

Q & A for Additional Grants for the Expanded Prekindergarten for Three- and Four-Year Old Students in High-Need School Districts

Note: The application checklist (page 19) has been updated to include the requirement for a Program Design Narrative in the application.

1. Can you define “strong preference”? Will these be separately reviewed and funded first, bonus points added? Is it just a tie-breaker or some other means?

A strong preference for funding will be given to high need districts, especially those that currently do not offer a state funded prekindergarten program. In making awards, proposals from high need applicants scoring 70 or higher that do not currently offer a state funded prekindergarten program will be awarded first, starting with the highest scoring proposal in rank order. If funds are not exhausted after a score of 70 for the high need districts without a current state funded prekindergarten program is reached, awards will be made starting with the highest scoring proposal in rank order for all other high need districts. If funds are not exhausted after a score of 70 for all other high need districts is reached, awards will be made starting with the highest scoring proposal in rank order for all other districts; that is, districts that are not high need.

2. In looking at the Appendix G, what do the numbers in the “preference category” column mean?

The number in the preference category column indicates the order in which the applicant’s proposal will be considered for funding as described in Question #1. Numeral “1” in the preference category column indicates a high need school district with no state funded prekindergarten program. A preference category of “2” indicates a high need school district that has a state funded prekindergarten program. A preference category of “3” indicates a school district that is not high need as defined in this RFP.

3. Is it worth applying if our district is not listed on Appendix F?

The State Education Department has no way of predicting how many applicants will submit proposals or how good their proposals will be. When the list of districts that submitted the mandatory Notice of Intent is posted (no later than September 6) you may be able to better judge whether you want to submit a proposal.

4. What are the “need points” as noted on Appendix G?

The “relative need points” are points that are automatically awarded to an applicant as measured by Economic Disadvantage, English Language Learner numbers as a percent of school enrollment, Need Resource Category and Need Resource Index. Based on these factors, applicants will receive up to 5 points for these criteria (see Appendix G).

5. What are the “current use points” as noted in Appendix G?

The “current use points” are points that are automatically awarded to an applicant based on the district’s three year average UPK enrollment compared with its funded capacity. The applicant automatically will be awarded up to 5 points for this criterion. Points will be awarded as described on page 22 of the RFP.

6. We are assuming that this program would be for the start of the 2020-2021 school year.

Districts implementing programs during the 2019-2020 school year must operate a minimum of 90 days. If there are factors making it infeasible to start the program until the start of the 2020-2021 school year, the district will have access to its fully award and must operate for a minimum of 180 days.

7. If a school district expects and budgets for a higher number of Pre-K students than end up attending the program, will the district’s Pre-K allocation be reduced to account for this situation?

Yes. The maximum grant payable for the 2019-2020 school year will be calculated based on the type of placements created and the number of students enrolled on April 13, 2020. In subsequent years, the official child count date will be BEDS Day, the first Wednesday in October.

8. If the District is only able to implement a PRE-K program midyear (90 days) and only able to attract a portion of the 18 students requested for funding, I understand funding will be reduced by the actual days served and also the actual number of students served. My question is, what will this do for my funding allocation in 2020-2021? Will the district be eligible for the full allocation as per the EPK Grant Calculator or will the maximum funding be based upon the amount actually received in 2019-2020?

If a district is unable to reach its targeted number of students in the 2019-2020 school year, its maximum grant payable will be reduced based on the number and type of placements that are filled. The district will have access to its full award amount for 2020-2021 and subsequent years, subject to the achievement of other performance targets and annual appropriation of funds for this purpose.

9. We plan to offer full-day Pre-K services in partnership with a local community-based organization (CBO). The CBO also offers wrap-around services before and after the Pre-K program. Parents would be charged for those services. Is it okay if parents are charged for those wrap-around services, if the Pre-K program itself is free to families?

Yes. While parents cannot be charged for the Pre-K program, a CBO may charge for before and/or after program care. Parents must be provided the option of purchasing such services. Payment for wrap-around care cannot be a condition of participating in the Pre-K program at the CBO site.

10. If a district has an existing collaboration with a community-based organization for the provision of UPK four-year-old programming, can the district expand the collaboration with the same partner for the three-year-old program without canvassing other providers in the district? Or is the district required to canvass additional providers of three-year-old prekindergarten programming for the purposes of this grant regardless of pre-existing collaborations?

