**Community Schools Grant: Q and A Document**

**Initial Posting: July 21, 2017**

**Updates: July 25, 2017**

**Updates: August 1, 2017**

**Question 1:** Is there a way that East can get our own allocation separate from RCSD?

**Q1 Answer:** Please reference page 21 of the application. Attachment A provides this specific information, as does the webinar:

*Note: \*Within the Rochester School District’s grant, $2,281,182 is allocated to the East Upper and East Lower Schools with $1,501,360 allocated for the Program Grant and $779,822 allocated for the Capital Grant. These schools are under the management of the University of Rochester, operating as the EPO. The Rochester City School District must apportion these funds for use by these schools.*

**Question 2:** I am writing to verify if this is a separate source of funding than our Community Schools Set-Aside for the 2017-18 budget ($11,706,493.) According to the documentation sent the grant funding available to the Syracuse City School District is $9,876,706. If I understand correctly, this would be in addition to our Community Schools Set-Aside.

**Q2 Answer:** Yes, this is a separate source of funding. This is the first release of this Community Schools Grant: Aid to Localities application. This application is for access to the Community Schools Grant: Aid to Localities ($75,000,000). You are referencing the Community Schools Grant ($100,000,000 for Foundation Aid: Community Schools Set-Aside) found at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/documents/CommunitySchoolsSetAsideGuidance.pdf>.

**Question 3:** On page 34 of the application, it states “…offering expanded learning opportunities that include afterschool, summer school, Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math programs (STEAM) and mentoring and other youth development programs”. How can summer school be a consideration when the grant ends in June of 2018?

**Q3 Answer.** Prior to implementation of the CSG, a school may have already begun to implement a community school strategy. The activity could be one to be newly implemented in 2017-18, or one that began on or after 9/1/16 and will continue in the 2017-18 school year.

**Question 4:** If a district had funds from a previous community schools grant that has sunset prior to 2016 and the district was not able to sustain the full services but, provided some services on a smaller scale in 2016, can these Community School funds be used to supplement the current work (see bullet 3 on slide 10 of the webinar)?

**Q4 Answer.** If the previous funding is no longer available, then these funds may be used to supplement these services. This is not supplanting.

**Question 5:** Is this a competitive application or an allocative application?

**Q5 Answer.** The Community School Grant is an allocative application. Please see slide 6 in the CSG Webinar Presentation.

**Question 6:** Has this document been released yet and from where is it available? The email to School Districts stated "When completing your application, please reference these three attached documents. All will be posted in the Community Schools Grant section of the OISR webpage at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/oisr/>:" However, the documents are not located at the link and the Community Schools Grant (CSG) from this page is currently blank.

**Q6. Answer.** All three CSG documents were attached to the June 29th email sent by OISR to the Superintendents with the subject line: *Application for Community Schools Grant: Aid to Localities ($75,000,000).* All documents have also been posted at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/oisr/>.

**Question 7:** Is this grant and money a one-time event?

**Q7 Answer:** Currently, The Community School Grant is a one-time grant with a fund cycle that ends on June 30, 2018. Future funding is dependent on the actions of the governor and the legislature.

**Question 8:** Can the amount available for capital work be leveraged against state building aid? In other words, if the district has $200,000 under the grant to use for capital expenses and their building aid ratio is 80%, then can they use the $200,000 as their local share and do a $1,000,000 project (remaining $800,000 would be reimbursed via building aid).

**Q8 Answer:** Yes, if the capital project is eligible for building aid and the capital expenditures are new district expenditures that would qualify them for the community schools grant, then it is possible that the community schools grant money could be leveraged to fund the local share for building aid.

**Question 9:** In the community school research, the first year is devoted to relationship building and needs/asset assessment that in turn drives the priorities.  Because of the timing of application release and short turnaround before submission,

**Question 9a:** We propose to utilize the work of the CET at each school to date and to engage those available in July, and then conduct more extensive involvement once school starts.  Is this “more lenient” understanding of stakeholder engagement acceptable at the application phase?

**Q9a Answer:** Despite the timing of the application release, the critical role that a community-wide needs assessment plays in the implementation of a community school strategy remains the same. The community-wide needs assessment information provided for each school should align to the details provided on Slide 17 of the CSG webinar. The district can decide if the needs assessment aligns to the steps outlined in the National Center for Community School’s (NCCS) Needs Assessment Toolkit, and in which steps the work of the CET should be referenced. As indicated on Attachment C, question 1, the school has to ensure that the major components of each step have been addressed. If such a needs assessment has been conducted at the school within the past three years, the district will reference each step, briefly describe the major findings, and submit a copy with the application. In addition, and in Part I question 4, the district is prompted to describe the CET’s role in each school to review and provide feedback on the application.

