

Questions and Answers

RFP # GT-16

Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness RFP

- 1a. Question:** Although BOCES cannot apply for the grant, can it act on behalf of a consortium of districts for managing and implementing the grant?
- 1b. Question:** Would it be possible for a BOCES to be the lead applicant for a partnership of school districts?
- 1c. Question:** Can several districts submit a proposal as part of a consortium along with BOCES, Higher Ed, and the Teacher Center as partners or should each district apply individually with all three partners listed? It did not appear from the RFP a consortium is being encouraged, but we are trying to create a comprehensive system across all districts.
- 1d. Question:** Can X number of school districts form a consortium in partnership with a university for the purpose of assisting each other in improving all aspects of the TLE Continuum? If yes, would all the school districts have to apply or just one having partnerships with the IHE and other school districts in the consortium?
- 1e. Question:** We are a university implementing the NYSED funded Enhanced Educational Leadership Program (TLQP). We are interested in partnering with the ten school districts we presently serve in our grant program to create a consortium to support the development of the TLE Continuum. Would such a consortium be allowed under this new RFP?
- 1f. Question:** We are a not-for-profit that works extensively with charter schools, particularly independent charter schools. We have been asked to form a consortium for this application. Assuming this is acceptable, all charter school participants of the consortium become partners of the lead applicant as well as our not-for-profit being a partner of the lead applicant. Is this assumption correct?
- 1g. Question:** If two districts apply together, would they have to spend the funds according to the amount they're eligible for individually? If a school district partners with another school district, are they eligible for the combined amount each is eligible for if it applied for the grant separately?
- 1h. Question:** Are higher educational institutions eligible for direct grants from this program?
- 1i. Question:** If two school districts partner on a grant, do they submit just one application? (With one district serving as the lead?)

- 1j. Question:** We received the announcement of funding opportunity, Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Request for Proposals. It does not seem like an individual school like ours can apply. It seems like only districts themselves can. Please let me know if this is the case.
- 1k. Question:** We are a private residential high school that provides services to students in several counties. We are interested in writing a grant proposal for GT-16 but are neither a public school nor a public charter school. We are funded by school districts, DSS and OCFS.
- 1l. Question:** I would like to know if this opportunity is available to private schools. If the opportunity is there would we need to partner with a Public or Charter School?
- 1m. Question:** Am I allowed to apply on behalf of my school or must my district apply on my behalf?
- 1n. Question:** Can small districts team together to write the grant, or is each proposal limited to one district?
- 1o. Question:** Our BOCES student programs have the target students. Can we be an eligible applicant?
- 1p. Question:** Can a consortium of eligible public school districts apply for a grant? If so, must one district be identified to serve as the lead applicant and fiscal agent?
- 1q. Question:** Can Teacher Centers apply for this grant on behalf of a consortium of eligible districts?
- 1. Answer:** As stated in the Webinar, BOCES, consortiums, individual schools, non-public-schools, teacher centers, institutes of higher education, and non-profit organizations are not eligible applicants but are eligible partners as detailed on page 12 of the RFP. Eligible applicants are public school districts and public charter schools that have at least 25% of students from low-income families and are fully implementing Education Law §3012-c. Only an individual public school district or an individual public charter school can apply. Schools cannot apply together or with a district or charter school; districts cannot apply together; charter schools cannot apply together; districts and charter schools cannot apply together. Only individual public school districts and public charter schools which are included in the posted eligibility list are eligible applicants based on the poverty threshold. The eligibility list is available at:
<http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/rfp/gt-16/eligibility.html>.
- 2a. Question:** If a school district is not currently eligible for the grant but were to partner with another school district or charter school who is eligible for the grant

or a higher education institution, would the school district that is not currently eligible now be eligible to apply for this grant?

- 2b. Question:** If two or more school districts form a partnership to respond to this grant, would the maximum award be based on their combined enrollment?
- 2c. Question:** If a school district partners with another school district, do their funds need to remain separate? Or can they make purchases together?
- 2d. Question:** We work closely with the local pre-school program. Would we consider them for a partnership?

2. Answer: Partnering with an eligible applicant does not make a district or charter school eligible to apply for this grant. Only eligible public school districts and public charter schools may apply for this grant (please see answer to Question 1 for details about eligibility). Only the eligible applicant may request funding based on its maximum award. There is no combining of funds. An eligible applicant may partner with an eligible partner(s). Partnerships must benefit **only** the eligible applicant's student population. Please see page 12 of the RFP for details about eligible partnerships.

3. Question: Can a district partner with or collaborate with more than one organization?

Answer: Yes, an eligible district or charter school can partner with more than one organization providing the partnerships benefit **only** the eligible applicant's student population. Please see page 12 of the RFP for details about eligible partnerships.

4. Question: If a school district partners with another school district, do their funds need to remain separate? Or can they make purchases together -- such as pay for workshops that staff from both districts will attend?

Answer: As stated in the answers to questions 1 and 2, only individual districts and charter schools may apply. Schools cannot apply together or with a district or charter school; districts cannot apply together; charter schools cannot apply together; districts and charter schools cannot apply together.

5. Question: Two districts that are in the middle of a merger study are interested in applying for the grant together. The merger would be effective July 1, 2013. If their application is successful, would the new, merged district be allowed to use remaining grant funds during the 2013-14 school year? Or should the two districts plan to use all grant funds during the 2012-13 school year? (Note: The non-binding/advisory referendum is tentatively scheduled for Sept. 18, and the

binding referendum is scheduled for late October.)

Answer: The districts must submit separate applications. If one or both of the districts is awarded funding from this grant and the merger is completed, then the budget would be amended as necessary for Year 2 of the grant. The grant applications may be very similar as the districts decide is appropriate for them, and should include relevant details regarding the upcoming merger. NYSED recommends the districts work together to develop an envisioned TLE system and when considering initiatives for which funding will be requested.

