Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19) Special Education Enhancement Fund (SEEF) Competitive Grant

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Answers from Application Webinars

General Application Questions

1. **Q: What is the application deadline?**
   A: The SEEF competitive grant application is due **Wednesday, July 11, 2018 at 3 p.m.** in the Enterprise Grants Management System (EGMS).

   Note: Late applications will not be accepted, so applicants are advised to start the application process early. For technical help with EGMS, contact the EGMS Call Center at (202) 719-6500 or OSSE.Callcenter@dc.gov.

2. **Q: Will the webinar slides be posted after the presentation?**
   A: Yes. The slides were emailed to all attendees and they have been posted on the FY19 competitive grant page on the OSSE website, here: https://osse.dc.gov/node/1333021.

3. **Q: What about the SEEF Formula Grant? Will there be another SEEF formula grant in FY19?**
   A: In FY18, OSSE made more than $3.7 million in funding available to LEAs in the Special Education Enhancement Fund (SEEF) formula grant. The latest version of the DC FY19 Budget Support Act (BSA) increases the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF) special education compliance weight, providing more overall than SEEF formula (please note: LEAs' exact allocations may vary, as UPSFF funding will be determined by the number of special education students). OSSE will not run the SEEF formula grant again in FY19. SEEF formula grantees for FY18 must spend 100 percent of their grant funds by the end of the grant period, Sept. 30, 2018, or unspent funds will revert to the SEEF for other initiatives.

4. **Q: What about the SEEF Competitive Grant, Cohort 1 (FY18)? Will SEEF competitive grant Cohort 1 grantees receive continuation funding in FY19?**
   A: Yes. SEEF Competitive Grant Cohort 1 grantees may apply for continuation funds for FY19 through a separate application. In FY18, OSSE awarded $1.5 million to six grantees in the SEEF competition, cohort 1 to implement research-based strategies to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. OSSE will provide SEEF competitive cohort 1 grantees with continuation funding in FY19, contingent on completing grant goals and spending funds appropriately in the first year. SEEF competitive grant FY18 winners will apply for continuation funds via a separate FY19 continuation application, available in late summer. Cohort 1 grantees are ineligible for the new SEEF competition in FY19.

5. **Q: When will applicants hear back that Intent to Apply forms have been received?**
   A: Applicants should have received an acknowledgement email from Brianna Becker. If not, applicants may contact her at Brianna.Becker@dc.gov.

6. **Q: If a potential applicant is not certain whether they will apply, should the applicant submit an Intent to Apply form anyway?**

Yes, but this date has passed. Submitting a signed Intent to Apply form was a mandatory requirement to apply for the grant. For future reference, there will be no repercussions for applicants that submitted an Intent to Apply form but decided not to apply. The collection of Intent to Apply forms help OSSE staff estimate the number of applicants and select a sufficient number of outside, independent grant reviewers in a timely fashion, so that OSSE does not need to wait until all applications have been submitted and thus potentially delay the grant awards.

Eligibility and Priorities

7. **Q: Who is eligible for the SEEF Competitive Grant?**
   A: Eligible applicants are all LEAs that served students in the 2017-18 school year, and third-party nonprofit organizations that demonstrate a partnership with at least one eligible LEA by submitting a signed partnership agreement.

8. **Q: How should early childhood charter school LEAs meet the SEEF competitive grant's fourth priority, related to improving graduation, secondary transition, and post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities? How would early childhood charter schools demonstrate graduation rates?**
   A: There is significant research to suggest that early childhood service programming has a long-term positive impact on outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities, later in life. An early childhood applicant is encouraged to consider the impact of planned activities on long-term outcomes.

9. **Q: What does OSSE mean by the application's priority to support projects that support a "continuum of public placements" in the "least restrictive environment"?**
   A: Federal IDEA law requires each LEA to ensure that a continuum of placements is made available in order for students with disabilities to be educated with children who are non-disabled to the maximum extent appropriate. This continuum of placements includes instruction in a regular education classroom, with or without the provision of supplementary aides and services, such as resource room or itinerant instruction, and special classes, also commonly referred to as "self-contained" classrooms. We've heard from LEAs that additional investment may help in providing a full continuum of public placements, and thus this is a priority for the application for competitive funding.

10. **Q: Is it appropriate to describe a continuum of public placement within one school? That is, if an applicant is creating a number of environments including full inclusion, pull-out/ resource room, and self-contained classrooms within the applicant's school, does that satisfy the priority area for OSSE?**
    A: Yes, this would likely satisfy the priority.

