

RFP # SA-17: Teaching is the Core (TITC) Questions and Answers

Prequalification Process

Pre-qualification for all not-for-profit organizations must be completed by the due date of the grant application (public schools districts and BOCES are exempt from this requirement; however, the lead charter school in a consortium must prequalify). The prequalification process may take up to a few weeks to complete, so interested organizations are encouraged to begin this process immediately upon RFP announcement. The process is described in the RFP. If you have any questions about prequalification registration, please go to the Grants Reform website (<http://www.grantsreform.ny.gov/Grantees>). If you intend to submit an application and have a question about your institution's status, contact NYSED at prequal@mail.nysed.gov.

Please note the following changes to the RFP:

1. The Eligible Applicants section of the RFP has been revised to allow a BOCES-led consortium to include non-component districts as consortium members.
2. In the Funding and Awards section, #2 has been corrected to read "BOCES- or District-led public school consortium awards." Meaning, the maximum request amounts listed for #2 apply to both BOCES and District-led consortia, not just those consortia that are BOCES-led.
3. In Attachment IV, District/Consortium Assessment Inventory Form, the title of the fourth column now reads "Instructional purpose (for APPR, please indicate local or SLO).
4. The grant application deadline has been extended by one month to give BOCES, districts, and charter schools more time to prepare their applications. The new deadline is Tuesday, June 24, 2014. *Applications must be received at NYSED no later than June 24, 2014, or they will not be accepted for review.*

Eligible Applicants

1. **Question:** If a district has both public and private school students totaling more than 19,000, can the district apply as a single entity?

Answer: As stated in the Eligible Applicants section of the RFP, only New York State public school districts ("Districts") with student enrollment above nineteen thousand (19,000) may apply individually. Student enrollment must include only those students enrolled in the public school district, which will be based on 2011-12 data found at <http://data.nysed.gov/>.

2. **Question:** Can a BOCES create more than one consortia application with different districts in each?

Answer: No. The Eligible Applicants section of the RFP states: "No charter school or public school district or BOCES may individually apply for, or lead or be a member of an applicant consortium, for more than one Teaching Is the Core grant."

3. **Question:** Can a grant include districts outside the BOCES region but within the district/Geographic region?

Answer: Yes. The Eligible Applicants section of the RFP has been revised to allow a Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES)-led consortium to comprise non-component districts as consortium members.

4. **Question:** Can a single BOCES submit an application to lead a consortium of non-component as well as component school districts?

Answer: Yes. A BOCES may submit an application to lead a consortium that consists of non-component and component school districts. As stated in the Funding and Awards section of the RFP, "The region of a consortium will be determined by the location of the majority of districts. If there are equal numbers of districts in two or more regions, the region that encompasses the highest student enrollment will determine the region."

5. **Question:** Page one of the RFP describes consortia including: "A Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES)-led consortium comprised of two or more of its component Districts as consortium members"; Table 1 defines the regions that are defined for funding distribution. It is not clear whether a BOCES may only work with districts that are components in its assigned catchment area or whether they may invite districts to participate within their region. Please clarify.

Answer: Yes. Please see the answer to Question # 4.

6. **Question:** Can districts from different regions or BOCES form a consortium?

Answer: Yes. Districts with less than 19,000 students may join any BOCES-led consortium or apply as a District-led consortium with districts from different regions or BOCES.

7. **Question:** Can two districts apply as a consortium with one serving as the lead or do they need to have a third district participate?

Answer: A third district must participate. As stated in the Eligible Applicants section, "District-led consortiums comprised of two or more Districts/Charter Schools as consortium members."

8. **Question:** Can BOCES schools be participants in a consortium application involving component districts? Our BOCES will be applying as the [lead applicant] with several component districts. The cover page indicates "A BOCES is eligible only as a consortium lead."

Answer: Yes. A BOCES school, if part of the lead applicant, can participate in a consortium application. However, no more than one BOCES can be a member of one consortium, and that BOCES must be the lead applicant.

