REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
RFP Proposal # SA-08
NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Title: Virtual Advanced Placement® (VAP) Program

Questions and Answers

1. Q: I am not able to locate Appendix B attached to the RFP for the VAP program grant. Would you be able to tell me if our district is eligible to apply?

A: Appendix B and the eligibility lists can be found starting on page 78 of either the Word or PDF version of the RFP, which is available at http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/rfp/sa-08/.

2. Q: We are an IB school so don't necessarily offer a lot of AP but actual college in the classroom and the flipped classroom model. Would this grant be applicable if we were able to show it is used for college and career ready? Or is it just advanced placement?

A: The purpose of the grant is to develop the capacity of local school districts and other eligible applicant entities to provide virtual learning (online and blended) Advanced Placement® (AP®) coursework to eligible students. In accordance with these goals, proposals to develop, enhance, or expand virtual learning AP® courses at the high school level must be included and addressed in proposal narratives and funding requests.

3. Q: Could you please explain what is meant by "*Align the learning management tool* across technical assistance providers for statewide use" as an allowable activity (page 92)?

A: One allowable funding activity within the Virtual Advanced Placement® (VAP) Program is to develop or adapt a learning management tool to support program activities in a way that can be replicated or shared for broader use as desired by other schools, school districts, and BOCES statewide. Such activities could include database exchanges of course enrollment, instruction and course completion information across systems, interactive multimedia or other platforms.

4. Q: Reference is made to participating in NYSED facilitated meetings. Would these be virtual meetings or in-person? If they are in-person meetings, please provide the number of meetings, location, and length of meetings for budgeting purposes.

A: One allowable funding activity within the VAP Program is to participate in NYSED-facilitated meetings on the development of interoperability standards to inform the development of a statewide virtual learning platform. For budgeting and planning purposes for this RFP, applicants proposing this activity should plan for two full-day meetings at the State Education Building in Albany. All other meetings would be held via a webinar.

5. Q: Is there any requirement for matching funds?

A: No, there is no requirement for matching funds within the Virtual Advanced Placement® (VAP) Program RFP.

6. Q: Are there any page limits for the narrative?

A: There are no page limits for the narrative in response to this RFP. NYSED has left this determination to the applicant's discretion.

7. Q: Is there a page limit/recommendation for the proposal narrative?

A: No, there are no page limits for the narrative in response to this RFP. NYSED has left this determination to the applicant's discretion.

8. Q: Is there a maximum page limit for the narrative? If not, the questions asked could be answered in a few pages or in 50 pages; can you give us a suggested length, to give us some guidance on the level of detail you are seeking?

A: No, there is no maximum page limit for the narrative in response to this RFP. As specified in the RFP scoring rubric, applications will be scored more favorably based upon comprehensiveness and thoroughness of detail and scored more poorly if non-specific and lacking in focus or detail. The optimum page length is one that allows for a focused, comprehensive, and detailed response to all elements within the RFP. The page length for narratives may vary, depending upon the details within the application such as the structure of a BOCES-led or public charter school-led consortium, or the nature and complexity of specific elements within the proposal.

9. Q: Are there page limitations for the narrative or any of the sections?

A: No, there are no page limitations for the narrative or any of the sections in response to this RFP.

10. Q: Please verify that the text can be single spaced in the narrative.

A: All text may be single-spaced in the proposal narrative.

11. Q: On page 44 of the RFP, instructions state: "Single space all text in the proposal narrative; double space between titles, headings, footnotes, quotations, references, and captions, as well as all text in charts, figures, and graphs." Since a double-space requirement in captions, charts, figures, and graphs, etc. is very unusual, please verify that this instruction is accurate; also does this include tables?

A: Although this statement is accurate, if double-spacing in captions, charts, figures, and graphs proves problematic for the applicant, these may be single-spaced with no impact on the scoring of the proposal. Tables may be single-spaced as necessary.

