

FISCAL YEAR 2022 INNOVATIVE EDUCATION FUND FINAL EVALUATION REPORT



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INTRODUCTION

The Georgia Foundation for Public Education (GFPE), the philanthropic arm of the Georgia’s Department of Education’s (GADOE), exists for the single purpose of supporting educational excellence for students in Georgia. Through donations, the foundation funds a variety of projects, as well as serve as a channel for organizations to fund their vision.

In February 2022, the GFPE launched the first round of the Innovative Education Fund, which provides traditional public and charter schools, school districts, and organizations partnered with these entities up to \$20,000 to implement innovative programs that will improve student outcomes. The Innovative Education Fund is made possible through the [PEACH Education Tax Credit](#).

TABLE 1. FY22 INNOVATIVE EDUCATION FUND PROTOTYPE GRANTEES

- *Calhoun City Schools, \$20,000*
- *Georgia Gwinnett College in partnership with Alford Elementary School of Gwinnett County Public Schools, \$20,000*
- *Hand, Heart & Soul Project in partnership with 7 Pillars Charter Academy of Clayton County Public Schools, \$20,000*
- *Leap Year in partnership with Atlanta Public Schools, \$20,000*

TABLE 2. FY22 INNOVATIVE EDUCATION FUND MINI GRANTEES

- *Newton County Schools, \$5,000*
- *Rome City Schools, West Central Elementary, \$5,000*

In May 2022, GFPE awarded six Innovative Education Fund grants to Georgia schools, districts, and organizations totaling \$90,000. The grant program provided two tiers of awards: the Prototype Grant, which provided between \$10,000-\$20,000

and the Mini Grant, which provided up to \$5,000. The GFPE awarded four Prototype grants and two Mini grants. The grants focused on improving math pedagogy, coding for girls, urban agriculture, an early education pathway for high school students, a gap-year mentorship program, and outreach with ELL students and families.

This report summarizes the final outcomes for the 2022 Innovative Education Fund grantees and presents evidence of impacts from grantees.



2022 INNOVATIVE EDUCATION FUND PROGRAM SUMMARIES

PROTOTYPE GRANTS

Applicant	Calhoun City Schools
Funding Request	\$20,000.00
Project Summary	The Calhoun College & Career Academy at Calhoun High School will partner with the Calhoun Early Learning Academy (Pre-school, Pre-K, and Kindergarten) to provide hands-on learning experiences to high school students on the aspiring teacher pathway. Specifically, the early learning center will create a training classroom for high schoolers to master the pathway standards while gaining experience with pre-school through kindergarten students. Calhoun City Schools will also partner with the University of West Georgia to use the Live Simulation Lab, which will provide aspiring teacher pathway students the opportunity to practice their pedagogy in a risk-free, simulation setting. Finally, the program will provide families of early learning center students with literacy kits to engage them beyond the classroom.

Applicant	Georgia Gwinnett College in partnership with Alford Elementary School of Gwinnett County Public Schools
Funding Request	\$20,000.00
Project Summary	In 2019, Alford Elementary School (AES) third through fifth grade students scored seven to ten points lower on the mathematics Milestone exam compared to the county average. The need for support increased due to learning loss as a result of the pandemic. Georgia Gwinnett College will use the Prototype grant to provide the school with its early learning teacher candidates specializing in math pedagogy. In a model lab structure, teacher candidates will learn best practices in math instruction and have the opportunity to apply those practices in the classroom with AES students.

Applicant	Hand Heart & Soul Project in Partnership with 7 Pillars Charter Academy of Clayton County Public Schools
Funding Request	\$20,000.00
Project Summary	Hand, Heart & Soul Project (HHSP) and 7 Pillars Career Academy of Clayton Public School System will partner to implement a food- and wellness-based curriculum. Ninety percent of 7 Pillars Middle School students live below the poverty line and there is limited access to healthy foods. HHSP, a grassroots non-profit, addresses food insecurity in schools located in food desert settings by teaching students about nutritious foods, incorporating a horticulture and agriculture pathway, and integrating healthy habits, such as yoga and art therapy. This project will impact 131 middle school students in 6 th -8 th grades, 30 parents, and 10 teachers. The curriculum will become part of the school's focus on career pathways and activism.

