



**INNOVATE
TO GROW**

INNOVATE TO GROW OVERVIEW

2026-27 Application Cycle

July 21, 2026

NOTE: This session is being recorded



- Key Updates
 - ITG Partners
 - What's New for ITG
- Program Information
 - Eligibility
 - Program Requirements
 - Funding Restrictions
 - Application Components
 - Budget Preparation & Tips
- Application Evaluation
- Application Platform Demo
- 2026-27 Application Cycle Timeline
- Program Reporting



SOCCKER FORWARD FOUNDATION

*Collaboration to maximize soccer's impact
as a force for good*

- Assisting grantees in tracking & maximizing program impact
- Capturing lessons learned & sharing program resources with the wider soccer community via the Resource Hub
- Collaborating on key priority areas (e.g. Soccer in Schools)



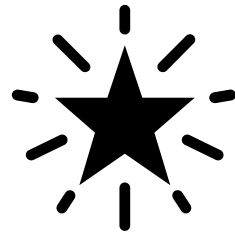
BANK OF AMERICA

Supporting partner of ITG

- Matchday activation & recognition at National Team match (Date TBD)
- Local activation at select grantee activities
- Ability to leverage local branches & employee network for program volunteers
- Pro-bono financial advising for grantee organizations

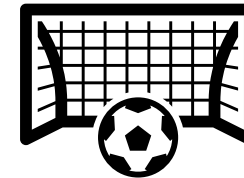
UPDATED PROGRAM THEMES

- New themes align with U.S. Soccer's generational ambitions
- Greater flexibility for members to design impactful programs
- Focus areas:
 - U.S. Soccer Success
 - U.S. Soccer is Yours
 - U.S. Soccer Everywhere



EXPANDED SOCCER FORWARD INTEGRATIONS

- Incorporation into Soccer at Schools initiative and other SF priority areas (e.g. Coaching for Impact, Soccer in Parks, Places to Play)
- Additional opportunities for learning, collaboration, and impact storytelling
- Stronger support network for school-based programs



The 2026-27 cycle builds on the successful enhancements introduced in 2025 while further aligning Innovate to Grow with U.S. Soccer's long-term vision.

ELIGIBILITY



All U.S. Soccer Member Organizations in good standing, except Professional Leagues, are eligible to apply. Good standing requires:

- All U.S. Soccer member dues through FY27 are paid as of the application close date
- Player data is submitted to the Soccer Data Platform (for organizations that register players)
- SafeSport is incorporated into the organization's personal conduct policies (submitted as part of application)
- Current ITG recipients are up to date on reporting as of July 31, 2026 reporting due date

If organizations who are not direct U.S. Soccer Member Organizations want to apply, they MUST partner with an eligible Member Organization who will submit on their behalf. This Member will assume all legal, fiscal, and compliance responsibilities for the grant.

SOCCER DATA PLATFORM

U.S. Soccer is currently working with the main registration platform vendors on connectivity.

Successful applicants will be required to connect their data or be actively working to do so for their grant to be released.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS



- Programs must align with one or more required program themes:
 - **U.S. Soccer Success:** Support pathways, infrastructure, and professional development for coaches, referees, administrators, and players
 - **U.S. Soccer is Yours:** Innovate to improve experiences for participants
 - **U.S. Soccer Everywhere:** Grow participation meaningfully and sustainably
- Programs may be one to three years in length, starting January 1 or July 1
- Proposed programs that include partner organizations must identify the partner organizations with defined roles, responsibilities, etc. in the proposal as well as detail oversight mechanisms for the partnership(s)
- Member must show financial investment into program (e.g., member funds, donors / sponsors, program revenue, in-kind)
- Aligns with applicable U.S. Soccer philosophies and standards on player development, coaching and referee education, and participant safety

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Applicants must provide letters of agreement / support from each partner organization. Letters should:

- Be on the partner organization's letterhead and signed by organization leadership
- Indicate the partner's commitment to working with the organization and implementing the proposed program

FUNDING RESTRICTIONS



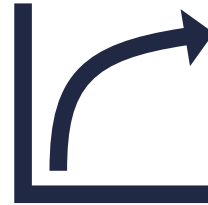
Funding **cannot** be used for:

Social events

New construction or property acquisition



Salaries cannot make up more than **33%** of total budgeted ITG expenses



ITG-funded portion of program is capped at **\$200,000**

RENOVATION GUIDELINES

Funds may be used for renovations or improvements needed to repurpose spaces

- Approval of renovation work subject to review by U.S. Soccer Legal department
- Applicants will be required to describe how contractors, vendors, etc. will be / have been selected
- **Proposal must include information on programming, even if funded by other sources**

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

See Appendix A of Program Overview for additional detail



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COMPONENT	DESCRIPTION	DIRECT ENTRY INTO PORTAL	UPLOAD
Organization Information / Profile	Basic contact information about your organization	X	
Statement on Fit with Program Themes	How the proposed program fits one or more of the three required program themes	X	
Other Program Information	Information on duration, partners, participants, impact numbers, & information on program lead personnel	X	(X)
Executive Summary	Brief overview of key goals & expected outcomes	X	
Program Background	Why the project is needed, who you want to reach, & program goals & objectives		X
Program Description / Execution Plan	How you will carry out your program, program timeline, & how you will measure success	X	X
Program Information on DEIB	Respond to questions regarding program's potential DEIB impact	X	
Technical Plan	Required only if program includes on-field instruction of players		X

APPLICATION COMPONENTS (CONTINUED)

See Appendix A of Program Overview for additional detail



COMPONENT	DESCRIPTION	DIRECT ENTRY INTO PORTAL	UPLOAD
Long-Term Strategic Plan	How the program becomes sustainable / next steps after ITG		X
Learning & Replication	Respond to questions about existing or potential learning & resources that could come from the program	X	
Budget	Details program costs & delineates between ITG & other funds	X	X
Policies Incorporating SafeSport	All policies from your organization that incorporate SafeSport requirements (see Appendix C for guidance)		X

BUDGET PREPARATION



Required line items for grant financial reporting are:

- Organization Staff
- Contracted Labor (instructors, referees, other short-term labor, etc.)
- Travel Costs
- Soccer Equipment Costs
- Other Equipment Costs
- Gear & Supplies (uniforms / kits, shirts, snacks, medals / trophies, etc.)
- Rental Costs (meeting space, fields, etc.)
- Technology Costs
- Registration Fees (player registration, course participants, etc.)
- Administrative Costs (copying / printing, telephone, internet, shipping, etc.)
- Other Contractual (insurance, advertising, legal, etc.)
- Other Costs

Applicants are not required to use these line items in the proposal budget. However, recipients will be required to report to U.S. Soccer financially using these line items, so it may be beneficial to prepare your budget using these categories as part of your application.

An optional budget template is available for download in the application and will also be shared via email.

BUDGET TIPS



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DON'T DO:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Clinics	\$11,450	\$21,300	\$42,600	\$75,350

OR

Clinics	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Recurring costs (\$5,325 per clinic)	\$10,650	\$21,300	\$42,600	\$74,550
Mini-goals	\$600	\$0	\$0	\$600
Cones	\$200	\$0	\$0	\$200
Total	\$11,450	\$21,300	\$42,600	\$75,350

- No information on what the specific costs per clinic include
- No information on unit costs other than cost per clinic
- Overall, doesn't show enough detail for reviewers to determine reasonableness & appropriateness of budget

DO:

Clinics		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total	ITG Line Item
Number of Clinics (1 day each)		2	4	8	14	
Children per Clinic		100	100	100		
Staff (5 per clinic)	\$150 /day	\$1,500	\$3,000	\$6,000	\$10,500	Contracted Labor
Mini-goals (one-time purchase)	\$100 /set	\$600	\$0	\$0	\$600	Soccer Equipment
Balls	\$15 /ball	\$3,000	\$6,000	\$12,000	\$21,000	Soccer Equipment
Cones (one-time purchase)	\$25 /pack	\$200	\$0	\$0	\$200	Soccer Equipment
Uniforms / shirts	\$25 /shirt	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$35,000	Gear & Supplies
Advertising	\$75 /clinic	\$150	\$300	\$600	\$1,050	Other Contractual
Field rental	\$500 /day	\$1,000	\$2,000	\$4,000	\$7,000	Rental Costs
Total - Clinics		\$11,450	\$21,300	\$42,600	\$75,350	