**Question 9b:** Will districts be penalized if the school has not yet conducted the needs assessment in the full-stakeholder way the strategy requires?

**Q9b Answer:** Districts are not penalized for any responses. If the OISR liaison needs additional clarification on a response, s/he will contact the district. The district should discuss the status of the school’s needs assessment as specifically as possible when referencing each of the steps outlined in the Toolkit so that the reader understands if the major components have been addressed.

**Question 9c:** Will some latitude be allowed in the FS-10/budget narrative in order to enable a responsive implementation as the schools’ planning work informs emerging priorities?

**Q9c Answer:** See Slide 20 for the budget requirements for the district. The review of those documents will be aligned to the details provided on that slide. Given that this grant is currently for an 11 month budget period, the district should ensure that the activities/expense align to the plan so that the school can begin its work and access its funds. If a revision to the budget is necessary, the district will need to submit applicable budget documents.

**Question 10:** Similarly, it would be difficult to have a community school site coordinator named by the date of grant submission, particularly if it was through a lead agency.  If this work is to be truly guided by stakeholder engagement and the needs assessment process, we will not be able to say for sure by July 28 whether each school will contract with an agency or hire internally.  May we budget for both possibilities (to allow for quick hiring) and submit a later budget amendment to re-allocate the funds for the unused, duplicate position?

**Q10 Answer:** See Slide 15 of the CSG webinar for details about the community school site coordinator requirement and the waver option. The district needs to determine the status at each school and budget accordingly. If a revision to the budget is necessary, the district will need to submit applicable budget documents.

**Question 11:** Please clarify the MOU requirement.  Is a contract for ***services*** aligned to community school implementation acceptable, or is the expectation that a ***lead agency*** should be identified?  Would an MOU or contract draft for a technical service provider at the ***district-level*** suffice?

**Q11 Answer:** Page 1 of the application provides the CR §100.19 definition of a community school. It indicates that “…a *Community School shall mean a school that partners with one or more agencies with an integrated focus* on…. “ Slide 18 of the CSG webinar outlines the requirements of the MOU stating that *Applicants must submit a preliminary Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between local education agencies (LEAs) and community partners.* Attachment C prompts the district to identify the partners/agencies. Page 8 of the application provides guidance on the MOU. The district must submit the preliminary MOU in the manner described on page 8.

**Question 12:** Please clarify the language about schools with the Demonstrable Improvement Indicator #2 and Attachment C.  Does this mean that we can simply write, “see Community School Rubric” in the relevant sections?

**Q12 Answer:** No, that process would not provide the reviewer with the specific information necessary to understand the response. The district should simply “cut and paste” the applicable information from that report into the applicable CSG application section. As per slide 16 of the CSG webinar: *If the school selected Demonstrable Improvement Indicator (DII) #2: Community School Model, reference the YR 2 report you provided to the NYSED Student Support Services (were due 6/1/17). As applicable, the district should use that same information when responding to the CSG application prompts.*

**Question 13:** The community schools body of work suggests that one way to promote authentic parent engagement is to be responsive to parent-generated proposals in visible ways.  Can CSG funds support these activities provided that they have surfaced in a meaningful way and are appropriately applied?  Many of these items are not allowable with SIG funding.  For example,

**Question 13a:** If the needs/asset assessment identifies a school-based sports team, garden on grounds, computer access, or transportation as a need/desire/barrier, can these costs be included?

**Question 13b:** Can CSG funds be used for food or uniforms?

**Q13 a and b Answer:** The CSG is state funded and the SIG is federally funded. Applicants submitting CSG budgets must meet the requirements outlined on Slide 20 of the CSG webinar. This means that all budget documents must align to the district responses provided on Attachment C, including descriptions of the needs assessment, the Demonstrable Improvement Indicators, and the progress monitoring being used to measure impact on student achievement. The specific activities and expenses identified in this question will be reviewed in that context to determine whether or not they are allowable.

**Question 14:** The RFP states that the FS-10 must address each Receivership school, with every budget item aligned to a school and identified as either a capital or a program cost.  Does this preclude doing anything centrally?  May we include centralized activities that will support all of the District’s community schools and apportion the cost between schools in the application?