9. Question: In reviewing the information, our BOCES Special Education Programs are asking if a BOCES could be part of the consortium. Information states that "A BOCES is eligible only as a consortium lead."

Answer: Yes. Please see the answer to Question # 8.

10. Question: Can BOCES schools that join a consortium be counted as a district (i.e., - nine districts plus BOCES special education schools equals 10 districts for funding purposes?)

Answer: No. A BOCES school may not be counted as a district. A BOCES school may participate in a BOCES-led consortium only if it is part of the BOCES serving as the consortium's lead applicant. In this instance, the BOCES school does not count in the consortium's district tally for funding purposes.

11. Question: It appears as though two BOCES within a region cannot submit a joint application. Can two BOCES submit a separate application to support districts from the broad region so that each of the two BOCES serves the same districts in different ways?

Answer: No. As stated in the Eligible Applicants section of the RFP, "No charter school or public school district or BOCES may individually apply for, or lead or be a member of an applicant consortium, for more than one Teaching is the Core grant application."

12. Question: Can a BOCES create more than one consortium application with different districts in each?

Answer: No. Please see the answer to Question # 11.

13. Question: Are regional efforts, involving more than one BOCES working together permitted in this RFP? What would be the implication on the funding limits (would those limits be combined according to the formula)?

Answer: No more than one BOCES may be part of a single consortium and they are only eligible as the consortium lead. Funding amounts are designed for one BOCES lead and districts as consortium members. Another BOCES may, however, serve as an advisor or in similar role to support a consortium application; these BOCES cannot be consortium members.

14. Question: Can a single application be submitted by a consortium of BOCES (i.e., the JMT)?

Answer: No. Please see the answer to Question # 13.

15. Question: Can multiple BOCES work together to form a single consortium under this grant program?

Answer: No. Please see the answer to Question # 13.

16. Question: If several BOCES wanted to take a JMT approach, is that permissible, as long as one BOCES was designated as the Lead and assumed at least 20% of the active work involved in the project?

Answer: No. Please see the answer to Question # 13.

17. Question: Our JMT region (four BOCES) would like to work together in applying for this RFP. We would have one BOCES as the LEA still. Each BOCES will only be involved if at least a portion of their districts are also a part. Is this acceptable under the roles that BOCES may take?

Answer: No. Please see the answer to Question # 13.

18. Question: What about regional efforts, involving more than one BOCES working together? Is that allowed? What would be the implication on the funding limits (would those limits be combined according to the formula)?

Answer: No. Please see the answer to Question # 13.

19. Question: Can two BOCES submit a joint application?

Answer: No. Please see the answer to Question # 13.

20. Question: If a BOCES consortium consists of districts in more than one region, since the BOCES covers multiple counties that are in different regions in table 1 on page 14, does the BOCES need to apply separately by region?

Answer: No. The BOCES does not need to apply separately by region. The RFP states "The region of a consortium will be determined by the location of the majority of districts. If there are equal numbers of districts in two or more regions, the region that encompasses the highest student enrollment will determine the region."

21. Question: Our BOCES region crosses the listed district/geographic regions. Can we lead a consortium that includes all of our components across two regions?

Answer: Yes. The RFP states "The region of a consortium will be determined by the location of the majority of component districts. If there are equal numbers of districts in two or more regions, the region that encompasses the highest student enrollment will determine the region."

22. Question: What are the award amounts of consortiums led by school districts? (Is it the same as the amounts listed for BOCES-led consortiums?)

Answer: The awards for the consortia led by school districts is the same as those led by BOCES—A consortium with 10 or more districts may request no more than \$400,000; a consortium with 7-9 districts may request no more than \$300,000; a consortium with 4-6 districts may request no more than \$200,000, and; a consortium with 2-3 component districts may request no more than \$100,000.

23. Question: Can you please clarify if a district can be the lead of a consortium or must a BOCES be the lead of a consortium? If a district can be the lead are the award amounts the same as if a BOCES was the consortium lead?

