RFP #: GC21-001: Questions & Answers
Learning Technology Grant 2021-2024

Note: An update to the RFP guidance related to awarding bonus points for Target Districts is contained in the response to question 13 on page 3 of this document.

Application Review and Scoring

1. Question: The grant overview indicates that bonus points are given for: “A District serving a high percentage of English Language Learners/Multilingual Learners (ELL/MLL) students, students with disabilities, or economically disadvantaged students.” Can you clarify what threshold determines a "High Percentage" for each of the identified categories?

   Answer: On page 17 of the RFP, it states that two bonus points will be provided for each of the three categories based upon the following: 5% or more of students classified as English Language Learners; 15% or more of students classified as students with disabilities; 50% or more of the students classified as economically disadvantaged.

Application Submission

2. Question: Page 38 of the RFP states that a copy of the completed application must be submitted via email in MS Word. However, the FS-10 is an Excel file. Is it okay to submit the FS-10 as an Excel file rather than a Word file?

   Answer: Yes, the FS-10 may be submitted in Excel.

3. Question: Page 38 of the RFP states that a copy of the completed application must be submitted via email in MS Word. However, that would mean that many of the forms (such as the MWBE paperwork) would be submitted electronically either without signatures or without original signatures. Is that okay?

   Answer: Forms submitted electronically can be submitted without signatures or a PDF scan of the signed document as long as the hard copies sent by mail have the original signatures where required.

4. Question: Is the Program Activities Chart included as part of the narrative page limit?

   Answer: Forms, including the Program Activities plan, are not included in the 25-page limit. (See page 37 of the RFP).
5. Question: Should the text within Attachment V be double-spaced?

   Answer: Double space between titles, headings, footnotes, quotations, references, and captions, as well as all text in charts, figures, and graphs, unless not possible due to the formatting of the template. (See page 37 of the RFP)

6. Question: For the Professional Development, Section E, can the information be provided in chart form?

   Answer: Yes, the information in Section E, Professional Development, can be provided in chart form, as long as all of the required components are included, and the font is large enough for the content to be readable.

7. Question: When emailing the completed application, should all the pieces be compiled into a single Microsoft Word file? Or should each section be attached as its own separate Microsoft Word file?

   Answer: All the components of the application should be submitted together in one document with the exception of the FS-10.


   Answer: It is acceptable to have the Religious or Independent school official sign Attachment III and scan the signed form, electronically sign using a digital signing software to insert a signature, or use a drawing tool to sign and subsequently return it to the applicant electronically for submission to NYSED.

9. Question: Is the Payee Information Form/Substitute W-9 required for school districts?

   Answer: For applicants who have previously received grant funds from NYSED, the payee information form is only required if information has changed.

10. Question: Can the chart on Attachment V be reformatted beyond changing the width of the columns?

     Answer: The chart may be reformatted, as long as it remains a chart and all the required information is present and readable.
Bonus Points

11. Question: Are bonus points cumulative? Can a district earn up to a maximum of 12 points?

   Answer: Yes, bonus points are cumulative. An applicant may qualify for up to 12 bonus points.

12. Question: Could you please identify the source that was used to designate rural districts for the purposes of this grant? We have districts that are typically designated as high needs rural districts that were not included on the list for this grant.

   Answer: Appendix D is based on Set Code 6 (Rural) from the United States Census data and is included in NYSED’s SEDREF database. To find a district’s set code, go to SEDREF’s public search site https://portal.nysed.gov/pls/sedrefpublic/SED.sed_inst_qry_vw$.startup

   Then search by name of institution. Click Find. Then click on County Info at the very bottom of the page. The County Info lists the set codes under Set Code Census Data.

13. Question: We are a Target District, but none of our schools have been identified. Do we still qualify for bonus points?

   Answer: As stated on page 17 of the RFP, to qualify for bonus points in this category, a participating district must contain one or more schools identified as a Comprehensive Support and Improvement or Targeted Support and Improvement School. The guidance should have stated: To qualify for bonus points in this category, a participating district must either be designated a Target district or must contain one or more schools identified as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) or Targeted Support and Improvement School. The school or district must appear in the Accountability Designations For 2019-2020 School Year as TSI, CSI, or Target. As such, your district will qualify for bonus points if it is identified as a Target District in the Accountability Designations document.