Applicant	Leap Year in partnership with Atlanta Public Schools
Funding Request	\$20,000.00
Project Summary	Prior to COVID-19, only 42% of Atlanta Public School (APS) third grade students were reading on grade level. Additionally, only 27% of APS high school graduates completed a post-secondary degree. Leap Year recruits first-generation high school graduates to serve as Fellows, where they spend one year as reading coaches for at-risk second graders while preparing themselves for success in college and career. Leap Year, in partnership with Atlanta Public Schools, will place yearlong Fellows to serve as mentors and tutors in three schools in their local communities before committing to a post-secondary degree program.

MINI GRANTS

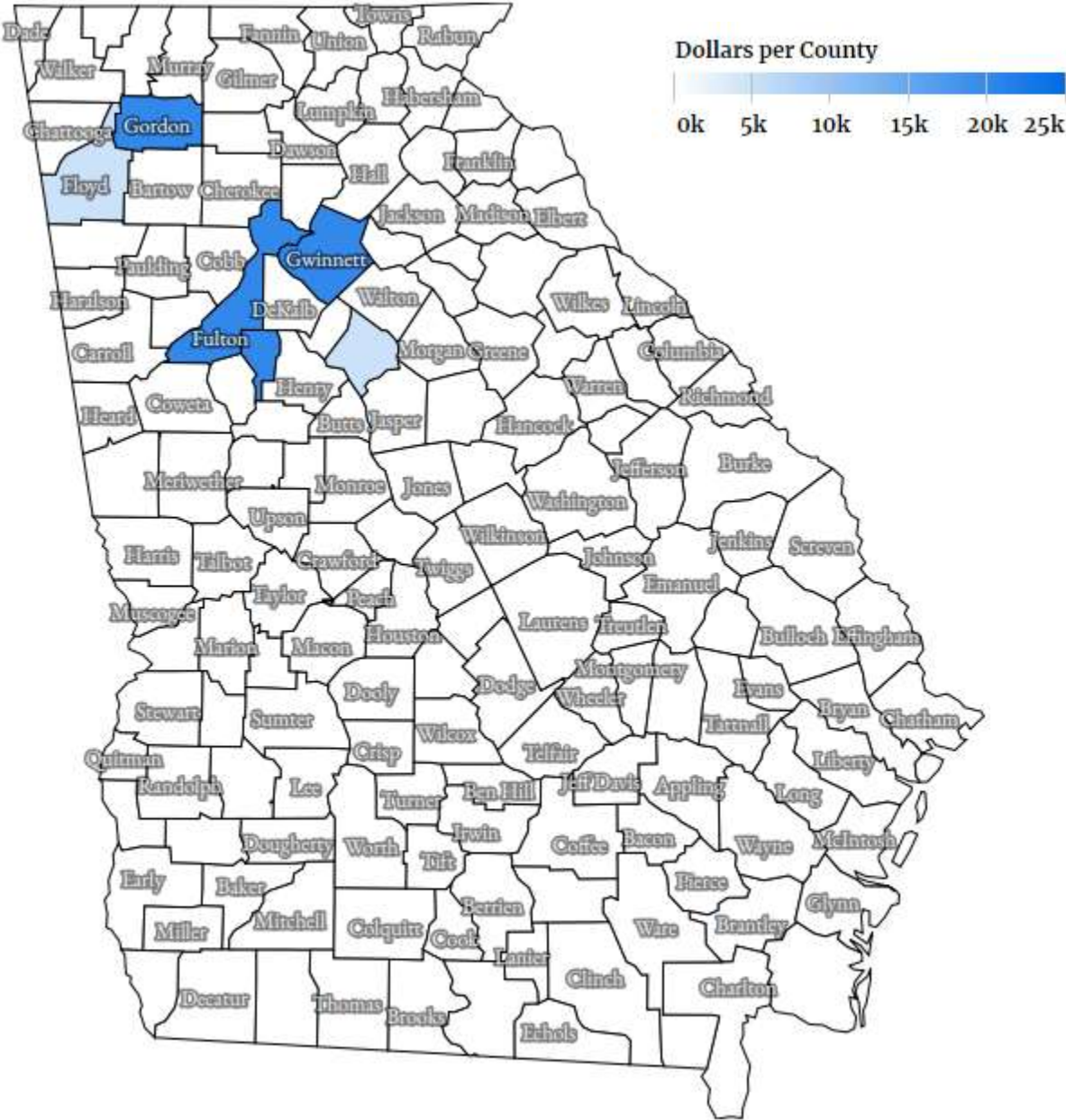
Applicant	Newton County Schools
Funding Request	\$5,000.00
Project Summary	Newton County Schools will use the Mini Grant to implement a district-wide coding program for girls. The full-day coding conference aims to expose girls to careers in computer science and technology fields. We need \$5,000 to buy supplies to run the conference.