**Q14 Answer:** Yes,the district can centralize activities and apportion the cost among each Receivership school. The activities must be described on Attachment C and aligned to the FS-10 as described on Slide 20 of the CSG webinar.

**Question 15:** Please confirm that we submit only one districtwide FS-10 that identifies budget costs for each eligible school and not separate FS-10s for each school.

**Q15 Answer:** Yes, see Slide 20 of the CSG webinar.

**Question 16:** Should the application for East Upper and Lower Schools be included in one Rochester application for all 10 eligible schools (including one combined FS-10) or submitted as a complete application separate from the District’s other eight schools?

**Q16 Answer:** The Rochester CSD can determine with the East EPO Superintendent how to best address these two schools. The funds allocated to these schools, as listed on Attachment A, must be easily identifiable on all budget documents. One Attachment C for each of these two schools is required.

**Question 17:** Must each school spend one-third of its budget on capital expenses, or could one school have no capital expenditures while others have higher capital costs?

**Q17 Answer:** No, each school does not have to spend 1/3 of its budget on capital expenses. Yes, one school could have no capital expenditures while others have higher capital costs. The district decides how much of each school’s grant shall be used for program costs and how much for capital costs, so long as the districtwide requirement that 2/3 of the funding be used for program and 1/3 for capital costs is met.

Page 23 of the application indicates that *each school must be allocated a minimum grant of $100,000, which* ***may be used for program and/or capital costs.*** *See the list of schools that are exceptions to this requirement, as they are indicated with an “\*”, as some schools are receiving funds ONLY for capital costs.*

**Question 18:** If a district has had a required community school activity (such as preK) in place BEFORE 9/1/16, do we only describe this work in Box #1 of the section?  Please confirm that none of the boxes in #2.a through #2.g need to be completed (e.g., funding source).

**Q18 Answer:** Yes, when responding to question #6, and for each required component A-H on Attachment C, describe the activity, where applicable, in prompt #1. Prompts 2a-2g are to be completed for each activity to be funded by CSG. See Slide 10 of the CSG webinar for additional supplement not supplant information in order to determine if activities should be described in prompt #1 or in prompts 2a-2g.

**Question 19:** The breakdown for the total allocation is about 1/3 for capital grant and 2/3 for program.  Can 100% be used for program or do you have to use a portion for capital?

**Q19 Answer:** The district allocation is approximately 1/3 for capital grant and 2/3 for program grant; and each eligible school must receive a minimum grant of $100,000. However, the district decides how much of each school’s grant shall be used for program costs and how much for capital costs, so long as the districtwide requirement that 2/3 of the funding be used for program and 1/3 for capital costs is met.

**Question 20:** Would the installation of a playground be considered a capital expenditure in the CSG application?

**Q20 Answer:** Yes, the installation of a playground would be considered a capital expenditure as opposed to a programmatic expenditure for the purposes of the CSG application.  As per Slide 11 of the CSG webinar, capital costs may cover the construction or renovation of spaces within the Receivership schools and other necessary costs to implement a community school.

**Question 21:** Does the site coordinator have to be hired by the school district or can the position be contracted through a vendor to provide the coordinator?

**Q21 Answer:** As per Slide 15 of the CSG webinar, CR §100.19 requires that the school district ***designate*** a full-time staff person to serve as the community school site coordinator at each of its Receivership schools. Yes, the position can be contracted through a vendor, as per district policy.

**Question 22:** The Buffalo City School District is currently working on our Community Schools Grant Application. In regards to submitting a preliminary MOU for each school - may we work with one organization who will partner with each of the 14 schools? In essence, may we submit one MOU that covers the roles and responsibilities of the community based organization with each of the 14 schools?

**Q22 Answer:** Yes, you can have one MOU if the single partner will work with each of the 14 schools and this single MOU is consistent with the requirements of Slide 18 of the CSG webinar.

**Question 23:** Can we apply for this grant for one school?  We have 2 eligible schools.

**Q23 Answer:** No, a district cannot exclude an eligible school from receiving CSG funds. The purpose of the CSG is to transform Receivership schools into community hubs to deliver services to students and families. As per Slide 9 of the CSG webinar, Districts are to apportion their total funds among their Receivership schools subject to a few restrictions, including: *Each school that was not operating under a State approved closure or phase-out plan as of September 2-016 and will continue to operate in the 2017-18 school year must be allocated a minimum grant of $100,000, which may be used for program and/or capital costs.*

**Question 24:** On the capital side, it will be impossible to complete some facility priorities within the funding period, especially since it does not go through next summer. May we include design costs, and perhaps equipment if that is the part that could be done before June 2018? For example, the design and equipment for a preK playground, knowing that the playground would not be built before June 30th.