Answer: A district can be the consortium lead. Please see Question # 22 for the award amounts.

24. Question: Can universities, such as a SUNY School, be part of the consortium?

Answer: No. A university is not allowed to be a member of a consortium. As stated in the Eligible Applicants section of the RFP, consortia may only be led by a BOCES, a District, or a Charter School; and only Districts and Charter Schools may be consortium members. However, a university may serve as an advisor or in a similar role to support a consortium's proposal.

25. Question: Must districts [that seek to participate in this opportunity] be RTTT participants?

Answer: No. Districts do not have to be participants in Race to the Top to participate in Teaching is the Core.

Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR)

26. Question: Does a district need to get a teacher union sign off on participating in this grant?

Answer: No. Although collaboration with multiple stakeholders, including teachers, will likely benefit the participating district, BOCES, or charter school, it is not necessary for a district to obtain teacher union sign off to participate in this grant. However, if, as an outcome of this funded activity, the district wishes to implement changes that are inconsistent with the currently approved district APPR plan, the district must submit a material change request to the Department and the changes will require collective bargaining. (see C8 of APPR Guidance: <http://www.engageny.org/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/appr-field-guidance.pdf>).

27. Question: If the new plan requires a change in APPR, do we get the union to sign off AFTER we get notice of approval and funding?

Answer: Please see the answer to Question # 26.

28. Question: If the application involves changing the APPR plan, does the union sign off before submission or after approval?

Answer: Please see the answer to Question # 26.

29. Question: Can a district be included in the application if they do not have an approved APPR plan?

Answer: Every district has an approved APPR plan as of the time of this Q and A. All districts must maintain a demonstration of full implementation of an approved APPR plan throughout the term of this grant period. Note that charter schools are considered LEA's, not districts. The RFP states, "Any local education agency (LEA) that is awarded a grant through this RFP, and that has an approved APPR plan in place at the time of application, must maintain a demonstration of full implementation of an approved APPR plan in compliance with Section 1 of Part A of Chapter 57 and Chapter 53 of the Laws of 2013, Education Law Section 3012-c, and Subpart 30-2 of the Rules of the Board of Regents."

30. Question: Does a charter school that is part of a consortium have to have an approved APPR plan?

Answer: No. An APPR plan is not required for this RFP.

31. Question: Is it required that all assessments that are a part of the review (and subsequent revision or elimination) be used for APPR purposes? Can schools/consortiums select other criteria such as "locally-designed assessments that are used for grading and reporting purposes and are high-stakes for students" or equity reviews (i.e. ensuring assessments are as free from racial, gender, or SED bias as possible) for selection (page 21, B2, #1)?

Answer: No. It is not required that all assessments that are a part of the review be used for APPR purposes. The RFP states, "Applicants for the funding provided by this RFP should review their overall assessment program to enhance their assessment practices, possibly replacing their existing assessments with new ones that can be used for formative/instructional purposes, not just APPR."

32. Question: Must the assessments that are developed or created through this grant be used for teachers' APPR in the 14-15 school year? Or could the assessments and the impact on APPR be developed in 2014-15, but not used for purposes of APPR until 15-16?

Answer: One of the goals of this RFP is to ensure that all assessments first and foremost support teaching and learning, meaning that all assessments (summative/interim/benchmark) should be reviewed, not just assessments that are used for teachers' APPR. If the applicant proposes to *develop* the action plan during the anticipated project period (September 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015), the action plan might be *implemented* (meaning assessments will be created/modified/identified) during school

year 2015-16. Please see the Step Requirements section of the RFP for more information regarding which steps may occur before, during, and after the project period. Districts should keep in mind that any material change to their APPR plan must be submitted to the Department by March 1 of each year. (see C8 of APPR Guidance: <http://www.engageny.org/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/appr-field-guidance.pdf>).

