



Smart Government Fund

Office of Data & Innovation
2025

What is Smart Government Fund (SGF)?

The Smart Government Fund is Salt Lake County's catalyst for innovation, dedicated to turning bold ideas into meaningful impact. This dedicated fund supports forward-thinking projects that improve efficiency, reduce costs, increase revenue, and enhance the services we deliver to residents and agencies.

Purpose of the Fund

The purpose of the Smart Government is to spark innovation and empower employees to rethink how we work. By tapping into the creativity and insight of our workforce, the fund supports bold ideas that improve operations – both behind the scenes and in the services we deliver. Employees offer invaluable perspectives, and this initiative helps turn those ideas into real, transformative change across the organization.

“Existing ways of developing solutions will not suffice in meeting new and upcoming challenges. It is impossible to solve deeply complex problems such as climate change or homelessness in traditional ways. Responses that go beyond incremental improvements are now required. Put simply, innovation in government is required just to keep up with the pace of change – and specially to stay ahead of it.”

Why should government and the public service innovate? – Deloitte.

Smart Government Fund Priorities: Return on Investment (ROI)

Every great idea starts with impact in mind. SGF projects are evaluated based on how clearly they demonstrate measurable value to the County.

To be considered for funding, proposals must demonstrate a clear return on investment (ROI) - meaning the benefits of the project must outweigh the costs. In the public sector, ROI is typically calculated using this simple formula:

$$ROI = (Benefits - Costs) / Costs$$

Benefits may include cost savings, time savings, productivity gains, improved service quality, or avoided future expenses. Costs may include one-time setup costs, materials, consulting fees, or ongoing operational expenses.

Projects must show a compelling case for how they will deliver a positive ROI in at least one of the following priority areas:

1. Save Money

Projects that reduce costs through smarter operations, streamlined workflows, or resource efficiency. This includes:

- **Direct Savings** – Lower labor, material, or operating costs
- **Indirect Savings** – Boosted productivity or reduced service friction
- **Cost Avoidance** – Preventing future expenses by fixing issues early

2. Save Time

Innovations that free up time—for employees, residents, or the County as a whole. This could mean faster processes, shorter wait times, or more efficient service coordination.

3. Deliver Services More Efficiently

Ideas that improve how we serve the public, including:

- Simplifying processes and cutting red tape
- Adopting technology that increases access, speed, or quality
- Enhancing coordination across departments

Whether it's a new digital tool, a redesigned workflow, or strategic consulting support, funded projects must show clear, practical benefits and a strong case for how they'll deliver value to the County and its residents. Ultimately, the fund prioritizes projects that make government work better – for the people who run it and the people it serves.

Who Can Apply for the Smart Government Fund?

The Smart Government Fund is designed to harness the creativity and insight of Salt Lake County's workforce. **All County agencies are eligible to apply**, and **every County employee is encouraged to submit an idea**—no matter their role or department.

You don't need to navigate agency channels on your own. If your idea involves another division or hasn't yet gained department-level traction, the Office of Data & Innovation (ODI) will step in to help facilitate conversations and build the right partnerships to move your idea forward.

While Contractors and Independent Service Providers are not eligible to apply directly, they can collaborate with County agencies as project partners to pursue SGF funding.

*For 2025, the Salt Lake County Council has approved **\$250,000** to be distributed in **grants of up to \$100,000 per project**, giving employees and teams the opportunity to turn innovative ideas into meaningful results.*

Eligible Ideas

The SGF prioritizes ideas that are innovative and approach a problem statement in new and creative ways. Employees are encouraged to think outside the box when submitting their ideas.

Eligible projects may include, but are not limited to:

- Innovative pilot projects
- Technology/software solutions
- Artificial intelligence initiatives
- Paperless initiatives
- Service delivery redesign
- Cross departmental coordination
- Temporary staff for innovation
- Streamlining internal and external operations
- Time-saving initiatives

Prohibited Expenses:

- Permanent FTE Funding
- Travel not directly related to project
- Deficit funding or debt reduction
- Software/technology solutions that do not have ongoing funding opportunities

Click [HERE](#) to review successfully funded SGF projects .

How to Submit an Idea

Have an idea that could make County operations smarter, faster, or more efficient? The Smart Government Fund invites all County employees to submit their ideas using a [short online form](#).