- Provides detail on types of costs that are included in the activity
- Shows unit costs, as well as the number of events & beneficiaries to aid in understanding of the calculations
- Shows sufficient detail for reviewers to determine reasonableness & appropriateness of budget
- Double-check that your budget file calculations & budget data entry are correct before submitting – reviewers are not budget detectives
- While not required, a budget narrative can be beneficial



APPLICATION EVALUATION

See Appendix B of Program Overview for additional detail



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How applications will be evaluated include:

- Prioritizing projects that have clear potential for learning & replicability
- Rewarding proposals that target one or more priority implementation areas / populations
- Other updates to further evaluate alignment, staffing plans, program targets and metrics, and sustainability



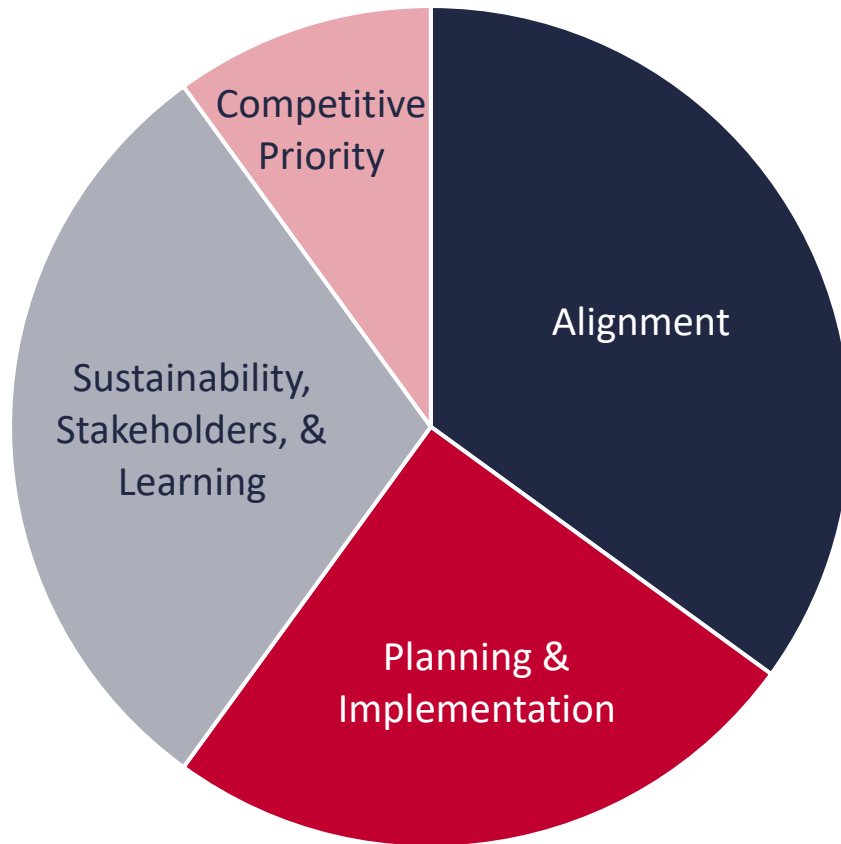


APPLICATION EVALUATION

See Appendix B of Program Overview for additional detail



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Evaluation divided into four weighted components:

- Alignment – 35%
- Planning & Implementation – 25%
- Sustainability, Stakeholders, & Learning – 30%
- Competitive Priority – 10%

APPLICATION EVALUATION - ALIGNMENT

See Appendix B of Program Overview for additional detail



Includes metrics on:

- Fit with required program themes
- How the program background information outlines need and target audience
- How the proposal communicates goals and objectives that are appropriate for program and budget