- 33. Question:** If the assessments developed with this grant funding are used for a teacher's APPR, can the teacher of record score his own students' tests? Historically, assessments that are used for a teacher's evaluation must be scored by someone other than the teacher of record. If assessments are to be used for "instructional or other curricular purposes", the teacher of record would typically score his own students.

Answer: According to Commissioner's Regulations, teachers are prohibited from scoring assessments where they have a vested interest in the outcome. Therefore, student assessments developed with this grant funding that are used for APPR purposes cannot be scored by the teacher of record. Please refer to question G2 on the APPR guidance document found at <http://www.engageny.org/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/appr-field-guidance.pdf> .

- 34. Question:** Does SED have recommendations for how districts can address the intent of the "vested interest" and "comparability across classrooms" rules in a way that will not inhibit the development and use of more appropriate, performance-based assessments?

Answer: Districts may use the processes supported by this grant funding to explore ways to create better assessments that are consistent with State requirements.

- 35. Question:** If districts need to modify their APPR as a result of participating in the exam, can those sections be "expedited"? That is, can they be reviewed without opening the entire plan?

Answer: Districts who wish to submit a material change to their currently approved APPR plan that solely relates to the elimination of unnecessary assessments that are used with students for APPR purposes may do so using the Department's expedited material change process: <http://www.engageny.org/regents-regulatory-changes-subpart-30-2-expedited-materials-change-form> Please keep in mind that all material change requests for the 2014-15 school year, including expedited changes, must be submitted to the Department by March 1, 2015 (see: C8 of the APPR Guidance document: <http://www.engageny.org/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/appr-field-guidance.pdf>).

- 36. Question:** Will reducing assessments with this RFP require a material change to district's APPR plans

Answer: Please see the answer to Question # 35.

- 37. Question:** Is the funding jeopardized if the Assessments Review Committee recommends changes to the assessments used for the local measures of student growth or achievement sub-component of the

APPR but the district and the local can't reach an agreement? Section 3012-c and its collective bargaining procedures would govern the inclusion of other assessments for purposes of teacher evaluation. The recommendations of the committee cannot override the statutory requirements of 3012-c.

Answer: The grant requirements will be met if there is a good faith commitment to implement the posted action plan.

- 38. Question:** If a district contracts with a vendor to develop a customized assessment just for the district -- but that is not available off-the-shelf for others -- does that assessment need to go through RFQ approval process?

Answer: Please see F4 of the APPR Guidance document (<http://www.engageny.org/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/appr-field-guidance.pdf>) which states that, if a school district or BOCES contracts with a 3rd-party provider to develop a new assessment for the district or BOCES, this would be considered a district- or BOCES-developed assessment and would therefore not have to be submitted for inclusion in the State Approved Assessment List. Therefore, a district/BOCES could use the assessment for the Locally-Selected Measures subcomponent or for the State Growth or Other Comparable Measures subcomponent to the extent permitted by the regulation. The district/BOCES would need to provide assurances, in its APPR plan, that the district- or BOCES-developed assessment is rigorous and comparable across classrooms in accordance with the Commissioner's regulations.

- 39. Question:** If assessments, whether for APPR or local are reduced, that would impact the 3/1/15 Review Room changes. Does a material change need to be made before then?

Answer: All material change requests for the 2014-15 school year, including expedited changes, must be submitted to the Department by March 1, 2015 (see: C8 of the APPR Guidance document: <http://www.engageny.org/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/appr-field-guidance.pdf>).

Funding & Awards

- 40. Question:** The RFP states, "Individual school districts with an enrollment of nine hundred thousand (900,000) or more may request no more than \$500,000. New York City DOE must be the applicant, not community school districts." Does this mean that \$500,000 available for application for the entire city system or \$500,000 for each of the 32 individual districts?

Answer: The \$500,000 potential award would be for the New York City School District as a *whole*. The RFP states, "Individual school districts with an enrollment of nine hundred thousand (900,000) or more may request no more than \$500,000. New York City DOE must be the applicant, not community school districts."

