



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

**Scholarships for Opportunity and Results (SOAR) Act
Third Party Charter Support Organizations
Grant Competition
Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23)**

Frequently Asked Questions

(Released May 2023)

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Definitions

Q #1: How does OSSE define “school climate?”

A #1: School climate is an overarching term used to describe students’ and educators’ experience in a school. According to the US Department of Education (USED), a positive school culture fosters safety, promotes a positive academic, disciplinary and physical environment and encourages trusting and caring relationships between adults and students. Please see more [here](#).

Q #2: Is the definition of educationally disadvantaged the same as economically disadvantaged or is there another definition?

A #2: Educationally disadvantaged encompasses students who are economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, migrant students, limited English proficient students, neglected or delinquent students and homeless students.

Q #3: What does “equitable access” mean in terms of this grant?

A #3: Applicants must describe how they will ensure that students, teachers and other beneficiaries with special needs have equitable access to, and participation in, activities, programs and/or services funded by the grant. Potential barriers that can impede equal access and participation include barriers based on gender, race, color, national origin, ability and/or age. A general statement of the organization’s nondiscriminatory hiring policy is not sufficient; this statement should specifically address the applicant’s proposed funded activities. (General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) Requirements –Section 427 (20 U.S.C. 1228a))

Competition Timeline

Q #1: Our organization did not attend the pre-application webinars. Are we still eligible to apply?

A #1: No. If a representative from your organization did not attend one of the mandatory pre-application webinars, your organization is not eligible to apply under this grant competition. As stated in the [Request for Applications \(RFA\)](#), each interested organization that intends to apply must have at least one representative attend one of the two pre-application webinars. This year, these webinars were held on May 9 and May 10, 2023. Webinar attendance was tracked electronically via GoToWebinar.

Q #2: Will applicants receive confirmation of receipt after submitting the Intent to Apply form?

A #2: Yes. The required Intent to Apply form was due on May 19, 2023. Applicants should have received a confirmation email from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). If you did not receive a confirmation email, email Jessica Mardo at Jessica.Mardo@dc.gov.

Q #3: When will awarded applicants be able to begin conducting program activities and expending grant funds?

A #3: OSSE anticipates making awards by Aug. 1, 2023. Awardees will be notified via an automated email from the Enterprise Grants Management System (EGMS). OSSE will also send, via email, an official award notification to the head of each organization. The grant award period starts on the date that the awardees receive the automated email from EGMS and awardees can start obligating funds and program activities on that date.

Eligibility

Q #1: Our organization is a current SOAR Third Party grantee. Are we eligible to apply?

A #1: Yes. Current and former grantees of SOAR Third Party and other OSSE grants are eligible to apply.

Q #2: Our organization currently only serves one DC public charter LEA but is proposing to work with two or three others for this project. Are we eligible to apply?

A #2: Yes. Nonprofit organizations that currently serve one DC charter LEA and have demonstrated success with that LEA are eligible to apply. The nonprofit applicant will also need to find at least one more charter LEA to partner with for the SOAR Third Party grant project, as all applicants are required to partner with at least two partner charter LEAs.

Q #3: Our organization is a national one with a location that serves DC. Are we eligible to apply?

A #3: Yes. All organizations, national and local, must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Demonstrated history of success working with DC public charter schools on a similar project.
- The project submitted in the application must serve two or more charter LEAs within DC for the entirety of the award period.
- Submit one letter of recommendation from a DC charter LEA with direct experience working with your organization.

Partnership Requirements

Q #1: How many LEA partners must a nonprofit organization have to apply for this grant?

A #1: Nonprofit organizations applying as the lead applicant for this grant must partner with two or more DC charter LEAs. Letters of commitment from each partner LEA must be submitted with the application.

Q #2: Our organization is a previous/current grantee. Can we have a repeat partner LEA?

A #2: Yes. You can partner with an LEA that you have worked with previously. A letter of commitment is required from all partner LEAs.

Q #3: Must the two letters of commitment come from schools our organization has never worked with before?

A #3: No. The letters of commitment must come from the two (or more) charter LEAs your organization is partnering with for the project proposed in the grant application. This could be an LEA that you have worked with previously or an LEA with whom you are starting a new partnership.

Your letter of recommendation, however, must come from a charter LEA you have worked with previously.

Grant Application and Priorities

Q #1: What is the difference between a direct assistance project and an indirect assistance project?

A #1: A direct assistance project is designed to improve student outcomes across multiple charter LEAs through a **direct service to students** and/or **direct professional development** and support for teachers and instructional leaders. Examples of direct service projects would include providing training and curricula to teachers to support their academic content areas or providing on-site tutoring services to students at partner charter LEAs.

