



219 North Main Street, Suite 402
Barre, VT 05641 (p) 802-479-1030 | (f) 802-479-1835

Study Grants -- Instructions

Act 156 (2012), Secs 2, 4, 5, and 9

To apply for a governance-related study grant with the Vermont Agency of Education, please use the following instructions and accompanying application. An overview of details for the various grants can be found below in [Appendix A](#). The text of the legislation establishing and restricting these grants can be found in [Appendix B](#).

Instructions

In order to ensure orderly tracking of the increased number of grant requests expected, we will employ the standard grant tracking process. It is necessary to apply for each grant individually. The application must contain the information requested in the instructions. Most data are identical regardless of the grant requested; however we recommend that you read the descriptions for all grants to be certain you are applying for the most appropriate grant. In addition, in some cases, receiving one grant could make it impossible to apply for another.

Following completion of the grant application process and Agency approval, the Agency will prepare a grant form to be signed by the designated person, typically the superintendent of the supervisory union serving as fiscal agent.

Important Note: If you are relying on funds from a grant to cover expenses for a study, it is prudent to avoid signing any contracts before receiving approval.

Reimbursement

Reimbursement is for invoiced services. Most grants are not available to reimburse any services other than consulting and legal services necessary to provide a study committee or district with the information it needs to do its job. Facilitators fall within the definition of consultant. Grants do not cover compensation of supervisory union or district employees, even if the service is in excess of usually scheduled hours. Grants do not cover any expenses of study committee or school board members including travel. Grants do not cover refreshments served at meetings.

[Study Grant Application](#)

Appendix A – Study Grants; Overview

Revenue Code 3714 – Act 156 Joint Services Facilitation Reimbursement

The grant reimburses fees paid for facilitation, legal, and other consulting services associated with the **initial exploration** of joint activity. The grant is available to reimburse fees paid by two or more school districts or two or more supervisory unions. Total reimbursement available to all entities engaged in the study is \$5,000. Please read the enabling legislation in Act 156, Sec. 2 ([Appendix B](#)).

This grant can be used to fund facilitation, legal, and other consulting services for the study of joint activity that is expected to improve quality of education or increase the efficiency of delivery of education services. This grant can be used to explore the feasibility of moving forward with one of the other studies for which grants are available. The grant is very flexible, but it is important that the application is explicit about the objectives to be achieved. It is not sufficient for two districts to study the same project for individual implementation. *This grant is intended to fund studies that may result in joint activity by at least two districts.*

If an agreement is reached that has an impact on financial reporting, *e.g.* one district making expenditures for more than one district and receiving reimbursement, business managers for the districts involved should submit a statement to the Agency of Education finance team explaining how the districts will each report the transactions on the annual financial report. The finance team is happy to work with business managers to determine proper reporting. Some of these transactions may break new ground. The finance team tries to ensure consistent reporting among all districts throughout the State.

Revenue Code 3715 – Act 156 Joint Services Analysis and Implementation

The grant reimburses fees for legal and consulting services analyzing whether the provision of **joint services** would provide a measurable improvement in student opportunities and a decrease in costs. The grant is also available to reimburse transitional costs associated with entering into and implementing joint service agreements. The grant is available to reimburse fees paid by two or more school districts or two or more supervisory unions. Total reimbursement available to all entities engaged in the study is \$10,000. Please read the enabling legislation in Act 156, Sec. 4 ([Appendix B](#)).

Note that this is the only study grant that can be applied to costs of transition. It is possible to divide this grant between consulting services and costs of transition. Be sure to get the Agency of Education's advance written approval for the specific transition services for which you intend to seek reimbursement. The need for approval is to ensure that the Agency's understanding of transition costs is consistent with your understanding. Approval can be obtained in the initial application or during the course of the study as the nature of the transition becomes clear.