6. Question: Does NYSED look more favorably on a district that has a partner?

Answer: NYSED does not look more or less favorably on a district with a partner.

7. Question: Can a partnership be formed as a group of independent charter schools coming together to implement this initiative or does our partner have to be a support organization?

Answer: The eligible applicant, either a district or a charter school, may partner with any eligible partner(s). This grant does not allow combining of eligible applicants into one application through partnership or consortium arrangements. If partnerships are proposed they must be developed to benefit **only** the eligible applicant's student population and meet the other criteria detailed on page 12 of the RFP.

8. Question: Please confirm the meaning of the first statement in Attachment B:

Assurance of Joint Commitment and Collaboration Form for Public School Districts and in Attachment C: Assurance of Joint Commitment and Collaboration Form for Public Charter Schools. It seems this means that if the district has unresolved collective bargaining negotiations, the district can submit a plan for instituting APPR as soon as "practicable." Does this in effect mean that those districts with unresolved negotiations can apply for this opportunity without a negative effect on their eligibility?

Answer: Yes, if certain criteria are met then districts with unresolved negotiations can apply for this opportunity without a negative effect on their eligibility. An eligible applicant must complete and sign either Attachment B or C certifying that the district or charter school intends to submit its entire APPR plan to the Commissioner by July 1, 2012 unless as a result of unresolved collective bargaining negotiations, the district will submit the plan as soon as practicable thereafter. The entire APPR plan must be submitted **with sufficient time to be approved** before close of business on January 17, 2013. To allow sufficient time

(a minimum of 6 weeks) for NYSED to review the APPR plan, the entire APPR plan must be submitted for review no later than December 1, 2012 in order to ensure sufficient review time. If the entire APPR plan is not approved by January 17, 2013, then a district's or charter school's application will be rejected and will not receive funding under the STLE RFP.

9. Question: Would school districts that otherwise meet the eligibility requirements--- but have not yet submitted an APPR plan to the Commissioner---be eligible to apply for the STLE grant, given the July 1, 2012 APPR deadline noted on page 39 of the RFP?

Answer: Please read the response to Question 7.

10. Question: In regards to Mandatory Requirement #2, the Assurance of Joint Commitment and Collaboration: must the collective bargaining agents certify that all initiatives described "ARE consistent with applicable collective bargaining agreements" or that they WILL BE (i.e., assuming final negotiations may not have taken place on all elements of grant proposal work)?

Answer: All initiatives described in the grant application must be consistent with the collective bargaining agreement which covers the 2012-2013 school year (and beyond, if applicable). If an eligible applicant's collective bargaining agreement is already negotiated, then the assurance is that the initiatives described are consistent with the collective bargaining agreements. If an eligible applicant's collective bargaining agreement is still currently being negotiated, then the assurance is that the initiatives described will be consistent with the collective bargaining agreement when the agreement is finalized.

11a. Question: Which of the measures listed under section 1113(a)(5) of the ESEA are being used to determine eligibility? If a district meets one of the above criteria—for example, if 30% of a district's student enrollment were eligible for free and reduced price lunch—would said district be eligible to apply for the STLE grant?

11b. Question: What year should districts be using for data if they are to qualify under the second bullet ("number of children eligible for free and reduced priced lunches")? Is the 2010-2011 New York State Report Card statistics acceptable to use?

11c. Question: We are a school district not currently on the eligibility list even though 31 percent of our students in 2010-11 received free and reduced lunch. In the two prior years, 30 percent of this district's students received free and reduced

lunch. The web announcement for the STLE grant program states: "Eligible applicants are those districts that have at least 25 percent of students from low-income families as determined using the criteria specified under section 113(a)(5) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)." It would seem from the above information that our district should be eligible, yet it does not appear on the list.

11. Answer: If a public school district or public charter school has at least 25% of its students from low-income families as demonstrated by the data a district or charter school submitted and certified to the Office for Information and Reporting Services based on the 2010-2011 school year, and the district or charter school is fully implementing Education Law §3012-c and has an approved APPR plan for 2012-2013 or will have an APPR plan for 2012-2013 approved by NYSED by January 17, 2013, then the district is eligible. All districts and charter schools that are eligible based on the poverty threshold are listed in the Eligibility List, available at: <http://usny.nysed.gov/rtrt/rfp/gt-16/eligibility.html>. Please note: on May 25, 2012, the Eligibility List was updated to also include districts and charter schools that meet the 25% poverty threshold based on the Free and Reduced-Price Lunch information included in the New York State Report Cards. These 24 public school districts/charter schools have been given an extended time period to submit questions. If there are new questions emailed to STLERFP@mail.nysed.gov by one of the 24 districts, an addendum to the Questions and Answers will be posted on June 15. Questions will only be accepted from these 24 districts/charter schools.

12. Question: The STLE RFP states: "... to be an eligible applicant for the STLE RFP, a public school district and public charter school must be included in the list below and be fully implementing Education Law §3012-c." Please define what is meant by "fully implementing"?

Answer: "Fully implementing" means that a public school district or public charter school must be in "full accordance with the requirements of Education Law §3012-c and Subpart 30-2 of the Rules of the Board of Regents" and either has an approved APPR plan for 2012-2013 or will have its APPR plan approved by NYSED by January 17, 2013. Charter Schools should note: as clarified in the May 3, 2012 Webinar, to satisfy the NYSED regulations, charter schools have specific criteria which was clarified in the April 18 memo from Sally Bachofer, Assistant Commissioner, Office of School Innovation (posted at:

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/documents/allchartersTSDLmemo18march2012.pdf>). However, in order to be eligible for the STLE RFP, charter schools must be

fully implementing Education Law §3012-c, not only the requirements set forth in the memo. The Webinar recording is available at:

<http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/rfp/gt-16/applicant-webinar.html>

- 13. Question:** Does a charter school need to be in operation for a certain number of years to be eligible? If a charter school just opened for its inaugural school year (2011-2012 school year), how will eligibility be determined? Do we use our projected enrollment?