41. Question: By the suggested timeline, districts will have very little time to implement the action plan under this grant funding (since action plans must be posted by June 1 and funding ends June 30). Does SED anticipate offering a second year of funding for consortiums, to implement action plans?

Answer: No. This grant is funded with Race to the Top funds and all Race to the Top funds must be expended by June 30, 2015. However, districts are encouraged to continue reviewing and improving their assessment systems on a regular basis after the grant period ends. Further, applicants should choose which portion of the process they have the capacity to carry out within the grant period, while adhering to the Step Requirements outlined in the RFP.

Application Instructions

42. Question: What is the page limit? Page 31 of the RFP says 25 pages, but the page limit maximums listed in the narrative section (pages 20-23) add up to 24 pages; which is correct?

Answer: Sections A-E should be no longer than 25 pages maximum. Any information provided over the maximum number of pages (25) will not be read or scored. Page maximum does not include Section F Budget Forms, Inventory Forms, or Appendices. An applicant will not be penalized for exceeding one of the individual page maximums listed for sections A-E by one page.

43. Question: Would the resumes required in Section D for the person overseeing the Teaching is the Core Project and for the DDI coordinator count toward the 3 page limit for this section?

Answer: No. Resumes will not count toward the 3 page limit for section D.

44. Question: In Section D, the RFP asks for certain individuals' resumes. (a) Do the resumes (which are usually one or more pages in length) count toward the narrative page limit?

Answer: No. Please see the answer to Question # 43.

45. Question: Should the resumes be included in the narrative itself, or as appendices?

Answer: Resumes may be included in either the narrative or appendices.

46. Question: Are there any length restrictions for the budget narrative?

Answer: No. There are no length restrictions for the budget narrative

Assessment Review

47. Question: Does the "review" need to be completed prior to grant submission? Can part of the grant funds be used to do thoughtful review of the assessment after the award date?

Answer: The assessment review does not need to be completed prior to grant submission. In most cases, we expect the review to occur during the grant period. Grant funds may be used to complete three consecutive steps (Assessment Review, Action Plan Development, and Action Plan Implementation). Please refer to the Step Requirements section of the RFP for more detailed information.

48. Question: Please share a specific definition of Performance-Based assessment item vs. Constructed Response.

Answer: In the RFP, a Performance based assessment is described as "an assessment made up of a number of individual performance-based tasks that require an individual to present a response to an inquiry or prompt, in a defined setting, then be judged based on a set of defined standards (Stecher, 2010). Performance-based tasks allow the learner to demonstrate his or her understanding of a concept...Performance tasks may occur in a number of forms, and are sometimes bound by subject area."

49. Question: Are districts able to change the assessment level(s) and disciplinary area they initially selected if they make a decision over the summer that a different assessment focus would be more appropriate? Is what was listed in Attachment IV, District/Consortium Assessment Forms binding?

Answer: The assessment review should focus on all summative, interim, and benchmark assessments in the district. The district should not select a specific level or disciplinary area, but rather attempt to conduct a comprehensive, district-wide review of assessments. With that said, if there are additional assessment(s) identified during the action planning, the team can certainly include those assessments in their work. Any changes such as this must be reported as part of the quarterly report required by the RFP.

50. Question: The RFP states, "please specify which instructional and/or APPR purpose is being satisfied by the assessment, for example, if the assessment is currently used for teachers and/or principals in the District/Consortium's currently approved APPR plan," but Attachment IV only has an APPR purpose column (local or SLO). Can districts choose an instructional purpose that is not directly related to APPR?

Answer: Yes. Districts may choose an instructional purpose that is not directly related to APPR. The title of the fourth column in Attachment IV has been corrected and now reads "Instructional purpose (for APPR, please indicate local or SLO)."

51. Question: Can districts choose to review other assessments outside of APPR, including SLOs?

Answer: Yes. Districts should review all summative, interim, and benchmark assessments in the district.

- 52. Question:** Can the assessment review graphic organizer be considered a draft document? If an additional assessment is identified during the action planning part that requires revision or elimination, can the team include that assessment in their work or are they beholden only to those assessments on the list?

