

Smart Start Program RFP (GC 19-010) Questions and Answers

Finances

1. Question: Are there any ineligible expenses?

Answer: As stated in the RFP on page 22, out of state travel is not an allowable expense. As stated on page 35, funding from this grant cannot supplant or duplicate positions/activities already funded through other sources. No more than twenty percent (20%) of the funds may be used for purchase of Equipment and Supplies and Materials. The combined budget request of both categories must not exceed 20% of total requested award. No more than ten percent (10%) of the funds may be used for program administration, not including indirect costs. No more than five percent (5%) of the funds may be used for evaluation. If the submitted budget exceeds these limits, the amount(s) in excess of these limits will be removed from the budget submission.

2. Question: Can we include food in the budget, if it would be given to staff during PD?

Answer: Applicants should ensure that the proposed expenses are appropriate, reasonable and necessary for the project scope/goals, and are supplemental and do not duplicate services currently provided.

3. Question: We see the line on the bottom of page 35 – that lead applicants in consortiums can't act solely as a flow-through for grant funds. If the lead applicant uses some funding for supplies or minimal coordination costs (below the 10% max for administrative costs), is that enough to satisfy that requirement?

Answer: As stated in the Memorandum of Understanding template on page 50, the lead applicant will not act solely as a flow-through for grant funds to pass to other recipients and will be responsible for the performance of any services provided by the consortium members, any partners, consultants, or other organizations, and coordinate participation. This example is allowable and not just a flow-through for grant funds.

4. Question: No professional salaries are included in Attachment III budget narrative template—can teachers be paid stipends for participation in professional development?

Answer: Code 15 Professional Salaries was inadvertently left off the budget narrative template and has been added back. That mistake has been corrected. Professional Salaries are an allowable expense; this includes teachers' stipends for participating in professional development.

5. Question: In the Application, is there any significance to the fact that the budget narrative template begins with SED Code 16? See Page 51.

Answer: Code 15 Professional Salaries was inadvertently left off the budget narrative. This has been corrected.

6. Question: Are stipends for teacher participation an allowable expense?

Answer: Yes, teachers can be paid stipends for participating in professional development.

7. Question: Can we use grant funds to pay for staff or teacher stipends or salaries for time they spend in training outside the regular workday?

Answer: Yes, applicants can use grant funds to pay for staff stipends or salaries for time they spend in training outside the regular workday.

8. Question: May the teachers receive a stipend for PD outside of school hours?

Answer: Yes, teachers can be paid stipends for participating in professional development.

9. Question: Can funds be used to pay teachers per session for training on Saturdays and after school hours?

Answer: Yes, applicants can use grant funds to pay for staff stipends or salaries for time they spend in training outside the regular workday.

10. Question: May the teachers be paid for curriculum writing outside of school hours?

Answer: Yes, teachers may be paid for curriculum writing conducted outside of school hours.

11. Question: Is sub replacement for the school district an allowable expense (funding allocated for the school to hire subs when teachers are participating in Smart Start professional development)?

Answer: Yes, substitute replacement for the school district is an allowable expense.

12. Question: Are substitute teacher costs an allowable use of Smart Start Program grant funds?

Answer: Yes, substitute teacher costs are an allowable use of Smart Start Program grant funds.

13. Question: May the districts be paid for substitute teachers?

Answer: Yes, districts may be paid for substitute teachers.

14. Question: If BOCES leads a district consortium and uses grant funds to pay a portion of a qualified staff member to coordinate the grant program, would these costs be counted as administrative costs that are subject to the 10% cap?

Answer: The answer to this question is dependent on what is meant by "coordination." If the activities fall within an "administration" scope, the salary of the individual would be subject to the 10% cap. As indicated on p.17, BOCES may conduct program administration on behalf of districts by, for example, arranging and hosting professional development, managing budgets/payments, communicating information to districts, managing project website, conducting participant surveys, and drafting and submitting reports. However, if the individual is instead serving in a project management role, the individual's salary would not be subject to the 10% cap. Project management is defined by the Project Management Institute as "...the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet the project requirements." Project managers are performing a leadership rather than administrative role, and are expected to plan in detail, provide ways to enable the vision, and have the overall responsibility for completing deliverables on time and within budget. The activities of the Project Manager should be clearly described in the budget narrative. Applicants should ensure that the proposed expenses for project management are appropriate, reasonable, and necessary for the project scope/goals. Please note that BOCES staff members cannot be involved in the creation or delivery of professional development or support activities.

15. Question: Is there a maximum award for NYC?

Answer: The largest grant that any NYC CSD can apply for is the Large-Scale grant (\$500,000), either individually or as part of a consortium. As stated in the Funding and Awards section of the RFP (pp. 19-20), the total combined award amounts for all NYC CSDs cannot exceed \$2.4M, or 40% of the \$6M.

16. Question: If the PDSP provides services at no cost, can the grant funds be utilized to pay teacher/administrator participants for work/time outside of their traditional work day?

Answer: Grant funds can be utilized to pay teacher/administrator participants for work/time outside of their traditional workday. There is no need to require PDSP's to provide services at no cost in order to utilize grant funds in this manner.

17. Question: May a charge be included for a Learning Management System and support for teacher collaboration and resource access?

Answer: Yes, Learning Management System costs may be funded under the category of Supplies and Materials as long as it is utilized for grant participants and grant

purposes. Technical support for setting up access and troubleshooting, if provided by a BOCES or district, may be included in administrative costs. Support for teacher collaboration and resource access may be provided as part of grant-funded activity as long as the support is provided by the non-profit or IHE partner.

18. Question: May BOCES be paid for Model Schools days for integration support in the district?

Answer: As stated in the Partnership Requirement section (pp. 9-10), professional development and support must be provided by qualified non-profit organizations or institutions of higher education. For the purposes of this grant, BOCES, NYS Teacher Centers, and school districts do not qualify as non-profit organizations.

19. Question: May a charge for a BOCES science be included?

Answer: As stated in the Partnership Requirement section (pp. 9-10), professional development and support must be provided by qualified non-profit organizations or institutions of higher education. For the purposes of this grant, BOCES, NYS Teacher Centers, and school districts do not qualify as non-profit organizations. The purchase of Science Kits that relate directly to computer science, engineering or educational technology would be allowed. Professional Development provided by BOCES related to the science kits would not. Reminder: Districts cannot get aid reimbursement on items purchased through grant funds.

