
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

2015-2016 Professional Development Partnerships for Advanced Math and Science Courses

RFA# 701-15-102

Posted March 23, 2015

Section A: Eligibility Questions

Question A-1

Our district seeks to partner with Northeast Lakeview College (NLC) for a Professional Development Partnership grant through TEA. NLC is a member of the Alamo Colleges, the community college system of San Antonio and has been approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) as a separate college, with the authority to offer college level courses. However, Northeast Lakeview College is currently seeking accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award Associate of Arts, Associate of Arts in Teaching and Associate of Science Degrees and currently lacks accredited status.

Does NLC's lack of accreditation affect its eligibility to enter into a partnership with us for the PD Partnerships for Advanced Mathematics and Science Course grant?

Answer

It would be permissible for a high-need LEA to partner with NCL to meet the eligible partnership requirement. Since NCL has been approved as a separate college by THECB, is an outreach site for San Antonio College, has a pending accreditation application with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on College, and has written agreements with various schools to accept the transfer of NLC's credits they meet the definition of an institution of higher education.

Question A-2

Can an Institution of Higher Education (IHE) partner on a couple of grants with different districts applying for the 2015-2016 Professional Development Partnerships for Advanced Math and Science Courses? We read through the RFP and saw that the applying districts can only submit one application but can an IHE be the partner for several high-needs districts that may apply in our area since we are the only 4-year IHE in this region that works with most of the districts?

Answer

An IHE may be a partner in more than one application. The high-need school district or open-enrollment charter school serving as the fiscal agent may be included in and submit only one application.

Question A-3

The RFA says, "High-need school districts and open-enrollment charter schools serving as the fiscal agent of an eligible partnership are eligible to apply." Does the open-enrollment charter school have to be "high needs" as well or can they apply and then include another district that is high needs in the application?

Answer

Yes, the open-enrollment charter school must be high-need. High-need refers to both school districts and open-enrollment charter schools. The fiscal agent must be high-need (page 8 of 19 Program Guidelines document).

Question A-4

Would partnering with the UT Dana Center meet the requirements for partnership outlined in the 2015-2016 Professional Development Partnerships for Advanced Math and Science Courses?

Answer

The UT Dana Center is an organized research unit in the College of Natural Sciences. Since it is not an engineering, mathematics, and/or science department they do not meet the eligible partnership requirement. The UT Dana Center may be an additional partner once the eligible partnership requirement is met.

Question A-5

Can an Education Service Center serve as the fiscal agent for a group of eligible schools and an IHE? Since the eligible school districts will only have two to three teachers per district, it would be more cost effective for the ESC to organize the staff development and training based on the needs of the schools in the collaboration.

Answer

No, an Education Service Center may not serve as a fiscal agent for this grant. High-need school districts and open-enrollment charter schools may serve as the fiscal agent for an eligible partnership (page 8 of 19 in the Program Guidelines).

Question A-6

Is there a preference for the type of IHE partner? Specifically, will a junior college receive equal or less weight as a university in terms of scoring?

Answer

An IHE partner may be a 4-year institution, 2-year institution and/or technical colleges. The institution selected to be an IHE partner should meet the needs of the high-need LEA so the professional development delivered accomplishes the requirements and purpose of the grant. Scoring and review criteria and priorities for funding are detailed in the General and Fiscal Guidelines document and the Program Guidelines document.

Question A-7

Can a district with only 34% free/reduced lunch rate apply as the fiscal agent if we are collaborating with other districts who are over 40% and above?

Answer

No, a district with 34% of its population on free and reduced lunch cannot serve as the fiscal agent. High-need school districts and open-enrollment charter schools may serve as the fiscal agent for an eligible partnership (page 8 of 19 in the Program Guidelines). High-need is defined as as an LEA in which at least 40% of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. A district with less than 40% of its population eligible for free and reduced lunch may be an additional partner once the eligible partnership requirement is met.

Question A-8

When will the report be posted that identifies the median student enrollment and other important information to identify eligible districts?

Answer

Districts or open enrollment charter schools can find their percentage of economically disadvantaged population on the [Snapshot 2013](#) search tool on the TEA website. This percentage will be used to ensure the district or open enrollment charter school fiscal agent is a high-need local education agency.

See this list of [Texas Public School Districts Categorized by Type](#).

Question A-9

If an local education agency (LEA) has multiple campuses, does that mean the whole LEA applies or can we apply for a campus or campuses that have two or less endorsements? In other words, LEA-wide we may have more than two endorsements but on one campus we may have less than two, could we apply on behalf of that campus?

Answer

Eligible applicants may only be included in and submit one application (page 8 of 19, Program Guidelines). An LEA may include one or more campuses in application. Selection of campuses in the application is the sole discretion of the LEA. TEA priority points will be assigned based on the criteria on page 19 of 19, Program Guidelines. If an application has multiple campuses and any of the campuses offer more than two endorsements, the application would not receive the priority points.

Section B: Application-Related Questions

Question B-1

Are paid stipends considered the same as Extra-Duty Pay for professional/support staff to participate in professional development/training?

Answer

Yes. On Schedule #7-Payroll Costs (6100), place the amount of stipends to participate in professional development or training on lines #26-Professional staff extra-duty pay, or #27-Support staff extra-duty pay.

Question B-2

Is the notice of intent to apply required?