**Q24 Answer:** While design costs and equipment would normally be approvable components of a playground installation, in order to ensure that the playground is actually built, we would only allow CSG funds to be used to pay in this instance if a) the district makes a commitment in writing to construct the playground and b) identifies the funds that will be used to pay for the construction in the event that CSG funds are not available.

**Question 25:** In some schools, the CET and/or stakeholder engagement process has identified a couple of ideas that would involve payment of parents and/or students. For example, if the desire has surfaced for students to begin gardening at the school, it would be helpful to be able to hire students and/or families to maintain the garden. Another idea is to help provide childcare at school events, and to have flexibility to hire students and/or parents to assist. The notion is that this helps meet basic needs, also provides mentorship into careers. Otherwise, we continue to only be able to pay teachers/staff, which does not help us anchor this strategy in the community.

**Q25 Answer:** There is no statutory or regulatory prohibition against the use of the CSG funds for this purpose.  Applicants submitting CSG budgets using the funds for this purpose must meet the requirements outlined on Slide 20 of the CSG webinar. This means that all budget documents must align to the district’s responses provided on Attachment C, including descriptions of the needs assessment, the Demonstrable Improvement Indicators, and the progress monitoring being used to measure impact on student achievement. The budget items will be reviewed in that context to determine whether or not they will be approved. If employing such individuals with such grant funds, the district may want to consult with its attorney to ensure that the district has adequate liability protection and that it is in compliance with all applicable laws regarding employment of such individuals.

**Question 26:** The CSG guidance advises that funding cannot be provided to feeder schools, my question is in regards to whether or not there is a limitation or restriction regarding the and types of services, resources and support that can be provided and/or shared between our school and the feeder?

**Q26 Answer:** All feeder school information provided in the district’s response must align to the information provided on Slide 19 of the CSG webinar.

**Question 27:** Theallocation to the districts is categorized into capital and program expenditures. Is there any allowance for transfer of funds between the two categories if there is need for more money in one area or the other?

**Q27 Answer:** There is no such provision in Education Law.

**Question 28:** I have an FS-10 question. If a school is going to reconfigure some space as a community/parent meeting space, can we simply put one lump sum and description/estimate on Code 30, that would include a few computers, or do we need to record the computers separately on Code 45? If we do that, we assume we can still count the tech costs toward the capital costs portion—is this accurate?

**Q28 Answer:** As per the NYSED Grants Finance Office guidance for the use of the FS-10 budget form which is posted at: <http://www.oms.nysed.gov/cafe/forms/>, Code 30 Minor Remodeling, is to be used to document allowable costs including salaries, associated employee benefits, purchased services, and supplies and materials related to alterations to existing sites. Computers are not included in this description. Code 45 Supplies and Materials would be used to document computer software, library books and equipment items under $5,000 per unit. Code 20 Equipment would be used to document all equipment to be purchased in support of this project with a unit cost of $5,000 or more. Since computers cannot be documented in Code 30, you cannot count them toward the capital costs portion.

**Question 29:** Upon review of the Guidance document, we do not see any reference to a   "standard" budget narrative, although there is certainly substantial documentation of budget items throughout the application. Should we include an additional narrative piece to accompany the FS-10, or is this not required for this grant?

**Q29 Answer:** This is not required and you should not include an additional narrative. As per Part III: Budget Requirements, you should submit one Attachment D: District Summary Budget Narrative. In addition, and on Attachment C, prompt 2g requires budget information aligned to each activity for each component A-H.

**Question 30:** We are looking for guidance as to construction/renovation being limited to the Receivership school.  Is construction/renovation within the Community Schools Grant limited to the Receivership school or can a renovation for family/community engagement purposes be added into the Community Schools Grant budget for a feeder school building?

**Q30 Answer:** As per CR §100.19, and the Use of Funds section on page 5 of the CSG Request for Applications, the construction or renovation of space is to be “within the Receivership school.”: As per Slide 19 of the CSG Webinar, feeder schools do not receive CSG funds; they can receive services from a Receivership school receiving CSG funds, as defined on pages 7-8 of the CSG application.

