



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 2025 (FY25)**

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

(Released July 9, 2024)

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## Definitions

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

A: 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: Our organization did not attend the pre-application webinars. Are we still eligible to apply?**

A: Yes! Applicants are still eligible to apply if they did not attend the pre-application webinar and/or did not submit an Intent to Apply form. During the webinar, changes from the prior year’s application, scoring rubric and award process were covered. Applicants can find a recording of the pre-application webinar [here](#) under the “Fiscal Year 2025 Resources” heading.

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

A: Yes. Applicants were strongly encouraged to submit an Intent to Apply form by Friday, July 5, 2024. Applicants will receive a confirmation email from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). If you did not receive a confirmation email, email Brianna Griffin at [Brianna.Griffin@dc.gov](mailto:Brianna.Griffin@dc.gov).

### **Q: What is the award period for this grant?**

A: OSSE anticipates making awards on Oct. 1, 2024, with pre-award costs allowed back to July 1, 2024 for all awarded applicants. The duration of the award period will be three years from Oct. 1, 2024. Please note, applicants will only complete the initial application budget for the first year of funding (FY25). Awarded applicants will need to submit an updated application at a later date for FY26 and FY27 continuation funding.

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

A: OSSE anticipates making awards on Oct. 1, 2024, with pre-award costs allowed back to July 1, 2024 for all awarded applicants. The duration of the award period will be three years from Oct. 1, 2024. Awarded applicants are not required to begin program activities immediately.

## Eligibility

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

A: Yes. Current and former grantees of the SOAR Third Party grant or other SOAR Act grants are eligible to apply.

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

A: 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: How many LEA partners must a nonprofit organization have to apply for this grant?**

A: 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 in EGMS.

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

A: Yes. You can partner with an LEA that you have worked with previously. Letters of commitment from each partner LEA must be submitted with the application in EGMS.

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

A: 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: What is the difference between a direct assistance project and an indirect assistance project?**

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

A: 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 of Columbia.

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

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

A: A letter of commitment for each partner LEA is required. For the logic model, please submit a single Excel file with a separate tab for each partner charter LEA.

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

A: 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: Are we expected to include data for specific student outcomes in our application?**

A: 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: Do applications/projects need to meet the funding priorities to be eligible?**

A: No. However, an additional 10 points will be awarded on the scoring rubric to a project that meets one or more priority areas. If a project meets more than one priority area, the maximum number of additional points the applicant can receive is still 10.

Projects that do not meet any of the funding priorities are still eligible for the competition, as long as the project is either a [direct or indirect assistance project](#), but their application will not receive any additional priority points.

## Enterprise Grants Management System (EGMS)

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

A: Applicants should create an [EGMS Support Ticket](#) upon logging in to EGMS. [See here](#) for instructions. Please note, EGMS is no longer utilizing a call center or monitoring a support email address.

**Q: Does the 2025 Central Data application need to be fully approved prior to submitting an application under this competition?**

A: No. Applicants must complete all sections of the Certifications and Assurances tab within the Central Data application for 2025 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: Is there a budget cap for this grant?**

A: Yes. The maximum award amount for a direct or indirect assistance project is \$400,000.

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

A: 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: Is this grant eligible for indirect costs?**

A: Yes. Applicants are eligible to claim indirect costs up to the 10 percent de minimis unrestricted rate. Applicants should notify Brianna Griffin at [Brianna.Griffin@dc.gov](mailto:Brianna.Griffin@dc.gov) if they

intend to claim indirect costs so that the application budget can be set up to allow for them. Indirect costs are included in, and not in addition to, the total maximum award amount of \$400,000.

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

A: Yes, if all proposed activities align with the purpose of the grant. The application narrative and logic models should reflect all programs being supported by the grant.

**Q: 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 at no cost to the designated school partners?**

A: 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.

**Q: Can professional development be provided to school leaders, or must it only be for teachers?**

A: Yes. 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: Is the grant funding provided upfront or on a reimbursement basis?**

A: 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.

**Q: Are pre-award costs allowable under this grant?**

A: Yes. Allowable pre-award costs in each program category include costs related to activities required to stand up or continue a third-party charter support program and incurred between July 1 and Sept. 30, 2024. Examples of pre-award costs include:

1. Salaries and benefits for individuals involved with standing up or continuing a charter school support program.
2. Professional services related to standing up or continuing a charter school support program, such as contracts for online systems/programs or trainings utilized by or offered to LEA partners at the start of the school year.
3. Equipment or supplies and materials related to standing up or continuing a charter school support program such as physical materials offered to LEA partners at the start of the school year.
4. Other objects related to training (venue rental, travel) of LEA partner participants at the start of the school year.

OSSE will make individual determinations for costs not on this list.

**Q: What happens if I am not awarded or awarded at less than my requested amount?**

A: Costs incurred by an applicant before receiving an award are done so at the recipient's risk. OSSE is not obligated to reimburse these costs if the applicant does not receive an award or receives an award that is lower than their requested amount. If an applicant is awarded at less than their requested amount, they will have an opportunity to amend the budget presented in their application.

**Q: How do I indicate pre-award costs in the application?**

A: Pre-award costs should be added in the cost basis section for each line item. Applicants should indicate what portion of the total line item is going toward pre-award costs as well as how much this is monetarily.

For example, "The program manager's total salary and benefits are \$100,000. Fifty percent is charged to the grant for a total of \$50,000. Pre-award costs are charged for training program participants in July, August and September 2024. The total salary earned in these three months is \$25,000 with 50 percent (\$12,500) being charged to the grant. Total budgeted = \$62,500."