Answer: The inventory form should be as complete as possible. If there are additional assessment(s) identified during the action planning, the team can certainly include those assessments in their work. This change must be reported as part of the quarterly report required by the RFP.

- 53. Question:** Should the inventory of assessments include assessments in our districts' APPR plans only? Or do we need to include all other assessments a district may use?

Answer: The inventory of assessments should include all summative, interim, and benchmark assessments a district uses. The RFP states, "The proposal must include descriptive details about all of the locally-selected assessments that will be reviewed. Applicants must include with their applications a completed copy of the Assessment Inventory Form, found in Attachment IV, to provide a context for the review plan."

- 54. Question:** Do we need to include in the inventory all tests in the APPR, including in all grades, areas? If other assessments should also be included, do we need to include all of them as well, including from all grades and areas? Or, if districts know already (before completing the assessment review) that assessments for a particular area/grade level, etc. need study, can we narrow the inventory to those areas/grades?

Answer: Yes. The inventory form should include all grades and all areas. The RFP states, "The proposal must include descriptive details about all of the locally-selected assessments that will be reviewed. Applicants must include with their applications a completed copy of the Assessment Inventory Form, found in Attachment IV, to provide a context for the review plan."

- 55. Question:** Is there a minimum or maximum number of assessments that should be on each district's inventory form, Attachment IV? Should they only include assessments that they would like to review?

Answer: No. There is no minimum or maximum number of assessments that should be on the inventory form. Districts should review all summative, interim, and benchmark assessments in the district.

- 56. Question:** Is the assumption that a committee of staff from each district will perform the assessment review for their district? Or could a team of BOCES staff conduct each district's' assessment review?

Answer: It is encouraged that staff from each district will participate in the assessment review. The RFP states, “Applicants are strongly encouraged to include as part of their professional development plans, an invitation to teachers to participate in the assessment review, resulting action plan, and assessment development process (if applicable)”

57. Question: In a BOCES-led consortium, is the assumption that BOCES staff help district staff conduct their assessment review? Or should BOCES staff conduct the reviews themselves?

Answer: The intention is for BOCES staff to provide support/help district staff conduct their assessment review. The lead consortium applicant will be responsible for overseeing the assessment review and action plan process in each consortium member district/school. The RFP states, “Applicants are strongly encouraged to include as part of their professional development plans, an invitation to teachers to participate in the assessment review, resulting action plan, and assessment development process (if applicable).”

58. Question: Is the “review committee” and “professional development delivery team” mentioned in Section D on page 23 of the RFP referring to one group or two? If two, do both need to include representatives from all participating districts?

Answer: The review committee and the professional development delivery team may be two separate groups. NYSED encourages teachers from each district to participate in the assessment review (see answer to question #57). Both the review committee and the professional development delivery team should include representatives from each participating district or charter school.

59. Question: Does the district assessment system being evaluated cover all grades K to 12 or can it be focused on K-8 or 9-12? If focused I would assume the proposal would have to cover plans for extending to all grades in a district, correct?

Answer: The assessment system being evaluated should cover all grades Kindergarten to grade 12.

60. Question: Can the scope of the assessment review be limited to specific grades/content areas or must it include all grades and all content areas?

Answer: No. The scope should not be limited to specific grades/content area. Please see the answer to Question # 59.

61. Question: The RFP asks for the criteria for choosing the assessments to be reviewed (p. 21, B2,1). Doesn't that contradict the statement that all assessments should be reviewed? Please clarify.

Answer: Districts are not obligated to review formative assessment strategies, although some may choose to assess particular formative assessments. Applicants are asked to specify the criteria that will be used to distinguish assessments to be included in the review. Districts should review all summative, interim, and benchmark assessments in the district.

Action Plan Implementation

62. Question: What is the intention of the secure network set up by NYSED? Does NYSED intend to share secure local assessment/items in this network? If they are secure assessments/items used for APPR how can they be shared?