14. Question: If a district or school has a designation as a "potential" TSI or CSI and they are included in an application for funding, does the application still receive the preference bonus points for the application?

   Answer: As stated on page 17, One or more schools identified as a Comprehensive Support and Improvement, or Targeted Support and Improvement School will earn the applicant 4 bonus points. To qualify for the bonus points, the school or district must appear in the Accountability Designations For 2019-2020 School Year as TSI, CSI, or Target.
15. Question: Page 18 of the RFP mentions that not more than 5% of the funds may be used for administration. What types of activities fall under the category of administration?

*Answer: Program administration is funds for work done by the individual district or consortia lead to administer the grant program. The following activities would be included under administration: arranging and hosting professional development, managing budgets/payments, communicating information to participants, managing project website, conducting participant surveys, and drafting and submitting reports. This list is not exhaustive nor inclusive of all possible administrative duties related to this grant.*

16. Question: Do applicants need to include travel costs for any NYSED meetings in Years 1 and 2, or just the one in Year 3?

*Answer: No, travel expenses should only be included for year 3.*

17. Question: Can grant money be used as stipends for teachers who participate in a PD program in order to strengthen their tech literacy skills? For example, let’s say I develop a PD program for teachers to become Google Certified educators. Can I use this grant money as stipends for those teachers who participate?

*Answer: Yes, grant money can be used as stipends for teachers who participate in a PD program in order to strengthen their tech literacy skills.*

18. Question: Can students be provided with hourly pay or a stipend through the grant?

*Answer: Yes, students can be provided with hourly pay or a stipend through the grant if the payment is related to their participation in grant activities.*

19. Question: Can salaries for current full-time employees be supplemented with stipends for work connected to the goals of the grant?

*Answer: This would only be allowable if the stipend-paid grant work is conducted outside of the normal work hours of the employee in question. At no time is an employee allowed to be paid twice, using grant funds, for the same hours worked.*

20. Question: Can grant funds be expended on creating flexible learning spaces including furniture, hardware, software, etc.
Answer: This would only be allowable if all items considered part of the flexible learning spaces and paid for by grant funds are reserved for students and/or teachers officially participating in the grant activities.

21. Question: Is the budget summary and budget narrative the same document? As in, should we submit separate FS-10, budget summary and budget narrative documents?

Answer: The Budget narrative is attachment VI and must be completed and submitted as a separate document. It must contain all proposed expenditures for the three-year program period. See pages 48 and 49 of the RFP for details. The FS-10 is also a separate document, the last page of which is the budget summary. The FS-10 and budget summary should contain information about the proposed expenditures for the first year of the grant.

22. Question: If the budget summary document is a separate form, should it only cover year 1?

Answer: The budget summary is the last page of the FS-10 Budget document, and it covers year 1 only and is based upon the information in the rest of the FS-10 form.

23. Question: A first year budget must be submitted along with a three-year budget summary. Will the amounts for awards be the same for all 3 years, or will winning submissions get different amounts each year based on rising costs for training/equipment from year to year (as calculated in the three-year budget summary)?

Answer: As stated in the directions for completing the budget narrative on page 48 of the RFP, the budgets for years two and three cannot exceed the budget proposed for year 1.

24. Question: On page 18, "No more than five (5%) percent of the funds may be used for program administration, not including indirect costs." What activities/expenses are allowable under "program administration" and which should be included under "indirect costs". In addition, what is the formula for calculating indirect cost for year 1?

Answer: The following activities would be included under administration: arranging and hosting professional development, managing budgets/payments, communicating information to participants, managing project website, conducting participant surveys, and drafting and submitting reports. This list is not exhaustive nor inclusive of all possible administrative duties related to this grant.

Indirect costs are calculated based upon the formula shown on the FS-10 form as follows: The Modified Direct Cost Base (category 90) is the sum of all...
preceding subtotals (codes 15, 16, 40, 45, 46, and 80 and excludes the portion of each subcontract exceeding $25,000 and any flow through funds) The Modified Direct Cost Base is then multiplied by the Approved Restricted Indirect Cost Rate to obtain the indirect cost total.