12. Q: The instructions for the CD version of the submission state that one must include a copy of the application "in Microsoft Word (.doc) format (keyword searchable) or portable document format (.PDF). Include all appendices, MOUs or LOIs (if applicable), and attachments on the CD of flash drive." Can the CD contain a combination of Word and PDF documents, such as the narrative in Word and signed documents such as LOIs in PDF? Do signed and scanned documents such as an LOI need to be searchable?

A: The CD versions of the submissions do not require signatures or copies of wet ink signatures, and therefore do not have to be scanned. The CD versions of the submissions should be submitted in their original Word version, prior to printing. All CD versions of the submissions should be made keyword searchable where possible.

Paper copies of application materials submitted must be signed with wet ink signatures consistent with specifications within the RFP.

13. Q: Should "Assurances" and/or "Standard Clauses (Appendix A)" be submitted with the application? Do they need to be included in the electronic/CD copy?

A: Yes, Assurances and Appendix A must be submitted with the application and should be included in the electronic/CD copy.

14. Q: Is there anything school districts or teachers can do to assist or contribute to this new VAP initiative? I am interested in learning more about what this means—particularly for the underserved, or more reticent students who have less motivation and/or less access to taking AP exams.

A: Eligible school districts can submit applications or participate in a BOCES-led consortium or public charter school consortium application in response to this RFP. Appropriately certified teachers within districts or schools that are awarded funding within this program can develop, pilot, and teach virtual AP® courses, participate in professional development in subject matter expertise and pedagogical content knowledge to teach new advanced-level virtual courses in AP® programs, and plan to refine and publish their virtual learning courses to a planned future statewide virtual learning course repository. Assistance or contribution to this program from schools or districts not qualified to apply within this RFP is beyond the scope of this RFP.

15. Q: Our overall district free and reduced lunch rate is 23.2%, which unfortunately does not qualify for this, but two of our schools do qualify, with free and reduced lunch rates of approximately 36%. Could we apply for the grant for those schools specifically even though our district is not on the approved list?

A: If your district is not on the eligibility list, it is not an eligible applicant for this RFP. Eligible applicants for this grant include individual school districts or public charter schools with an enrollment as reported to NYSED for the 2010-2011 school year of at least 25% of students from low-income families as determined by the criteria specified in the RFP. A list of all eligible school districts and public charter schools is included in Appendix B of this RFP.

16. Q: My district wishes to apply for this grant as a partnership with several other districts that qualify for the grant, but are not in the same BOCES. Is that permissible?

A: No restrictions are placed upon the BOCES as to which districts may be included in a BOCES-led consortium, other than that the districts are on the list of eligible applicants included in Appendix B of this RFP. Eligible districts that wish to respond to this RFP but do not wish to submit an individual application must participate as part of a BOCES-led consortium. An application from a partnership of multiple eligible public school districts without BOCES leadership is not allowable.

17. Q: In a BOCES-led consortium, can only the component districts of that BOCES participate? Or can districts from outside that BOCES also participate in such a consortium?

A: Any eligible public school district in New York State may be listed as a participant within any BOCES-led consortium. No district may be listed in more than one application in response to this RFP.

18. Q: In a BOCES-led consortium, can that BOCES' supervisory districts (big city districts that aren't a component) also participate?

A: Any eligible public school district in New York State may be listed as participants within a BOCES-led consortium.

19. Q: In a Consortium application, as long as the majority of participating districts meet the 25% low-income student criteria (on eligibility list), may other districts participate, or must all participating districts meet the low income criteria?

A: All consortia applications must consist only of eligible applicants meeting the income criteria.

20. Q: Is a MOU required for public school districts?

A: No, public school districts are not required to submit an MOU. Only public charter school consortium applications must include a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for each consortium member describing the roles and responsibilities of each member as well as the related grant expenditures required by each member (see Attachment C).

BOCES-led consortium applications must include a signed Letter of Intent (LOI) for each consortium member describing the roles and responsibilities of each school district as well as the related grant expenditures required by each member (see Attachment D).

21. Q: Our agency already offers rigorous online curriculum that aligns with State and Common Core requirements. Is there a place where I we can go to register as an approved vendor for AP online curriculum to assist in providing schools with the courses they need in accordance with this RFP?