Answer: There are no minimum years of operation required for eligibility. If a charter school just opened for its inaugural school year (2011-2012 school year) and will be fully implementing Education Law §3012-c, as detailed in the answer to Question 18, and has at least 25% of its students from low-income families, then the new charter school is eligible. The new school should submit its application per the instructions and submit an additional letter signed the Chief Administrative Officer stating that the school is new and meets the eligibility criteria. The letter should include the date the school opened as well as the total student enrollment based on BEDS Day and the percent of students from low-income families. This data must have been previously submitted to NYSED/Office for Information and Reporting Services. Both the student enrollment and poverty percentage should include the source and date of the data. The data provided will be confirmed with the Office for Information and Reporting Services and, if confirmed, the applicant will be eligible. If the data is not confirmed, then the applicant will be disqualified and notified as such.

- 14. Question:** Per the STLE RFP, "An applicant's maximum award is based on the student enrollment data listed here and as specified in the RFP". Is this rule flexible in the case of a new school that will have an enrollment in 2012-13 that is triple the stated maximum figure?

Answer: Unless otherwise required by law, which must be expressly claimed in the proposal to justify any variation from the stated enrollment, as long as the public school district or public charter school was open during the 2010-2011 school year then only the 2010-2011 student enrollment data included in the posted Eligibility List may be used to determine an applicant's maximum award. If the charter school was not open during the 2010-2011 school year, please refer to the answer to Question 13.

- 15. Question:** Can you please explain the importance of Attachment G: Mandatory Requirements Certification? How does Attachment G affect an application?

Answer: In order to be eligible for review, an application **must** contain the completed and signed Attachment G: Mandatory Requirements Certification, indicating that all mandatory requirements have been met. On page 18 of the RFP it states "Upon determination that an applicant is eligible, and the mandatory requirements certification has been completed, the application will be reviewed. If a proposal does not meet all of the mandatory requirements, it will be rejected as non-responsive and will not be reviewed." Then, on page 46 (the second page of Attachment G: Mandatory Requirements Certification), it states "Proposals that do not include the complete and signed Mandatory Requirements Certification will be disqualified and removed from further consideration."

16. Question: I downloaded our free and reduced lunch numbers for my district and took that number and multiplied it by \$125. Is this the correct list that I should go to or is the number given with the grant the number that we should use?

Answer: No, this is not the correct way to calculate the maximum award. One of the eligibility criteria is that a district or charter school has at least 25% of students from low-income families (see answer to Question 1 for more on eligibility). However, a district's or charter school's maximum award is based on the total K-12 student population included in the STLE RFP Eligibility List. To determine a district's maximum award, applicants must:

1. Go to the Eligibility List and find your district or charter school (<http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/rfp/gt-16/eligibility.html>).
2. Take the number of total students listed in the eligibility list for your district and multiple this number by \$125.

If, for example, the total students in your district is 1,000 you would multiply this by \$125 and the maximum award your district could apply for would be \$125,000.

17. Question: Does the use of funding need to be evenly split over the two years of the grant period? Or can it all be used in one year?

Answer: The funding request must be distributed across the two year grant period. However, the request does not need to be evenly split between the years. The district/charter school needs to decide what is appropriate based on the initiatives proposed and provide adequate explanation for the funding request in the application.

18a. Question: The \$125 per student – is that for each year, or for the entire two-year project period?

- 18b. Question:** Page 10 of the RFP explains how maximum award sizes are calculated. Are the maximum award sizes discussed there per year or for the full project period?
- 18c. Question:** Is the funding of \$125 per student a per year amount or a total grant amount?
- 18. Answer:** The maximum award (\$125 x total student enrollment listed in the Eligibility List) is for the entire 2-year period.
- 19. Question:** Can work only cover the Year 2 time period or does it need to cover Year 1 and Year 2?
- Answer:** The funding request must cover work for both Years 1 and 2. However, not all proposed initiatives must be included in both years of the grant and the funding request for Year 1 and Year 2 does not need to be evenly split. The district/charter school needs to provide what is appropriate based on the initiatives proposed and provide adequate explanation for the funding request in the application.
- 20. Question:** Page 1 of the RFP notes that awards will be made subject to availability of funding by the U.S. Department of Education. Are there definitely funds available? What is the status of that funding?
- Answer:** New York State received official approval from the U.S. Department of Education to use \$72 million of our Race to the Top federal grant to fund the Strengthening Teacher and Leader RFP.
- 21. Question:** Are we reading the chart on page 11 of the RFP correctly, that there is \$72 million total available, to cover both years of the grants?
- Answer:** Yes, there is \$72 million total available to cover both years of the grants which are awarded.
- 22a. Question:** Does our district APPR plan have to be finalized in order to submit a proposal or just in progress?
- 22b. Question:** How does the application review process work with the approval of the APPR? If it is approved, do we notify you, or will you have a system that notifies you of the APPR approval?
- 22c. Question:** Will districts be notified if funding is approved, pending the approval of their APPR plan by the commissioner?