25. Question: I am in the process of building a budget for our upcoming LTG grant submission in May. As a BOCES we will apply for the grant as a consortium with a number of school districts in our region. Our budget would include services being purchased from departments within our BOCES – would these be in the Purchased Services (Code 40) or BOCES Services (Code 49)?

Answer: Services being purchased from departments within your BOCES should be listed under BOCES Services (Code 49)

Elements of the Proposal

26. Question: Is it a requirement that the proposal provide information about the specific numbers of teachers, students and administrators to be served by the program?

Answer: Yes, providing the specific numbers of each target audience to be served, both per-year and overall, is a requirement. See footnote 4 on page 47 of the RFP.

27. Question: On page 11 of the RFP (section 4 – Professional Development), what is meant by “tools-based” workshops?

Answer: As stated on page 11, professional development may not be limited to (but may include, if necessary) “tools-based” workshops, but such workshops must be based on individual teacher or administrator needs as determined by a needs assessment. A tools-based workshop would be one where the content of the professional development is limited to learning how to use one or more specific educational technology tools such as a specific platform, software, hardware or application.

28. Question: On page 26 near the bottom (under the “Important Note” section), what does the acronym AUP stand for?

Answer: AUP stands for Acceptable Use Policy (see page 11 of the RFP).

29. Question: On page 26 near the bottom (under the “Important Note” section), there’s statement referencing “attendance at conferences” not being effective. Does this mean attendance at conferences with 50+ attendees? Or would attendance at a conference for smaller groups be acceptable as one of the professional development activities?
Answer: The guidance regarding conferences is intended to indicate that professional development provided with grant funds should be specifically targeted to the educational entities and individuals who are participating in the grant activities and should be based upon a thorough needs assessment. Conferences that are public events open to all do not lend themselves to the creation of program artifacts as required by the grant and are generally not targeted to the specifically-identified needs of the participants.

30. Question: Do we need to use an external evaluator, or may an organizationally separate accountability department within our school district conduct the evaluation?

Answer: The RFP does not specify who should serve as the program evaluator. It would be an applicant’s decision.

31. Question: Please confirm that the Program Activities Chart to be included in Section D.2 is Attachment V and that the reference to Attachment VI on P. 25 is a typographical error.

Answer: The Program Activities Chart to be included in Section D.2 is Attachment V, not Attachment VI. The reference to Attachment VI on page 25 is a typographical error.

32. Question: The link to the USNY Statewide Learning Technology Plan on P. 24 brings up a document dated 2010. Where can we access the State’s most recent Technology Plan?

Answer: The 2010 USNY Statewide Learning Technology Plan is the State’s most recent Technology Plan.

33. Question: Is Attachment IV, Other Participating Partners form, just for partners, or must this attachment be completed for all vendors/providers/consultants also?

Answer: An explanation of which entities are considered partners can be found on page 13 of the RFP titled Collaborative Activities. Vendors, providers, and consultants working with the grant applicant are not considered to be Participating Partners.

34. Question: Is Attachment V submitted as an attachment and not included in the narrative?
   b. Or, is the chart in Attachment V part of the narrative? If so, is Attachment V included in the page count total?

Answer: Forms, including the Program Activities plan (Attachment V) are not included in the 25-page limit (See p. 37 of the RFP, page limits and standards). It is submitted as an attachment.
35. Question: Can the format of Attachment V be modified as long as all of the categories are included?

   Answer: As stated on page 25 of the RFP, all applicants will complete Section D.2. in the form of a chart, not a narrative. Please see page 68, scoring rubric for Attachment V- D2, for additional details.

36. Question: Does entering the grant project at phase 1 mean that there is actually a period of time built into the project design for the consortia team to plan the project? Is there an advantage to entering applications at any particular phase?

   Answer: See pages 9 and 10 of the RFP for Phase 1 allowable activities. See page 12 for the expectations regarding the time frame for phase 1. The applicant determines whether or not they see an advantage to entering an application at any particular phase.

37. Question: On Pg. 8 under the "Program Goals", it states that the first program goal of the LTG is ..."creation of fully-developed programs" and then goes on to describe the features that the "fully developed program" should include. However, it is not clear what is intended by "fully developed programs" or what a program actually means? For example, is this a program of supplemental coursework for direct service/delivery to k-12 students? Is it referring to a program of professional development for educators? Is this a thread of curricula to adopt in every core content area that addresses the focus area? or something else....

