

Questions and Answers
RFP #TA-15
School Innovation Fund (SIF)

Q1. I just received notices about the new round of SIG funding and round 3 of SIF. Can schools apply for both SIG and SIF?

Answer: An LEA may apply for a SIG and SIF for the same eligible Priority School. Should the LEA receive preliminary notice of award for both grants for the same school, the LEA must withdraw from one or the other. An LEA may, however, apply for and receive both SIG and SIF for different eligible Priority Schools within their district.

Q2. NYU Metro Center is interested in being a lead on this opportunity. Can a single priority school within a district apply with a lead partner? If so, what does the LEA need to provide?

Answer: Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must apply on behalf of one or more eligible Priority Schools. Eligible LEAs must partner with one Lead Partner or a Partner Consortium. Information about what is expected of the LEA in the partner selection process is described in the Purpose Section of the RFP, and in Sections I.E. and II.F. of the Proposal Narrative.

Q3. Is SIF going to be comprised of ARRA funds?

Answer: There's a strong likelihood that ARRA funds will be used for at least a portion of the SIF funding.

Q4. I was told that for this round of the RFP, Focus schools are able to apply (if the LEA also has at least one Priority school in its district). Is this true?

Answer: This grant is open to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) with one or more eligible Priority Schools. The eligible Priority Schools can be found at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/ESEADesignations.html>. The LEA must apply on behalf of the eligible Priority School where the whole-school redesign will take place.

Q5. Can we extend the school week instead of the school day? Can we have Saturday school to extend the school week?

Answer: As per RFP Section II. School Level Plan: H: Educational Plan, you are asked to "Describe a logical and meaningful set of strategies for the use of instructional time that leads to a pedagogically sound restructuring of the daily/weekly/monthly schedule **to increase learning time and/or extend the school day or year**. The structure for learning time described here should be aligned with the Board of Regents standards for Expanded Learning Time, as outlined here: <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2012Meetings/April2012/412bra5.pdf>."

Q6. Is the grant able to cover after school bus transportation for students?
Answer: Allowable activities are those that are directly impacting the school-level implementation of the whole-school redesign SIF plan proposed in the application. It is incumbent upon the LEA to demonstrate a connection between a cost and an activity described in the Project Narrative. In addition, the budget must supplement, not supplant, core instructional activities to be provided by the district.

Q7. Can the grant funds be used to provide services for students during the summer?
Answer: See answer to Question 6.

Q8. Can the grant funds be used to cover compensation for teachers for after school or summer professional development hours?
Answer: See answer to Question 6.

Q9. Can the grant be used to cover salaries for additional resource personnel ie Coaches (Math, ELA, or Social and Emotional Development)?
Answer: See answer to Question 6.

Q10. Can grant funds be used to cover expenses for Professional Development ex. purchase refreshments for parents or teachers or students?
Answer: The purchase of refreshments is not allowed. For other PD expenses, see answer to Question 6.

Q11. What is the role of the Partner?
Answer: The role of the key partner organizations is to have a joint commitment with the LEA to the rigorous work required to redesign and turnaround schools into high performing, high quality organizations. The key partner shares joint accountability for improved student achievement with an LEA. By signing a Performance Agreement, the LEA and Lead Partner or Partner Consortium agrees to meet the identified indicators and performance metrics, according to the responsibilities explicitly identified in the MOU.

Organizations comprising a Partner Consortium have a direct role in the implementation of this SIF-3 grant and work collectively with an “in-district team” to provide direction, coordination, oversight, and overall development in the areas of portfolio management, human capital development, site-based governance, site-based budgeting and financial services, facilities, instructional and non-instructional planning and implementation. A Lead Partner also provides direction, coordination, oversight, etc. as well as coordinates all supporting partner organizations that interface with the school. Please see the Purpose section of the RFP for additional information about the role of the Partner.

- Q12.** Can grant funds be used to cover purchasing materials/ or the cost of printing?
Answer: Supplies and materials are allowable, if necessary to meet the project goals and objectives, but may be no greater than ten percent (10%) of the total budget for each period.
- Q13.** Can the grant be amended after it is written?
Answer: The application submitted through Review Room cannot be amended. If the applicant is awarded a SIF grant, the LEA will work with the School Turnaround Office (STO) staff to finalize any documents required to be submitted in draft form during the application process. In addition, after the grant award is approved, awardees have the opportunity to submit an FS-10A, or request changes to originally proposed plan, all within the provided guidance, including the Fiscal Guidelines for Federal and State Grants: <http://www.oms.nysed.gov/cafe/guidance/guidelines.html#forms>.
- Q14.** Can the grant funds be used to cover expenses for an Out of District or Out of State Professional Development consultant?
Answer: The LEA/school must have a coherent school-specific framework for training, support, and professional development clearly linked to the identified SIF plan and student needs. It is incumbent upon the LEA to demonstrate a connection between the cost and the activity described in the SIF plan.
- Q15.** Can the grant funds be used to pay for travel and registration for school personnel to attend conferences either in or out of state?
Answer: See answer to Question 6.
- Q16.** Is the Lead Partner compensated through the grant?
Answer: The SIF grant could be used to compensate the Lead Partner. Applicants should identify all other sources of income that will support and sustain the Lead Partner.
- Q17.** At the end of the year one, what data/documents have to be submitted to the state?
Answer: Refer to the Additional Required Post-Award Documents and Reporting Requirements sections of the RFP.
- Q18.** Is 100% teacher participation required?
Answer: It is unclear to what specific participation this question is referring. If you reference Section J: Communication and Stakeholder Involvement/Engagement, then yes, the LEA/school must fully and transparently consult and collaborate with key education stakeholders (including all teachers) about the school's Priority status and on the implementation of the SIF plan.

If you are asking about teacher participation in a SIF award, the SIF grant is intended to be used to launch a whole-school redesign of an existing school. A whole-school redesign would involve 100% teacher participation. However, if the school design being proposed is an autonomous school within an existing school and has an extremely small cohort, the applicant would need to justify why this particular design would be the best fit for both the students enrolled and the other schools, including the potential impact on students not enrolled. In this particular design, you may not have 100% teacher participation.

Q19. Does the grant require a minimum of 300 hours for participation?

Answer: The RFP does not reference a 300 hour participation expectation in any area.

Q20. Are we utilizing Race to the Top funds for this grant?

Answer: There's a strong likelihood that RttT funds will be used for at least a portion of the SIF funding.

Q21. Are we allowed to select a Community Partner of choice?

Answer: As per RFP Section I: District-Level Plan: E: External Partner Recruitment, Screening, and Matching of the Proposal Narrative, the LEA must have a rigorous process for identifying, screening, selecting, matching, and evaluating partner organizations that provide critical services to Priority Schools.

Q22. Are stipulations included in the grant application?

Answer: The question is unclear. Requirements and expectations of SIF applicants are explicitly described in the SIF 3 RFP #TA-15.

Q23. Does the grant consider existing contract language?

Answer: The question is unclear.