Answer

No, the notice of intent to apply is not required.

Question B-3

Is March 26th the deadline for reviewer information?

Answer

Yes, March 26th is the deadline for submitting the reviewer information. The Reviewer Information Form can be downloaded from the grant's webpage on the [TEA Grants Opportunities](#) webpage.

Question B-4

Is there an awarded grant like this one that can be made available for review?

Answer

No, there is not currently any awarded grants similar to this grant.

Question B-5

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) is required, is there a template or example we could use?

Answer

No, there is not a template or example to use; however, there is guidance about what to include within the MOU on page 18 of 19 in the Program Guidelines.

Question B-6

Is there an FAQ printout for this proposal?

Answer

The FAQ will be available for download from the grant's webpage on the [TEA Grants Opportunities](#) webpage on or before March 26, 2015.

Section C: Program-Related Questions

Question C-1

Will there be made available a power point presentation to print out ahead of time in preparation for the March 3, 2015 webinar?

Answer

The PowerPoint will be available for download from the grant's webpage on the [TEA Grants Opportunities](#) webpage on or before March 26, 2015.

Question C-2

Are middle school teachers who teach Algebra 1 and Biology, etc. eligible for the advanced training (...given that endorsement picking can start in grade 8...)?

Answer

The high-need LEA should select teachers for participation based on needs as evidenced by the results of the needs assessment.

Question C-3

How much flexibility will applicants have in choosing professional development for participating teachers?

Answer

Applicants must select professional development that meets the needs as evidenced by the results of the needs assessment and meet the requirements of the grant.

Question C-4

Are applicants limited to providing professional development through the IHE? Or can they work with the IHE and others?

Answer

Applicants are not limited to receiving professional development only through an IHE. Applicants may work with any of their partners. One of the federal requirements for this program is that teachers have opportunities to be brought together with “scientists, mathematicians, and engineers to increase the subject matter knowledge of mathematics and science teachers.” All professional development providers should serve this purpose.

Question C-5

If applicants can work with an IHE and another professional development provider, is there a suggested allocation? For example, can the IHE provide 50% of the professional development and the other provider the remainder?

Answer

While applicants may partner with professional development providers in addition to an IHE, each member of the eligible partnership should have specific roles and contribute to achieving the goals of the grant. The IHE must have a significant role in the grant activities.

Question C-6

Is there a required number of teachers required to participate in the program?

Answer

No, there is not a required number of teachers that must participate in the program. Required program elements are found on page 11 of 19 in the Program Guidelines.

Question C-7

Can you hire a teacher to be the math and science specialist so they would attend the professional development and train the other teachers?

Answer

Applicants are required to meet the elements within the Program Guidelines on page 11 of 19 when creating their professional development. As long as those elements are met, applicants are free to create the professional development plan that best fits the needs of the teachers as given by the needs assessment.

Question C-8

Is there a list of advanced courses that are targeted?

Answer

Advanced math and science courses associated with the Foundation High School Program and endorsements in the areas of STEM, Business and Industry, Public Services, and Multidisciplinary Studies can be found in [Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 74, Subchapter B](#).

Question C-9

How many teachers do you have to serve?

Answer

See response to question C-6.

Question C-10

Can we recruit teams of teachers from the same high school?

Answer

Yes, teachers can be recruited from the same high school.

Question C-11

Are middle schools considered "secondary schools" for the purpose of this grant?

Answer

Yes, middle schools are considered secondary schools for the purpose of this grant. Please see question C-2 for additional information.

Question C-12

Can we target teachers that are teaching beyond STAAR levels? How will we evaluate their effectiveness?

Answer

Yes, those teachers that do not teach at the STAAR levels can be targeted. Their effectiveness will be evaluated based on the measures the campus or district sets.

Section D: Allowable Use of Funds Questions

Question D-1

Is it permissible to use the funds to pay stipends (incentive pay, perhaps) to teachers who receive the additional training?

Answer

Yes, payment of stipends is an allowable expense. Please see the answer to question B-1 for additional information.

Question D-2

Can a district use these funds to pay for or reimburse a teacher for the cost it takes to obtain an additional Grades 8-12 Computer Science certification?

Answer

No, this grant would assist the teacher in developing the knowledge to obtain the additional certification, but could not be used to pay for the cost it takes to obtain the certification.

Question D-3

Are working lunches allowed at a workshop?

Answer

Food costs are not an allowable use of funds.

Section E: Funding Questions

No questions were submitted

Section F: Competitive Review Questions

Question F-1

I'm from a large district, what are the chances of being awarded funding?

Answer

Scoring and review criteria and priorities for funding are detailed in the General and Fiscal Guidelines document and the Program Guidelines document.

Question F-2

I am requesting clarification regarding priority points for the number of endorsements to be addressed/offered.

On page 19 of the program guidelines document, it states that, "LEAs that have no more than two endorsement areas as indicated in Schedule #13 of the grant application" qualifies for the 10 priority points.

Does this mean that LEAs with campuses who are offering no more than two endorsements qualify for the priority points?

Or

LEAs requesting grant funds to support no more than two endorsements qualify for the priority points?

Answer

LEAS that are currently providing no more than two endorsement areas as indicated in Schedule #13 of the grant application qualify for the 10 priority points. See the program purpose in the Program Guidelines (page 7 of 19) for additional clarifying details.