   Answer: The program referenced here is whatever program the applicant designs and submits for consideration. It is up to the applicant to design a fully developed program based upon the parameters laid out in the balance of the RFP.

38. Question: On Pg. 8 under "Program Goals", item 2 states that "implementation of programs with intended audiences of students, teachers, or administrators." What is meant by a "program"?ie: is this a curricula, PD catalog of offerings, enrichment programs for students, etc.? Also, does this goal intend that a program would be developed for all of these populations or just a single 1 of an LEA's choosing?

   Answer: The program referenced here is whatever program the applicant designs and submits for consideration. It is up to the applicant to design a fully developed program based upon the parameters laid out in the balance of the RFP. The applicant may design a program for one or more of these intended audiences and is not required to offer programming for all three.
39. Question: On Pg. 8-9, item 3 states that "evidence-based evaluation of programs..." is expected. Is this an evaluation of the overall grant project, or is this ongoing evaluation of the individual programs developed during this project?

Answer: As outlined on page 8 of the RFP, it is expected that the grant recipient will conduct evidence-based evaluation of programs to determine program strengths and weaknesses, adjustments to be made, additional areas for development, and next steps, with the goal of increasing effectiveness, efficiency, scope, and scale. Evaluations are expected to be conducted at least annually.

40. Question: Can this grant apply to creating programs geared towards implementing the New York State K-12 Computer Science and Digital Fluency Learning Standards?

Answer: Yes, as stated on page 1 of the RFP, one of the purposes of this grant is to develop services and supports in schools that provide effective instruction aligned to the state’s standards. Additionally, see page 24 of the RFP, Alignment to Learning Technology Goals, where it states that activities should increase equitable access to high-quality digital resources and standards-based, technology-rich learning experiences.

Eligibility

41. Question: Can libraries apply for this grant as well?

Answer: As stated on page 1 of the RFP, the only entities that can apply for this grant are public school districts and consortia of districts or district(s) and BOCES. (Page 1 of RFP)

42. Question: Could you please clarify if a public school district may apply on its own (in consultation with private schools within its borders) or must the district apply with at least one other district or a BOCES?

Answer: Yes, a public school district may apply on its own in consultation with private schools within its borders.

43. Question: I was forwarded the 2021-2024 Learning Technology Grant Program application information by the Charter Center and asked to apply. However, my team noticed that it says that Charter Schools are not allowed to apply. Can you clarify this for me? Are we allowed to apply or was this forwarded to us in error?

Answer: No. As stated on Page 1 of the RFP, “Charter Schools are not eligible to apply.”
44. Question: NYC submissions must be made by community school districts. Are NYC high school districts eligible to apply and/or participate?

Answer: New York City proposals must be submitted by a Community School District (CSD), either as an individual CSD or as part of a consortium of two (2) or more CSDs. High Schools that wish to participate in LTG grants must apply as part of their geographic CSD, and their grant applications should include the signatures of both the High School Superintendent and the Community School District Superintendent.

45. Question: Can BOCES submit on behalf of their region as a consortia of districts (without specifically naming individual districts as co-applicants)?

Answer: No, the BOCES must name the districts. As stated on page 14 of the RFP, Memorandum(s) of Understanding (MOU) between the lead applicant and each consortium member must be completed, signed and submitted. Only consortium applicants must submit MOUs.

46. Question: Can BOCES submit on behalf of their region AND specifically name a single district?

Answer: BOCES can submit on behalf of one or more specific school districts in their region. A BOCES cannot submit a proposal on behalf of their entire region.

47. Question: If 2 or more BOCES join a consortia application on behalf of their region(s), are any letters of support/participation required from component district superintendents? Are there specific requirements for the BOCES that will designate as the LEA?

Answer: As stated on page 2 of the RFP, consortia cannot be comprised of only BOCES. Consortia can be comprised of multiple BOCES if at least one district is also a member of the consortium. BOCES can submit on behalf of one or more specific school districts in their region(s). As stated on page 14 of the RFP, Memorandum(s) of Understanding (MOU) between the lead applicant and each consortium member must be completed, signed and submitted. A BOCES or consortia of BOCES cannot submit a proposal on behalf of their entire region.