- 22d. Question:** Since an application could be deemed as eligible as late as Jan. 17, 2013 (page 39-40 of the RFP), do you anticipate potentially announcing grant awards in waves, as the commissioner approves more APPR plans?
- 22. Answer:** To be eligible to submit a proposal, the applicant must be included in the Eligibility List and submit the proposal including all of the mandatory requirements and Attachment G by the application due date of July 2, 2012. As stated in the Award Methodology section of the RFP, "applicants will be ranked by region in order of score received and will receive preliminary notification of award when the districts' [or charter schools'] Approval from the Commissioner for their APPR plan is confirmed." The preliminary notification of award letters will be sent out on a rolling basis as the Program Office staff receives notification from the APPR Review Team of an eligible applicant's APPR plan approval. Applicants should not communicate directly with the Program Office regarding the status of their APPR plans; the APPR Review Team will do this. No notification will be given to the applicant until the Program Office receives notification from the APPR Review Team of an applicant's APPR Plan Approval. If APPR plans are not approved by January 17, 2013, the application(s) will be rejected and will not receive funding. The next highest ranked application(s) will then be sent preliminary award notification.
- 23. Question:** What, if any, documentation regarding the status of the district's APPR plan should be submitted with the application in addition to Attachment B: Assurance of Joint Commitment and Collaboration Form for Public School District or Attachment C: Assurance of Joint Commitment and Collaboration Form for Public Charter Schools?
- Answer:** Only the requirements set forth in the RFP should be included in the application. No additional documentation regarding the status of the district's or charter school's APPR plan should be submitted with the application.
- 24. Question:** Page 18 of the RFP states that all equipment purchases must receive prior approval from the State Education Department. In that case, who do we contact, to get such prior approval? And how do we contact them? What if we don't hear back from the Education Department in time for the grant deadline?
- Answer:** For the purposes of this RFP, proposed equipment purchases should be included in the budget submitted with the proposal. For purposes of this RFP, the "prior approval" process happens during the application review process. An applicant does not need to receive "prior approval" before submitting an application, although applicants must be sure all funding requests are compliant

with the Guidelines for Federal and State Aided Grants (link is on page 18 of the RFP: <http://www.oms.nysed.gov/cafe/>). As stated in the RFP, Program Office staff will review budgets and eliminate any items that are deemed non-allowable or inappropriate and this would include any equipment that is deemed inappropriate.

- 25. Question:** Has the grant established an amount of money available for charters separate from the regions, or must charters compete within their regions?
Answer: No, the grant has not established an amount of money available for charters separate from the regions. Charter schools are competing within their region.
- 26. Question:** If charter schools are competing within the region, and the districts all apply for their maximum and score the same as the charters in the vetting process, how will decisions be made for awarding funds to charters versus districts?
Answer: All public school districts and public charter schools within a region will be scored and ranked regardless of whether the applicant is a district or a charter school. If two eligible applicants within the same region receive the same score, then the scores of Section B will be used for final ranking. If the Section B scores are the same, then Section A scores will be compared. If necessary, Section C scores followed by Section D scores will be compared.
- 27. Question:** I see that charter schools are included within their geographic regions rather than being grouped under their own region. Does this organization make it potentially impossible for charters in New York City to be able to receive awards if the NYC DOE receives the full amount possible as a district?
Answer: All applicants that earn at least the minimum of 65 points out of 100 points to be considered for funding will be ranked within their regions by their total scores, regardless of whether the applicant is a district or charter school. Awards will be made to the highest ranked applicants in each region until the regional funding is exhausted. As stated on page 19 of the RFP: "In the event there are insufficient funds to fund the next ranked applicant in full, the next ranked applicant may be given the opportunity to operate a smaller program using the remaining funds. If the applicant declines, the applicant will be entered into the statewide pool of applicants. If there are no applicants from a region, or if there are monies left over in a region, all excess funds will be pooled and

awarded in a statewide ranking to the next highest ranked unfunded applicant(s) statewide.”

- 28. Question:** If a school has doubled in size, as is common for charters that are in growth mode, can the school submit a proposal using current student enrollment numbers rather than the numbers on the eligibility page?

Answer: Unless otherwise required by law, which must be expressly claimed in the proposal to justify any variation from the stated enrollment, a public school district or public charter school cannot submit current student enrollment from the 2011-2012 school year or any data other than the 2010-2011 student enrollment included in the Eligibility List (<http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/rfp/gt-16/eligibility.html>).

- 29a. Question:** In New York City, individual schools and clusters of schools might want to develop tailored proposals to implement improvements that, while aligned to the district's APPR system, address particular school needs. Can individual schools or sets of schools within districts submit proposals, either alone or in partnership with eligible charters? If so, how does the regional budget allotment change?

- 29b. Question:** There are networks and clusters of NYC public schools that meet the requirements and are interested in applying for the grant. Are they allowed to apply or does the NYC DOE (Tweed) need to apply for all 1600 schools?

- 29c. Question:** We are a NYC public school that has a side contract with the UFT and the NYC DOE that differs from the standard UFT/NYC DOE teacher contract. Is it possible for NYC DOE and the UFT to create a separate APPR plan and submit it for approval to NYSED? If the answer is yes, can the NYC DOE submit an application dedicated to our school that is independent from any other proposal? Could the NYC DOE submit two grant applications?

- 29. Answer:** For NYC public schools that are not charter schools, the eligible applicant is the NYC district represented by the Chancellor. Please direct any questions about NYC's potential application or applications to Joanna Cannon (jcannon3@schools.nyc.gov) who has been designated to address them.

- 30. Question:** During the Webinar there was a reference to a "shortage subject area." What does a "shortage subject area" refer to?

Answer: A "shortage subject area" refers to a subject which has been determined to have a shortage of qualified teachers. In New York State this generally includes secondary science, technology, engineering and mathematics

(STEM) disciplines, English Language Learners (ELL), bilingual and/or special education. However, a district or charter school may have alternate or additional shortage subject areas. If so, the alternate or additional shortage subject area(s) should be detailed and justified within the application.

- 31. Question:** The grant says that applicants must “apply for funding to develop a supplemental financial award program targeted to effective or highly effective educators and/or educators who have potential to be effective or highly effective with high needs students and/or in shortage subject areas.” Can working “with high needs students” mean ANY teacher who has Students with Disabilities, Low Income students, ELL students, etc. in his/her class? E.g. might an Art teacher who works with ALL students, including high needs students, be eligible for participation?

Answer: Yes, any teacher who has “high needs students” in his/her class, regardless of the subject, grade or certification the teacher holds, may be included in the development of the supplemental financial award program (and/or any other initiative proposed). Please remember to include, as appropriate in the grant application, relevant details and a rationale for all initiatives proposed for this grant. Applicants are encouraged to review the scoring rubrics which include the scoring criteria of: quality of the proposed plan, issues of equity, probability of desired outcomes, and sustainability of the effort.