20. Question: Can funds be used to purchase an online professional development platform?

Answer: This is allowable as long as the online professional development platform is utilized for participant activities related to the Smart Start grant program. Funding from this grant, however, cannot supplant or duplicate positions/activities already funded through other sources. See page 35 of the RFP.

21. Question: Are costs associated with the creation and maintenance of the required Smart Start web page considered program or administrative costs?

Answer: Applicants will determine the budget category for costs associated with the creation and maintenance of the required Smart Start web page based on the role of the individual or group designated this responsibility. If the Smart Start Web page is maintained by the applicant's staff, and that staff member does not perform any grant management or administrative functions, their salary cost can be listed under Professional Salaries (Code 15) and not counted toward the cap on administrative expenditures. If that same person also performs administrative tasks, it is suggested that the applicant create two separate budget items to differentiate the costs allocated to administration.

22. Question: Does the 10% maximum for administrative costs include benefits or just the salaries? Given the number of participants and scope of the work, 10% will not be sufficient to cover all our costs for project administration, especially if maintenance of the website is considered an administrative cost.

Answer: Administrative costs include the salary or salaries of the person or persons involved in grant management for the applicant. Benefits are not included in the 10% calculation.

23. Question: What support will be provided to institutions of higher education to provide professional development? Is it expected that part of the budget would be allocated for this purpose to partnering campuses?

Answer: Institutions of Higher Education hired to provide professional services will be paid under budget code 40, Purchased Services. It is at the discretion of the applicant to choose what percentage of their proposed budget will be spent on professional development and support services.

24. Question: We currently run a blended PD program through our BOCES' learning management system (LMS). We would like to utilize this system to house and deliver the PD provided by the targeted higher ed partner as teachers: may then directly access to provide turn-key training and may utilize resources with students which also provides data. We are part of a state-wide LMS domain system; thus what we create could be shared with teachers around the state already using the LMS in addition to uploading to the NYSED provided site. Question: May the teacher licensing for use of the LMS be included as part of the grant?

Answer: Licensing for use of the LMS by teachers directly participating in the grant may be funded as part of the grant as long as the LMS is utilized for grant activities. It would not be allowable to utilize grant funding for teacher licensing to the LMS for teachers not participating directly in the professional development and support activities. Also, applicants must attest that grant funds will be used to supplement, not supplant or duplicate services currently provided.

25. Question: What happens to the equipment at the end of life span? We see the grant states that NYSED would own the equipment. Does that mean it will require NYSED tagging?

Answer: Districts should utilize locally established hardware inventory and maintenance procedures and policies to manage hardware purchased through Smart Start grant funds for use in grant-funded activities. Please review Section 3 of the Scope of Work: Sharing of Professional Development and Support Program for information on NYSED's ownership of materials, processes, and products produced for, modified for, or utilized in activities funded through Smart Start Grant funds.

Format

26. Question: We see on page 43 of the RFP it states that narratives must be at a minimum single-spaced; are we correct in understanding is it therefore okay if we double-space the entire application?

Answer: The instruction to single space at a minimum means that applicants are not allowed to use spacing that goes below single spacing. There is no prohibition on double-spacing.

27. Question: We see applicants are required to email an electronic copy of the application in Word format. What about the FS-10 – can that be in Excel? And what if attachments from the trainer (like resumes) are in PDF format – is that fine?

Answer: The FS-10 can be submitted as an Excel document. Resumes and materials from professional development and support partners can be submitted as .pdfs. The M/WBE unit can accept signed PDF copies of any M/WBE documents. Signed M/WBE PDF documents may be submitted as a separate attachment.

28. Question: In regard to the email submission with a Word attachment. Word often reformats Word documents differently in different versions of Word. That is a document in Word 2019 (version 16.0) may be 20 pages, however when opened in Word 2013 (version 15.0) could be 21 pages. It also could change some fonts. If the exchanged is made between a Mac and PC or with Word versions before 2013 (version 15.0) the reformatting is almost inevitable. This is why documents are usually converted to PDF's before submission. Will NYSED be accounting for this possible reformatting that is beyond the control of the submitter? Also, what version of Word does NYSED use?

Answer: NYSED will account for possible reformatting when reviewing proposals; however, if an applicant wishes to submit a proposal as a .pdf to ensure that proposals are presented to NYSED in the most readable format, NYSED will accept proposals in .pdf. For reference, NYSED uses Word 2016. NYSED will not accept proposals in other formats (such as .pages). In addition, the M/WBE unit can accept signed PDF copies of any M/WBE documents. Signed M/WBE PDF documents may be submitted as a separate attachment.

29. Question: Do you want the entire application, or just the narrative submitted electronically? Instead, can we send you a scanned version of the entire application as a PDF?

Answer: The entire application should be submitted electronically. NYSED prefers that applications be converted to .pdf rather than scanned (for readability purposes). The M/WBE unit can accept signed PDF copies of any M/WBE documents. Signed M/WBE PDF documents may be submitted as a separate attachment. The FS-10 may be

submitted in Excel. Electronically-submitted Word documents do not need to be signed as long as the original hard copies that are submitted have all required signatures. Electronically-submitted .pdf applications may be signed electronically but the mailed hard copies must also include an original signature.

30. Question: The RFP indicates that applicants must submit one electronic copy of the completed application as an attachment in Microsoft Word format. Is it allowable to convert all documents to PDF, including signed forms, and submit one combined PDF file instead of multiple Word documents? How would we send signed documents in word format?

Answer: One combined .pdf file is acceptable as long as all required documents are included and the mailed hard copies include original signatures.

31. Question: Is Section G- Budget Narrative, included as part of the 20-page narrative limit?

Answer: No, Section G- Budget Narrative, is not included as part of the 20-page narrative limit.

32. Question: If there are more than one PDSP, do we complete Section F twice?

Answer: If an applicant wishes to partner with more than one PDSP, the applicant is responsible for completing Section F for all chosen PDSPs. This includes all sub-sections of Section F. Please note that in such a case, the Applicant's score for Section F will be the lowest of the scores for the included "Section Fs," not the average. For example, an Applicant decides to partner with two PDSPs; the score of the first Section F is 30/45 and the score of the second Section F is 42/45. For this Applicant, the final score for Section F will be 30/45 (the lowest of the two scores).