A: Curriculum development to support student learning is the responsibility of each school district. NYSED does not currently register, approve or recommend a particular textbook, piece of software, instructional resource, etc. School districts have the flexibility and responsibility to identify appropriate content and resources to help students. To share your curriculum with school districts, BOCES, and/or public charter schools, please contact these local education agencies directly.

22. Q: We are a private 9-12 High School. Can you confirm our eligibility to apply for the Virtual Advanced Placement Program? We are interested in exploring this exciting program.

A: Non-public schools are not eligible applicants within the Virtual Advanced Placement® (VAP) Program.

23. Q: This (*RFP*) is very appealing, but would this be prudent for LOTE programs as well?

A: Yes, development of virtual learning AP® courses in Languages Other Than English (LOTE) would be an allowable activity in this grant.

24. Q: I've been reviewing the RFP for the Virtual Advanced Placement® (VAP) Program and in speaking with some of my colleagues we find it baffling that this program is limited to AP® courses and does not include concurrent enrollment. Could you offer the reasoning for this limitation?

It was mentioned that it could be an oversight, and I'd like to respectfully request that the Office of P-12 Education reconsider the RFP and perhaps send a revised request to include what has certainly become New York State's most significant pathway for low income students to gain college credits and prepare for future college level work.

A: The range of the VAP Program is consistent with implementation of the Regents Reform Agenda as articulated in NYSED's successful Race to the Top (RttT) application. The VAP Program was designed for eligible BOCES-led consortia, public charter schools and charter school consortia, and public school districts to increase the successful participation of low-income students in virtual learning and provide greater opportunities to demonstrate college- and career-readiness. Inclusion of concurrent enrollment is beyond the scope of this RFP. NYSED welcomes the feedback, however, and may include concurrent enrollment programs in any future development of the statewide virtual learning initiative.

25. Q. The RFP states that course development activity expenditures are limited to a total of 30% of the total grant funding and that subcontractors may not exceed 30% of each grant period. Can the district identify a vendor who can provide an entire Virtual AP® offering that covers each of the requirements of the RFP, or can the district only subcontract 30% of the total work to a 3rd party vendor.

A: Subcontracting for services of consultants and/or other subcontractors (which includes all 3rd party vendors) may not exceed thirty percent (30%) of total expenditures for the VAP Program for each grant period.

26. a. Q: Is it an error on page 16 where it states that "Proposed course development activities expenditures are limited to a total of <u>20%</u> of the total grant funding?" Elsewhere in the narrative it repeatedly states it is a 30% maximum.

26. b. Q: On pages 14 and 20 of the RFP it states that course development activity must be limited to 30% of the funding, but on page 16 it states that proposed course development activity must be limited to 20% of total grant funding. Can you please clarify?

26. c. Q: The RFP says two different things regarding the amount allowable for course development - In one place it indicates 20% and another 30%, please clarify.

A: Yes, this is a typographical error on page 16 of the RFP. Course development activities expenditures are limited to a total of **30%** of the total grant funding. NYSED regrets and apologizes for the error.

27. Q: What actually constitutes activities for "Course Development (30% of total budget)? Is it the cost of compensating teachers for the actual building of courses (per session) or does it also include the cost of acquiring the knowledge of how to build online courses and increased knowledge in the content area (tuition and staff development costs)?

A: Compensating teachers for the actual building of courses consistent with the Virtual Advanced Placement® (VAP) Program RFP would be an allowable activity and expenditure as part of the 30% course development component of this RFP. Such compensation could be for duties including the development of: formative and summative assessments; other course evaluation tools or techniques; student identification and assurances or processes; components for addressing universal design or accessibility for students; and processes for review and improvement of courses or courseware; and other applicable course development activities. Acquiring the knowledge of how to build online courses and knowledge in the content area would be more accurately classified as professional development activities and expenditures within applications in response to this RFP.

28. Q: Does 'course development', as defined in the project, include the professional development needed to be trained in AP, to learn how to teach online, and for teachers to design online courses and materials? Or does 'course development' mean paying instructional designers, such as to develop modules and interactives.