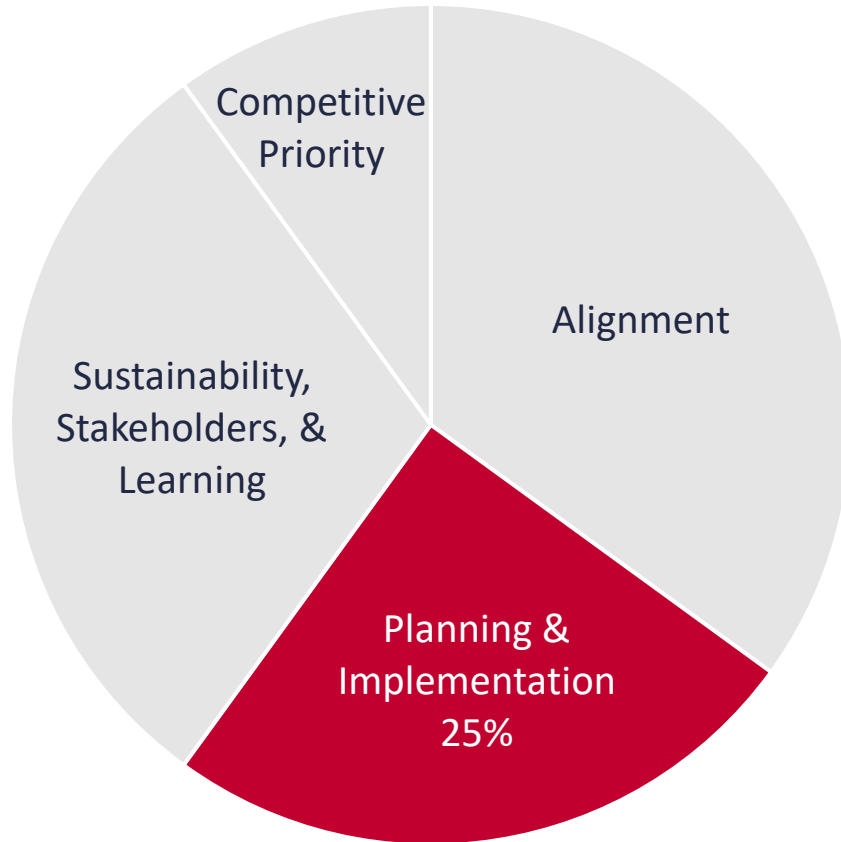


APPLICATION EVALUATION – PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

See Appendix B of Program Overview for additional detail



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Includes metrics on:

- Reasonableness of program plan / approach
- Demonstrated capacity of organization to implement
- Appropriateness of plan to staff the program
- Reasonableness of targets
- Comprehensiveness and appropriateness of metrics
- Reasonableness of program budget



APPLICATION EVALUATION – SUSTAINABILITY, STAKEHOLDERS, & LEARNING

See Appendix B of Program Overview for additional detail



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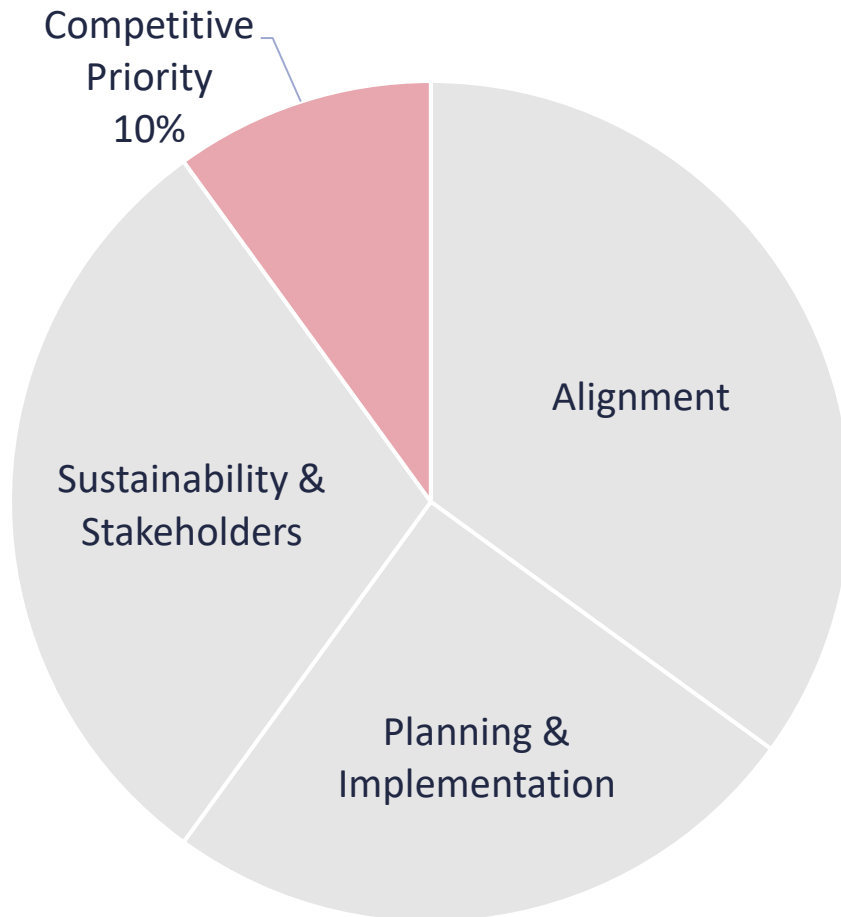


