Will Kenny Foundation — STEM Innovation Grant Program

Program Overview

The **Will Kenny Foundation STEM Innovation Grant Program** supports Peoria, Illinois educators who want to bring hands-on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics learning to their classrooms. Inspired by Will's passion for robotics, technology, and creativity, the program empowers teachers with the resources needed to spark curiosity and innovation in their students.

Mission

To honor Will's legacy by equipping schools with STEM tools, materials, and technologies that help students dream, build, experiment, and explore.

Grant Priorities

Projects should promote one or more of the following:

1. Hands-On STEM Learning

- Robotics kits

- 3D printing integration

- Engineering design challenges

- Coding, circuitry, or makerspace supplies

2. Technology Integration in the Classroom

- Classroom devices

- Software licenses

- Digital fabrication tools

3. Innovative Teacher-Led Initiatives

- Projects that encourage problem-solving, teamwork, or real-world applications

4. Equity & Access

- Programs serving under-resourced classrooms or rural districts

- Projects improving STEM access for underrepresented students

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Eligibility Criteria

- Applicants must be **teachers, STEM coaches, or administrators** in **Peoria, Illinois** K–12 schools.

- Schools must demonstrate commitment to STEM integration.

- Each school may submit up to **two** applications per cycle.

Grant Amounts

- **Mini Grants:** up to **$500**

    o Ideal for classroom materials, small robotics components, or software.

- **Innovation Grants:** up to **$2,000**

    o Supports larger programs, technology purchases, or multi-class projects.

Use of Funds

Grant funds may be used for:

- Curriculum-aligned STEM equipment

- Robotics materials

- 3D printers and filament

- Licenses for coding or engineering education platforms

- Lab equipment and tools

- Competition entry fees (e.g., FIRST robotics, LEGO League)

- Teacher training supporting selected STEM initiatives

Funds **may not** be used for:

- General school operating expenses

- Non-STEM-related supplies

- Salaries or stipends

- Travel unrelated to STEM competitions

Grant Cycle Timeline

Annual Cycle

- **January:** Applications open

- **March:** Applications close

- **April:** Review committee evaluations

- **May:** Award announcements

- **June–July:** Funds distributed

- **December:** Final project reports due

Application Requirements

Applicants must submit:

1. Project Proposal (1–2 pages)

- Description of project and intended impact

- Grade levels and number of students served

- Alignment with STEM goals

2. Budget Breakdown

- Itemized list of materials and costs

- Explanation of sustainability beyond grant period

3. Principal/Administrator Letter of Support

4. Optional Supporting Materials

- Photos of classroom environment

- Student feedback or inspiration samples

- Links to curriculum or standards alignment

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be scored on:

Innovation (30%)

Creativity and originality of the STEM experience.

Student Impact (30%)

Reach, diversity of participating students, and depth of engagement.

Feasibility (20%)

Clarity of planning and ability to execute the project.

Alignment with Foundation Mission (20%)

Focus on robotics, STEM exploration, and honoring Will's legacy.

Awardee Expectations

- Submit a brief mid-year update

- Provide a final summary including:

    o Photos or videos of the project

    o Student impact reflections

    o Budget reconciliation

- Grant recipients may be highlighted at Foundation events (e.g., **Whiskey + Robots**)

Program Administration

The STEM Innovation Grant Program will be overseen by the **Will Kenny Foundation Board**, with input from:

- Local educators

- STEM professionals

- Community volunteers

The Foundation may partner with businesses or community sponsors to expand funding capacity.