**Q: Do you expect a FY26 continuation opportunity for awardees?**

A: The funding for the SOAR Act Grants is awarded to OSSE from the US Department of Education (USED). Therefore, continuation funding is always contingent on available funds, as provided by USED. At this current time, OSSE has no indication that the agency will not continue to be awarded this grant, at the current level of funding, from USED. As such, OSSE expects that grantees will be able to apply for their second and third years of funding in FY26 and FY27, equal to the amount awarded in FY25.

Funds that are not spent the first two years of the grant carry over into the following years. However, all funds not spent by the end of the three-year grant will lapse and must be returned to OSSE.

**Q: Can we include a full three-year scope of activities in the application with different activities in years two and three, with the budget only reflecting the expenditures for FY25 activities?**

A: Yes, applicants should include a full three-year scope of activities in the application narrative sections, but the budget should only reflect FY25 activities, and any pre-award costs back to July 1, 2024.

**NEW! Questions from Pre-Application Webinar 1 June 25, 2024, 10 a.m.****Q: For Priority 1, do applicants need to focus on all three elements, or just one or two?**

A: The priority reads, "chronic absenteeism, reengaging youth ages 16-24 who have dropped out of school to attain a high school diploma or GED, *and/or* building positive school cultures and inclusive learning environments." Applicants may receive additional points for Priority 1 whether they focus on one, two, or all three elements.

**Q: Under the "building positive school cultures and inclusive learning environments" element of Priority 1, can applicant meet this priority if a project focused on a particular need or constituency within inclusive learning environments, such as special education practices?**

A: Yes. Applicants should demonstrate in the application how they are proposing to meet this element of Priority 1. External reviewers will score the applications against the rubric and determine whether the additional points are awarded.

**Q: Can one school or LEA partner with multiple nonprofit organizations that receive a SOAR Third Party grant?**

A: Yes, one LEA can partner with multiple applicants that are funded under this competition as long as the scopes of the projects do not overlap.

**Q: Can a national organization with a DC-based program (not a separate 501c3) be considered eligible? All SOAR funds would be used in DC for DC charter students.**

A: Yes, a national organization with a DC-based program is eligible to apply, but all SOAR funds must be used in DC and benefit DC public charter schools.

**Q: Outside of the letter of commitment, what additional information/support is needed from the two charter school partners?**

A: The letter of commitment is the only support needed from partner charter schools at the time of application. However, the needs assessment section of the application should clearly demonstrate a need at *each* partner school using qualitative and/or quantitative data.

**Q: How do we approach a project that has different budgets for each of the three years?**

A: Awarded applicants for FY25 will be eligible to apply for continuation funding in FY26 and FY27 up to the amount initially awarded in FY25. Therefore, applicants should apply for the maximum amount in FY25 that they may need in future years. Any funds not expended in FY25 will carry over into FY26; unexpected funds at the end of FY26 will carry over into FY27. The maximum award amount for FY25 is \$400,000.

**Q: Can we apply to work with schools that we already work with through a SOAR Third Party grant?**

A: Yes. However, the scopes of any concurrent grants should not overlap. If you are an FY23 grantee that is applying for an FY25 grant and will have concurrent grants, you must ensure that either the work is distinct (i.e., different project or serving different populations), or that the partners are distinct.

**Q: If we are applying to work with one or more charter LEAs that we also plan to work with through another OSSE SOAR grant (Educator Pipeline), we are assuming the rule under Educator Pipeline about the SOAR funding cap per educator would still apply, and we would want to avoid including the same teachers within the**



**funding allocated in this Third Party grant budget. Is there anything else we should consider in our planning or include in our application if we anticipate working with LEAs on multiple SOAR projects at the same time, beyond ensuring that the scopes of the two projects do not overlap?**

A: No. Applicants should just ensure that they are not working with the same educators that are benefitting from the SOAR Educator Pipeline grant or SOAR Teacher Pipeline grant.

**Q: Is there any particular form/format for the Letters of Commitment and Letters of Recommendation we should follow?**

A: No. There is no particular format or template for the letters of recommendation and letters of commitment.

**NEW!** Questions from Pre-Application Webinar 2 June 26, 2024, 1 p.m.

**Q: Regarding academic outcomes, can those be longitudinal outcomes based on external research – or do outcomes have to directly show increases in reading, writing, etc.? (Our outcomes are all social and emotional learning (SEL)-based, measuring increases in sense of courage, group relationships, etc. But research shows that strong SEL skills improve academic capacity.)**

A: Yes, academic outcomes may be longitudinal outcomes based on external research and can be SEL-based.

**Q: Are you more interested in innovations or if the work we are doing is really sound, as this would allow us to expand what we are doing? Would that potentially be a competitive application?**

A: There is no preference for innovative approaches or continuing existing work that has been proven successful. Applicants should review the scoring rubric to further understand how points will be assigned to each application by the external reviewers.

**Q: Past SOAR grants were two-year projects. Since this is an application for one year with the potential to be eligible for continued funding, is the expectation that a full application is submitted each year? Can aspects of the project change from the first award year to build on the initial project?**

A: Awarded applicants will complete a continuation application to receive additional funding for their projects in FY26 and FY27. The continuation grants are not awarded through a competitive process. However, continuation funding is subject to the availability of funds. The continuation application will be a shorter application than the FY25 application for new funding. Applicants will be able to tweak some aspects of their project and/or budget but will still be responsible for completing the same project funded under the initial competitive application.

**Q: Are we allowed to partner with other community-based organizations to bring certain aspects of programming?**

A: Yes. Applicants may partner with other community-based organizations for their SOAR Third Party project. However, only the lead applicant will be responsible for meeting all grant requirements and abiding by terms and conditions of the award. Lead applicants should include the work of the subcontractors or partners under the professional services column of your budget.