Applicant	Rome City Schools, West Central Elementary
Funding Request	\$5,000.00
Project Summary	West Central Elementary serves 587 students, 54% of whom speak exclusively Spanish at home. The language barrier limits family engagement in school activities and with their children's teachers. West Central Elementary School will use the IEF Mini Grant to create a video recording zone in the STEAM lab where students will plan, film, edit, and produce bilingual video communication to keep fellow students, families, and community members up to date on current school events, successes, and engagement opportunities.



MAPPING THE 2022 INNOVATIVE EDUCATION FUND

GRANTS BY COUNTY



2022 INNOVATIVE EDUCATION FUND FINAL IMPACTS

AT A GLANCE

2,521 students were **IMPACTED** by Innovative Education Fund programs.

In addition, **8** recent high school graduates and **25** college students were **IMPACTED**

Of the students impacted, **63%** are **FEMALE** and **37%** are **MALE**.

Impacts by Race/Ethnicity
White, **25%**
African American, **43%**
Latino, **28%**
Asian, **1%**
Native American, **<1%**
Other, **2%**

Impacts by **Grade Band**
Elementary School, **68%**
Middle School, **22%**
High School, **10%**

83% of students impacted are identified as **Economically Disadvantaged**

14% of students impacted are identified as **English Language Learners**

15 Schools Involved in Programming

GRANTEE OUTCOMES

At the end of June 2023, grantees reported the outcomes from the grant year and all grantees completed the majority of the action steps. In addition, most grantees either met or surpassed most goals for the program set out at the beginning of the grant year. Here are the final outcomes and spotlights for all 2022 Innovative Education Fund Grantees:

Prototype Grants

Leap Year in Partnership with Atlanta Public Schools

In second grade classrooms at two Atlanta public schools, Deerwood Academy and Harper-Archer Elementary School, the teachers take a step back. Today, recent high school graduates will hold small groups where they serve as reading coaches and mentors to the second graders. This is the structure of Leap Year, which prepares Atlanta area high school graduates for college by letting them take a gap year between graduation and college to help elementary students improve their literacy skills. In addition, the students take a one-credit college course at Georgia State University, further preparing them to become full-time college students. Through the program, students earn a paycheck while gaining invaluable leadership and professional skills and, secondarily, develop the next generation of strong teachers. Here were the outcomes at the end of the grant year:

- 100% of Harper-Archer second graders involved in programming reported that they read more books and 86% of students reported they like reading, based on a student survey.
- Leap Year small-group second graders at Harper Archer Elementary School and Deerwood Academy showed a 4- and 6-point average growth, respectively, from beginning of year (BOY) to end of year (EOY).
- Leap Year small-group second graders at Harper Archer Elementary School showed an average increase on the MAP Reading Assessment of 2.45 points, from 161.1 at BOY to 163.5 at the EOY.
- Leap Year small-group second graders at Deerwood Academy showed an average increase on the MAP Reading Assessment of 9.6 points, from 166.2 at BOY to 175.8 at the EOY.
- Overall, 400 second grade students were impacted by the program.
- Overall, 24 Leap Year Fellows were involved in programming.