11. **Q: Is the creation of a continuum of public placements only for the LEA that is applying (i.e., as it pertains to current students), or is the application looking for applicants to create a continuum of public placements that can be replicated in any public school?**
    A: While the grant proposal must serve students at the LEA itself, if the proposal includes a plan to scale up a successful model to serve other public schools, this plan could be considered in the context of sustainability. The application rubric includes five points for the following: "The project is designed to ensure that gains are sustainable after the grant ends."

Funding and Budgeting

12. **Q: What is the maximum funding level per applicant?**

A: A total of $2 million is available for awards through this grant award period, which will begin Aug. 1, 2018 or as soon as funds are awarded, and end on Sept. 30, 2019. Maximum funding is based on the number of students with disabilities:

- Applicant LEAs (or partnerships) serving a total of up to 99 students with disabilities may apply for up to $300,000.
- Applicant LEAs (or partnerships) serving 100 or more students with disabilities may apply for up to $500,000.

Successful applicants may be eligible to receive up to the same amount of funding as their first grant award for each of two additional grant periods of 12 months each, subject to availability of continued funding and satisfactory completion of grant obligations.

13. **Q: Is there an expectation on how funds will be dispersed (i.e., is there a preference for quantity of grants or fewer grantees and more sizable grants)?**
A: Both the number of awards and the amounts will be informed by the quality of applications, as determined by rubric scores returned by independent, neutral, qualified professional reviewers.

14. **Q: Is OSSE more likely to fund LEAs that serve larger numbers of students?**
A: The most important factor in determining whether an applicant will be funded will be the quality of the applications, as determined by rubric scores submitted by the independent, qualified, professional reviewers.

15. **Q: Is it safe to assume that applicants should not fund staff or services that are not sustainable without the grant funds?**
A: Yes. The application rubric includes five points for the following: "The project is designed to ensure that gains are sustainable after the grant ends." For any work that continues beyond the grant period, reviewers will want to see a plan for braiding and/or transferring costs over to other sources.

16. **Q: What kinds of projects is OSSE envisioning since they need to be sustainable after the grant?**
A: Grant projects must meet the grant purposes and score highly on the application rubric, as evaluated by external reviewers. Subject to continued funding, successful applicants in the FY 2019 competition shall be eligible to receive continuation funding for up to two additional years.

17. **Q: Are the SEEF grants subject to supplement-not-supplant requirements?**
A: No.

18. **Q: Is there a Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirement for the SEEF grant?**
A: SEEF funding is considered local special education funding. As such, SEEF expenditures made by LEAs must be included in the LEA's Maintenance of Effort (MOE) calculations of annual expenditures on special education, under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Accepting these funds will increase the level of special education expenditures which the LEA will need to maintain in future years.

19. **Q: Is there a list of allowable costs that are deemed "reasonable"?**
A: All costs allocated to the grant must:
- Support projects that address needs identified within the needs assessment conducted;
- Support projects that are linked to evidence-based research and have been shown to increase academic achievement; and

- Support projects that apply promising practices to increase academic achievement.

Non-allowable expenses include:

- Costs that do not align with the strategies outlined in the application;
- Costs that do not meet the purpose of this grant; and
- Unallowable costs per government guidelines.

While this grant uses local funds and is not subject to federal regulations, Subpart E (Cost Principles) of Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 200 may be used as a resource in determining allowability of costs.

20. **Q: Is this grant eligible for indirect costs?**

    A: Yes. Each fiscal year, applicants must receive approval for an indirect cost rate that will be used for all grants that allow indirect cost claiming. Sub-recipients that have an approved indirect cost rate may claim indirect costs on local grants, and the SEEF grant does not forbid indirect costs. Applicants could use the unrestricted rate if they currently have a rate approved for FY 2019.

    Once a grantee has an approved rate, that rate will be entered in EGMS and will appear as a special indirect cost line item, on all grants that allow indirect cost claiming. This is the only place that indirect costs can be budgeted and claimed. Grantees are not permitted to enter indirect costs in the "OTHER" tab of the budget. The following is required for each type of entity:

    - **LEAs** must submit an indirect cost rate proposal to OSSE for review, by emailing the Office of Grants Management and Compliance at OSSE.Grantscompliance@dc.gov, using the approved LEA Indirect Cost Rate Template found at https://osse.dc.gov/publication/indirect-cost-information-and-templates. OSSE will issue a letter stating the approved rate and period for which that rate is applicable, once it is reviewed and approved.
    - **Third party nonprofits** may either use the de minimus rates of 10 percent Unrestricted and 8 percent Restricted as long as they have never previously negotiated an indirect cost rate with the federal government, or provide a letter each fiscal year with a current approved rate from another federal agency.