Supervisory unions and school districts receiving reimbursement under this grant cannot also receive funding for the same proposal under Sections 5 or 9 of Act 156. (See [Appendix B](#)) Fifty percent of the amount of invoices submitted quarterly to the Agency of Education shall be reimbursed on receipt, with the remainder paid after a written analysis and conclusions have been submitted to the Agency.

If an agreement is reached that has an impact on financial reporting, *e.g.* one district making expenditures for more than one district and receiving reimbursement, business managers for the districts involved should submit a statement to the Agency of Education finance team explaining how the districts will each report the transactions on the annual financial report. The finance team is happy to work with business managers to determine proper reporting. Some of these transactions may break new ground. The finance team tries to ensure consistent reporting among all districts throughout the State.

This grant is appropriate for projects that do not involve governance mergers.

Revenue Code 3716 – Act 156 SU Merger and Petition

The grant reimburses the legal and consulting services necessary to analyze whether a merger of two or more supervisory unions is advisable and for the preparation of a petition to the State Board of Education requesting adjustment of supervisory union boundaries. The grant is available to supervisory unions. Total reimbursement available to all entities engaged in the study is **\$20,000**. Please read the enabling legislation in Act 156, Sec. 5 ([Appendix B](#)).

Invoices shall be submitted quarterly to the Agency of Education. Fifty percent of the invoice amount shall be reimbursed, with the remaining portion disbursed at the time either a formal petition has been submitted to the State Board of Education to adjust supervisory union boundaries or a written analysis supporting the preservation of existing boundaries is received. Should a study funded with this grant result in a supervisory union merger, the \$150,000 transition grant to the new supervisory union will be reduced by the amount of this grant. (Note: The merged unit will not receive a \$150,000 transition grant unless the specific eligibility requirements for that grant were met on or before December 31, 2015.)

In order to receive full reimbursement, a report of the data produced by the study and the recommendations of the committee conducting the study must be submitted to the Secretary of Education. The report should contain sufficient detail of the issues investigated and the results found to help other supervisory unions that may be considering mergers. Payment is not contingent on the recommendation of the report.

Supervisory unions receiving grant funds under Act 156 Section 4 (Revenue Code 3715 above) are ineligible for Revenue Code 3716 grants for the same proposal.

Revenue Code 3718 – Union School Analysis

The grant reimburses the fees incurred by two or more districts participating in a **study committee** established under **16 V.S.A. § 706**, for the legal and consulting services necessary to analyze the advisability of creating a union school district and prepare the report required by 16 V.S.A. § 706b. Total reimbursement available to all districts engaged in the study is **\$20,000**. Please read the enabling legislation in Act 156, Sec. 9 ([Appendix B](#)).

Invoices shall be submitted quarterly to the Agency of Education. Fifty percent of the invoice amount shall be reimbursed, with the remaining portion disbursed upon completion of the final report.

16 V.S.A. ch. 11 sets forth the requirements for the study funded by this grant. It is important to become familiar with these requirements while designing your study. For example, § 706b identifies the contents of the study committee's report. In addition, § 706 and § 706a address development and adoption of a study committee budget, including instances in which prior voter approval of the budget is required.

In order to receive full reimbursement, a report of the data produced by the study and the recommendations of the study committee must be submitted to the Agency of Education. The report should contain sufficient detail of the issues investigated and the results found to help other districts that may be considering mergers. Payment is not contingent on the recommendation of the report.

Eligibility for study grants depend on a number of factors. Please contact the School Governance Team at aoe.act46@vermont.gov or (802) 479-1030 for more information and answers to questions.

Appendix B – Study Grants; Enabling Legislation (Act 156 of 2012)

Sec. 2. REIMBURSEMENT OF FEES FOR CONSULTING SERVICES; INITIAL EXPLORATION OF JOINT ACTIVITY; SUPERVISORY UNIONS; SCHOOL DISTRICTS; SUNSET

(a) From the education fund, the commissioner of education shall reimburse up to \$5,000.00 of fees paid by two or more supervisory unions or two or more school districts for facilitation, legal, and other consulting services necessary for initial exploration of the value of providing services or performing duties jointly, which may include community engagement and lead to the identification of possible joint action, including the provision of shared programming, the operation of a joint contract school, the merger of supervisory unions, or the creation of union school districts pursuant to 16 V.S.A. chapter 11, subchapter 4 or the variations authorized by Secs. 15, 16, and 17 of this act and by No. 153 of the Acts of the 2009 Adj. Sess. (2010).