- 32a. Question:** What does it mean that a partner must cover at least 20% of the services/ activities of the grant? Does that mean that 20% of the grant funds must be awarded to the partner?

- 32b. Question:** When a partner is a school or any other eligible partner according to slide 19 of the webinar and page 12 of the RFP, how does that work? Must the partner receive 20% of the funds? If there are two partners would that similarly mean that each needs to cover 20% - what if the partners worked together on 20%?

- 32. Answer:** It is not the partner but the applicant that the minimum 20% refers to. If there is a partnership (regardless of whether with one or more eligible partners), out of all the services/activities, at least twenty percent (20%) of the services/activities of the partnership must be provided by the applicant. This means that the applicant cannot form a partnership and then be a passive participant in said partnership. Please refer to the wording on page 43, the MOU template: “[The applicant]...will provide at least twenty percent (20%) of the services/activities from this partnership.” The 20% does not refer to overall grant

funds, overall funding request or budget distribution. The applicant determines the distribution of all grant funds.

- 33. Question:** Is it allowable to partner with an organization that is located in a different region?

Answer: Partnerships may extend beyond regions as well as beyond NYS. The "organization" which will be the partner must be listed on page 12 of the RFP as an "eligible partner."

- 34. Question:** Are the incentives included in the 20% district portion?

Answer: The 20% portion for the applicant refers to an eligible partnership (applicable only if the applicant has a partnership). Please read the answer to question 32 for additional clarification regarding the 20% portion. Please note: NYSED assumes the "incentives" referred to in this question are part of the mandatory requirement to apply for funding to develop a supplemental financial award program, which must be either recruitment or transfer awards or career ladder opportunities (see page 10 of the RFP for more details). The supplemental financial award program developed does not include a mandated percentage of the budget; the applicant determines the distribution of all grant funds. However, if the partnership is connected to the development of a supplemental financial award program, then the incentive pay would count towards the district's or charter school's minimum 20% of services/activities of the partnership.

- 35. Question:** I am looking on page 12 of the announcement document, where eligible partners are listed as bullets. We currently operate a Teacher Center in our district. Can we partner with our own Teacher Center?

Answer: If an eligible applicant wants to work with its own Teacher Center, no formal partnership needs to be established. Thus, no MOU is required; simply an explanation of the work to be done with the Teacher Center needs to be included in the application. However, if an eligible applicant wants to work with a Teacher Center which it is not affiliated with, then a formal partnership must be created and an MOU would be submitted with the grant application.

- 36. Question:** Currently, Teacher Centers are restricted from accepting additional monies for their Centers. If they partner with a school district for this grant and the district is awarded the funds, will the Teacher Center be able to add those funds to its current allocation and not be jeopardized?

Answer: If a Teacher Center follows all applicable rules and policies, a Teacher Center may accept funds from a district's grant award from the STLE RFP.

37. Question: Is the MOU the only legal document needed if the applicant has a partner?

Answer: For purposes of the STLE RFP, the MOU is the only legal document needed for the grant application. However, if the applicant is awarded funding, standard district procedures for distribution of funds must be adhered to.

38. Question: The Teacher Incentive Funding opportunity soon to be released from the federal government provides for incentives. Can a district apply for both sources of funding? Can this grant money be applied to the same group of educators as the Teacher Incentive Fund?

Answer: Districts and charter schools are welcome to apply for any other sources of grant funds for which they are eligible, however the minimum mandatory requirements of the STLE RFP still apply. Regarding TIF Districts, as stated in footnote 3 on page 10 of the RFP, "Districts [or charter schools] that receive Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant money ("TIF Districts") do not have to meet the mandatory requirement of funding a supplemental financial award program; however, TIF Districts may choose to request funding to develop career ladder opportunities. Additionally, a TIF District may request funding to develop recruitment or transfer awards for any school in the district not receiving TIF funds. TIF Districts must be sure to comply with any TIF grant requirements." If an eligible applicant receives or will receive any funding from TIF, the funding request for this grant must follow the above criteria and be compliant with any TIF grant requirements to be an allowable funding request. If the eligible applicant receives or will receive funding from any sources, including TIF, in addition to this grant, or are in the process of applying for additional funding, please consider how this funding may support your STLE application and be sure to include relevant information regarding the district's or charter school's involvement with TIF and/or any other funding source in the grant application. All expenditures and activities must be supplemental to and not supplant or duplicate services currently provided.

39a. Question: Does the "mandatory requirement of a supplemental financial award program" mean that the applicant must offer financial compensation in the form of cash (as opposed to financial compensation in the form of, for example, awarding a teacher a sum of money to be used on materials and supplies in that

teacher's classroom.... materials and supplies which the effective/highly effective teacher chooses)?

39b. Question: Can applicants use the mandatory “supplemental financial award” in ways other than a direct financial payment to educators (for example, give the educator a “coupon” that entitles the educator who is receiving the award to take advantage of a professional development opportunity that might have a more far-reaching benefit than a straight payment)?

39. Answer: In order to fulfill the mandatory requirement of a supplemental financial award program, an applicant must develop at least one initiative involving a financial award to educators as described in the RFP. These financial awards must be compensation in the form of a direct financial payment to the educator (can be paid out over a period of time of the district's or charter school's choosing). Additional forms of compensation may be funded by this grant which a district or charter school might include under the title of “supplemental financial award program” or other initiative(s); however, only a request for funding which includes a direct financial payment to educators will fulfill the mandatory requirement of a supplemental financial award program.

40. Question: Regarding the mandatory supplemental financial award program: Could this be the payment of stipends to highly effective teachers to mentor less effective teachers? Can these payments be for work that is done during the school day, e.g. highly effective teachers being paid extra as mentors or coaches to observe less effective teachers in their classrooms, then providing those teachers with feedback and opportunities to discuss? Can these awards be in the form of stipends that we pay teachers to attend professional development (in-service) workshops?

