

# OTTER CARES

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## **Illumination** Fund

Funding student-led projects  
that create impact.

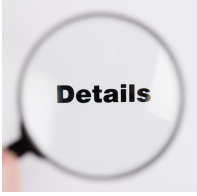




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# What is the **ILLUMINATION FUND?**



**We believe that one young and inspired mind can change the world - and we put our money where our hearts are to prove it.**

Sometimes the best ideas need a little support. That is why we created our Illumination Fund to help back student-led projects that are born from our Project Heart program.

When you walk your students through our Project Heart philanthropy program, these aspiring world-changers will be inspired to create change in their communities through an Impact Project. The Illumination Fund was designed to provide seed money to purchase materials to help bring these Impact Projects to life or, if the Impact Project is a fundraiser, the Illumination Fund can provide matching dollars for their fundraising efforts.

We're passionate about helping students bring their ideas to life and support projects that put them in the driver's seat to create lasting and impactful change in their communities and world.

# REQUIREMENTS AND DETAILS



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## PROJECT HEART INTEGRATION REQUIRED

We believe that our Project Heart philanthropy program has the power to unleash the maker, doer and giver inside of every student and we want to invest in their ideas that have the power to transform their communities. That's why the Illumination Fund was designed specifically to support student-led projects that come from their Project Heart experience.

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## MATERIALS OR FUNDRAISING GRANTS

Impact Projects that are fundraising events or collection drives can apply to receive a matching grant for their efforts. Service oriented Impact Projects, such as food drives, can apply for a materials grant to provide required supplies.

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## GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- If funded, the grant must be paid to the school or to a 501c3 nonprofit organization.
- Applications are reviewed monthly. Award notifications will be sent no later than 45 days after the completed student application is submitted.
- Due to the high volume of requests for the Illumination Fund, OtterCares has set a limit of two applications per class per school year. For nonprofit organizations, two applications per program per calendar year will be considered. If your class or nonprofit has more than two student projects, please use an internal vetting process to select the best projects for submission to OtterCares.

# HOW DO I APPLY?

APPLYING FOR THE ILLUMINATION FUND PUTS YOUR STUDENTS IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT. YOUR JOB? WATCH THEM GROW.



## INTEGRATE PROJECT HEART LESSONS

Teacher or program facilitator integrates Project Heart lessons into instruction with K-12 students. Share the grant template questions with your students ahead of time [HERE](#).



## SUBMIT PRE-APPLICATION

Teacher or program facilitator submits a pre-application [HERE](#). Note: The pre-application will include the name and email address of the student project leader as well as the project title and summary, which you can copy from student pre-work.



## OTTERCARES REVIEWS YOUR PRE-APPLICATION

Within 10 business days, OtterCares will review the pre-application. If the project idea meets Illumination Fund criteria, a link for the main application will be emailed to you and the student project leader.



## SUBMIT YOUR FINAL APPLICATION

Once the application is submitted, no changes can be made. Students are encouraged to proofread their content prior to submission to ensure all answers are complete and error free.



## APPLICATION REVIEW AND DETERMINATION SENT

Applications will be reviewed monthly. Award notifications will be sent no later than 45 days after the completed student application is submitted.



## KEEP IN MIND...

- Many students work on Impact Projects in groups, but the application requires one specific name and email address. The program facilitator or student group should select a “grant writer” who will be responsible for receiving the application link and ensuring it gets submitted. This is a similar structure to many nonprofits who have a specific grant writer on staff, even though they have many employees.
- The Illumination Fund is highly competitive. Encourage your students to draft their answers using the template [HERE](#). Once all questions are answered completely and are proofread for errors, they can copy/paste from the template into the application.
- Plan your instruction and timeline! When students have goals, they can start the application.
- If students have more than two impact projects to execute in each class, you will need to help narrow it down. You could have a pitch competition judged by community or business members, the class could vote, or you could score all the ideas and choose the top two who can apply.

## BE AWARE OF...

- Submitting too early – if students don’t have goals and measurable outcomes, it’s best to wait to submit.
- Fundraising Fatigue – schools often have many fundraising events throughout the year and that can be overwhelming. If a book fair and a fun run are happening when your students want to do a coin drive, your community may not respond well. Consider working directly with your administration, PTO/PTA and other community members before deciding on a fundraiser.
- Illegal fundraisers – In some states a raffle needs a special gaming license. If students want to hold a raffle, yard sale, farmers market booth, or anything along those lines, then be sure to research your local/state regulations.
- Typos and grammatical errors – these can make ideas hard to understand. Be sure your students seek revisions and edits from multiple sources.
- Overly complicated projects – stick to one main objective! Students can sometimes want to clean up an outdoor area and sell something for their cause. These are great examples of ways to be philanthropists but should be executed as separate projects. Help your students do one thing well.

# GET INSPIRED

We've helped students across the country bring their impact projects to life. Here are just a few ways we've invested in ideas that have made a difference.



## MATERIALS FUNDING

- Middle school students planned a river cleanup day. They requested funding for trash bags, buckets, gloves and trash pickers.
- Middle school students saw a problem with student connections and mental health in their school. Two small groups of kids solved the problem in two different ways. One group researched the ways physical activity brings kids together so they asked for materials to build a gaga ball pit, while the other group created a chill space outside with seating and plants to encourage more spontaneous conversations.
- High school students wanted to leave a legacy project to improve literacy and encourage discussion groups. They researched little libraries and asked for materials to build one on an approved site at school.
- High school students in FCCLA made blankets and care baskets for families with babies in the NICU. Funding was requested for blanket making materials and they requested donations within the community for the remaining items needed.



## MATCHING FUNDS

- Elementary school students hosted a fundraising luncheon for a nonprofit summer camp for kids with disabilities. They asked for food donations from local restaurants and supplies from local vendors, then asked attendees to pay a suggested amount for their meals. The Illumination Fund grant was awarded to match the donations raised.
- High school students wanted to donate to March of Dimes so they organized a walk/run at their school then were awarded funds to match the donations they collected.
- Elementary school students found a local food pantry that needed more food items so they organized a school wide food drive competition by grade level. After awarding a pajama party to the winning class, they converted their total cans and boxes collected to dollars (roughly \$.50 per item collected) and a matching donation was sent to the food pantry.



## CONNECT WITH OUR EXPERT

Our Impact and Education Director, Sarah Weeks, is our resident expert on all things Project Heart and the Illumination Fund. Whether you have been using Project Heart for years and need some help with the application process or are brand new to the Project Heart journey, Sarah is ready to help!

Feel free to email her at [sarah.weeks@ottercares.org](mailto:sarah.weeks@ottercares.org) to book a one-on-one meeting or connect with her via weekly office hours to collaborate on integrating Project Heart content or to support students with the Illumination Fund application process.

## GET SOCIAL

Changing the world cannot be done alone. That is why we created our [Project Heart Community page on Facebook](#). Use this space to connect with other educators using Project Heart, get ideas for impact projects for your students and be the first to hear about news and updates to the Project Heart content.

You can also learn more about upcoming office hours with our Impact and Education Director as well as sign up to participate in future info sessions about Project Heart!

# SOS SUPPORT AND HELP



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