Includes metrics on:

- Clarity, comprehensiveness, and realistic nature of future programming plan
- Clarity, comprehensiveness, and realistic nature of long-term financial plan
- Strength and clarity of proposed partnerships
- Level of service to new markets and participants
- Potential for learning and information sharing
- Percentage of budget devoted to programming for underserved populations

APPLICATION EVALUATION – COMPETITIVE PRIORITY

See Appendix B of Program Overview for additional detail



Includes metrics on:

- Receipt of previous ITG funding
- Targeting one or more priority implementation areas (soccer desert*, schools)
- Targeting one or more priority target populations (persons with disabilities, women & girls)

* Defined as lacking:

1. Soccer programming in schools
2. Soccer spaces accessible, inclusive, & affordable in the community
3. Coaches & other community leadership that is representative of the groups they are serving

Applicants proposing programming for a soccer desert area will need to provide information that supports the area meeting this definition.

APPLICATION EVALUATION – WEIGHTED SCORING

See Appendix B of Program Overview for additional detail



Criteria	Maximum Raw Score		Weight		Maximum Weighted Score
Alignment	60	>	35%	>	21
Planning & Implementation	60	>	25%	>	15
Sustainability, Stakeholders, & Learning	60	>	30%	>	18
Competitive Priority	60	>	10%	>	6
Total	240				60



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APPLICATION PLATFORM DEMO



Applications / Innovate to Grow

Program Info

Eligibility Check

Intake Forms

Program Info

THE APPLICATION FOR THE 2026-27 CYCLE WILL OPEN **MONDAY, AUGUST 10** AND CLOSE **TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8 AT 5PM ET**. LATE APPLICATIONS MAY NOT BE ACCEPTED BY U.S. SOCCER. IF YOU NEED TO EDIT AN APPLICATION AFTER YOU HAVE ALREADY SUBMITTED IT, PLEASE CONTACT ITGFUND@USSOCCER.ORG.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

All U.S. Soccer Member Organizations who are in good standing, except Professional Leagues, are eligible to apply for Innovate to Grow funding. Good standing is defined as:

- All member dues through FY27 paid as of application close date
- Player data submitted to the Soccer Data Platform (for organizations that register players)
- SafeSport incorporated into organization's personal conduct policies (to be submitted as part of application process)
- Current ITG recipients must be up to date with reporting as of the July 31, 2026 reporting due date for reports on activities through June 2026 (must be received but can still be under review)

The Soccer Data Platform, which has replaced the National Data Center, is live. U.S. Soccer is currently working with registration platform vendors on connectivity; no action is needed by Member Organizations at this time. However, successful applicants will be required to connect their data for their grant to be released. If the organization and / or its registration platform vendor are actively working with U.S. Soccer to reconnect player data but have not yet completed the process by the time the grant is awarded, this requirement will be considered satisfied.

If organizations who are not U.S. Soccer Member Organizations are interested in utilizing ITG funds, they must partner with one of U.S. Soccer's 114 non-Professional League [Member Organizations](#) who will submit on their behalf. The U.S. Soccer Member Organization will assume primary legal, fiscal, and compliance responsibilities for the grant. Any clubs or leagues affiliated with a U.S. Soccer Member Organization must submit applications with the approval and support of that Member Organization. **Applications submitted without the Member Organization's agreement and support will not be**

ANTICIPATED TIMELINE



July 21, 2026	ITG webinar & platform demo
August 10, 2026	Application opens to members
September 8, 2026 at 5pm ET	Application window closes
September 9 – mid November 2026	Review process
November 20, 2026	Board of Directors approval
Late November-December 2026	Results communicated to members & grants signed