21. **Q: May funds be used to support travel for an applicant's special education leadership team to visit schools in other parts of the country that are having notable success increasing academic achievement for students with special needs? Are building renovations (i.e., building out space to support a self-contained classroom) allowable expenses under this grant? Are facilities expenses (new construction) allowable? Could an applicant use the funds for ice skating for athletes with disabilities from public schools in DC? Is it appropriate to use the funds for salaries to support an applicant's special education initiative? Could an applicant use the SEEF funds to serve students who are in the process of being identified as students with disabilities (in the student support team process)? Would it be appropriate to use funds for additional staff to move through an applicant's testing load, which is significant?**

    A: Potentially. Reviewers will evaluate the application narrative and proposed uses of funds using a rubric that includes the following criteria, among others:

    - The success of the project is based on credible and recent (within the last five years) research and/or demonstrated success.
    - The project is likely to be successful in rapidly raising student achievement.
    - The project is designed to ensure that gains are sustainable after the grant ends.
    - Costs seem allowable (necessary to the project, allocable, and reasonable).
    - Budget line items and summary of costs align with the described project.

- Proposed budget can reasonably be expended within the grant period.

22. **Q: An applicant has an alumni support program that follows its graduates through high school and college. Although the students are no longer enrolled in its schools, they are still strongly linked to the LEA's services. The applicant provides considerable support for its high schoolers with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and supports their transitions. Can funds be used to support the applicant's kids even though they are graduates?**
A: The grant project must serve students who are currently enrolled at the LEA itself.

Partnerships

23. **Q: If a third-party nonprofit partner applicant wants to work with multiple LEAs or multiple nonprofit partners, does the application need to include a separate Joint Partnership Agreement with each partner or is one agreement sufficient?**
A: The third-party nonprofit partner may submit one agreement or multiple agreements, as long as all partners are included in the submissions with the application. A template partnership agreement is available on the competitive grant page on the OSSE website, here: https://osse.dc.gov/node/1333021. Partners may use this template or any other, as long as there is at least one executive signatory from each participating nonprofit organization and LEA.

24. **Q: Can a third party hold the contract and work with others to implement the grant? Or must there be an LEA-third-party relationship?**
A: Nonprofit third-party partners must submit a partnership agreement with at least one LEA partner, detailing the roles and responsibilities of each partner.

25. **Q: For the purposes of this grant, is DCPS considered a potential partner LEA or is the scope limited to charter LEAs?**
A: All LEAs serving students in the 2017-18 school year are eligible, either as lead applicants or as partners with third-party nonprofit organizations as the lead applicant.

26. **Q: May an LEA apply as part of a partnership with a nonprofit third-party, and also apply alone?**
A: Yes. Each application will be evaluated separately. However, awards are limited to one per applicant.

27. **Q: If early childhood LEAs may apply, may third-party nonprofit organizations in partnership with an LEA serving the same students apply?**
A: Yes.

Application Components

28. **Q: Where can we find resources related to logic models?**
A: For more thorough training and education-focused examples of logic models, please view the training provided by OSSE, available here: https://osse.dc.gov/publication/successfully-using-logic-models-enhancing-program-performance-and-accountability. Applicants may also wish to view the logic model guidance and examples presented by the U.S. Department of Education's Regional Education Laboratory, including additional acceptable logic model templates, available here: https://osse.dc.gov/publication/regional-education-lab-logic-model-workbook.

29. **Q: The application states that evidence of success at the LEA can be used to support the proposed project. How should a school document the evidence of success given our work is not published in any outside journal?**
A: If an applicant would like to use evidence of success at the LEA to support the theory of action for the project, the results are not required to be published. However, any outside research used to support the project should be credible and recent (within the last five years, if possible).

30. **Q: An applicant is concerned about the timing of the release of PARCC results as it pertains to the application's required needs assessment. Does OSSE expect schools to use school year 17-18 PARCC data, or school year 16-17 data, in the required needs assessment?**
A: Applicants should use the latest data available for the needs assessment.

Grant Reviewers

31. **Q: Do the external grant reviewers receive training prior to scoring the applications?**
A: Yes, reviewers are required to participate in training prior to being assigned any applications.

32. **Q: Will reviewers look at attachments that applicants upload? For example, if applicants upload graphs to correspond to the needs assessment, should applicants be confident that the reviewers will look at them? (In past competitions, OSSE mentioned that reviewers are not required to look at attachments.)**
A: During the reviewer training, reviewers will be instructed to view all attachments, especially the logic model which is a required element. Applicants may briefly describe any other attachments in the narrative sections of the application.