

RFP #GC23-015

2024-2028 NYS Smart Scholars Early College High School (SS-EHS) Program

Questions and Answers Summary

Eligible Applicants:

1. I am a Project Manager for a health facility. I was curious if hospitals (non-profits) are eligible for this Cohort. We have a lot of programs that are school-based programs within our organization.
 - A. The only eligible applicants for this grant are public school districts or BOCES, or IHEs that serve as the lead fiscal agent in an existing Smart Scholars ECHS project. Community-based organizations (CBOs) providing support services for high-need communities and businesses or industry entities that have a presence in the community of the proposed SS-ECHS are also encouraged to participate as collaborators in the program in support of the partnerships.
2. Can there be more than one application in a school district?
 - A. Yes, as long as each application is its own separate program, and students and funds aren't comingled between applications/projects.
3. Can two schools in a school district apply for the SS-ECHS grant and both potentially receive the award?
 - A. Note that a high school in and of itself is not an eligible applicant and see answer to question 2.
4. If a district already has been awarded the SS-ECHS Continuation grant for one school through 2027, can an application be submitted for the SS-ECHS grant running through 2028 for a separate school without losing funding?
 - A. A school district that is currently operating an SS-ECHS program could submit a new application as long as the new program will be distinct and different from the currently funded program. The new program must support a different group of students and cannot comingle funds. Per the RFP, the Cohort 6 programs are not allowed to sustain, expand, or support any currently awarded program.
5. We are wondering if a district that has a Smart Transfer ECHS program running from 2021-2026 would be eligible to apply for a Smart Scholars grant with the program running from 2024-2028? (We are looking at the note in the current SS-ECHS RFP that states *Note: Currently funded Smart Scholars Early College High School (SS-ECHS) partnerships may apply to create a new Smart Scholars ECHS project, separate from currently operating projects; however, they may not apply to expand their current projects. Additionally, these funds are not meant to replace any previously awarded Smart Scholars ECHS projects.*)
 - A. A school district currently operating a Smart Transfer ECHS project would be eligible to apply for this RFP as long as the Smart Scholars proposal will be distinctly different from

the Smart Transfer ECHS program, have a different pathway, serve a different group of students, and does not comingle funds.

6. I am a Senior Grants officer in the Bronx for the NYC DOE. I have identified several schools in the Bronx who are interested in applying for this opportunity. Based on the eligibility language below, I am wondering if the New York City Department of Education is eligible to submit one application per geographic district ie. Can we submit one application for high schools in geographic district 7? another for high schools in geographic District 8? District 9? District 10? District 11? and District 12? Or is it that the NYC DOE can only submit one application citywide?

A. NYC DOE is allowed to submit multiple applications. Please consult the NYC DOE for how many applications it will submit. A separate application must be submitted for each specific project being considered for a Smart Scholars award and may not comingle students and funds.

Applicants can either submit one proposal to support multiple high schools or applicants can submit an individual proposal for each unique project within the same district.

If you are planning one proposal to support multiple high schools, you will need to thoroughly explain how you plan to provide all students with a consistent curriculum and provide a college-going culture among all students in the program. The high school instructional program should be rigorous, engaging, high-quality instruction and provide extra academic support for all students in the program in grades 9 through 12.

NYC school districts looking to submit a Smart Scholars Cohort 6 proposal should consult with NYC DOE.

7. Could you please explain more fully what is meant by “Currently funded Smart Scholars Early College High School (SS-ECHS) partnerships may apply to create a new Smart Scholars ECHS project, separate from currently operating projects; however, they may not apply to expand their current projects.” This seems to say that this new application cannot extend an existing program through 2028 or increase the size or scope. Could a new project be a replica of an existing project? Does a new project require a new pathway or a new IHE?

A. A school district that is currently operating an SS-ECHS program could submit a new application as long as the new program will be distinct and different from the currently funded program. The new program must support a different group of students and cannot comingle funds. The new project can have the same IHE but should have a different pathway. It cannot be a replica of an existing project. Per the RFP, the Cohort 6 programs are not allowed to sustain, expand, or support any currently awarded program.

8. Page 47 of the RFP indicates “These funds are not meant to replace any previously awarded Smart Scholars ECHS projects.” Does this mean that a district that has a Smart Scholars grant project that ends just before this new grant round begins could not propose essentially the same project that it current operates? The district is operating a successful Smart Scholars program and sees no reason to change what is already working well.