Hand, Heart & Soul Project in Partnership with 7 Pillars Charter Academy

The release bell rings at 7 Pillars Academy. Some students run to the buses and some run to the playground. But a select few students run to a classroom and take their seat at a desk. The classroom is typical except it is adjacent to a large storage room where there are hydroponic gardens set under purple-hued UV lights. On a long table situated at the front of a classroom, instructors have several fresh ingredients,



cookware, and utensils laid out. The instructors begin by saying, “Today we are going to make peanut butter hummus! We are going to learn how to make the recipe and how to safely chop the fruits that you will eat the hummus with.” The students exclaim, “Yay!” With that, the Hand, Heart, & Soul Project’s (HHSP) instructor starts asking for volunteers to help create the healthy snack.

This class combines math, science, literacy, and dirt – it’s the Garden Club! The after-school class, as well as the adjacent room housing the indoor gardens, are part of the HHSP initiative to engage students in healthy eating and living education. The partnership between HHSP and 7 Pillars Academy gives students the opportunity to learn how to garden, grow and harvest fruit and vegetables, and how to make healthy fresh ingredient-centered recipes. Students also have access to raised garden beds outside, as part of the program model. In addition, parents also had the opportunity to participate in the after-school classes and any events sponsored by HHSP. The after-school program was so popular that there was a waiting list for students to join – a testament to the organization’s presence on the 7 Pillars Academy campus. By the end of the grant year, HHSP boasted strong outcomes.

“The Gardening Club has been a huge success for the students here at 7 Pillars Academy. A few students have left their extracurricular activities, like football and drill team, to be part of the gardening club.” Parent Liaison, 7 Pillars Academy

Here is a breakdown of the program’s takeaways by the end of the year:

- By the end of the year, 100% of student participants agreed or strongly agreed that they would be able to maintain a plant bed or plant in a container, based on a student survey.
- By the end of the year, students had successfully planted and harvested basil, lettuce, and arugula.

- At an event in April 2023, families received 2,400 pounds of fresh fruit and vegetables grown at the school and donated from the Clayton County Cooperative Extension.
- By the end of the year, 100% of student participants tried five healthy foods, which surpassed the target goal of 90% by 10 percentage points and surpassed the baseline of 21% by 79 percentage points, based on a student survey.
- By the end of the year, 92% of parents felt more confident to serve a budget friendly, healthy snack or meal at home, which surpassed the target goal of 75% by 17 percentage points and surpassed the baseline of 17% by 75 percentage points, based on a parent survey.



Georgia Gwinnett College in Partnership with Alford Elementary School of Gwinnett County Public Schools

Since fall 2020, students at Alford Elementary School in Gwinnett County have shown learning loss in mathematics on district benchmarks and state assessments. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a spate of learning loss across all subject areas and grade levels. In an effort to mitigate this challenge, Alford Elementary School and Georgia Gwinnett College (GGC) partnered to test an innovative model that would both provide targeted mathematics support to students who need it most and create a pipeline of strong teacher candidates at the college. Using the IEF Prototype Grant, GGC marketed the paid tutoring opportunity to students seeking an



education degree but who are still in the process of applying to the teacher education programs at the college. Using this approach, the college hopes to ensure that the students applying to the education program are a good fit for the classroom before starting work on the degree. In addition, the program helps pre-program students acquire the teaching experience hours required for acceptance into the education program.

“The focused interventions and support offered to my below grade level students increased their confidence, not only in math but, across all content. This was observed as an increase in risk-taking within the class and overall increase in whole group participation.” – Alford Elementary School Teacher (on the impact of the small group interventions provided by the GGC tutors)

Each day the GGC students served as tutors was an opportunity to hone their pedagogy as burgeoning teachers. They would plan and practice differentiated instruction in math and then pull and work with small groups of first, second and fourth graders. This even gave the elementary school teachers a chance to provide their own differentiated instruction to a smaller class, allowing the students who need the most support to receive more targeted interventions from the GGC tutors. By the end of the grant year, surveys indicated that GGC students participation in the program resulted in increased overall ability to communicate with elementary students and school faculty, teach math content to elementary students, and develop a deeper understanding of how to design and implement lesson plans. Here are some of the takeaways from the GGC Tutor and AES Faculty Experience Surveys:

- 100% of GGC student tutor respondents indicated that they are at least somewhat capable of teaching math content to elementary students by the end of the program.
- 100% of GGC student tutor respondents indicated that their assessment of the overall value of the program in developing math abilities and skills in the elementary students was valuable or very valuable.
- 100% of participating Alford Elementary School teachers indicated that the tutors were either effective or very effective in increasing confidence in mathematical ability of their students.