A: The professional development needed to be trained in AP®, to learn how to teach online, and for teachers to design online courses and materials would be more accurately classified as professional development activities and expenditures within applications in response to this RFP. Paying instructional designers to develop modules and interactive activities would be an allowable activity and expenditure as part of the 30% course development component of this RFP.

29. Q: Is student mentoring an allowable expense? Expenses would include the cost of training and a stipend for college student mentors.

A: Yes, enhancement or expansion of virtual learning AP® courses at the high school level through mentoring to help enable low-income students to enroll and succeed on AP® tests would be an allowable expense within the Virtual Advanced Placement® (VAP) Program.

30. Q. Are there any limitations on for-profit vendors engaging with school districts in order to provide the entire virtual AP offering or a component of the virtual AP® offering?

A: Applicants are restricted to subcontracting of 30% of grant funding each grant period.

31. Q: If a module is selected for the OER statewide repository, does the district retain ownership and is that ownership full or joint ownership over the modules developed?

A: Any learning materials, course content, or content modules developed through use of funds from the VAP Program grant for inclusion in a statewide virtual learning course repository become available for teaching, learning, and research purposes by all New York State educators. Although the district can retain ownership over the modules developed, the district must permit New York State educators to use, copy, distribute or modify them for non-commercial educational purposes pursuant to a royalty-free, nonexclusive, perpetual license.

32. Q: If a resource requiring a paid subscription is deemed integral to a module, will NYSED provide this resource for free through the OER if the module is adopted?

A: Use of a paid subscription is inconsistent with the overall intent of this RFP to make high quality learning materials, course content, or content modules available to all New York State educators pursuant to a royalty-free, nonexclusive, perpetual license. Therefore, it is

unacceptable for a module deliverable under this grant to require a paid subscription in order to use the module.

33. Q: Will districts be required to adopt specific online course materials once modules are adopted by the State?

A: There is no statewide requirement for usage of any specific course materials. Selection of curriculum materials is the responsibility of local education agencies.

34. Q. Would all of the AP® course content and technology that supports the delivery of the AP® course content have to be owned by the eligible district? Does the creative commons license model apply here?

A: With regard to course content, applicants should avoid license or shared-ownership models that make it difficult or complicated to comply with the licensing requirements clarified in answer #31 above.

35. Q: Will the OER be provided to the district through a standardized shared LMS, or will the district be anticipated to host the online course when delivered?

A: OER planning is in the development phase at the time of this Q&A posting.

36. Q: Will the district be required to adopt a statewide learning management tool?

A: No, there is no requirement of an eligible applicant to adopt any learning management tools.

37. Q: What format do the courses created need to be in to be submitted to the Open Educational Resources statewide repository?

A: OER planning is in the development phase at the time of this Q&A posting. Courses should be formatted for inclusion in a local online learning management system capable of connecting or interacting with a virtual course repository system. Functionality should ensure that learning resources are easy to find, access, and integrate into other learning environments, wherever they are stored. The content infrastructure could address the ease of re-use, re-mixing, or re-purposing of content. An example of technical guidelines on making curriculum and instructional resources available to New York State's educators to support instructional improvement and professional development, please see the "Education Data Portal: Content Management and System Services Solution" RFP, available at http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/rfp/ds-08/home.html.

38. Q: An allowable expense within the RFP includes the acquisition of a learning management tool to support implementation of the identified online AP® courses; can grant funds also be used to contract with software developers to design a new learning management tool or modify an existing tool, customized to fit the needs of the proposed program?

A: Yes, this is an allowable expense within the VAP Program RFP, as long as the need for designing a new learning management tool or other instrument is justified throughout the applicant's proposal and does not supplant existing resources to do so.

39. Q: Are there software or hardware compatibility priorities that applicants should be aware of when planning for the virtual component of their proposed program (for

instance, Windows or Macintosh operating systems; laptop, tablet or handheld computing systems)?

A: It is recommended that applicants are aware of previously released NYSED guidance on software or hardware compatibility, available at http://www.p12.nysed.gov/technology/ComputerBasedTesting.html.

Applicants may further wish to be aware of and review technical specifications for software applications found in the separate NYSED Education Data Portal RFP, available http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/rfp/ds-08/home.html.