33. Question: If there are two PDSP providers, do we submit 6 letters of reference?

Answer: Yes, if there are two PDSP providers, the applicant is required to submit three letters of reference per PDSP, for a total of 6.

34. Question: If a district is planning on using more than one PDSP, and therefore include multiple Section F's, does this have to be accommodated within the 20-page limit for the narrative?

Answer: The Proposal Narratives page limit does not include the Overview (Section A), any Works Cited pages, Budget Category and Narrative forms, the FS-10 budget, resumes or artifacts from Professional Development and Support Providers, or any other forms. Letters of Reference would not be included in the 20-page limit. (See page 35 of the RFP.)

MWBE

35. Question: Do we get bonus if we find a qualified trainer that is an M/WBE?

Answer: No. M/WBE utilization is not factored into the application rating process. All awardees must comply with M/WBE requirements. As stated in the Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) Participation Goals section (p. 24), not-for-profit agencies are not eligible for M/WBE certification. In addition, not-for-profit Institutions of Higher Education are not eligible for M/WBE certification.

36. Question: How are the non-profit or IHE partners counted toward the MWBE calculation?

Answer: As stated in the Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) Participation Goals section (p. 24), M/WBE participation goal is 30% of the total discretionary non-personal service budget excluding the funds budgeted for direct professional development and support services. This is also evident in the M/WBE Goal Calculation Worksheet (p. 54).

37. Question: If we contract with a non-profit PDSP is that cost subject to MWBE?

Answer: As stated in the Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) Participation Goals section (p. 24), M/WBE participation goal is 30% of the total discretionary non-personal service budget excluding the funds budgeted for direct professional development and support services. This is also evident in the M/WBE Goal Calculation Worksheet (p. 54).

38. Question: Is the non-profit organization involved in the grant allowed to sub-contract for a M/WBE for PD and if so, would this count towards the 30%?

Answer: Only non-profit organizations or Institutions of Higher Education may provide professional development for the Smart Start grant program. Non-profit organizations and Institutions of Higher Education cannot be certified as M/WBE providers, so therefore this option is not available.

39. Question: In reviewing the application guidance, on pages 9 and 11 of the RFP it states that professional development must be provided by a non-profit organization or institution of higher education; however, on page 31 and 24 (M/WBE section) it states that services can be provided by professional development support providers, in general. Does the PDSP have to make a nonprofit or can the PDSP be a for profit CTLE provider meeting the 30% M/WBE requirement?

Answer: The PDSP must be a non-profit organization or non-profit Institution of Higher Education. These institutions cannot be certified as an M/WBE provider.

40. Question: Does the MWBE requirement apply to non-profit or IHE partner organizations?

*Answer: As stated in the **Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) Participation Goals** section (p. 24), M/WBE participation goal is 30% of the total discretionary non-personal service budget excluding the funds budgeted for direct professional development and support services. This is also evident in the M/WBE Goal Calculation Worksheet (p. 54).*

41. Question: Is there a significant amount of non-profit MWBE CTLE certified organizations that provide professional development in CS, engineering and ed tech in NYS?

*Answer: As stated in the **Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) Participation Goals** section (p. 24), not-for-profit agencies are not eligible for M/WBE certification. In addition, not-for-profit Institutions of Higher Education are not eligible for M/WBE certification.*

42. Question: Can an M/WBE provider be used to provide the professional development?

*Answer: The PDSP must be a non-profit organization or non-profit Institution of Higher Education. As stated in the **Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) Participation Goals** section (p. 24), not-for-profit agencies are not eligible for M/WBE certification. In addition, not-for-profit Institutions of Higher Education are not eligible for M/WBE certification.*

43. Question: As a New York, born and bred, woman, I would love to somehow also be listed as a MWBE but how can a non-profit charity also qualify as a M/WBE?

*Answer: As stated in the **Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) Participation Goals** section (p. 24), not-for-profit agencies are not eligible for M/WBE certification.*

44. Question: Can the evaluator count toward the M/WBE requirement?

Answer: As long as the organization is M/WBE certified, evaluation services can count toward the M/WBE requirement.

Participation

45. Question: Can a Big Four School District with less than 8,000 Students apply by themselves?

Answer: The Big Four School Districts are Yonkers, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo. All have an enrollment of more than 8,000 students. Rest-of-State Districts with less than 8,000 students must apply as part of a consortium.

46. Question: Is it okay if the participating districts are not geographically contiguous? We are thinking of using distance learning to provide the same PD to teachers in different regions; is that allowed?

Answer: Districts that form a consortium do not need to be geographically close.

47. Question: Is it okay if our district student enrollment drops below 8,000 during the grant period? In that case, will you rescind a portion of our award?

Answer: The enrollment component of the eligibility criteria is only based on the 2017-18 PK-12 total district enrollment.

48. Question: Are independent schools eligible for these funds in the SmartStart grants?

*Answer: As stated in the **Eligible Applicants** section (p. 1) religious and independent schools are not eligible to apply for the grant. However, as stated in the **Scope of Work** (p. 11), teachers employed by religious and independent schools may be invited to participate in professional development activities at the discretion of the grant recipient.*

49. Question: Do all schools in the consortium need to be represented in each cohort of trainees?

Answer: No, all schools in the consortium do not need to be represented in each cohort of trainees.

50. Question: Do certified Teaching Assistants count as Teachers for the purposes of this grant?

Answer: Yes, certified teaching assistants count as teachers for the purposes of this grant.

51. Question: Can Teaching Assistants (TAs) be included in the group of 50 teachers to receive professional development through the focused Smart Start Grant?

Answer: All certified educators may receive professional development through the focused Smart Start Grant.

52. Question: If BOCES is leading a consortium of districts, can we include the number of BOCES teachers participating in training in our counts?

Answer: If a BOCES is serving as a consortium lead, the teachers employed by that BOCES may participate in the professional development and support activities and be counted towards the required minimum number of participants. Please note that this grant is focused on K-8 teachers.

53. Question: "Public school districts and consortia of districts or district(s) and BOCES, Charter Schools, Religious and Independent Schools, Institutions of Higher Education, and 503(c) Corporations are not eligible to apply." - Clarifying this statement in review of the grant, this is made because there must be a consortium not an individual district, correct?