Answer: For purposes of the STLE RFP, career ladder opportunities may involve additional job duties like serving as mentors or coaches for which additional compensation is provided as long as one of the criteria for selection into these roles includes the teacher's performance rating (e.g. Effective or Highly Effective), the financial incentive must be a new or an enhanced/expanded initiative, and the compensation does not supplant or duplicate services currently provided. If educators are not mandated or already compensated for the professional development opportunities included in the proposed career ladder, then those opportunities would qualify for the mandatory supplemental financial award program. Additionally, if a career ladder role required additional professional development (e.g. coaching skills) before taking on additional

coaching duties for which additional compensation is earned, that would also qualify.

41a. Question: Question regarding the mandatory supplemental financial award program – is there a guideline as to how much money we need to spend on this program? A minimum percentage of the total? A minimum dollar amount?

41b. Question: Is there a certain percentage or amount of the funding that must be used for the mandatory financial award program?

41. Answer: There is not a minimum requirement, but the mandatory supplemental financial award program will contribute to how the district's entire application is judged by reviewers. As detailed in the scoring rubric on pages 68-69 of the RFP, the scoring criteria for Section B, the section in which the supplemental financial award program is included, will be scored based on: quality of the proposed plan, issues of equity, probability of desired outcomes, and sustainability of the effort. All funding requests must be detailed and include a rationale, and the merits of all proposed initiatives will be judged when read in context of Sections A-D of the grant application.

42. Question: With regard to the supplemental financial award requirement, will an existing program, such as a merit pay program (for example, incentives for school administrators) fulfill this requirement or must it be a new financial incentive specifically using funds from this grant?

Answer: In order to fulfill the mandatory requirement of a supplemental financial award program, at least one proposed initiative must be a new or enhanced/expanded financial incentive program. As stated in the RFP, "expenditures and activities [must be] supplemental to and [must] not supplant or duplicate services currently provided." Thus, an existing program must be enhanced or expanded in order to qualify for this grant. The exception for the mandatory supplemental financial award program is TIF districts and is detailed in the answer to question 38.

43. Question: It is stated that districts must at a minimum apply for funding to develop a supplemental financial award program. Would this award program need to be implemented within the grant period as well?

Answer: All grant funds awarded must be obligated within the grant period which ends on June 30, 2014. Therefore, any initiative for which funding is requested must be able to meet this requirement. All initiatives, including the supplemental financial award program, would need to be developed and

implemented by the conclusion of the grant period. For all initiatives, the applicant may include a work plan that includes spending from alternative revenue sources after the grant period ends.

44. Question: Can you give us some other examples of a supplemental financial award program for a district that is planning to use this grant to implement the following components: 3. Induction and Mentoring; 4. Evaluation; 5. Ongoing Professional Development/Professional Growth; and 6. Performance Management on the TLE Continuum?

Answer: Examples of possible initiatives which fulfill the mandatory requirement of a supplemental financial award program can be found in Appendix C: Guidance for Section B of the Proposal Narrative, pages 62-66 of the RFP, within 2. Recruitment and Placement and 7. Career Ladder. Additional resources are included in Appendix F: Additional Resources, on pages 76-80 of the RFP.

45. Question: What might be one example of a career ladder opportunity for teachers, to help teachers advance in their careers, which are considered within the purview of the grant?

Answer: Examples of career ladder opportunities can be found in Appendix C: Guidance for Section B of the Proposal Narrative, specifically on pages 65-66 of the RFP under 7. Career Ladder. Additional resources are included in Appendix F: Additional Resources, specifically on page 80 of the RFP.

46. Question: Regarding "Preparation" on the continuum: we would like to find a way to enhance the student teacher program we have in place (we are neighbors with numerous IHEs). We have worked closely with a local IHE in the past, for example with their student teachers. Would a collaboration with an IHE to enhance our shared student teaching program be something is within the purview of the grant? Would this be considered a favorable initiative in the "Preparation" part of the continuum?

Answer: Working with an IHE for any initiative proposed in the grant application, under "Preparation" or any other component of the TLE continuum, is permitted under this grant. Initiatives can only be judged to be "favorable" when read in the context of Sections A-D of the grant application and scored based on the scoring rubric criteria included on pages 67-73.

47a. Question: Can we use money from this grant to pay for embedded professional development?

- 47b. Question:** Can funds be used for new computer or other technology hard or software that will allow for professional development through distance learning or remote communication and/or make communicating with leaders and mentors easier?
- 47. Answer:** Money from this grant can be used for initiatives which pay for all forms of professional development and to develop the systems the applicant needs to facilitate the proposed initiatives providing they are new or enhanced/expanded. The merits of proposed initiatives will be judged when read in context of Sections A-D of the grant application and scored based on the scoring rubric criteria included on pages 67-73.
- 48a. Question:** Can we use this grant money to attract certified teachers and pay their salaries?
- 48b. Question:** Can funds be used to pay substitutes to cover teaching and/or administrator duties during training, classes taken to obtain certifications, evaluation results discussions, mentoring sessions, etc.?
- 48c. Question:** On page 75 of the RFP, you give an example of hiring a Coach to provide intensive support to principals for implementing the APPR. As long as the district meets the minimum supplemental financial awards requirement, can grant funds be used to support other full time positions that support implementation of the district's STLE initiatives?
- 48. Answer:** Funding from this grant may be used to provide financial incentives to help attract certified teachers for whom there is a high need in the district, as is appropriate, to the district or charter school (or within the district or charter school) or for coaches and other positions. However, simply replacing district salary dollars with grant dollars is not allowable. The applicant must demonstrate that the proposed initiative is new or enhanced/expanded, and that the proposed expenditures do not supplant or duplicate services currently provided. Applicants are encouraged to review the scoring rubrics which include the scoring criteria of: quality of the proposed plan, issues of equity, probability of desired outcomes, and sustainability of the effort. Grant funds cannot be used to pay a salary to the extent that the person is performing job duties that are already part of the district's or charter school's business.
- 49. Question:** Can we use this money to help administrators with having an extra support person to implement the new APPR?
- Answer:** Applicants may use this grant money to fund positions which are part of new initiatives and/or initiatives which are being enhanced. Applicants are

encouraged to review the scoring rubrics which include the scoring criteria of: quality of the proposed plan, issues of equity, probability of desired outcomes, and sustainability of the effort. The grant funds cannot be used, however, to pay the salary of a new support person to the extent that the person is performing job duties that are already part of the district's or charter school's business.