40. Q. Our pricing model is a per student fee for each course with time interval access. Would this model prohibit school districts from working with us?

A: There is no specific prohibition within the RFP for grantees to work with any outside entity other than the subcontracting limit of 30% of grant funds per each grant period.

41. Q: Is 'time' assessed through competency measures versus student time-online?

A: Pursuant to §100.1(a) of the Commissioner's regulations, a unit of study is defined as 180 minutes of instruction per week throughout the school year, or the equivalent. The principal must evaluate all course components (including, but not limited to, its curriculum, alignment to relevant State learning standards, instructional strategies and requirements, formative and summative assessments, professional development for teachers, and general delivery and revision processes) to determine whether an online/blended course provides students with instruction that is equivalent to the definition of "unit of study". While Commissioner's regulations for completing a unit of study and earning a unit of credit (pursuant to §100.1[b]) refer to the amount of instruction to which students are entitled, the regulations do not limit or confine instruction solely to classroom-based instruction. As a result, instruction may be delivered in multiple ways and through multiple media that best meet the needs of the students, so long as such modes and media are under the direction of a certified teacher in that subject area and accountable to the district providing instruction, and so long as all applicable requirements are met. The mastery of learning outcomes, as determined by the principal, is based on an evaluation of the online/blended course as an equivalent mode of instruction.

42. Q: The new RFP in NY for online AP® courses must satisfy a hands-on lab requirement. How will kids in rural areas be able to accomplish this? I don't see how this can achieve the stated access goals for online courses when kids still need to somehow get themselves to a lab (or get mailed a kit I guess)?

A: Proposals to develop blended AP® science courses are one way that applicants can meet the goals, purpose, and the online and electronic delivery criteria established within the RFP. Additionally, pursuant to §100.5(b)(7)(iv)(d) of the Commissioner's regulations, 1,200 minutes of actual hands-on (not simulated) laboratory experience with satisfactory documented laboratory reports is required in order for students to qualify to take a Regents Examination in any of the sciences. Regents Examinations are offered in Physical Setting/Earth Science, Living Environment, Physical Setting/Chemistry, and Physical Setting/Physics. Specialized courses (popularly known as electives), or courses that do not culminate in one of the four a Regents examination in science, do not require the 1,200 minute hands-on laboratory requirement in addition to regular instructional time (pursuant to §100.1[a] of the Commissioner's regulations), and therefore could include online laboratory experiences during or beyond the regular instructional time.

The AP® Biology exam is the only NYSED-approved alternative AP® science examination for meeting Regents diploma requirements in the sciences. The AP® Biology exam would satisfy the requirement for a Regents Examination in Living Environment, if a student earns a minimum acceptable score of "3." In addition to achieving this minimum score, students must complete 1,200 minutes of actual, hands-on laboratory experience with satisfactory laboratory reports.

Applicants should note that the College Board® provides the following guidance regarding laboratory experiences:

"IMPORTANT: AP Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science and Physics courses can only be labeled "AP" if they include a hands-on laboratory and/or field experience component. Schools that cannot meet the minimum time required to be spent engaged in hands-on laboratory or field experiences are eligible for conditional authorization. The conditional authorization permits the use of the AP designation in conjunction with courses that meet all AP curricular requirements for the course but due to the delivery model cannot meet the minimum time required to be spent in hands-on laboratory investigations and/or fieldwork. Permission to use the AP designation is granted on a case-by-case basis."

For more information, please visit the College Board® at
http://www.collegeboard.com/html/apcourseaudit/online_learning.html.