Calhoun City Schools

In a high school classroom in northwest Georgia, teacher education pathway students take turns reading to tiny, wiggling first grade students. While the students read, they simultaneously redirect students when they are too wiggly or start talking while they read the book. This scene, though, is much more innovative than you think. The elementary students are being broadcast into the high school classroom and disguised by a cartoon-like overlay. This is the most interactive part of the Calhoun City High School Teacher Pathway Program: it provides high school students with a college-level simulation lab

“The experience of participating in the UWG Simulation Lab was wonderful! I was nervous at first to interact with a classroom in a digital setting; however, it was a risk-free environment that allowed me to better learn how to engage with children.” Teaching as a Profession Pathway Student, Calhoun City High School

experience run out of the University of West Georgia wherein they interact virtually with elementary students, teaching lessons and providing behavior management, all from the comfort of their classroom desk. The other caveat? The elementary students broadcast into the class



are not real; but the high schoolers think they are and gain all the experience that they need from the short interactions. After the broadcast is over, the pathway teacher provides robust feedback to the students and asks them to reflect on their time with the elementary kids: “What went well?” “How would you redirect differently next time?” “What did you miss this time that you will be on the lookout for next time?” Then, after this experience, the high schoolers then have the opportunity to read to real elementary school students at the Calhoun Early Learning Academy. Elementary students are hand-selected by their teachers as those in need of additional reading support. At the beginning of the year, the pathway students designed and set up a primary classroom, which is where the little students come to meet with their high school reading mentors. The combined experiences are part of the district’s vision to create a robust teaching pathway program at the high school with the hopes of building an educator pipeline so that alumni seeking a teaching degree will return, upon college graduation, to Calhoun City to be teachers. By the end of the year, Calhoun City High School reported the following findings:



- According to an Early Childhood Education Pathway Survey distributed to high school students in the pathway,
 - 92.5% of student respondents felt prepared or somewhat prepared to teach in a real classroom setting because of their experience with the simulation lab.
 - 97.5% of student respondents felt that the simulation lab provides a real-world or somewhat of a real-world classroom experience.
 - 67.5% of student respondents felt prepared to teach first grade.
- MAP Assessment data from beginning of the year (BOY) to end of year (EOY) for elementary students receiving reading tutoring from high school pathway students:
 - Participating elementary students showed an average conditional growth of 33 percentage points on the math MAP assessment, from 66% at the BOY to 99% at the EOY, meaning participating students were in the 99th percentile for growth by EOY.
 - Participating elementary students showed an average conditional growth of 30 percentage points on the reading MAP assessment, from 61% at the BOY to 91% at the EOY, meaning participating students were in the 91st percentile for growth by EOY.

Mini Grants

Rome City Schools, West Central Elementary

Just miles from where they filmed the hit show *Stranger Things*, there is another kind of production taking place. This one is centered on news from happenings at an elementary school, including upcoming events, fundraiser updates, teacher and student spotlights, and important parent information. There are a few special things about this production, though: 1) the production is in both English and Spanish to engage the large Spanish-speaking population that the school serves and 2) the news production is planned, written, filmed and edited entirely by West Central Elementary School students. The program is an opportunity to develop a vigorous audio-visual pathway at



"I wanted to help with the news show because I thought it was really important. I like talking in Spanish and want to help other people understand what's going on at school" – West End Elementary School Student and Program Participant

the elementary level and use the skills to create bilingual news to engage all students and families served by the school. Once the newscast is complete, it is published on various school update outlets, including the school website and Facebook page.

By the end of the grant, West Central Elementary School had surpassed both goals it set for its program:

- During the school year, WCES increased the participation of families by 28, from baseline 25 to 53, surpassing the goal of 50 by three families.
- The school sought to increase their Facebook presence by creating more “posts,” and increasing their average “likes” per post. By the end of the grant year, the school averaged 21 posts per month and received an average of 80 likes per post, an increase of 65 average “likes” at baseline.



