



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

Summary of SOAR Act Application Changes

Dec. 9, 2016

Thank you to all stakeholders who provided input and suggestions regarding the federal fiscal year 2016 Scholarships for Opportunity and Result (SOAR) Act charter sector grant. We received a great deal of feedback from many of you through a stakeholder survey, an in-person follow-up stakeholder session, and through individual email and phone conversations. As a result, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) made the following changes:

Academic Quality Grants to Charter LEAs

- **Award Amounts:** The original proposal was to use a per-pupil calculation to distribute the academic quality grant to each charter local education agency (LEA) that was operating during the 2015-16 school year. This distribution method produced a wide range of awards from approximately \$7,000 to over \$750,000, and resulted in 24 LEAs receiving less than \$50,000. Based on stakeholder feedback, the distribution formula has been adjusted to award a based grant of \$50,000 to each LEA. The remainder of the budgeted funds will be distributed funds through a per-pupil formula. This distribution method narrows the range of awards to approximately \$52,000 to just over \$407,000, allowing for greater equity and access to the funds.
- **Application & Reporting:** Acknowledging that federal grant requirements can be burdensome, especially for small grant amounts, OSSE will continue to streamline application and reporting requirements.
- **Reallocation of Unclaimed Funds:** Formula funds allocated to LEAs who elect not to apply for an academic quality grant will be redistributed to other LEAs through the formula. In addition, any unspent OSSE administrative funds from last year will be reallocated to this grant.

Early Childhood Grants to Charter LEAs

- **Application & Reporting:** To address the concern of early childhood grant recipients, OSSE will add the early childhood formula grant amount for eligible LEAs into each LEA's academic quality grant award. For example, an LEA that is allocated \$80,000 through the academic quality grant formula and is eligible for \$25,000 through the early childhood grant formula will be issued a single grant award notice for a total of \$105,000. Impacted LEAs will only be required to submit one application that describes how both budgets will be used and will be able to submit combined reports.
- **Reallocation of Unclaimed Funds:** Funds under this category have historically been claimed in full. In the event that this changes, funds will be redistributed through the academic quality grant.

Facilities Grant

- **Application:** OSSE will provide additional clarity in the request for applications (RFA) regarding what successful applicants must demonstrate in order meet the criteria for this award.
- **Award Amounts and Priority:** The maximum award amount will remain at \$750,000 for LEAs who have never received a SOAR facilities grant; lower grant award tiers may be established for other LEAs. The manner priority is given and/or priority points are assigned will be clearly explained in the RFA.

Third Party Charter Support Organization and Third Party Teacher Pipeline Grants

- **Project Quality:** Applicants will be required to submit at least one letter of recommendation from an LEA with whom the organization has worked in the past and a list of all LEAs with whom the organization has worked. OSSE is also exploring ways to incorporate pay-for-performance principles into the grant awards.
- **Review Panel:** OSSE will invite charter LEA and charter sector representatives to serve as grant reviewers. Interested volunteers will be asked to completed conflict of interest forms to ensure that all potential conflicts, both real and perceived, are identified.

OSSE Administrative Costs

- **Amount:** While OSSE's proposed administration budget was well within the range of typical grant costs (5.3% of the total budget), we were able to identify additional savings and reduce the budget by \$90,000. Those savings were allocated to the academic quality grants.
- **Reallocation of Unspent Funds:** Unspent OSSE administrative funds from last year will be reallocated to the academic quality grant.

Budget

The final FY 16 SOAR budget is as follows:

Purpose of Funds	Budgeted Amount
Academic Quality for Charter LEAs	\$5,799,575.17*
Early Childhood for LEAs	\$ 740,424.83
Facilities Grants for Charter LEAs	\$ 4,000,000.00
Third Party Charter Support Organization Grant	\$ 2,000,000.00
Third Party Teacher Pipeline Grant	\$ 1,500,000.00
My School DC Common Lottery	\$ 250,000.00
OSSE Administration	\$ 710,000.00
Total	\$15,000,000.00

** This amount is slightly lower than the amount presented at the in-person stakeholder meeting. It was reduced due to finalization of Title I-based Early Childhood allocations. This reduction was largely offset by \$90,000 from the OSSE administration budget. The amount may be increased by the addition of unspent OSSE administrative funds from last year.*

Thank you for your willingness to engage in this progress and thank you for all of the work you do on behalf of District of Columbia students and families.