A. This application cannot be used to sustain or expand any current project. The new project can have the same IHE but should have a different pathway.

Currently funded SS-ECHS projects have historically been sustained through a non-competitive application process.

9. How is “district” defined, specifically relating to the New York City Public School (NYCPS) system? Could an internal NYCPS District apply on behalf of the schools they represent or is a singular application from NYCPS suggested? Page 108 of the RFP “List of Target Districts” with specific NYC Geographic Districts (i.e. NYC GEOG DIST #7 - Bronx). Can NYCPS apply on multiple district’s behalf or must they do it separately

A. Regarding how NYSED interprets “districts” in NYC for the purposes of this grant, please see the answer to Question #6.

Distribution of Funds:

10. Within the “IX. Distribution of Awards” section states: “Priority will be given to proposals from sending schools with a cohort high school graduation rate below 87% based on the 4-year cohort graduation rate for the 2021-22 school year (August) [published annually by NYSED](#).” Would “special population” data (ethnicity designation, individuals with disabilities, economically disadvantaged...) that falls below the 87% graduation rate be taken into consideration as a priority if the grant was written specifically with support for that specific population?

A. No. Priority will not be given to “special population” data (ethnicity designation, individuals with disabilities, economically disadvantaged...) that falls below the 87% graduation rate. However, per the RFP, priority will be given to proposals from sending schools with a cohort high school graduation rate below 87% based on the 4-year cohort graduation rate for the 2021-22 school year (August) [published annually by NYSED](#).

11. How will priority for funding be determined for applicants where multiple high schools are to be served through one application, or BOCES applications where multiple districts apply as a consortium?

A. With regard to BOCES applications or where multiple districts apply as a consortium or where multiple high schools are to be served through one application, priority will be given to proposals whose participating schools have an average cohort graduation rate below 87% based on the 4-year cohort graduation rate for the 2021/2022 school year (August) [published annually by NYSED](#). Should there be BOCES or consortium applicants or an applicant for which multiple high schools are to be served whose participating schools’ high school graduation rate average is 87% or above, and there is availability of resources to fund such projects, such projects will also be considered.

Per the RFP, if the lead applicant is a BOCES, at least one Target District served by the BOCES must join the partnership and sign the MOU. Additionally, more than 50% of the students who enroll in the consortium program must be from Target District(s).

Target Population:

12. "Historically underrepresented and/or economically disadvantaged students" - does this mean the program will not be an option for all students in our district if we were to receive the grant? Also, what constitutes that classification? We are a small rural public school with no college in our county; 49% poverty rate; upwards of 73% first gen college students (if they go); roughly 10% military affiliated; 97% caucasian.

A. An eligible student is any student at a NYS public high school that offers a Smart Scholars ECHS program. At least 75% of the SS-ECHS enrolled students must be economically disadvantaged, and/or from groups that are historically underrepresented in postsecondary education and/or academically at-risk. See specific definitions of eligibility designations beginning on page 9 of the RFP.

Program Requirements/Specifications:

13. If a partnership proposes a small number of students to start, can they grow the number of students in future years? After the contract ends, could they renew with a larger number of students in the future?

A. Yes, but you will not receive any additional funds. Per the RFP, award amounts will be determined by the number of students that an applicant proposes to serve in their application. The maximum amount of funding that an applicant may request will be determined by the exact number of new 9th-grade students the project commits to serve on an annual basis.

14. In regards to the planning period. Currently the RFP states the grant program begins March 1, 2024, but the ECHS program starts on September 1, 2024. If a three-week summer orientation is required for those students entering the 9th grade, can the program begin July 1, 2024?

A. The RFP states that students should participate in a summer orientation prior to taking college courses. If students will begin college courses in 9th grade, then summer orientation would need to take place during the designated planning period.

15. We currently have several dual enrollment courses in conjunction with our local community college - not a minimum of 24 credits though. Would we still be eligible for this grant?

A. Yes, you may leverage what you are already doing for your students; however, this grant proposal requires your students to earn at least 24 credits.

16. On page 16 under requirement "R," if an applicant already has a program in place (for example, AP courses) in which students can earn college credits, would that already existing program meet the requirement?