Scan the QR Code above to watch the Wolf Howl News from April, which was produced using the IEF Mini Grant.

*Newton County Schools, West
Central Elementary*

At a one-day coding conference in Covington, Georgia, people learn about various aspects of coding including how to build and program a robot and how to develop an app. In addition, they have the opportunity to network with speakers and experts from Microsoft and Google. But this isn't any ordinary coding conference



– the attendees are in elementary, middle and high school. Even more surprising, all of the attendees are girls. The InspiHer Conference, a one-day computer science event open to Newton County Schools students, offers girls in first through twelfth grade the opportunity to learn about a field where they are traditionally underrepresented. In addition, the high schoolers had the opportunity to receive guidance on completing a college application. Finally, the district provided the opportunity to attend a one-week computer science camp during the summer of 2023.

Here are the outcomes from the conference:

- A total of 282 girls across all schools in the district attended the one-day conference.
- 100% of attendees applied for the weeklong computer science camp.
- Six girls applied for and were accepted to Georgia Piedmont Technical College. The conference gave them a rare chance to meet with the college recruiters who helped them put an application together and accepted them on the spot, including some girls who did not have postsecondary plans at the time.



Newton County Schools leveraged the outcomes from the 2022 Mini Grant to apply for and receive a \$20,000 Expansion Grant from GFPE's Innovative Education Fund. Using the funds, Newton County Schools will expand the InspiHer Conference to include more girls across the district and offer a summer STEM camp component.

END OF YEAR TAKEAWAYS

The Innovative Education Fund launched in 2022, making these six grantees the inaugural cohort of the program. With GFPE’s active engagement in each of the programs, including conducting site visits, providing programmatic guidance, and maintaining positive rapport, grantees felt confident to implement their programs with a focus on goals but also pivoting when necessary.

All grantees were able to complete all milestones set out in the original application, with some experiencing minor changes in timelines, as was the case for Georgia Gwinnett College and West Central Elementary School. Any changes to timelines were due to external factors (school priorities taking precedent, school schedule changes, etc.) rather than a lack of planning on the part of the grantee. In addition, all grantees met or exceeded the majority of their goals. Those who fell short of their goals understand how to pivot their programs to ensure they can reach the goals beyond the IEF grant.

For the 2023 grant cycle, the GFPE increased the amount offered for Prototype Grants from \$20,000 to \$25,000. In addition, the 2023 grant cycle included a separate subgrant program, the Expansion Grant, which offered up to \$20,000 to scale an existing successful program to more students and/or schools.

FEEDBACK FOR THE GEORGIA FOUNDATION FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

Grantees are required to provide mid-year and end-of-year grant evaluation forms. In the evaluation, grantees highlight the grant’s current status, including the demographics of students/faculty/families impacted, as well as progress towards the SMART goals outlined on the original application. In addition, the evaluation provides space for grantees to give feedback to the Georgia Foundation for Public Education regarding its responsiveness as a grantor. Here are the feedback findings from the 2021 end of grant evaluation reports:

- Grantees are asked to rate the GFPE’s quality of technical assistance and support on a scale of one to five, with one being poor and five being excellent. Of the five grantees that provided a rating, all gave GFPE an excellent rating.
- GFPE received an overall average rating of five.
- Three grantees provided comments regarding the rating and/or overall feedback for the foundation.
- Here are the grantee comments:
 - **Hand, Heart & Soul Project in Partnership with 7 Pillars Charter Academy:** “Great flexibility of the site visit and the expressed engagement and interaction was appreciated.”

- **Calhoun City Schools:** “Always felt supported and appreciated in our work. We have loved this grant and the entire process! Thank you!”
- **Newton County Schools:** “We were so pleased with the assistance we received from Ms. Colona. She came to our InspiHER: Code Like a Girl conference and was able to witness how we exposed the girls to coding and computer science on this day. In addition, Ms. Colona made herself available for questions and answered any inquiries during the grant cycle graciously and promptly.”