Since it will be offering a new service (a program for three year old students), the district must solicit interest from any eligible CBOs located within the district boundaries. If interest from potential collaborators exceeds the anticipated need, the district must select the agencies with which it will work through a competitive process as set forth in Section 151-1.6 of the regulations of the Commissioner of Education.

11. We have no potential CBO collaborators within our district's geographic boundaries. Do we need to reach out beyond our boundaries to get a waiver from the collaboration requirement?

Applicants may seek collaborators from outside the district's boundaries. However, this is not required in order to qualify for a variance from the 10% collaboration requirement.

12. Does the CBO we partner with need to be inside the district boundaries? Is it permissible to use a CBO located outside district boundaries, if none are present with the district's boundaries?

A district may partner with a CBO that is located outside the district boundaries if the location is accessible to families and the program meets the Pre-K requirements.

13. What is considered the "instructional program"? We're looking at the requirement that 10% of the total instruction program goes to a CBO. Can you provide clarification on what budget categories should be included?

Awardees are required to set aside a **minimum** of 10% of their grant funds to collaborate with a CBO for the provision of the Pre-K instructional program to a specified number of the enrolled Pre-K students. This means that the CBO will employ a teacher and paraprofessional(s) as required to operate a Pre-K classroom that complies with the Pre-K program requirements as set forth in this RFP and Subpart 151-1 of the regulations of the Commissioner of Education. SED expects that the amount the district pays the CBO will closely approximate the amount per pupil it is receiving through this grant. All funds that are going to the CBO will be budgeted in Code 40 Purchased Services on the FS-10 Proposed Budget.

14. Can the grant be used for district-based programs? If so, is the inclusion of CBOs still required? To what extent?

*Districts may use grant funds for a district-based program. In such cases, awardees are required to set aside a **minimum** of 10% of their grant funds to collaborate with a CBO for the provision of the Pre-K instructional program to a specified number of the enrolled Pre-K students as described in Question 13.*

15. Is a district able to apply for new Pre-Kindergarten seats that will be part of a program at a CBO only? The district would not add seats to its district-based Pre-K program.

Yes. The district may apply to implement the EPK Round 4 grant by adding new Pre-K seats through collaboration with a CBO. The district is not required to add seats or classrooms district-operated Pre-K program.

16. Is a CBO expected to provide direct instruction (i.e., a full academic program) versus simply providing enrichment or push-in services?

To be counted towards meeting the Pre-K collaboration requirement the CBO must provide the classroom instructional program. While enrichment and/or supplemental services are allowable grant expenditures, they do not meet the collaboration requirement.

17. What does the CBO collaboration look like? What are some examples?

For this grant program, the term “collaboration” means that the community-based organization (CBO) is providing the instructional program to a specified number of enrolled Pre-K students; that is the classroom teacher and paraprofessional(s) are employees of the CBO. The Pre-K classroom may be located at the CBO site or in a public school classroom.

Eligible CBOs with which the district may collaborate include day care programs, early childhood programs or centers, approved preschool special education

programs, Head Start programs, nursery schools, libraries and museums. All collaborating CBOs must currently meet, or be willing to adapt their programs to meet, the requirements of Subpart 151-1 of the regulations of the Commissioner of Education, as well as the standards and requirements of this grant.

18. What are the required services that must be provided by the identified CBO? For example, does a field trip to a local museum qualify as instructional programming to meet this requirement? Or must the CBO provide the instructional program?

To be counted towards meeting the Pre-K collaboration requirement the CBO must provide the classroom instructional program. While enrichment and/or supplemental services, such as field trips, are allowable grant expenditures, they do not meet the collaboration requirement.

19. “CBOs that employ teachers who are not certified must have a supervisor who is certified for service in the early childhood or childhood grades and who is on-site during the hours of prekindergarten operation.” Can the supervisor be another teacher at site (with a clear plan implemented for regularly scheduled supervision meetings and mentoring)?

Yes. If the district is satisfied that the plan for supervision of the uncertified teachers is sufficient, this approach is allowable.

20. If the on-site supervisor can be certified early childhood or childhood grades, does that include N-6th/Birth-2nd and 1-6th (Childhood Education) as well?

Yes. The on-site supervisor may be certified in Early Childhood Education (Birth-Grade 2) or Childhood Education (Grades 1-6) or any prior certification that is comparable.