Answer: As stated in the Program Scale section (p. 19), individual districts can apply individually for either a Focused or Large Scale grant as long as the district meets all of the qualifications for the program that they are applying for.

54. Question: On page 19 of the RFP, one of the requirements for a "Focused" grant reads: The number of students that would potentially be impacted would need to equal or exceed 8,000. Does this mean 8,000 K-8 students in year one who are currently enrolled in the district?

Answer: As stated in the Program Scale section (p. 19), the number of students potentially impacted will equal the total PK-12 district enrollment from the 2017-18 school year.

55. Question: Would it mean 8,000 K-8 students impacted over the five-year life of the grant?

Answer: As stated in the Program Scale section (p. 19), the number of students potentially impacted will equal the total PK-12 district enrollment from the 2017-18 school year.

56. Question: Can you provide more specific guidance on meeting that requirement of the "Focused" grant?

Answer: As stated in the RFP on page 19, the number of teachers that will receive high-quality, job-embedded professional development and support must equal or exceed 50 unique individuals for each year of the grant (such as for the cohort model) or a total of 250 unique individuals over 5 years (such as for the train-the-trainer model). The primary difference between a "Focused" and "Large Scale" program is the size of the district(s) involved, the number of teachers trained, and the number of students potentially impacted.

57. Question: As you know, New York City has Community School District Superintendents who report to regional Executive Superintendents. Can a lead applicant be either a

Community School District Superintendent or and Executive Superintendent?

Answer: If an Executive Superintendent wishes to apply on behalf of the CSDs within his or her region, he or she may sign the grant application as the fiscal lead of an individual CSD grant or consortium of CSDs within his or her region. As this grant is targeted to grades K-8, New York City High Schools are not eligible to participate. District 75 may apply individually or as part of a consortium.

58. Question: If we submit an application that spans multiple community school districts that report to one Executive Superintendent, do we need an MOU between the community superintendents?

Answer: As stated in the RFP on pages 1-3, NYC Community School Districts may apply as individual School Districts or as a Consortium of Community School Districts. If an Executive Superintendent wishes to apply on behalf of the CSDs within his or her region, he or she may sign the grant application as either the fiscal lead of an individual CSD grant or consortium of CSDs. Whether the lead applicant is the Executive Superintendent or a lead CSD, the CSD Superintendents must sign an MOU.

59. Question: What is the total # of students you need to have in a consortium to qualify for the grant? Is it 8,000 students minimum? For example, I have 5 districts who would like to form a consortium and apply for the grant, but their total student # is around 6,000 students.

Answer: Consortia must be able to meet the expectations for, at minimum, a Focused grant award. See Program Scale section for more information. The total enrollment of all participating districts must equal or exceed 8,000 students P-12. (See page 2 of the RFP)

60. Question: If BOCES is leading a consortium of districts, can we include the number of BOCES students in our counts? If so, does the state provide this data or do we need to get it directly from BOCES?

Answer: No, BOCES student enrollment may not be used in student counts.

61. Question: Are low-income or economically disadvantaged students considered traditionally under-represented groups for the purposes of this grant opportunity?

Answer: As stated in the RFP on page 11, " Programs should incorporate strategies for increasing participation in computer science, engineering, and/or educational technology, by one or more traditionally under-represented groups, such as female students, students with differing abilities (students with disabilities), English language learners/Multi-lingual learners (ELL/MLLs), and/or black, Hispanic, and Native American students." The use of the words "such as" means that other groups may

also be considered as traditionally under-represented for the purposes of this grant, including economically disadvantaged students.

62. Question: Are Regional Economic Development Councils and PDSPs that will be included in a proposed program required to sign the MOU? Or are districts and BOCES the only entities that are required to sign the MOU?

Answer: An MOU between the lead applicant and each consortium member must be completed. See pages 27 and 45 of the RFP. The Regional Economic Development Council and PDSP's are not considered a lead applicant nor a consortium member.

63. Question: For a grant applicant to be considered "large scale" or "focused", do the number of schools and students have to be unique every year? For example, in year 1, all K-8 students in a school district will get the lessons and 18,000 students will receive lessons in all 20 schools and 500 teachers giving lessons. In year 2-5, the same students in the same schools but a different group of teachers will be giving lessons.

Answer: For the purposes of this grant, the enrollment criteria is based on the 2017-18 PK-12 enrollment of each district.

64. Question: When 12 schools are required for a "focused" grant, is that 12 schools are cumulative over the five years? Or 12 schools every year?

Answers: As stated on page 19 of the RFP, the number of schools represented must equal or exceed twelve (12) total over five (5) years. Therefore, the requirement to work with twelve schools is cumulative over the five-year grant period.

65. Question: Can BOCES work with non-component districts?

Answer: Yes, BOCES can work with non-component districts.

66. Question: Are preK teachers allowed to participate?

*Answer: No. As stated in the **Purpose of the Grant** (p. 1), the grant is designed to develop, implement, and share innovative programs that provide professional development and support to increase expertise in computer science, engineering, and/or educational technology among teachers in grades K-8.*

67. Question: Is Pre-K included in this grant?

Answer: As stated in the Purpose of the Grant (p. 1), the grant is designed to develop, implement, and share innovative programs that provide professional development and support to increase expertise in computer science, engineering, and/or educational technology among teachers in grades K-8.

68. Question: If we are a smaller school does that mean we have no chance of getting a grant?

Answer: Smaller schools may apply as part of a consortium for either a Focused or Large-Scale grant, based on the total PK-12 enrollment of all districts.

69. Question: What is the NRC code for district 75? It's not listed.

Answer: All New York City CSDs are considered High Needs.

70. Question: What is the role of the regional economic partnership?

*Answer: As stated in the **Partnership Requirement** section (p. 9), applicants must describe how they will partner with their respective regional economic development council to tailor the program to regional business or future employer needs.*

71. Question: Our BOCES would like to submit a grant application, but our BOCES is made up of 8 component districts. We exceed the 8,000 students and 250 teachers, but we do not comprise of 12 districts. Are we eligible to apply? Will points be reduced because of not meeting the 12 districts?

Answer: Applicants applying for a focused grant must include representation from at least 12 schools, not necessarily 12 districts.