Answer: The secure network is a space where grant recipients may share the locally developed assessments, strategies, and resources with other grant recipients. If NYSED determines that it is appropriate to share any of these resources, and consent has been provided by the relevant grant recipients, NYSED may share resources beyond those who have been granted access to the secure network.

63. Question: Can districts/consortiums submit assessments created outside the scope of the Teaching is the Core grant for sharing via the secure network (page 12, item f)? Will non-participating schools and districts have access to this network?

Answer: Yes, other assessments created by funded districts/consortia may be shared. Only grant recipients will have access to the secure network during the grant period. NYSED may determine that this network is shared with non-participating schools in the future if there is a need and the participating grant recipients provide consent.

64. Question: What criteria will be used in determining what assessments are included in the clearinghouse ("secure network to be set up by NYSED")?

Answer: The criteria for the secure network are yet to be determined by NYSED in collaboration with grant recipients.

65. Question: Can districts/consortiums contract with a vendor to serve as the DDI coordinator or should this position be staffed by BOCES/district personnel?

Answer: Districts/consortiums may contract with a vendor to serve as the DDI coordinator. Please note that all applicants are required to comply with NYSED's Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBE) policy. The M/WBE participation goal for this grant is 20% of each applicant's total discretionary non-personal service budget over the entire term of the grant. Please see the Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise Participation Goals section of the RFP for additional information.

66. Question: The RFP says that if the district/consortium chooses to provide funds for a DDI Coordinator, the person's name and resume should be submitted with the application. If an applicant submits this information, is there a possibility of changing staffing of the position at a later time?

Answer: Yes, if there is a strong justification for such a change. However, all staff changes must be approved in advance by NYSED.

67. Question: If a district/consortium has identified assessments to review but still need to implement professional development around identifying attributes of quality assessments, how would you advise they design the Action Plan, especially with regards to B3, items 1-7. (They won't know if the APPR plan needs to change until after they've completed the review.)

Answer: If the review has not been completed, the sections of the application narrative that address the action plan must give a clear plan for addressing each of the action plan components. For example, in section B3, #s1-7, please describe how you intend to incorporate each of these components into your action plan. If you do not know how the APPR plan may change in the following school year, you will describe what steps you plan to take to change the APPR plan through a material change request. The intent is for the district to spring into action as soon as the review is complete or a recommendation is made.

The RFP states, "The resulting action plan must include: Specific actions that will occur to implement the recommendations of the assessment review committee (modify or augment, eliminate, or replace assessments that are not working). A time line should be included for each action. For example, if the committee finds that a new assessment needs to be developed, the action plan should include the number and titles of individuals involved in developing a new assessment that meets all the criteria included in the assessment review, and a schedule that includes when the assessment will be complete, when the assessment will be administered, and when the developed assessment, strategies, and resources will be shared with other grant recipients."

68. Question: Activity requirements include posting information on district websites and creating an engagement plan for parents. Consequently, can we request funding for communications support?

Answer: Yes. Communications support may be requested. As with all funding requests, there should be a clear explanation of how the request is directly linked to specific activities outlined in the RFP.

69. Question: We are organizing a BOCES-led consortium. Can each district in the consortium develop its own action plan? Or do we have to have one action plan for the entire consortium? Can we plan to develop one action plan that has options for districts, depending on their individual needs?

Answer: Each district should develop its own action plan. The BOCES can certainly develop one action plan that has options for districts depending on their individual needs.

70. Question: What is meant by the step to implement the action plan that states, “Using the aspects of the assessment system that support instruction and learning goals to inform aspects that do not. This may include using existing assessments as models.” (Action Plan Implementation,3a) Could you please provide clarification and a specific example?

Answer: If there are assessments that meet all of the criteria (rigorous, comparable, informs instruction, supports learning goals, utilizes a diverse set of assessment techniques), the district/consortium may want to investigate the common elements of those assessments such as how were they developed, who was involved in the development, etc. and try to replicate that process. Educators who create high quality assessments could be used to train other educators.