50. Question: If a teacher is released part time from his/her teaching position, can grant funds support their full salary (including incentive pay) for their new duties as a master teacher? In this case, the district would need to back fill the time they will be released from teaching with another teacher. This will be difficult in an environment where districts are having to lay off teachers.

Answer: Grant funds may be used to provide stipends but as stated in the RFP, the applicant must be sure that all expenditures and activities are supplemental to and do not supplant or duplicate services currently provided. It is also the responsibility of each applicant to define for itself any titles/positions on the career ladder.

51. Question: Does having someone as a master teacher and paying them qualify as a career ladder?

Answer: If an educator is given the title master teacher or any other designation and that educator is (1) effective and/or highly effective; and (2) is paid for additional responsibilities and duties, then it qualifies as a career ladder opportunity. However, it must be a new or enhanced/expanded initiative, and must not supplant or duplicate any services currently provided.

52. Question: Are we required to continue providing the mandatory supplemental financial award program after the two-year project period ends? If so, how will we be expected to continue funding those awards? Out of another STLE grant? Out of our general funds? Out of our Title II Part A funds?

Answer: There is no requirement to continue providing the mandatory supplemental financial award program or any other initiative begun or expanded under this grant after the two-year project period ends. Please note, however, the merits of the proposed initiatives, including the mandatory requirement of developing a supplemental financial award program, will be judged within the context of Sections A-D as specified in the scoring rubric.

53. Question: Are there any expenses that districts should avoid for the program?

Answer: Please review the instructions and scoring rubrics in the RFP and be

sure that any funding request will directly impact the development of the applicant's TLE continuum. Per the Allowable Costs included in the Fiscal Guidelines for Federal and State Aided Grants

(<http://www.oms.nysed.gov/cafe/guidance/guidelines.html>), "to be considered allowable for reimbursement, costs must meet the following general criteria:

- a. Be necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient operation of the program.
- b. Be permissible under applicable state and/or federal laws and regulations.
- c. Conform to any limitations or exclusions set forth in these guidelines, laws or regulations, or other governing limitations as to types or amounts of cost items.
- d. Be the net amount after applying all applicable credits, such as purchase discounts, project-generated income, and adjustments of overpayments.
- e. Must not be included as a cost in any other project or grant."

54. Question: Can administrative or overhead costs be included in the grant? If yes, is there a percentage or rate we should use?

Answer: Indirect costs may be included in an applicant's budget. If an applicant chooses to include indirect costs in the budget, they should use their current approved indirect cost rate. Actual reimbursement will be made using approved rates for 2012-13 and 2013-14 respectively.

55. Question: Please clarify "incentive pay."

Answer: Incentive pay is a direct financial payment which is in addition to an educator's salary, usually in the form of a stipend although other forms are acceptable, for the purposes of incentivizing an educator. For example, an applicant may choose to incentivize teachers of a specific shortage subject area to come work in the district by providing a recruitment award or to transfer to a different school within the district by providing a transfer award. Incentive pay can also be structured as additional compensation for additional duties in the context of career ladder steps as long as at least one criteria for earning the career ladder involves an educator's performance rating. Although it is allowed, this grant does **NOT** require "pure" performance pay where educators earn financial awards solely on the basis of performance evaluation results.

56. Question: Can an applicant recoup the cost of writing the grant in the budget?

Answer: Yes, the cost of writing the proposal is allowable under indirect costs. If the applicant decides that the cost of writing the grant proposal is part of an

initiative which the applicant considers to be the most logical “next step,” as stated in page 15 of the RFP, a compelling rationale should be included. If an applicant is not selected for funding, the applicant will be responsible for funding the grant-writing cost.

- 57. Question:** If the district pays tuition costs for a teacher to add new certification, is that considered incentive pay, or does it need to be a stipend added to the teacher’s salary?

Answer: Funding tuition through a stipend to encourage teachers to add certifications in high needs areas could qualify as a financial incentive that meets the minimum requirement of developing a supplemental financial award program (if this funding is a new or enhanced/expanded initiative).

- 58. Question:** Assuming that stipended mentoring assignments would qualify as a “career ladder” financial award under the supplemental financial award requirement of this RFP, is there any expectation that the mentoring model used align with or mirror in any way the long-standing “mentor/teacher/intern” program implemented by NYSED over the past many years?

Answer: Stipended mentoring assignments would qualify as a career ladder opportunity. There is no expectation that the mentoring model used is aligned or mirrors the NYSED grant-funded “mentor/teacher/intern” program, although it may if the applicant chooses. NYSED does, however, have recently-adopted mentoring standards that should be consulted in designing mentoring programs (<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/resteachers/mentoring.html>). Regardless of whether the applicant currently receives money for the “mentor/teacher/intern” program, the applicant must “demonstrate that the proposed expenditures are supplemental and do not supplant or duplicate services currently provided.” If the applicant currently receives money from the “mentor/teacher/intern” program (or any other grant), this should be included in the application. The merits of the proposed initiatives, including the mandatory requirement of developing a supplemental financial award program, will be judged within the context of Sections A-D as specified in the scoring rubric.

- 59. Question:** When will funding be transferred to districts (i.e., how soon after approval of APPR agreement and award notification)?

