

Questions and Answers

RFP #TA-09

School Innovation Fund Grant (SIF) Round 2



NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Questions submitted via SIFGrant Mailbox – 7/2/2012

1. *If a school has a successful program operating in it, can the current program be left in-tact in the entire school re-design process or does the program need to be eliminated? We have a school that is eligible for SIF funds but is designated as an IB Diploma Programme. Approximately 20% of school students participate in the Diploma Program. The IB Program has selective student admission and it is optional.*

ANSWER: In the case described in this question, an LEA may propose to keep any successful program within a school in-tact (including, but not limited to an IB program), so long as it is clear that the whole school in which that program exists, is proposed to be redesigned within the parameters set forth in the RFP.

2. *Can the “whole-school redesign” leave the IB Program intact and focus SIF funds on the non-IB population/teachers/curriculum?*

ANSWER: In the case described in this question, an LEA may propose to keep any successful program within a school in-tact (including, but not limited to an IB program), so long as it is clear that the whole school in which that program exists, is proposed to be redesigned within the parameters set forth in the RFP.

3. *Does the definition of “whole-school redesign” mean that all existing programs need to be eliminated?*

ANSWER: This grant requires a dramatically different change in whole-school organizational, leadership, and comprehensive educational plan. If these larger systems and structural features are proposed and met, all existing programs do not need to be eliminated, particularly if there is strong evidence of these programs being successful for students. However, when proposing a SIF2 grant, LEAs should review all existing programs, and if there is limited to no evidence of the effectiveness of

a particular program improving student achievement, or if the program is not consistent with the whole-school design proposed, it would make sense to eliminate such program.

4. Is it too late to submit a letter of intent?

ANSWER: The deadline for the Letter of Intent for this grant is July 18, 2012. LEAs should submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) designating the specific identified schools for which applications will be submitted. The LOI should be emailed to SIFGRANT@mail.nysed.gov. The purpose of the LOI is to ensure appropriate resources are available for SED to engage in a timely and thorough review and rating process. It should be noted that while the LOI is recommended, it is not a requirement. LEAs may submit applications for individual schools up until the August 15 application deadline.

5. Is there a date and time set for the end of June applicant webinar? Are the only schools permitted to participate those who will be listed on July 15th?

ANSWER: The Webinar for SIF2 was recorded and posted during the week of June 25. A recording of the webinar and accompanying PowerPoint slide presentation is available on the web at the following address: <http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/rfp/sif-round2/home.html>.

The webinar is available to all prospective LEAs, partner organizations, and stakeholders in New York State's efforts to turn around chronically underperforming schools.

7. If there are other high need schools in need of improvement in our region, can we partner with them?

ANSWER: Proposing a design that plans to work collaboratively with other high needs schools in a region is not prohibited through SIF-2. However, the type and nature of the collaboration would still need to fit within the parameters set forth in the RFP and contribute directly to systems, structural, and instructional changes in the school for which funding is being sought. Any individual SIF-2 application will be evaluated based on the scoring rubric as applied to the specific school for which funding is sought.

8. Are other 'whole school reform' models (not indicated) permissible as partners, such as Expeditionary Learning or International Baccalaureate (Middle Years or Diploma Programme)?

ANSWER: Partners such as those referenced in this question would fit within the "Network-Affiliated" school framework for SIF-2. A "Network-Affiliated" school is a general term for any number of specific partners who may launch and manage new/redesigned schools, have a pattern of success, and therefore have an existing network of similar schools from which to draw additional support. It is essential to note that the proposal with such partners must be for a whole-school redesign and not a program within the school.

9. May arts partners, colleges, and/or community based organizations be 'sub-contracted' under the grant to deliver direct services to students/families that support the redesign of the school and support student success?

ANSWER: The types of partners referenced in this question could be proposed as a Lead Partner (one partner only) or as a part of a Partner Consortium (2-3 partners, max), as long as the specific partners chosen meet the requirements and standards for partners identified in the RFP (e.g., proven track-record of success, experience in managing a school change process, etc.). The activities of such partners would be included under the "purchased services" budget category.

10. The Principal of our school, who was key to the Round 1 SIF Grant proposal, is retiring. We implemented many of the ideas in the grant with current staff. Would Assistant Principal and teacher leaders constitute strong leadership in Round 2 of the SIF Grant?

ANSWER: An LEA applicant will need to clearly make the case, with evidence, in the proposal narrative and other submission documents, that any specific school leader or leadership team meets the standards identified within the Organizational Plan section of the scoring guide.

11. If the district is still negotiating the APPR with the Union, does it have to be in place by the August 15 / November 13 deadlines?

ANSWER: While the August 15 submission is preferred, in the case of unresolved collective bargaining negotiations, the district can submit the plan as soon as practicable, but no later than November 13, 2012. Award and release of grant funds is contingent upon a confirmed approved APPR plan. If an LEA that scores high enough to receive an award does not have an APPR plan approved by the Commissioner by December 31, 2012, the application will be rejected and will not receive funding under this RFP.

12. Please confirm that an FS-10 for Year 1 only must be submitted.

ANSWER: Only an FS-10 for Project Period 1 (January 1, 2013 to June 30, 2013) needs to be submitted with this application. However, it is essential to note that the 3-Year Budget Summary Chart and detailed full-budget narrative for all three years must be submitted with this application.

13. Our District is anticipating SIF applications for several schools. Can more than one District user be working in the Review Room Portal at the same time (i.e., do we need to coordinate document upload and submission timing)?

ANSWER: Questions regarding submission through the portal can be posed any time prior to or on August 15, but must be asked by calling Alice Roberson, (518) 486-2449, and must not be sent by email.