Professional Development – PDSP

72. Question: Are local or regional teacher centers okay to use (if they appear on the CTLE list)?

*Answer: As stated in the **Partnership Requirement** section (p. 9), professional development must be provided by either qualified non-profit organizations or institutions of higher education. BOCES, NYS Teacher Centers, and school districts do not qualify as non-profit organizations.*

73. Question: Last fall you released RFQ #19-028 that was supposed to generate a "List of Approved Providers of Professional Development and Support Services for the Smart Start Grant Program". I cannot find that list. -It directs me to CTLE list of providers. Are these two lists the same? Is there a list of providers that resulted from the SmartStart-specific Request for Qualifications, and if there is, where can potential applicants find it?

Answer: NYSED exercised its right to cancel the RFQ. As such, there is no list for providers other than the list of CTLE providers.

74. Question: Will a list of Smart Start-specific providers of Professional Development and Support Providers (PDSPs) that was going to be generated from the request for

providers be provided for Smart Start applicants? The only list referenced in the Smart Start RFQ is a list of CTLE providers, many of which are unable to serve as PDSPs (e.g., BOCES Teacher Centers, School Districts, etc.) or are not qualified to serve as Smart Start PDSPs (e.g. Dance Academy)?

Answer: NYSED exercised its right to cancel the RFQ. As such, there is no list for providers other than the list of CTLE providers. As stated in the Scope of work section (p. 11), non-profit organizations and/or institutions of higher education that are selected by the applicant to serve as PDSPs should be or have applied to be NYSED-approved CTLE sponsors.

75. Question: Why was the RFQ for PDSPs discontinued?

Answer: NYSED exercised its right to cancel the RFQ.

76. Question: Last year, there was an RFP for Smart Start Grant Qualifications of Professional Development and Support Services Providers. Where is the list of providers that were approved from this RFP?

Answer: NYSED exercised its right to cancel the RFQ. As such, there is no list for providers other than the list of CTLE providers.

77. Question: Is there any flexibility in the requirement for the professional letters of reference? For example, can we submit three letters from different organizations, but that have worked with the trainer over seven years, instead of five?

Answer: As stated on page 32 of the RFP, letters should be from customers for whom the PDSP has successfully provided goods and services comparable, in scale and scope, to the proposed deliverables, in NYS school/district or similar setting, all within the past five (5) years. Any deviation from the five-year window must be thoroughly justified. Applicants should include a written explanation with any reference letter not meeting the specified parameters. Not meeting the specified parameters may result in points deduction.

78. Question: Will letters from customers from seven years ago receive any points?

Answer: As stated on page 32 of the RFP, letters should be from customers for whom the PDSP has successfully provided goods and services comparable, in scale and scope, to the proposed deliverables, in NYS school/district or similar setting, all within the past five (5) years. Any deviation from the five-year window must be thoroughly justified. Applicants should include a written explanation with any reference letter not meeting the specified parameters. Not meeting the specified parameters may result in points deduction.

79. Question: Can one of the professional letters of reference for the PDSP be from the applying district (that has worked with that PDSP in the past)? Or does it have to be from agencies not part of the application?

*Answer: As stated in the **Proposal Narrative** section (p. 34), the Applicant district or BOCES (and any consortia member districts, if applicable) cannot serve as references.*

80. Question: If we plan to partner with 2 PDSP organizations, should we submit 3 letters of reference for each organization or 3 letters of recommendation in total across all the partners?

Answer: The grant requires 3 letters of reference for each organization submitted as a PDSP partner.

81. Question: Can a district or BOCES who is applying provide a letter of reference for a PDSP on a different application?

Answer: As stated on page 34 of the RFP, "Letters should be from customers for whom the PDSP has successfully provided goods and services comparable, in scale and scope, to the proposed Deliverables, in NYS school/district or similar setting, all within the past five (5) years. The Applicant district or BOCES (and any consortia member districts, if applicable) cannot serve as references." Therefore, it is acceptable for a district or BOCES to provide a reference for a PDSP that will be working with a different consortium.

82. Question: Is 5 years mandatory experience for the PDSD?

Answer: There is no requirement for five years of mandatory experience for the PDSP. The requirement is that letters of reference are based upon services provided during the past five years.

83. Question: I am also curious if New York organizations and/or organizations partnered with SUNY schools will receive any sort of preferential review?

Answer: No, there will not be any preference for New York organizations or organizations partnered with SUNY.

84. Question: If we do not see local colleges on the partnerships list, how do we get them approved?

Answer: On page 9 of the Smart Start RFP it states: "Non-profit partners and/or institutions of higher education must be (or must have applied to be by the deadline of this RFP). Therefore, local colleges not appearing on the list of NYSED-approved CTLE sponsors must apply to be CTLE sponsors by the deadline of the RFP. Information about applying can be found at:

<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/resteachers/registrationguidance.html>

85. Question: If a PDSP is an IACET Accredited Provider, but is not on the CTLE Sponsor List, can we still use them? Or are they required to be on the NYS CTLE list?
<https://www.iacet.org/standards/ansi-iacet-2018-1-standard-for-continuing-education-and-training/>

Answer: Potential PDSPs can apply to be NYSED-approved CTLE sponsor. See the following link for more information:

<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/reteachers/registrationctlehome.html>

86. Question: Page 10 – letter d at the top – If a partnership must be discontinued for factors outside the control of the applicant, can the applicant select another PDSP instead of discontinuing participation in the grant?

*Answer: As stated in the **Partnership Requirement** section (p. 10), the grantees may, at the sole discretion of NYSED, have their remaining project funding cancelled and their participation in the program discontinued in the event that the original PDSP is unable to participate or continue in the grant. Factors outside of the control of the applicant, while unfortunate, are not cause enough to warrant continuation of grant funding with an alternate PDSP. As a significant portion of the application is based on the qualifications of the PDSP, selection of a qualified, reliable, and capable PDSP is critical.*

87. Question: Is there any opportunity to for BOCES to provide professional learning services, or for the grant to shift over time to include BOCES as PL providers?

Answer: Professional development and support must be provided by qualified non-profit organizations or institutions of higher education. Grant applications should include information on the organization(s) that have agreed to provide professional development and support if the grant application is successful. Please note:

a. Non-profit partners and/or institutions of higher education must be (or must have applied to be by the deadline of this RFP) NYSED-approved Continuing Teacher and Leader Education (CTLE) sponsors.

b. For the purposes of this grant, BOCES, NYS Teacher Centers, and school districts do not qualify as non-profit organizations.