71. Question: Is the activity of convening a group of educators for assessments that were identified as needing to be eliminated and not replaced (Action Plan Implementation,3d) to reconfirm that the eliminated assessments are definitely not needed?

Answer: The purpose stated in the RFP is “...[to] provid[e] alternative methods of measuring performance for formative/instructional purposes.” Reconfirming that the eliminated assessment is definitely not needed could be another purpose for convening those educators.

Professional Development

72. Question: Will grant applications be penalized for including topics in their professional development plan that will be provided by SED in the fall (i.e. reliability, validity; mentioned in the webinar)?

Answer: No. Grant applications will not be penalized for including topics in their professional development plan that will be provided by SED in the fall. It is the expectation of NYSED that professional development activities will involve increasing assessment literacy among district staff members, which will likely involve discussion of reliability, validity, performance assessment, etc.

73. Question: From the name, the “professional development delivery team” mentioned in Section D on page 23 of the RFP sounds like it needs to include everyone who will deliver professional development – is that correct, even if that will be a mix of BOCES staff and outside vendors?

Answer: Yes. The “professional development team” should include everyone who will deliver professional development, even if that will be a mix of BOCES staff and outside vendors.

Charter Schools

74. Question: Can a charter school join a BOCES led consortium if they are the only charter school in the district?

Answer: A charter school cannot be a member of a BOCES-led consortium. Districts are defined in this RFP as individual New York state public school districts. Charter schools can apply only in charter-school-led consortia, comprising two or more charter schools as consortium members. The RFP does not require all members to be within the same district, so they could organize with other charter schools in New York State.

75. Question: If a charter is in a BOCES led consortium do they have to still 'prequalify'?

Answer: Please see the answer to Question # 74. Only the charter school that is the lead applicant must prequalify. Other charter school consortium members do not need to prequalify.

76. Question: Why can't charters be within our BOCES consortium?

Answer: Please see the answer to Question # 74.

77. Question: If a Charter does not have approved APPR plan and is within a BOCES led consortium - can they still participate in the consortium?

Answer: A charter school may not participate in a BOCES consortium (please see the answer to Question # 74). An approved APPR plan is not required for this RFP.

78. Question: Can the members of a charter school consortium each have its own educational assessment plan?

Answer: Yes. Each member should have their own educational assessment plan.

Budget

79. Question: Does all money given for the grant have to be used within the first year or may it continue through one year if funds are still there?

Answer: All funds must be expended by June 30, 2015.

80. Question: Can money that is budgeted for indirect costs be used to compensate districts for substitute teachers?

Answer: No. Indirect costs can be broadly defined as central administrative costs and certain other organization-wide costs that are incurred in connection with a grant but that cannot readily be identified with the grant (e.g., payroll preparation, central purchasing). Substitute teachers, who are providing direct services to this project, should be included under Code 15, Professional Services if they are employed by the district lead (applicant) or under Code 40, Purchased Services if they are employed

by an outside party. Please review the Fiscal Guidelines for Federal and State Grants for additional information: <http://www.oms.nysed.gov/cafe/guidance/guidelines.html>

- 81. Question:** Is there any consideration for changing the project period to include August? If quality assessments were to be designed by teachers, summer is the best time to allow multiple days of work. Sept – June will require after school or release time for teachers.

Answer: No. Since this grant is funded by Race to the Top, all funds must be expended by June 30, 2015.

M/WBE

- 82. Question:** The RFP states that the M/WBE 20% requirement does not apply to direct personal services, including professional and support staff salaries. In a BOCES-led consortium, does that exemption apply to BOCES staff salaries/benefits only? Or does that exemption also apply to salary/benefits for partner districts?

Answer: Only the salaries and benefits of staff employed by the lead applicant should be subtracted on the M/WBE Goal Calculation Worksheet. The 20% goal does apply to the salaries and benefits budgeted for consortium members' staff.