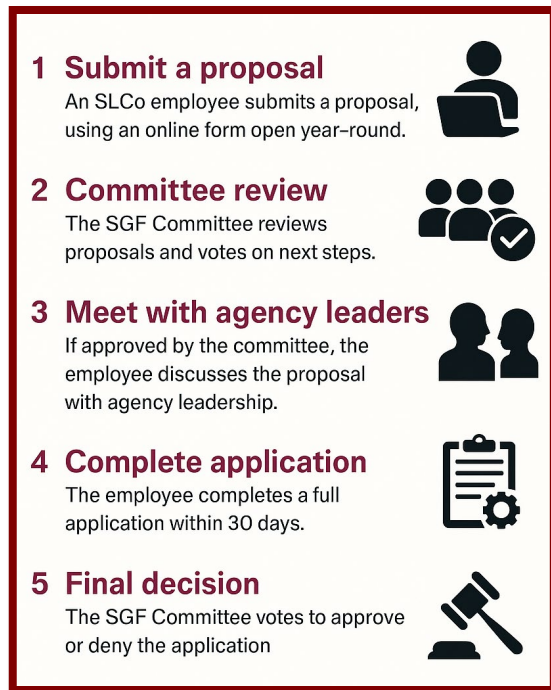
The form asks just a few key questions to help the SGF Committee understand the core of your idea:

- What's the problem you're trying to solve?
- What solution are you proposing?
- How will it improve efficiency, save time, or reduce costs?
- How much money do you estimate your idea will cost?
- How might your idea result in a positive return on investment (ROI)?

Once submitted, your idea will be reviewed by the SGF Committee to assess its alignment with fund priorities and feasibility. If it moves forward, you and/or your team will be invited to complete a more detailed proposal for funding consideration.

There's no need to overthink it - just start with the idea. Once submitted, your idea enters the SGF review process.

Idea Proposal Process



Here is what to expect from idea submission to implementation:

1. Submit Your Idea

Employees can submit ideas anytime using the online form. Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis until the annual fund is fully allocated.

2. Committee Review

The Smart Government Fund Committee provides oversight and recommendations to manage the Fund. The committee is comprised of seven rotating members:

- Two (2)- from County Council – *2-year term*
- Two(2)- from Elected Offices - *2-year term*
- Two (2)- from Mayor’s Portfolio - *2-year term*
- One(1)- CW Employee Rep -*1-year term*

The committee meets quarterly throughout the year to review all submitted ideas. The Office of Data & Innovation (ODI) serves as a non-voting facilitator of this process.

When reviewing submitted ideas the committee will score each idea submitted based on its innovative approach, alignment with the Fund’s priorities, ROI, and ability to sustain progress moving forward after the SGF award is exhausted.

Committee members vote on ideas by using one of three outcomes:

- Move forward to full proposal
- Not feasible for SGF
- Need more information

Employees who submitted ideas are notified of the committee’s decision. If more information is needed, the employee will be provided with specific follow-up questions to respond to, and the new details will be presented to the committee during their next meeting.

3. Agency Approval

For ideas that are voted to move forward to full proposal, ODI will facilitate a meeting with the agency leadership connected to the idea. This step is to acquaint agency leadership with the submitted idea, and to confirm whether there is support moving forward with the proposal.

4. Submit a Full Proposal (Invite-Only)

If the agency leadership involved supports the idea, the employee will be sent a link to the full application for a detailed proposal that contains more specific information than the original submission form. The full application will issued a deadline, and if needed - ODI is available to assist with any questions or information that require clarification.

Questions in the full proposal include:

- Problem Statement
- Proposed Solution
- Alternative Solutions Considered
- County Agencies Impacted
- Technology or IT Requirements
- Priorities Addressed (*Time, Money, Efficient Service Delivery*)
- Return on Investment
- Desired Outcome(s)
- Performance Indicators (1–3, reported quarterly)
- Project Timeline & Milestones
- Funding Amount Requested/Detailed Budget Breakdown
- Optional Attachments (*support letters, research, etc.*)

5. Committee Presentation & Funding Decision

After reviewing the full proposal, the Committee reconvenes to vote on whether to award SGF funding. You'll be invited to attend this meeting for a live Q&A session with the Committee.

Following the meeting, ODI will notify you of the final decision.