21. Is it okay if we send some of our students to a CBO to fulfill the CBO requirement – and so those students would be taught completely separate from the rest of the district-run program.

When collaborating with a CBO for Pre-K instruction to all or some of its enrolled students, the district retains responsibility for oversight of the Pre-K program. Section 151-1.3(f) of the regulations of the Commissioner of Education requires that a school district monitor compliance by collaborating eligible agencies with all fiscal and program requirements, must assess student progress in the prekindergarten program, and must correct any identified deficiencies.

22. The money that will be allocated, I’m assuming will be done following the same formula that is currently used. If not, how will it be different?

The maximum amount of funding that an applicant is eligible to receive if selected for funding is based on the type of slots being created (new full-day, new half-day, or conversion of existing half-day to full-day) and the number of slots requested. Applicants must use the EPK Grant Calculator in Appendix C to determine the maximum grant request based on the number of new full-day placements, half-day placements converted to full-day, and/or half-day placements to be created and the adjusted grant for Year One based on the number of days the program will be in operation.

23. Is the money being offered sustainable for years after or is it just for a one time program start up?

In the 2020-2021 school year and thereafter, each grantee's award will be consolidated with the district's Universal Prekindergarten allocation as specified in Section 3602-e of Education Law, subject to an available appropriation in the State budget for this purpose and provided that the grantee has met all requirements of this grant.

24. We are considering applying for grant funding to expand our UPK efforts. When looking at converting our current 4 year old program from 1/2 day to full day, I am wondering if the amount to essentially add another classroom (by switching from 1/2 day to full day) would be in addition to our current allocation?

Yes. The EPK Round 4 grant award would be in addition to any existing UPK allocation that the district receives.

25. We would use the entire grant award for salaries and benefits, so our M/WBE requirement is \$0 (according to the M/WBE goal calculation worksheet). Consequently, do we need to submit any M/WBE paperwork beyond the cover page and goal calculation worksheet?

*When the M/WBE goal is zero, the applicant must submit the M/WBE Goal Calculation Worksheet, the Cover Page indicating **full participation**, and the M/WBE 100 EEO Staff Plan.*

26. My question is about the M/WBE forms. If my FS-10 budget for my EPK Round 4 Grant application is going for CBO Purchased Service, what do I check off for compliance (Full, Partial or No Participation)? Then what forms do I complete if there was no need for a waiver or Good Faith Efforts?

If the full award is going to collaborating agencies for the provision of the Pre-K instructional program and the M/WBE goal is zero, the applicant must submit the M/WBE Goal Calculation Worksheet, the Cover Page indicating full participation, and the M/WBE 100 EEO Staff Plan.

You would mark the Cover Page full participation because the goal is zero and the district will be able to meet that goal.

27. Do we need to have M/WBE participation if we already have a UPK grant that does not require it?

Yes. The M/WBE participation requirement applies to this grant opportunity.

28. As stated on page 5 of the RFP, "Grant funding must be used to supplement, not supplant, any existing prekindergarten programs." Please provide further clarification/definition of "supplement" and "existing prekindergarten programs."

A district may apply for funding to create new full-day slots, to create new half-day slots and/or to convert existing half-day slots to full-day. An applicant may not use these grant funds to replace State, federal or local funds that supported prekindergarten services offered by the district in the base year (the year prior).

29. If a school district will be starting 36 new full-day four year old Pre-K slots at the start of the 2019-20 school year that are not state funded, but school district funded, can these new slots be funded by this grant given the grant project period for Year One runs from 7/1/19 - 6/30/20? The RFP requests current slots based on the 2018-19 school year, so these 36 slots would be new in this grant period based on those baseline figures.

Yes. A district may implement new Pre-K slots at the start of the school year and if successful in securing an EPK-Round 4 grant can use the grant funding to support those new slots. This is not considered supplantation because the 36 slots and the funding to support those slots was not expended by the district in the prior school year (2018-2019).

30. If we are a successful applicant, can we phase in implementation as follows: As of the date of the award, open new ½ day program(s) with a CBO, and then effective September 2020, continue the new ½ day programs while also converting two of the district's half-day classrooms to full day programs? This phased implementation would provide continuity for children starting in fall 2019 in half day programs, but open seats for full day programming next fall.

