget (whether it can be done by the Board or needs a membership vote).

## Section 8. Appendix – Additional Resources and Sample Forms

Please visit the LWSD website to find this document.

- LWSD “2017-2018 PTA Payments to Lake Washington School District Employees” (information on stipends)
- LWSD Document – “Policies, Procedures and Guidelines for Working with Parent Organizations” (This document includes information about stipends.)

These documents will be found on the LWPTSA.net website.

- Sample grant application form
- Sample grant guidelines for schools to use
- Sample grant letters to grant requestors – notification of rejection and acceptance
- Sample letter to school/district - restricted donation
- Sample of a Grant application summary document (tool for grant committees)
- Sample Committee Plan of Action form (can be used by any committee)
- Sample Program Evaluation form (can be used by any committee)