88. Question: Do institutes of higher education need to be public/non-profit? Or can they be private/for profit? Are there any restrictions on what types of institutes of higher education you can partner with?

Answer: Institutes of Higher Education must be non-profit and can either be public or private. The only restriction is that they cannot be for-profit institutions.

89. Question: Who is eligible to be a PDSP?

*Answer: As stated in the **Partnership Requirement** section (pp. 9-10), professional development and support must be provided by qualified non-profit organizations or institutions of higher education. For the purposes of this grant, BOCES, NYS Teacher Centers, and school districts do not qualify as non-profit organizations.*

90. Question: Does the nonprofit need to be the major provider of the Prof Dev or can the M/WBE be the major PDSP?

Answer: The nonprofit organization and/or institution of higher education must be the only provider(s) of professional development.

91. Question: As a follow up, is it possible for a BOCES to be both the Consortium Lead and the primary PD providers (PDSPs)?

*Answer: As stated in the **Partnership Requirement** section (pp. 9-10), professional development and support must be provided by qualified non-profit organizations or institutions of higher education. For the purposes of this grant, BOCES, NYS Teacher Centers, and school districts do not qualify as non-profit organizations and cannot be the PDSP.*

92. Question: Can a non-profit organization sub-contract the professional development?

Answer: The non-profit organization may not sub-contract the professional development.

93. Question: Is it preferred that one partner PD provider be selected per focus area if multiple areas will be incorporated into the plan?

Answer: There is no preference that one partner PD Provider be selected per focus area if multiple areas will be incorporated into the plan.

94. Question: Our component districts have used an organization that is a consortium of businesses to provide "content" to a dozen Math-Science-Partnerships our component districts have implemented. This has been very successful. This partner organization did apply to the Smart Start Request for Providers. However, this RFP was cancelled. We still wish to partner with them for our proposed Smart Start project. Can we still use them in a supporting role in providing content to our teachers?

Answer: This is allowable as long as the partner being referenced is a non-profit organization or Institution of Higher Education (IHE).

95. Question: Is NYS Model Schools a qualified PD provider?

Answer: Model Schools is part of BOCES, and BOCES are not eligible to be providers of professional development for the Smart Start grant program.

96. Question: Could another cooperative educational agency from another state (i.e. PA IUs) be a PD service provider?

Answer: Only non-profit organizations or institutions of higher learning can provide professional development for the Smart Start grant program.

97. Question: Can coaching/ongoing support for the teachers in a cohort be supported by the BOCES model schools service so that the teachers receive ongoing support with implementation?

Answer: Only non-profit organizations or institutions of higher learning can provide professional development and support services for the Smart Start grant program. For the purposes of this grant, BOCES, NYS Teacher Centers, and school districts do not qualify as non-profit organizations.

Professional Development – Program

98. Question: On page 12 of the RFP we see you don't prefer "sit-and-get" workshops; what format do you prefer? Can you give us some examples?

Answer: The preferred format can be gleaned from aligning professional development activities with the NYS Professional Development Standards found at: <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/pdf/pdstds.pdf>

99. Question: On page 28 of the RFP we see we need to include the PD Focus Area; what does "focus" mean – does that mean we only cover one of the three topics? Can we provide training on all three topics to our staff? Do you prefer we focus on one or two? Can we change the topics we focus on each year?

Answer: Yes, applicants can provide training on all three topics and/or change the topics focused on each year. This is at the discretion of the applicant. Applicants should include a description of their proposed program in the application narrative.

100. Question: Can the PD content address just one focus area, or must it address all three (computer science, engineering, and educational technology)?

Answer: The PD content can address one, two or all three focus areas, at the discretion of the applicant.

101. Question: For consortium applications – can some districts receive PD in one focus area (e.g. computer science) and other districts receive PD in another focus area (e.g. educational technology)? Or must all consortium members receive PD in the same focus area?

Answer: Yes, some districts may receive PD in one focus area and other districts may receive PD in another focus area.

102. Question: Is there any disadvantage to identifying multiple focuses if/when the Regional Economic Development Council articulates a related business or future employment need for each area?

Answer: No. Applications will be scored on the quality of the proposal.

103. Question: Is coding considered part of educational technology?

Answer: Coding is considered part of Computer Science.

104. Question: Is it okay if the first year or two of the grant period is spent developing the training, and then the training is delivered to teachers in the final years of the grant?

Answer: As stated in the RFP, NYSED will accept other innovative models [than the ones listed] as long as they can demonstrate how a large number of teachers will be trained over the course of the program, with no teacher receiving more than one year of professional development. For a focused grant, for instance, the number of teachers that will receive high-quality, job-embedded professional development and support must equal or exceed 50 unique individuals for each year of the grant or a total of 250 unique individuals over 5 years, the number of schools represented must equal or exceed twelve (12) total over five (5) years, and the number of students that would potentially be impacted would need to equal or exceed 8,000. In the scenario presented in the question, the applicant would need to describe how its proposed model would meet the grant requirements.

105. Question: We have a number of school districts that plan to participate in a consortium with BOCES. Since BOCES cannot serve as a PDSP, the consortium must seek out an eligible PDSP from the list of CTLE providers. If the consortium with BOCES uses grant funds to participate in PD and support from an eligible PDSP (higher ed., non-profit), can they also use grant funds to pay for BOCES staff (i.e., Instructional Support staff, STEM Curriculum Mentors, etc.) to provide additional training and professional development to teachers through the grant

Answer: As stated on page 9 of the RFP, professional development and support must be provided by qualified non-profit organizations or institutions of higher education. For the purposes of this grant, BOCES, NYS Teacher Centers, and school districts do not qualify as non-profit organizations. Therefore, grant funds cannot be used to pay for BOCES staff to provide additional training and professional development to teachers through the grant.

106. Question: Can BOCES teachers and mentors be trained to be trainers and then provide training to teachers at schools in the BOCES service area using grant funds?

Answer: As stated on page 9 of the RFP, professional development and support must be provided by qualified non-profit organizations or institutions of higher education. For the purposes of this grant, BOCES, NYS Teacher Centers, and school districts do not qualify as non-profit organizations. Therefore, grant funds cannot be used to pay for BOCES staff to provide additional training and professional development to teachers through the grant. BOCES teachers of students in grades K-8 may participate in professional development and may provide turnkey training within their individual schools in a train-the-trainer model.