43. Q: The requirements stipulated by the RFP for AP science courses seem to be inconsistent and contradictory with the overall goals of the program. The stated goals are to "deliver on-demand virtual learning AP® courses" for "low wealth/high-need students" . . . "who would not otherwise have access to such courses." Yet, the RFP states that "for science courses, laboratories must be provided to satisfy the State regulation for 1,200 minutes of hands-on (not simulated) laboratory experience." How does the State propose that respondents provide on-demand virtual laboratory experiences to this population that are "hands-on (not simulated)" and meet the other requirements in the RFP? Specifically, the RFP states:
> **"#2. Delivery: the course is delivered online or through other electronic means";**
> **"#6. Accessibility: the course adheres to standard principles of universal design and accessibility for all learners, including (but not limited to) students with disabilities, English Language Learners, hospitalized students, incarcerated youth, home bound students, etc."**

A: The stated goal of the VAP Program is to increase the capacity of eligible applicants to provide virtual learning, through online and/or blended coursework. Blended AP® science courses are one way applicants can meet both the goals and purpose of the RFP and requirements in the Part 100 Regulations of the Commissioner of Education. The home school district is responsible for providing the equivalent laboratory experiences that the student would receive in the regular course of instruction while the student is hospitalized or home bound. Many facilities in New York State serve incarcerated youth and some have developed hands-on laboratories used to meet the 1,200-minute laboratory requirement.

44. Q: A solution that involves "hands-on" laboratories would require that students utilize local laboratory facilities in their school, travel to a designated laboratory site, or be shipped "lab kits." Any of these solutions violates the "online/electronic delivery" criteria. Further, requiring local lab facilities would be infeasible for hospitalized

students, incarcerated youth, and homebound students. Making any type of hands-on laboratory – including mailed lab kits - accessible to students with disabilities also poses significant challenges. Students who are fortunate enough to have science laboratory facilities available in their own school building would be required to somehow gain access on-demand to the science laboratory, assuming it was even appropriately equipped for AP science lab work, a daunting scheduling challenge for both students and their schools when lab space is already at a premium for regular, non-AP science courses.

A: Proposals to develop blended AP® science courses are one way that applicants can meet the goals, purpose, and the online and electronic delivery criteria established within the RFP.

45. Q: The RFP states "The program goals are to provide incentives for larger and more diverse groups of students to participate and succeed in virtual learning AP® programs, and to increase the numbers of low-income and other disadvantaged students who receive AP® credits." Yet this very population of students, by definition, faces overwhelming obstacles in accessing high quality laboratory facilities of the sort that is required for AP science coursework.   Assistance in clarifying the apparent contradictions in the RFP requirements for providing the AP science laboratory experiences would be helpful and appreciated.

 A: The VAP program will provide an opportunity for eligible entities to create and offer new or expanded virtual learning Advanced Placement® programs through instruction consisting of combinations of classroom-based and digital and/or Internet-connected media, thereby enabling the grantee to reach larger and more diverse groups of students.

46. Q: One suggested option is to allow the use of the many high-quality online learning tools now available to support scientific inquiry, many of them developed and evaluated with funding by the National Science Foundation and US Department of Education. There is a growing body of research indicating that in many cases online learning tools can support scientific inquiry learning as well as or better than hands-on labs. We would encourage revision of the RFP requirements related to removing "hands-on" language in the requested virtual AP courses and instead focus on supporting scientific inquiry learning that is as good as or better than hand-on labs, including allowing virtual labs, simulations & modeling tools, remote online labs, and other proven cyberlearning tools.

A: NYSED appreciates these thoughtful suggestions. At this time, NYSED will not be revising the requirements of the RFP in this area.

47. Q: Can grant funds be used to pay for students' AP® exam fees? If so, would this option have to be available to all students or could it be reserved only for low-income students?

A: Yes, the use of grant funds to pay for students' AP® exams is an allowable expenditure within the RFP. The purpose of the NYSED VAP Program is to encourage more minority and low-income students to participate and succeed in virtual learning (online and blended instruction) Advanced Placement® courses. The proposal must align with the intention of the grant to broaden and support increased AP® participation levels, not to supplant existing participation levels. Schools, districts, and BOCES must maintain a current cost of AP® test fee structures, and use grant funds provided under the VAP program to supplement, and not

supplant, other funds that are available to assist low-income individuals to pay for the cost of AP® test fees.