48. Question: I wanted to know if a school district is partnering with another LEA for the grant if it can be 2 LEA’s from different regions

Answer: Yes, two districts from different regions may partner to file an application for the LTG program. One must be the lead applicant, and For the Rest of State initial round of scoring and awards, the regional designation will be based on that of the lead applicant.
Funding and Awards

49. Question: How many schools do you expect to award the grant to?

Answer: NYSED does not have an expectation that a specific number of applicants will receive awards.

M/WBE Participation Goals

50. Question: Can the Professional Development provider and consortium district stipends be excluded from the M/WBE calculation?

Answer: The M/WBE participation for this grant is 30% of each applicant’s total discretionary non-personal service budget for each year of the grant. Discretionary non-personal service budget is defined as the total annual budget, excluding the sum of funds budgeted for direct personal services (i.e., professional and support staff salaries) and fringe benefits. Please use the M/WBE goal calculation worksheet in the RFP to determine the dollar amount of the M/WBE goal for this grant application.

51. Question: For applicants that file a waiver (with good faith efforts), is there any penalty or negative implication to the application score?

Answer: Whether or not an applicant files an M/WBE waiver is not a factor when scoring an LTG application.

52. Question: For the M/WBE requirements, how do we gain full credit for including a women owned business that has an application with the M/WBE office that is in "pending" status? Can we utilize the services of MBE and/or WBE providers that are not New York certified and count the expenditures as our M/WBE?

Answer: A women owned or minority owned business that has an application with the M/WBE office that is in “pending” status or is not New York certified cannot be used toward the M/WBE goal.

53. Question: Can BOCES Services be excluded from the M/WBE calculation?

Answer: The M/WBE participation for this grant is 30% of each applicant’s total discretionary non-personal service budget for each year of the grant. Discretionary non-personal service budget is defined as the total annual budget, excluding the sum of funds budgeted for direct personal services (i.e., professional and support staff salaries) and fringe benefits. Please use the M/WBE goal calculation worksheet in the RFP to determine the dollar amount of the M/WBE goal for this grant application.
54. Question: Please define “religious” and “independent” schools. We have charter schools in our district. For the purpose of this opportunity, are charter schools considered “independent” schools which must be included in our outreach, planning, and application?

Answer: Charter schools are Public Schools and are not part of the requirement to be included in outreach and planning for the application.

55. Question: Are private school districts or non-public schools able to apply for the grant?

Answer: As stated on page 1 of the RFP, the only entities that can apply for this grant are public school districts and consortia of districts or district(s) and BOCES. (Page 1 of RFP)

56. Question: We are a not-for-profit 501c3 educational corporation with two religious schools from K to 12 grades. I have reviewed the documents, and can see charter & BOCES are not eligible, but would our schools be? I noted in the FAQ’s item 53. It stated the "We are based in Brooklyn and partner with a private Catholic school, where the students that are part of our program receive 90% of their tuition as a part of our programming. We work closely with this school on all levels to support the growth and success of our scholars. I was wondering if there is a possibility that our afterschool programs would qualify for this if our partner school is private? “

The response was “Only public school districts and not-for-profit organizations working in collaboration with school districts are eligible.” Does this mean that like with the NYS Smart Bond Act we would be eligible, but would have to go through our local school district?

Answer: As stated on page 1 of the RFP, the only entities that can apply for this grant are public school districts and consortia of districts or district(s) and BOCES. The FAQ referenced is from the Q&A from a different grant that is posted just below the LTG RFP.

57. Question: I would like a little more information regarding the LTG grant, we are a Catholic School, it is my understanding that we are able to participate in this opportunity under the guidance of an approved public school. We are in the process of starting a STEM robotics program and would like to know how to merge with an approved bSI school. Do the public schools keep all equipment on their campus? or can we be an annex school with our own equipment and take advantage of their professional development and curriculum? Thank you for your response
Answer: As stated on page 2 of the RFP, all public school district applicants, either individual district applications or as part of a Consortium, must give Religious and Independent Schools within their boundaries the opportunity to participate. Religious and Independent Schools choosing to participate must be given the opportunity for meaningful and substantial involvement in the development of the proposal. The details of that partnership must be worked out between the Public-School District and the Religious and Independent schools within their boundaries.