107. Question: Can BOCES provide guidance for non-BOCES providers that is regionally specific and aligned to regional instructional goals?

Answer: As stated on page 9 of the RFP, professional development and support must be provided by qualified non-profit organizations or institutions of higher education. For the purposes of this grant, BOCES, NYS Teacher Centers, and school districts do not qualify as non-profit organizations. Therefore, grant funds cannot be used to pay for BOCES staff to provide additional training and professional development to teachers through the grant. As long as "guidance" is clearly defined and is clearly not training or professional development, it is allowed.

108. Question: We are considering a PD model where the PDSPs will work DOE staff, who will be considered "in-Kind" support and not part of the budget for the grant funds. Is that in-Kind support allowable and how, if at all, should it be reflected in the application or budget narrative?

Answer: Such "in kind" support is allowable, so long as grant funding is used to supplement and not supplant existing services or programs. Grant funds can only be used in the manner, and for allowable uses as, outlined in this RFP. Additional funding streams being utilized to enhance the grant-funded program are allowable, especially if the goal is to create a more sustainable model. Additional funding streams and efforts to sustain the professional development model can be explained in the application.

109. Question: If NYSED owns all materials, do districts and partners have free use of those materials in perpetuity?

Answer: NYSED owns all materials produced as a result of grant activities in perpetuity. As such, districts and partners have free use of those materials in perpetuity. See page 13 of the RFP for additional details.

110. Question: Are there any required deliverables of the PD?

Answer: Please see pages 11-16 of the RFP, beginning with section 2 of "Expectations of Professional Development and Support Providers" and ending with Section 3,

"Sharing Of Professional Development and Support Program" to determine the expected deliverables of the Professional Development.

111. Question: What is the expected minimum number for each Cohort?

Answer: On page 18 of the RFP, it states: It is expected that each Cohort will contain a relatively large number of teachers. If the applicant desires to limit the number of teachers per cohort, more than one cohort per year is allowed." Additional details regarding expected numbers for each Cohort can be found on page 19 of the RFP.

112. Question: Are there a number of specific hours of PD that each teacher needs to receive?

Answer: No, there is no number of specific hours of PD That each teacher needs to receive.

113. Question: Define "High Quality" in relation to PDSD and will that definition be relational to goal of program "CS/E/Tech"?

Answer: All applications will be judged based upon the rubric provided in the RFP.

114. Question: Will Smart Start grant funds support teacher professional development specifically in Math, which is a gateway to the fields of computer science/engineering/ed tech?

Answer: No. As stated in Purpose of Grant section (p. 1), the grant program is designed to develop, implement, and share innovative programs that provide professional development and support to increase expertise in computer science, engineering, and/or educational technology among teachers in grades K-8.

115. Question: Are selected non-profit providers able to sub-contract services provided to schools and districts to for-profit organizations?

Answer: Professional development and support services cannot be sub-contracted. These services must be provided by the identified non-profit organizations and Institutions of Higher Education. Sub-contracting other services will be allowed if there is a reasonable justification provided.

116. Question: Can applicants who are proposing to serve multiple school districts in a single consortium led by a BOCES use the cohort model for some of those districts and the train-the-trainer model for other districts in the consortium? In other words, can one applicant use a combination of both models for the delivery of professional development and support

Answer: NYSED will accept other innovative models as long as they can demonstrate how a large number of teachers will be trained over the course of the program, with

no teacher receiving more than one year of professional development. This could include a combination of both models.

117. Question: Can you give additional examples of the TtT model and related performance reporting? For example, must the 250 or 500 unique individuals all have CTEPD point of contact or do those trainers who return to their schools additionally count classroom teachers reached through turn-key training?

Answer: Using the Train the Trainer Model, performance reporting will include all classroom teachers who have participated in turn-key training conducted by the teachers who have been trained using this model.

118. Question: In the five-year total budget, can non-grant funds be used to provide PD to grades 9-12 teachers?

Answer: The purpose of this grant is to develop, implement, and share innovative programs that provide professional development and support to increase expertise in computer science, engineering, and/or educational technology among teachers in grades K-8. PD provided to grades 9-12 should not be a part of the applicant's proposal.

119. Question: Can the grant be used to build capacity for an existing non-grant funded STEM teacher training program?

Answer: The purpose of this grant is to develop, implement, and share innovative programs that provide professional development and support to increase expertise in computer science, engineering, and/or educational technology among teachers in grades K-8. In addition, funding from this grant cannot supplant or duplicate positions/activities already funded through other sources. Any proposed use of funds that is determined to be supplanting or duplicating activities funded through other sources will be removed from the budget.

120. Question: If a previously existing 9-12 STEM teacher training program uses grant funds to build a K-8 component, can the 9-12 component retain proprietary rights or must full access to such a curriculum and its artifacts also be made available for open sourcing as described in the RFP?

Answer: All curricula and artifacts created through Smart Start grant funds and/or utilized in Smart Start Grant Programs are the property of NYSED as described in the RFP. If any portions of a pre-existing 9-12 program are used for the K-8 program, those portions must be made available as described in the RFP. The 9-12 program may retain property rights for any portion that is not utilized in a program funded through Smart Start grant funds.

121. Question: Will curriculum and related materials already created for and by such previously developed programs be allowed the password protected provision described in the RFP if they so choose?

Answer: Yes, the materials from the previously developed program are allowed the password protected provision.

122. Question: For the purposes of the Smart Start RFP, can you please provide a definition of educational technology?

Answer: Educational Technology is the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning.

123. Question: If the PDSP contract can't begin until July 1 (project start date), and if existing, proprietary programs cannot be used, time will be needed in Year 1 to "craft a professional development and support program tailored to the unique and specific needs of the applicant's teachers, students, schools, and region (P. 33, Section F4: Description of the Partnership). This will reduce the time available for teacher training in Year 1 and is of particular concern if using the Train-the-Trainer model. Typically, you would want these teachers to have the most extended and rigorous experience, not one that is cut short. Is there any way that a planning year can be incorporated into the project timeline?

Answer: The expectation of the Smart Start grant program, as outlined on page 19, is that as large a number of teachers as possible shall be trained each year of the grant. Applicants must describe how they will train the required number of teachers over the course of the grant, based on their indicated scale (focused or large scale).