6. Project Planning & Implementation

If awarded funding, your project enters the planning phase.

- You'll have **12 months** from the date of award to begin planning and initiate implementation. This allows time for procurement, research, or partnership coordination.
- Once the **first SGF-funded transaction** is made, you'll have **up to 2 years** to complete the project's goals.

PLACEHOLDER FOR FUNDING TRANSFER EXPLANATION

Project Performance Reporting

Funded Smart Government Fund projects are required to report on their project's progress on a quarterly basis including expenditure, performance indicators, and project completion status. Project performance updates will be shared with the SGF Committee, as well as stakeholders and County leadership.

Any significant deviation from the original intent, scope, or implementation plan of a funded project must receive prior approval from the Smart Government Fund (SGF) Committee to ensure continued alignment with the goals and expectations of the fund.

Early Termination

A culture of innovation requires space for experimentation, including the possibility that some projects may not achieve their intended outcomes. While failure is an acceptable part of the innovation process, failure to reflect and learn is not.

SGF-funded initiatives are considered pilot projects, with the potential to be sustained or scaled without further Smart Government Fund investment. Agencies are encouraged to regularly assess their project's progress, capture lessons learned and determine if continued implementation remains viable and aligned with the original objectives.

The SGF Committee also retains the authority to re-evaluate projects during quarterly reporting reviews and may revoke any uncommitted funds if a project is determined to be no longer feasible or misaligned with the approved proposal.

Project Evaluation

Upon completion, funded SGF projects are required to submit a final evaluation report to the SGF Committee. This report should document the project's implementation, outcomes, key lessons learned, and, if applicable, plans for sustaining or expanding the initiative without additional SGF funding.

The final evaluation will include, but is not limited to:

- Did the project address the problem in a new or innovative way?
- Are our customers (internal/external) satisfied?
- What is the current state of the initiative?
- What is the project sustainability plan?
- What is the actual ROI on this project?
- What are the lessons learned?
- How could the project be improved?

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can submit funding ideas?

Any county employee can submit an idea.

What happens after I submit an idea?

We will vet the idea with the respective agency leadership + employee for consideration. If the idea gets an approval nod, the lead agency will be asked to complete an invitation-only detailed application for funding consideration.

Who makes funding decisions?

The Smart Government Fund Committee will review the ideas and make funding decisions. The Office of Data & Innovation provides staff support to the SGF committee as non-voting members.

Can non-county service providers/contractors apply for SGF funding?

Salt Lake County's independent service providers and contractors are not eligible to apply directly but can partner with a county agency to seek funding from SGF Fund.

What is the deadline for submitting an idea?

There's no deadline. Ideas submission is open 24/7 and 365 days a year.

When are you going to make funding decisions?

The SGF committee will meet on a quarterly basis. Ad-hoc meetings can be scheduled to expedite the funding decisions.

Is there a \$ limit on the SGF funded project?

The maximum amount you can request is a one-time grant of \$100,000.

Why don't County agencies bring these innovative ideas directly to the Council?

By increasing the level of formality needed for approval we decrease the number of ideas that are likely to be brought forward. It is critical that the Council be heavily engaged in this process by allocating staff to sit on the SGF Committee and supporting quarterly updates on Council agendas.

Are there other public sector organizations that have a fund like this?

Innovation funds have long been used in the private and nonprofit sectors to spark new ideas and drive progress. While relatively new to government, the public sector is quickly embracing this approach. Across the country, a growing number of agencies are establishing similar funds to explore creative solutions and improve service delivery—many of which are now becoming leaders in public sector innovation.

By establishing the SGF Fund, Salt Lake County has joined the leading public sector organizations to seek new and innovative ways of delivering services and create a culture of innovation throughout the organization.



Contact Us

Have questions about the Smart Government Fund?
Need help refining your idea or navigating the process?

The Office of Data & Innovation is here to support
you every step of the way!



Email

innovation@saltlakecounty.gov

Reach out with questions, ideas, or guidance.



Website

[SGF Website](#)

Visit our site for SGF details, examples of funded
projects, and helpful resources



Submit an Idea

[Submit Your Idea Form](#)

Start here when you're ready to share your idea.
The form is open until annual funding is exhausted.

We look forward to hearing your ideas and helping you to create
impact within Salt Lake County!