48. Q: Can the cost of the AP tests be offset for an initial cohort of students in 2013-2014?

A: Yes, the use of grant funds to pay for students' AP® exams is an allowable expenditure within the RFP, including an initial cohort of students in 2013-2014. The proposal to use grant funds to pay for students' AP® exams must align with the intention of the grant to broaden and support increased AP® participation levels, not to supplant existing levels of support.

49. Q: Allowable expenses include teacher stipends to develop course materials and professional development. Can grant funds also be used to provide stipends to teachers to provide virtual assistance to students outside of regular school hours?

A: Yes, this is an allowable expense within the VAP Program RFP. Stipends for teachers or administrators must be made in accordance with local education agency (LEA) policies and contractual agreements.

50. Q: Can grant funds be used to pay for additional/new information technology staff to provide support for the hardware and software used by students and teachers in the virtual AP® program?

A: Yes, this is an allowable expense within the VAP Program RFP. An applicant's selected and specific initiatives will be reviewed for the extent to which they meet the goals of sustained benefits beyond the grant period.

51. Q: It states that the Application Cover Page must be signed by the "Chief School Administrative Officer/Chief Financial Officer." Must the Cover Page be signed by both or only one of these two district leaders?

A: The cover page requires only one signature. It should be signed by the Chief School Administrative Officer, if the Chief School Administrative Officer and the Chief Financial Officer is not the same person.

52. Q: Do participating districts and BOCES need to have approved APPR plans in order to be considered for this grant?

A: No, there is no requirement to have an approved APPR plan included in this RFP in order to be qualified for this grant.

53. Q: Is a memorandum of agreement is required with the union for the virtual learning RFP?

A: No, there is no requirement for a memorandum of agreement with a union as part of this RFP.

54. Q: The RFP announcement states that awards are subject to funds being available from the U.S. Department of Education. Is such funding definitely available?

A: The New York State Education Department received official approval from the U.S. Department of Education to use $17,105,000 of its Race to the Top federal grant to fund the Virtual Advanced Placement® (VAP) Program RFP.

55. Q: Page 28 of the RFP mentions that all equipment purchased with these funds must have prior approval from the New York State Education Department. Is that approval that will be given as part of a grant award? I.e., districts don't need to get such approval before including equipment in a grant application?

A: Applicants would seek such approval through the proposal, budget, budget narrative, and needs statements throughout the application, within the application process. Unallowable and inappropriate items are eliminated from the budget by NYSED. Non-instructional equipment purchases are non-allowable expenditures**.**

56. Q: Can grant awards be spent any time during the project period? (Or do they have to be split over the two school years the project period covers?)

A: Yes, VAP Program grant awards can be spent any time during the project period, consistent with the submitted and approved application and do not need to be split over multiple project periods.

57. Q: Can the grant funding be used to support the salary of the teacher offering the AP class? Or only the professional development associated with preparing for the class?

A: Funding consistent with this RFP can be spent to support the salary of teachers offering Advanced Placement® courses so long as the proposed expenditures are supplemental and do not supplant or duplicate services currently provided.

58. Q: If NYC's Department of Education is technically the only eligible applicant in the five counties of Kings, Bronx, New York, Queens and Richmond, could they apply for $2,000,000 since these counties combined are larger than any BOCES? NYC school system serves over 1.2 million students.

A: As stated in the RFP, "For a city school district located in a city with a population of one million or more inhabitants, NYSED anticipates awarding up to one grant to the eligible public school district of up to $1,000,000." As such, the New York City Department of Education may apply for one grant of up to $1,000,000.

59. Q: Can a group of NYC school districts apply as consortia with one district acting as the applicant and fiscal entity? If yes, then could that application be allowed to request more than $1,000,000?

A: The New York City Department of Education is the only public school district eligible to apply in New York City. Eligible consortia consist of either two or more eligible public charter schools or a BOCES-led consortium of eligible school districts. Individual public schools or school districts may not form a consortium for purposes of this grant opportunity.

60. Q: Are all NYC school districts eligible to apply?

A: No, for the purposes of this RFP, the New York City Department of Education is the only public school district eligible to apply in New York City.

61. Q: Are parent involvement activities allowable such as College Ed materials and workshops to make sure parents know the importance of their children graduating from college?