124. Question: On Pp. 9 and 11, it states that all PD and support must be provided by qualified non-profit organizations or institutions of higher education, yet on P. 18 it states that a train-the-trainer model can be used. Please clarify. Is it allowable for the PDSP to train turn-key trainers in Year 1, then for these district teachers to turn-key the training to other teachers in their schools in Years 2-5 without the support of the PDSP?

Answer: Yes, it is allowable for the PDSP to train turn-key trainers in Year 1, then for these district teachers to turn-key the training to other teachers in their schools in Years 2-5.

125. Question: If using the Train-the-Trainer Program Model, is there any way for the PDSP to continue to provide turn-key trainers who participated in PD in Year 1 with follow-up support in Year 2-5? One year of training does not seem sufficient for teachers with minimal or no knowledge of computer science or engineering to develop the required technical expertise to be turn-key trainers without continued, long-term support. The purpose would be to allow these teachers to continue to expand their

knowledge and pedagogical skills and be better trainers.

Answer: As outlined on page 11 of the RFP, "Programs must structure professional development and support into one-year cycles. Teachers, and if applicable, administrators, will receive training and support for one year only. The next year of the grant, and each subsequent year, a new set of teachers will receive training and support. Individual teachers will not receive professional development and support for more than one year through Smart Start Grant funds." In the event that a train-the-trainer model is used, teacher-trainers may receive support in their capacity as trainers but may not be "counted" in the number of teachers receiving support for that year. Applicants may not structure multi-year professional development programs.

126. Question: Do district participants all need to participate in every training, or can training be customized to meet the needs of a particular district? Such as one district having one type of software or equipment that the other districts do not have?

Answer: Training can be customized to meet the needs of a particular district as long as the professional development offered adheres to grant requirements.

127. Question: How can a train the trainer model be used for professional learning when the districts/BOCES are not allowed to serve as the PDSP through the grant?

Answer: The PDSP must be a non-profit organization or non-profit Institution of Higher Education. They will provide the initial training for employees who participate in the Train-the Trainer model. Once trained, these district employees will provide training to district staff going forward using the training model and materials provided by the PDSP.

128. Question: If trainers are trained in year 1 of the grant, can the training that they provide to their respective schools be funded through the grant? Could a BOCES trainer provide the follow-up training in respective districts?

Answer: Yes, the training provided by trainers who are trained using the train-the-trainer model can be funded by the grant. BOCES trainers cannot provide the follow-up training in respective districts, as the BOCES do not meet the grant criteria of being a non-profit organization or IHE. BOCES K-8 teachers and K-8 district teachers may train at their respective schools only. Other BOCES staff or District staff may not provide the training. There is no restriction on BOCES staff (such as Staff and Curriculum Development Coordinators) participating in PD, though they would not count towards the numbers of teachers who must be trained. Similarly, District or School administrators (such as Assistant Superintendents of Curriculum or Technology Integration Specialists, etc.) may attend PD, but do not count towards the required number of teachers.

129. Question: What artifacts must be made publicly available? If a PD provider is brought in for training, they may not want to make their training materials publicly available. How could this be handled?

Answer: Please see pages 13-16 for details about the artifacts that must be made publicly available. This is not an optional requirement. There is no exception for PD providers that refuse to make their training materials publicly available.

130. Question: Can districts submit a Smart Start grant application where the PD provider is a partnership between a non-profit and for-profit?

*Answer: As stated in the **Partnership Requirement** section (pp. 9-10), professional development and support must be provided by qualified non-profit organizations or institutions of higher education. Therefore, the PD provider cannot be a partnership between a non-profit and for-profit.*

Standards

131. Question: The NYS Computer Science standards have not been released or approved yet. Are there draft standards anywhere?

Answer: The draft NYS Computer Science standards were posted on October 15. They can be found at <http://www.nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction/computer-science-and-digital-fluency-review>

132. Question: Professional development on computer science and educational technology must be clearly aligned to the NYS K-12 Computer Science and Digital Literacy Learning Standards according to the RFP. How do we get access to those standards?

Answer: The draft NYS Computer Science standards were posted on October 15. They can be found at <http://www.nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction/computer-science-and-digital-fluency-review>

133. Question: Who monitors the provider adherence to the standards?

Answer: It is the grantees responsibility to monitor adherence to the standards and report to NYSED in an annual evaluation. Adherence to the standards will be evaluated when the proposal details are reviewed prior to receiving grant funding; when the grant-funded evaluator completes their annual evaluation; and when the program office reviews the artifacts provided at the end of each project year.

134. Question: Given that the NYS Computer Science and Digital Literacy Learning Standards have not been released yet, could consideration be given to extending the grant deadline to allow sufficient time for districts to carefully review the standards and to identify the PD partner who will best address their specific needs for

implementation of the standards? Developing and submitting this application before the standards are available seems premature.

Answer: The draft NYS Computer Science standards were posted on October 15. They can be found at <http://www.nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction/computer-science-and-digital-fluency-review>.

While it is anticipated that the draft standards will be revised in response to stakeholder feedback, the draft standards are sufficient for applicants and PDSPs to begin designing a program. No extensions will be given.

Submission

135. Question: Can we hand-deliver our applications to NYSED?

Answer: Yes, you can hand-deliver your application to NYSED. This does not negate the requirement to send an electronic version to smartstart@nysed.gov by the due date.

136. Question: If we are allowed to hand-deliver applications, what time will your offices close on the due date?

Answer: The office will accept hand-delivered applications brought to the Security desk at the Hawk Street entrance, no later than 4 p.m. on November 19.

137. Question: In the past when hand-delivering applications, we have been required to have a person's name for delivery purposes when we arrived. If we are allowed to hand-deliver applications, can you provide a name that we can use?

Answer: Applicants can ask for Mary Ann Valikonis or simply ask for the Office of Educational Design and Technology when hand-delivering applications.

138. Question: Does NYSED prefer that the EEO 100 be completed for the project or the organization?

Answer: As stated on the EEO Staffing Plan, grantees have the option to select "work force to be utilized on this contract" OR "applicant's total work force." The EEO Staffing Plan is to be completed for the applicant, not the PDSPs.

139. Question: Are the insurance documents required for submission?

Answer: Insurance documents are not required with the initial application.