**Question 31:** Can you provide further clarification on the MWBE requirement as it applies to the FS-10 in Code 30 and 20?

**Q31 Answer:** As per Slide 21 of the CSG Webinar, for specific questions about M/WBE, contact MWBE@nysed.gov.

**Question 32:** As referenced in the RFP: "Attach an updated school intervention plan and identify in bold font any changes in the plan that will result from implementation of the CSG. The plan should align to the information provided in the cover page above. If necessary, provide comments." Our School Improvement Grant (1003g) (SIG) describes the intervention plan being implemented at the Poughkeepsie Middle School. Is it the requirement of the CSG that the school intervention plan (SIG) be revised to encompass the initiatives developed under the CSG?

**Q32 Answer:** Yes, each Receivership school implements one school intervention plan. With the use of CSG funds, schools were asked to build on that plan, rather than create a new one. The CSG Request for Applications describes this requirement on Attachment C, and specifically on pages 28 and 30. In this instance, this district will check off SS: SIG Plan on page 28; and as per prompt #5 on page 30 it will identify, in bold, its updates to its 2017-2018 SIG continuation plan and attach this updated plan to its CSG application.

**Question 33:** Is the capital budget incorporated in the overall FS10?

**Q33 Answer:** Yes, as per Slide 20 of the CSG Webinar: For every budget item listed on the FS-10, the district must identify the school associated with that item AND whether the item is an operating (program) cost or a capital cost.

**Question 34:** Capital projects by schools and by buildings can vary and subject to the physical space and needs.  Are the projected capital projects costs expected to be “cookie cutter” by school or should it be specific project based?

**Q34 Answer:** Capital costs are expected to align to the school’s needs assessment. As per Attachment C, each Receivership school is to conduct a needs assessment which then informs all of its activities to be funded by the CSG. CSG budgets must meet the requirements outlined on Slide 20 of the CSG webinar. This means that all budget documents must align to the district’s responses provided on Attachment C, including descriptions of the needs assessment, the Demonstrable Improvement Indicators, and the progress monitoring being used to measure impact on student achievement. The budget items will be reviewed in that context to determine whether or not they will be approved.

**Question 35:** Are administrative and capital purchased services subject the 30% MWBE requirement?  Capital projects normally involved skilled trades, e.g. licensed electricians, even if contracted out – are such services considered professional services and subject to MWBE requirements?

**Q35 Answer:** As per Slide 21 of the CSG Webinar, all M/WBE questions should be sent to MWBE@nysed.gov.

**Question 36:** Is OTPS (SED codes 40 and 45) capital cost subject to the 30% MWBE requirement?

**Q36 Answer:** As per Slide 21 of the CSG Webinar, all M/WBE questions should be sent to MWBE@nysed.gov.

**Question 37a:** Are there any specific restrictions that are allowable/not allowable under capital, e.g. are window air-conditioners allowable under capital

**Q37a Answer:** As per Slide 11 of the CSG Webinar, capital costs can be the construction or renovation of spaces within the Persistently Struggling or Struggling School or other necessary costs to implement a community school. As per Attachment C, each Receivership school is to conduct a needs assessment which then informs all of its activities and expenses to be funded by the CSG. CSG budgets must meet the requirements outlined on Slide 20 of the CSG webinar. This means that all budget documents must align to the district’s responses provided on Attachment C, including descriptions of the needs assessment, the Demonstrable Improvement Indicators, and the progress monitoring being used to measure impact on student achievement. The budget items will be reviewed in that context to determine whether or not they will be approved.

**Question 37b:** Are there minimum threshold for a capital project?

**Q37b Answer:** As per Slide 9 of the CSG Webinar: *Each district shall decide the amount of funding to apportion to each of its Persistently Struggling and Struggling Schools, subject to the restrictions discussed.* Minimum grant allocations are provided on that slide. The district decides how much of each school’s grant shall be used for program costs and how much for capital costs, so long as the districtwide requirement that 2/3 of the funding be used for program and 1/3 for capital costs is met.

**Question 37c:** Are all technology end-user devices allowable e.g. laptops, printers, desktops, tablets (chromebooks, ipads).

**Q37c Answer:** The CSG Request for Applications does not disallow these items. Refer to the Q37a answer with regard to the need for school budget and plan alignment in order to be approved. In addition, reference the guidance provided at: <http://www.oms.nysed.gov/cafe/forms/> in determining if these items are placed on the FS-10 in Code 20: Equipment or in Code 45: Supplies and Materials.