A. Yes.

17. If the project period for activities (not planning activities) begins on September 1, 2024, how can a district meet the suggested activity of offering a summer program to incoming ninth-grade students who are participating in the grant program?
- A. The RFP states that students should participate in a summer orientation prior to taking college courses. If students will begin college courses in 9th grade, then summer orientation would need to take place during the designated planning period. Also see Question 14.
18. On page 57 of the RFP, could you provide an explanation of what is meant by “authentic and comprehensive measures of assessment?”
- A. We want you to measure and assess whether your academic interventions and curriculum are preparing your students to be successful in their upcoming college coursework. In other words, “How will you measure what you say you are going to do?”
19. For the MOU, it may not be possible to get original signatures all on one page due to the tight deadline. Can we have each entity sign a single sheet and then combine multiple signature pages when submitting the grant application?
- A. Yes, you are allowed to combine multiple MOU signature pages when submitting the grant application.
20. On Page 82, under “Program Location” rubric is states: “Applicants whose SS-ECHS is not located on the partner IHE campus must provide at least three college courses for all students on the partner IHE campus, to help instill in the SS-ECHS students the value and impact of a college-going culture. For SS-ECHS programs in which students earn an associate degree, students must take at least six of their college courses on the partner IHE campus.”
- a. Do summer courses taken during summer bridge satisfy this mandate?
- A. Yes
- b. For classes that are offered virtually, can regular college visit opportunities or on-campus support opportunities in conjunction with these virtual classes be considered?
- A. No, virtual classes would not meet the on-campus coursework requirement.
21. Must the summer at the College component of the ECHS grant begin in summer 2024 (which overlaps with the planning grant period) or can it start in summer 2025?
- A. No, but the summer orientation must take place prior to students taking college courses.
22. Can we partner with a SUNY school that does not offer Associate degrees? We would align with a Bachelor’s degree.
- A. Yes.

Program Location:

23. When we create our proposal, is it possible to host ECHS in two different buildings under the heading of one district grant application? In addition, is it possible to have two different grant applications for two unique high schools within the same district? Our primary Post-Secondary partner would remain the same for both grants if that was the case.

A. Yes, you can either write one application to support two different high schools or you can write two different applications for two unique high schools within the same district to prevent comingling of funds and students.

24. In consultation with our proposed IHE partner, we are wondering if students must be in school together at the same location for the duration of their ninth and tenth grade years?

A. No, but you will need to thoroughly explain how you plan to provide all students with a consistent curriculum and provide a college-going culture among all students in the program. The high school instructional program should be rigorous, engaging, high-quality instruction and provide extra academic support for all students in the program in grades 9 through 12.

Staffing and Management Budget:

25. Can the ECHS grant pay 100% for a College Liaison who is both a Coordinator of the ECHS College activities and a faculty for the Smart Scholars program, or can the ECHS grant pay for a portion of the College Liaison—the Coordinator at 50% role?

A. The percentage of grant funds used for staffing may not exceed the proportion of work conducted with Smart Scholars students and/or its programming. The budget should reflect an understanding of actual costs of operating the program from the planning period through full implementation. Additionally, the budget should be developed so that sufficient funds are available to meet all program requirements, support intended targeted populations, and codified intended outcomes. To the extent that you pay 100%, 50%, or any other percentage for the college liaison, this would be allowable.

Budget:

26. Are applicants required to submit the Overall Resource Plan that starts on page 68 as part of the application package?

A. Yes.

27. How should applicants fill out the Overall Resource Plan that begins on page 68 if (per the instructions), "it is not necessary to estimate a dollar value for these resources." What information goes in the cells?

A. The goal of this worksheet is to provide a general idea of the level of resources available in each year of the planned program. In-kind contributions may simply be listed, and it is not necessary to estimate a dollar value for these resources.

General:

28. In regard to “double space between titles, headings, footnotes, quotations, references, and captions, as well as all text in charts, figures, and graphs.” Does this mean we have to double space charts and figures, or does it mean put a space between the chart or figure and the next content.

A. You may single space your charts and figures but put a space between the chart or figure and the next content.

29. Is it permissible to hand-deliver our application materials?

A. Applications must be postmarked by December 5, 2023. While hand-delivery is permissible by 3:00 pm on December 5, 2023, we strongly encourage ALL applicants to use the United States Postal Service or other trackable delivery service. Applications not received by or postmarked by December 5, 2023, may not be reviewed.