An indirect assistance project is designed to improve student outcomes at multiple charter LEAs **indirectly by enhancing the organizational capacity** of charter LEAs to operate as fiscally and operationally sound nonprofit organizations and schools. Examples of indirect service projects include professional development for charter LEA leaders or board members to improve the charter school's leadership capacity or supporting the LEA in increasing their data management capacity.

Q #2: Should the list of all schools/districts your organization has provided similar services to include schools/districts nationwide or just DC-based?

A #2: Applicants may reference schools/districts that they have served anywhere in the country in their application. This can include both traditional public and public charter schools. However, the project proposed for grant funding must serve public charter schools in the District.

Q #3: Can the letter of recommendation come from one of the two partner charter LEAs we are proposing to serve for this project?

A #3: Yes. If the nonprofit organization is already providing services to a charter LEA that is included in their application, that charter LEA can submit both a letter of recommendation and a letter of commitment. If they are not already providing services to the charter LEA, then that charter LEA cannot complete a letter of recommendation for the organization

Q #4: Is our organization required to upload a letter of commitment and logic model for each partner charter LEA?

A #4: A letter of commitment for each partner LEA is required. A minimum of two logic models are required. If your organization will have more than two partner LEAs, you do not need to provide a logic model for the third, fourth, etc. partner LEAs.

Q #5: If the same project will be done at two or more LEAs, can the two logic models be identical?

A #5: Yes. The two logic models may be identical if the same proposed project will be implemented by each partner LEA. Please note that while the overall purpose and scope of the project at each LEA may be the same, there may be differences in the details of the inputs, outputs, or outcomes sections of the logic model depending on the needs of the partner LEA. In this case, the logic models should reflect those differences.

Q #6: Are we expected to include data for specific student outcomes in our application?

A #6: Nonprofit organizations should include any student outcome data in their application that is pertinent to the proposed project and will demonstrate the need for the project and/or intended outcomes of the project. This could include test scores, matriculation into the next grade, graduation rates, etc.

Q #7: Do applications/projects need to meet both funding priorities?

A #7: No. Funding priority may be given to projects that address one or both of the two priority areas in the RFA ([see RFA section 4.2](#)). However, projects may still be considered for funding even if they do not meet any of the funding priorities.

Enterprise Grants Management System (EGMS)

Q #1: Where should I go if I have questions about EGMS or have a technical issue?

A #1: Potential applicants should contact the EGMS help desk by calling (202) 719-6500 or emailing osse.callcenter@dc.gov for technical issues.

Q #2: Does the 2023 Central Data application need to be fully approved prior to submitting an application under this competition?

A #2: No. Applicants must complete all sections of the Certifications and Assurances tab within the Central Data application for 2023 in EGMS, but the full Central Data application is not required to be approved prior to submission of an application for the SOAR Third Party grant. If awarded, applicants will need a fully approved Central Data application prior to submitting their first reimbursement request.

Budgeting and Allowable Costs

Q #1: Is there a budget cap for this grant?

A #1: Yes. The maximum award amount for a direct assistance project is \$400,000 and the maximum award amount for an indirect assistance project is \$300,000.

Q #2: Have reviewers adjusted their expectations of what nonprofits can accomplish for the maximum award amount given rising inflation and unchanged maximum award amounts?

A #2: Applicants should provide information in the budget narrative to demonstrate how they determined the budgeted amounts, which may include a statement of current market rates that accounts for rising costs and inflation. Reviewers can use this information to determine if the budgeted amounts are reasonable given the proposed project activities.

Q #3: Is this grant eligible for indirect costs?

A #3: Yes. Applicants are eligible to claim indirect costs up to the 10 percent de minimis unrestricted rate.

Q #4: Can the direct funding go toward multiple programs that meet the funding priorities for organizations that serve schools in multiple ways?

A #4: Yes, if all proposed activities align with the purpose the grant.

Q #5: If our program charges a per-person fee for a professional development program, can we apply for funding to cover a certain number of seats and provide those seats to the designated school partners? Also, can professional development be provided to school leaders, or must it only be for teachers?

A #5: Yes. Applying for funds to cover a certain number of seats for a professional development program is an allowable use of grants funds and should be listed under the “Other Objects” budget category. Professional development for teachers would be considered a direct assistance project, whereas professional development for school leaders would be considered an indirect assistance project.

Q #6: Is the grant funding provided upfront or on a reimbursement basis?

A #6: All grants administered by OSSE are paid on a reimbursement basis. Awardees must submit reimbursements through [EGMS](#) for all project related expenses. These reimbursements must match what is included in the approved budget in the application.