Answer: All applications which meet the mandatory requirements and submit a signed and completed Attachment G will be scored and ranked. As soon as the Program Office receives notification that an applicant’s APPR plan has been

approved, the applicant will receive the preliminary award notification (if APPR plan approval happens by January 17, 2013). Then, the applicant will be provided official award notification by NYSED through the usual grant process when the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) provides final approval for funds to be used. Funding will be provided on reimbursement basis only; no funds will be provided for anticipated expenditures.

60. Question: What is the url site address to view the eligibility list for funding, watch the Webinar, and download a copy of the RRP and application.

Answer: The following is a list of all important links:

- o RFP: <http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/rfp/gt-16/home.html> (this includes links to all of the following)
- o Eligibility List: <http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/rfp/gt-16/eligibility.html>
- o May 3, 2012 Webinar Recording: <http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/rfp/gt-16/applicant-webinar.html>
- o May 3, 2012 Webinar presentation: <http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/rfp/gt-16/nysed-rfp-gt-16-stle-applicant-webinar.pdf>
- o Questions and Answers document (to be posted on May 29, 2012): <http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/rfp/gt-16/home.html>

61. Question: On p. 17 of the RFP under the Budget Summary it says to "Complete Attachment B: Multi-Year Budget Summary." However, the Multi-Year Budget Summary is actually Attachment E. Is it attachment B or E?

Answer: The Multi-Year Budget Summary is Attachment E and can be found on page 42 of the RFP.

62. Question: When we submit the hard copies of the grant application, do we need to include a copy of Appendix A (Standard Clauses for NYS Contracts)?

Answer: No, a copy of Appendix A (Standard Clauses for NYS Contracts) does not need to be submitted with the grant application.

63. Question: Please clarify the difference between the description of goals in Sections A and B. Section A of the RFP states that "a response that meets the standard for Section A will include...clear and measurable goals for improvement..." Section B of the RFP states that "a response that meets the standard for Section B will...set specific and measurable goals..."

Answer: The goals for Section A should be the overall, high-level goals the applicant has for its envisioned end-state TLE continuum. The goals for Section B

should be specific to the proposed initiatives included in the section, and these goals should allow the applicant to address the probability that the plan of the proposed initiatives will achieve the desired outcome. Depending on the goals of Section A and the initiatives proposed in Section B, there may be some cross-over, but the goals should not be identical.

64. Question: Section C of the application requires an organizational chart and a work plan (attachment D); is there a page limit for that section?

Answer: There is no page limit for Section C. The length must be determined based on what is appropriate to provide sufficient information based on the instructions and the scoring rubric. The information must be included in the form provided in Attachment D (a separate document may be included for the organization chart only).

65a. Question: In the RFP, can the term "leader" apply to positions other than "Principal" e.g. curriculum coordinator or CIO?

65b. Question: When the RFP states that programming can be for school leaders, is it referring to principals only? Or can other administrators benefit from the programming as well?

65c. Question: May the supplemental financial award program be targeted for example towards assistant principals who have the potential to be effective or highly effective as an assistant principal and/or as a future principal with high need students and/or in shortage subject areas?

65. Answer: This RFP is focused on teachers and principals and the initiatives to attract, develop and retain more effective and highly effective teachers and principals. If other administrator positions are included as part of building leadership capacity in the district, the applicant should describe who and how they are involved in the relevant initiatives for which funding is being requested by this grant. However, please note the following in regards to meeting the mandatory requirement to develop a supplemental financial award program: Currently, only teachers and principals are given a HEDI rating (Highly Effective, Effective, Developing, or Ineffective) based on Education Law§3012-c (see page 57 of "Guidance on New York State's Annual Professional Performance Review for Teachers and Principals to Implement Education Law§3012-c and the Commissioner's Regulations" available at: <http://engageny.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/APPR-Field-Guidance.pdf>). Since the supplemental financial award program must be "targeted to effective or highly effective educators and/or educators who have potential to be effective or highly effective

with high needs students and/or in shortage areas” and should be “based at least in part upon their annual performance results,” then unless the applicant has an established evaluation system for school leaders other than principals, only a supplemental financial award program for teachers and principals will qualify for the mandatory requirement.

66. Question: Is NYSED set up to give money directly to charter schools? I was not aware that we could do this? i.e., do they all have accounts in our financial databases, report to us in SIRS and elsewhere, etc?

Answer: NYSED will enter into a grant contact with a charter school that is awarded a grant. Grant contracts are subject to review and approval of the State Comptroller. Payments under the grant contract will be made directly to the charter school upon submission of properly completed claim forms and as indicated in the Fiscal Guidelines for Federal and State Aided Grants (<http://www.oms.nysed.gov/cafe/guidance/guidelines.html>).

67. Question: Does part of the grant need to be spent on an evaluator to evaluate our program and the progress we're making towards our goals? Or would this be optional? Can this evaluator be an outside consultant from an IHE or other organization that is not our partner?

Answer: Part of the grant does not need to be spent on an evaluator, but may be if the applicant chooses. If the applicant chooses to request funding for an outside evaluator, this may be an outside consultant from an IHE or other organization that is or is not a partner.

68a. Question: Are applicants required to propose plans that include initiatives for both teachers and leaders? If not, is an applicant likely to score lower for choosing to include initiatives for just one of those groups rather than both?

68b. Question: Regarding the 7 components of a fully developed TLE: can the grant focus on some components and not others (so long as the proposal clearly articulates how the district currently/ plans to cover all components)?

68. Answer: As stated on page 15 of the RFP: “The plans do not have to include initiatives in every component of the TLE continuum and do not have to include initiatives addressing both teachers and school leaders [although they may]. However, the plan should be detailed and coherent. A compelling rationale should be included, explaining why the chosen new or enhanced initiatives are the most logical ‘next steps’ and why the proposed initiatives will advance the district toward specific and measurable goals for improved teacher and/or leader

effectiveness.” NYSED will judge the merits of the funding as specified in the scoring rubrics.