Yes. This type of phased in implementation is acceptable as long as the portion of the program being implemented during the 2019-2020 school year operates a minimum of 90 days.

31. We are considering expanding our half-day UPK program to full-day. Does the application process allow districts to run a hybrid model, meaning can we offer both full-day and half-day to parents?

Yes. Districts are permitted to convert some classrooms to full-day while leaving others half-day. Since in a full-day model the instructional program is provided over a time span of at least five hours rather than 2.5 hours, the district cannot serve half-day and full-day children in the same classroom.

32. Our district currently has a full-day state-funded Pre-Kindergarten program for four-year-old students. Are we eligible to apply for funding for a three-year old program, without adding new slots for four-year old students?

Yes. If a district already has a Pre-K program for four-year old students, it may apply for funding to serve three-year old students provided the request for slots for three-year old children does not exceed the number of four-year old students it currently has the capacity to serve.

33. Does a three-year old program need access to a playground? Does a fenced in play area suffice?

Section 100.3 of the regulations of the Commissioner of Education requires that the instructional program for prekindergarten must allow for active and quiet play in indoor and outdoor environments. While appropriate outdoor play space must be available, a playground is not specifically required.

34. If a district is applying for a grant to implement programming for three-year-olds only, is it required to respond to section 7 under the Program Quality Narrative? This question relates to transitions to kindergarten for four-year-olds.

Yes. The applicant must respond to all sections of the program quality narrative, including the section on transitions to kindergarten for its four-year old students.

35. Is transportation an allowable expense?

Yes, Costs associated with the provision of transportation for Pre-K students are an allowable expenditure.

36. Are we required to provide transportation for three-year old students?

Districts are not required to provide transportation for three- or four-year old Pre-K students. However, if the district provides transportation for some Pre-K students it must offer it for all Pre-K students residing within the mileage limits established by the district.

37. Can funding be used to purchase car seats for three-year old students while they are being transported to and from the program?

Yes. Costs associated with the provision of transportation for Pre-K students, including car seats for three-year old students, are an allowable expenditure.

38. Is a fillable version of Appendix D available for the EPK Round 4? The PDF posted under grant application documents is not digitally fillable.

The NYS Pre-K Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Action Plan (Appendix D) is provided to help applicants provide thorough responses in the Program Quality Narrative. Awardees will be provided with instructions and the appropriate form to complete after program implementation. Applicants are not required and should not submit this form as part of their proposals as it will not be read or considered by the reviewers.

39. Must districts be serving all eligible four-year-old children before serving the three-year-old population?

No. Districts do not need to be serving all eligible four-year old children before starting a program for three-year old children. However, to serve three-year old children, the applicant must have the capacity to serve an equal or greater number of four-year old students.

40. It looks like the maximum amount a district could request is \$6.0 million (40% of the total funding). Is that correct?

Yes. For purposes of this grant, no school district shall receive more than forty percent (40%) of the total grant funds. The total grant appropriation to be awarded is \$15 million. No school district may receive more than \$6.0 million.

41. Is there a limit on the number of students we can propose to serve?

The only limit on the number of students a district can propose to serve is dependent on the district's per pupil rate and the type of placements the district proposes to create. No school district may receive more than \$6.0 million (or 40 percent of the total grant appropriation) as determined using the Grant Calculator (Appendix C).

42. If a program is situated in one of our school buildings, can the students take part in school lunch?

*Yes. If the district participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or School Breakfast Program (SBP), all students that are present during scheduled breakfast or lunch periods **must** have access to the SBP or NSLP meals.*

43. If a district budgeted for new or expanded Pre-K slots in its 2019-20 budget and starts or expands its Pre-K program in September 2019, can it apply for funding under this RFP or would that be considered supplanting?

Applicants may not use these grant funds to supplant (replace) State, federal or local funds it expended for Pre-K services in the base year; that is the year prior. Districts may apply for this grant if the new grant funds will not be used to replace funds it had previously used to support Pre-K services.

44. Do you know the date when the awards will be announced?

Award announcements will be made as soon as the review process has been completed and the required approvals have been obtained.

45. If we apply by the September deadline when will we get notification?

Award announcements will be made as soon as the review process has been completed and the required approvals have been obtained.