A: Allowable activities are those activities that are directly related to meeting the goals of the applicant's envisioned approach to the provision of a virtual learning Advanced Placement® (AP®) program and coursework to the targeted population. Activites to address student recruitment strategies and student selection that might involve parents and college education materials would be allowable to meet this aspect of program requirements.

62. Q: Are guidance activities allowable to reinforce the importance of college to students?

A: Yes, program activities to address and promote student recruitment and student selection are allowable activities within program guidelines.

63. Q: May professional development support the acquisition of teacher skill (and resulting student knowledge/predisposition) to teach (and learn) in an online environment – BEFORE rigorous content such as AP is attempted? We have reviewed evaluation and research data indicating that such preparation is critical and want to ensure that the model set forth works, but were unsure if funds may be so dedicated.

A: Professional development to enhance or expand opportunities for teachers to effectively conduct and support virtual learning at the high school level for the targeted student population is allowable, so long as those activities are directly related to meeting the goals of the applicant's envisioned approach to the provision of a virtual learning Advanced Placement® (AP®) program and coursework.

64. Q: If model lessons for introductory learning are developed (and allowed) would they be submitted for inclusion in the state repository also?

A: Development of course materials to provide instruction in identified AP® virtual learning courses (including introductory learning) is allowable, as long as such learning is part of a Virtual Advanced Placement® (VAP) program proposal. Yes, development of virtual learning AP® course materials funded through this program - including materials for introductory learning - must be made available for inclusion in a statewide virtual learning course repository for use by New York State teachers.

65. Q: Can funding be dedicated to overcoming bandwidth/connectivity barriers in extremely isolated regions?

A: Improving targeted student access to virtual learning Advanced Placement® courses through the development of adequate programming infrastructure is an allowable activity within this grant program. Should the infrastructure analyses consistent with this program RFP determine that overcoming bandwidth/connectivity barriers are essential to the institutional infrastructure to support the district(s) or school(s) Virtual AP® Program to enable improved access to virtual learning Virtual AP® courses by the targeted student population, addressing this concern would be an allowable activity within this grant program.

66. Q: How does College Board get paid for use of their assessment/model? Are they only paid if a child takes the assessment?

A: Please visit the College Board®'s Web site for contact information on the AP® program: http://www.collegeboard.org/contact-us/#app.

67. Q: What training – through College Board – would be needed for the teachers/administrators trying to develop the course materials? Do they have a vetting system within which we'd need to work (for approval of course materials)? Can a description of that be shared, if it exists, so that such work is accounted for in a project timeline?

A: It is the applicant's discretion whether training is needed for teachers or administrators trying to develop AP® course materials. For detailed information on possible AP® training programs through the College Board® that could be used as allowable activities, please visit the College Board®'s Web site: http://www.collegeboard.org/contact-us/#app.

68. Q: Online instruction requires unique pedagogical skills and techniques. If a district has a module selected for adoption, how can the district be assured that their materials/resources are supported through best-practices designed for virtual instruction?

A: Guidance towards the most promising practices in online and virtual education can be found on the NYSED Online Learning Web page, available at: http://www.p12.nysed.gov/technology/Online/online.html

For guidance specific to the development of online or distance AP® courses, please visit the College Board®'s AP® Online/Distance Learning Web pages at: http://www.collegeboard.com/html/apcourseaudit/online_learning.html

69. Q: What provisions have been made for researching the Virtual Advanced Placement Program, or at least providing an overall evaluation of the various projects that will be funded? Virtual learning is still new; our knowledge of best practices is still emerging. There is a required evaluation section for each project, but this will only yield data from each individual project, and it may be extremely difficult to draw lessons across projects without a specific research agenda or an overall evaluation initiative. New York educators would benefit from data that describes comparative practices and identifies successes across projects. What provisions can be made at this point so that the state as a whole learns from this important investment in virtual learning?

A: Research and evaluation of the VAP program is beyond the scope of this RFP. However, NYSED anticipates releasing a future RFP to facilitate VAP Program monitoring and the comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of all VAP Program grantees. The overall program evaluation may include the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data regarding VAP Program efficacy.