58. Question: Is this applicable to non-public, 853 schools as well? How does an 853 school apply for this grant?

Answer: Yes, for purposes of this grant, the phrase "religious and independent schools" includes private, nonpublic, and K-12 853 schools. 853 schools are NYS approved private schools that provide day and/or residential programs for students with disabilities. As stated on page 1 of the RFP, however, the only entities that can apply for this grant are public school districts and consortia of districts or district(s) and BOCES.

59. Question: How would a non-public school access this funding opportunity? Would the public school district be required to reach out to non-public schools in its district or is the burden on the non-public school to somehow coordinate with the district? Does our application fall under the umbrella of our public school's application? Will grants be awarded to the public school district, who will then distribute awards to the religious or independent schools within the district, or will the religious and independent schools receive grant awards directly?

Answer: As stated on page 2 of the RFP, all public school district applicants, either individual district applications or as part of a Consortium, must give Religious and Independent Schools within their boundaries the opportunity to participate. Religious and Independent Schools choosing to participate must be given the opportunity for meaningful and substantial involvement in the development of the proposal. Religious and Independent schools do not receive grant awards, either directly or indirectly. On page 14 of the RFP, it explains Attachment III: The Religious and Independent School Communication Form. This form must be completed and submitted with all applications. Applicants must make a concerted effort to contact all Religious and Independent Schools within the district boundaries, or the boundaries of all districts participating in a Consortium.

60. Question: I represent a consortium of 14 independent and private schools. Would we be eligible for this grant?

Answer: As stated on page 1 of the RFP, the only entities that can apply for this grant are public school districts and consortia of districts or district(s) and BOCES. (Page 1 of RFP)
61. Question: Based upon the district we are located within and our zip code; which public school should we expect to correspond with? How should we go about establishing a partnership with our designated public school?

Answer: If the district within which your private school resides submits an application for this grant, they are required to reach out to all religious and independent schools within their boundaries.

62. Question: As a non-public school, which components of the application are we required to fill out & submit?

Answer: As stated on page 1 of the RFP, only public school districts and consortia of districts or district(s) and BOCES are eligible to file an application.

63. Question: What percentage of the grant needs to be allocated for the non-public schools in the district?

Answer: As stated on page 13 of the RFP, applicants must provide Religious and Independent School(s) within their boundaries the opportunity to participate fully in the activities of this grant. There is no specific requirement regarding the percentage of the grant funds or other resources allocated to Religious and Independent Schools.

64. Question: The District intends to focus the grant on a specific student demographic. How does this impact the non-public schools' participation if the school does not meet the intended demographics of the grant? In other words, what consultation steps must be taken for non-public schools that do not serve, for example, the grade levels for which the grant proposal is intended?

Answer: The District is still obligated to contact the Religious and Independent Schools within their boundaries to discuss their intentions and determine if there is any opportunity for meaningful participation in the grant activities.

65. Question: Do we need to attach the documentation of our attempted outreach to non-public schools to the application?

Answer: Yes, all applicants must submit Attachment III, Documentation of Religious and Independent School Communication.

66. Question: May private and religious schools opt to participate in a proposed project, acquisition and implementation of a Learning Management System (the district will purchase their system from general funds), by observing/benefiting from the process the district undertakes without purchasing technology as part of the grant?
Answer: The specific details regarding how the Religious and/or Independent schools can most effectively participate in grant activities are determined by the parties involved.

Web Posting:

67. Question: What are the technical specs and features for the publication website and file formats of the artifacts? ie: curricula documents, PD catalog files, searchable database of standards aligned curricula? (ie: on Page 60, the text indicates that "Be in a downloadable and modifiable form—no PDF file format"), so what formats are expected?

Answer: As stated on page 9 of the RFP, materials and artifacts published on the LTG recipient's website must be provided in downloadable formats and under Creative Commons License, so that other NYS districts can freely use, copy, adapt, and implement similar programs in their districts. Artifacts cannot be password protected, require the user to sign into a certain file saving/file sharing application, or be saved to a district's filesharing platform that is inaccessible to outside users. If the applicant is concerned that modifiable documents posted to their LTG website could be corrupted by malicious users, it is allowable to post downloadable documents that cannot be modified as formatted as long as the contact information to obtain a modifiable version of the document is prominently displayed.