46. Is it possible to start our Pre-K program in December or January depending on acceptance of the application?

Awardees can start their Pre-K program as soon as they desire after the announcement of final awards. Awardees implementing during the 2019-2020 school year must operate their programs for a minimum of 90 days and for the full school year thereafter.

47. Will the payments be made to the school district the same way the UPK payments are made? Or will the district have to advance all the funding and be reimbursed at the end of the year, as it is with the Statewide Full Day Pre-K?

This grant will have the same type of payment schedule as the UPK program. That is, upon budget approval a 25% advance will be issued, the ability to request additional funds through the submission of an FS-25 during the year, and final payment upon submission/approval of a final expenditure report (FS-10 F).

48. Can these grant funds be used to pay service providers for therapies and 1:1 aides (OT/ PT/ Speech) as identified in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for CPSE identified students?

No. This grant is to provide the Pre-K instructional program. Payment for services specified in an IEP for a preschool child with a disability who has been identified by the Committee on Preschool Special Education is made with special education funds through the county.

49. If CBOs currently serve both three- and four-year old students in the same classrooms, would they be required to establish separate classrooms to serve children funded by this grant?

No. A district and its collaborating CBOs may provide Pre-K programming in mixed aged classrooms. However, the applicant's proposal must demonstrate how the applicant has distinguished between the needs of the three- and four-year old students and has created or will create appropriate classroom environments and activities for each age group within the classroom.

50. Is there a minimum number of new or expanded Pre-K placements that a district should be aiming for? In other words, if a district is considering adding, for example six slots, would that program be less likely to receive funding than one that adds 25 slots?

There is no competitive advantage based on the number of students proposed to be served.

51. Will districts adding full-day placements receive priority over those adding half-day placements?

There is no competitive advantage based on the type of placements (new full-day, new half-day, or conversions) that an applicant proposes to create.

52. If awarded grant funds under this grant, the district plans to partner with Head Start for the provision of a three-year old pre-kindergarten program, using grant funds to enhance the current full-day Head Start program and to establish an additional district classroom. In calculating the potential grant award, the students in the district classroom would be new full day slots. Would the Head Start students also be counted as new full day students?

No; the Head Start program is already providing a full-day instructional program for its students. Because the Head Start classrooms are not currently supported by State-administered Pre-K funding, the district could apply for new half-day Pre-K funding for these students. These grant funds may be used to provide Pre-K instruction to the currently enrolled Head Start students, provided the following conditions are met.

- a. These grant funds must be used to supplement, not supplant (replace) the federal Head Start funds that currently support the program for these students.*
- b. The Pre-K funding could support program enhancements and modifications that are needed to ensure that the program provided by the Head Start complies with the program requirements set forth in Subpart*

151-1 of the regulations of the Commissioner of Education and meets the approved quality indicators described on pages 24-26 of the RFP.

- c. *Examples of program modifications and enhancements include but are not limited to: extending the length of day for the program by 2.5 hours to better meet the needs of working families; increasing the program from four to five days per week; hiring certified teachers; enhancing the teacher's salary to attract and retain certified teachers, hiring substitutes so teachers can attend district professional development or attend classes related to obtaining teacher certification; aligning curriculum and assessments with the school district; and other activities related to meeting the approved quality indicators.*

Grant funds may not be used for children currently enrolled in Head Start to receive the same program that they would be receiving without addition of the Pre-K grant funds. When collaborating with any CBO, the district must be able to identify the "value added" that results from the Pre-K investment; that is, how the program is different than what children would have received without the Pre-K funding.

53. I see the requirement to submit the final application via email in Word. Since the FS-10 will be in Excel, can we send that as an Excel? Or, so that you have a signed copy, can we send a PDF instead, that is a scan of the full application?

The FS-10 Proposed Budget may be submitted as an Excel file or a PDF. The rest of the application should be submitted as a Word document.

54. We would like to hand-deliver our application. Can you provide the contact name and phone number we need to give to the guard at the entrance of the building? Also, what is the cutoff time for delivering applications on September 18, 2019?

*Applications **must be received no later than 5:00 PM** on September 18, 2019. While it is preferred that applicants follow the transmittal method set forth on page 2 of the RFP, hand-delivered applications will be accepted. Couriers delivering applications should enter the Education Building Annex using the Hawk Street entrance. Security will have the contact name and phone number for the staff assigned to meet you and receive the application. **No applications will be accepted after 5:00 PM.***