DUE DATES

Reports due semi-annually for each year of grant

January-June reports due July 31

July-December reports due January 31



FORMAT & CONTENT

Includes program and financial reporting using templates provided by U.S. Soccer, submitted via the ITG portal



TIED TO DISBURSEMENTS

Reports must be completed to receive the next disbursement of funds

Provide semi-annual updates on:

- Program highlights & accomplishments
- Challenges & how they are being addressed
- Activity status / upcoming timeline
- Program metrics / statistics
- Photos, videos, publicity links, etc. highly encouraged

I. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Briefly describe significant highlights and accomplishments that took place during the reporting period. Please submit photos or videos from your program as available (encouraged, but not required).

II. CHALLENGES

Briefly describe any unforeseen challenges you have faced during the reporting period and describe your solutions or planned strategies for mitigating these challenges. For ongoing challenges that had not been resolved as of your last report, please provide an update on efforts to resolve them.

III. STATUS OF ACTIVITIES

Briefly comment on the status of activities as compared with your intended program timeline (behind, on target, ahead). Please provide an updated timeline of activities planned for the next six months.

IV. PROGRAM STATISTICS

As appropriate, please provide cumulative figures for the number of players, coaches, and/or referees impacted by your program as well as how many of these individuals are new player registrations, coaching licenses, and referee certifications. (Individuals impacted in the first column could include both existing and new individuals. The second column should include new individuals only.) Indicate whether you are on target with where you expected to be at this point of your program. If not, please provide more information in the Additional Comments column.

If additional metrics are appropriate and available for your program (number of clubs impacted, number of organizations reached, etc.), please provide them and include similar information regarding whether you are on target with expected results.

Individuals	Cumulative Number Impacted	Cumul. New Registrations / Licenses / Certifications	On Target? (Yes/No)	Additional Comments
Players				
Coaches				
Referees				

FINANCIAL REPORTING



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Program Name: My Program
 Grant Number: ITG-2021-41
 Funding Amount: \$200,000
 Reporting Period Dates: 7/1/2022-12/31/2022

Line Item	Budget (ITG funds only)	Reported Prior	Incurred this Period	Cumulative to Date	Remaining
Organization Staff	\$51,000	\$32,000	\$7,500	\$39,500	\$11,500
Contracted Labor (instructors, referees, other short-term labor, etc.)	\$9,000	\$4,000	\$3,000	\$7,000	\$2,000
Travel Costs	\$4,000	\$2,348	\$752	\$3,100	\$900
Soccer Equipment Costs	\$20,000	\$18,690	\$0	\$18,690	\$1,310
Other Equipment Costs	\$10,000	\$9,752	\$0	\$9,752	\$248
Gear & Supplies (uniforms/kits, shirts, player snacks, medals/trophies, etc.)	\$34,000	\$17,494	\$10,793	\$28,287	\$5,713
Rental Costs (meeting space, fields, etc.)	\$15,000	\$6,000	\$2,500	\$8,500	\$6,500
Technology Costs	\$1,000	\$755	\$0	\$755	\$245
Registration Fees (player registration, course participants, etc.)	\$30,000	\$16,725	\$6,375	\$23,100	\$6,900
Administrative Costs (copying/printing, telephone, internet, shipping, etc.)	\$18,000	\$7,804	\$862	\$8,666	\$9,334
Other Contractual (insurance, advertising, legal, etc.)	\$8,000	\$4,379	\$0	\$4,379	\$3,621
Other Costs	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$200,000	\$119,947	\$31,782	\$151,729	\$48,271

Non-ITG Funding Sources	Total Anticipated	Reported Prior	This Period	Cumulative to Date	Remaining
Member Funds	\$20,000	\$9,285	\$2,912	\$12,197	\$7,803
Other Funds	\$40,000	\$18,961	\$8,674	\$27,635	\$12,365
Total	\$60,000	\$28,246	\$11,586	\$39,832	\$20,168

Semi-annual financial reports must be accompanied by a detailed transaction listing / activity ledger to support the ITG-funded expenditures being reported for the period



QUESTIONS?