(b) This section is repealed on July 1, 2017.

Sec. 4. REIMBURSEMENT OF FEES FOR CONSULTING SERVICES; JOINT ACTIVITY OTHER THAN MERGER; SUPERVISORY UNIONS; SCHOOL DISTRICTS; SUNSET

(a) From the education fund, the commissioner of education shall reimburse up to \$10,000.00 of fees paid by two or more supervisory unions or two or more school districts for:

(1) legal and other consulting services necessary to analyze in detail the advisability of providing services or performing duties jointly that will result in a measurable increase in opportunities for students and a decrease in costs; or

(2) transitional costs necessary to enter into and implement agreements to provide those services or perform those duties jointly; or

(3) both subdivisions (1) and (2) of this subsection.

(b) Each group of supervisory unions or school districts shall forward invoices to the commissioner on a quarterly basis. The commissioner shall reimburse one-half of the total amount reflected in each set of invoices and the remaining one-half upon submission to the commissioner of a written statement of the entities' analysis and conclusions, provided that no payment shall cause the total amount paid to exceed the \$10,000.00 limit.

(c) A group of supervisory unions or school districts that receives reimbursement under this section shall not be eligible to receive additional reimbursement under Sec. 5 or 9 of this act for the same proposal.

(d) This section is repealed on July 1, 2017.

Sec. 5. REIMBURSEMENT OF FEES FOR CONSULTING SERVICES; MERGER; SUPERVISORY UNIONS; SUNSET

(a) From the education fund, the commissioner of education shall reimburse up to \$20,000.00 of fees paid by two or more supervisory unions for legal and other consulting services necessary to analyze the advisability of the merger into a fewer number of supervisory unions and to prepare a petition to the state board of education requesting adjustment of supervisory union boundaries.

(b) Each group of supervisory unions shall forward invoices to the commissioner on a quarterly basis. The commissioner shall reimburse one-half of the total amount reflected in each set of invoices and the remaining one-half upon submission of either a petition to the state board requesting that the boundaries be redrawn or a written statement of the entities' analysis supporting preservation of the current boundaries, provided that no payment shall cause the total amount paid to exceed the \$20,000.00 limit.

(c) Any transition facilitation grant funds paid pursuant to Sec. 6 of this act shall be reduced by the total amount of reimbursement provided under this section.

(d) This section is repealed on July 1, 2017.

Sec. 9. REIMBURSEMENT OF FEES FOR CONSULTING SERVICES; MERGER; SCHOOL DISTRICTS; SUNSET

(a) From the education fund, the commissioner of education shall reimburse up to \$20,000.00 of fees paid by a study committee established under 16 V.S.A. § 706 for legal and other consulting services necessary to analyze the advisability of creating a union school district or a unified union school district and to prepare the report required by 16 V.S.A. § 706b.

(b) The study committee shall forward invoices to the commissioner on a quarterly basis. The commissioner shall reimburse one-half of the total amount reflected in each set of invoices and the remaining one-half upon submission of the final report pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706c, provided that no payment shall cause the total amount paid to exceed the \$20,000.00 limit.

(c) Any transition facilitation grant funds paid to the union school board pursuant to Sec. 11 of this act shall be reduced by the total amount of reimbursement provided under this section.

(d) A regional education district (“RED”) receiving incentives pursuant to Sec. 4 of No. 153 of the Acts of the 2009 Adj. Sess. (2010) as amended by this act is not eligible to receive reimbursement under this section.

(e) This section is repealed on July 1, 2017.