

Special Education Enhancement Fund (SEEF) Competitive Grant

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Answers from Application Webinars

1. Q: Can eligible LEAs apply to and receive both the SEEF Formula and Competitive Grant?

Yes.

2. Q: What is the application deadline?

A: The SEEF competitive grant application is due **Aug. 15, 2017 at 3 p.m.**

(Note that the SEEF **formula** application deadline has been extended from Aug. 2, 2017 at 3 p.m. to Aug. 31, 2017, at 3 p.m.)

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.

3. Q: Will the webinar slides be posted after the presentation?

A: Yes. The presentation has been posted on the competitive grant page on the OSSE website, here: <https://osse.dc.gov/page/special-education-enhancement-fund-seef-competitive-grant>.

4. Q: Is there a separate webinar for the SEEF formula grant? When will the webinars for the formula grant be available?

A: Yes. OSSE held separate webinars for the formula grants, covering separate content. Applicants may learn more about the formula grant, view webinar slides, and read Frequently Asked Questions here: <https://osse.dc.gov/page/special-education-enhancement-fund-seef-formula-grant>.

5. Q: Where is the Intent to Apply form?

The Intent to Apply form and other important documents can be found on the competitive grant page on the OSSE website, here: <https://osse.dc.gov/page/special-education-enhancement-fund-seef-competitive-grant>. The Intent to Apply form was due to Jonathan.Elkin@dc.gov on July 12, 2017 at 5 p.m.

6. Q: Does the SEEF formula grant have an Intent to Apply form as well?

A: No.

7. Q: When will applicants hear back that Intent to Apply forms have been received?

A: Applicants should have received an acknowledgement email from Jonathan Elkin, Special Assistant. If not, applicants may contact him at Jonathan.Elkin@dc.gov.

8. 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. 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.

9. Q: Who is eligible for the SEEF Formula Grant and SEEF Competitive Grant?

A: For the SEEF formula grant, eligible applicants are all LEAs serving students in the 2017-18 school year and receiving federal IDEA funds. For the SEEF competitive grant, eligible applicants are all LEAs serving students in the 2016-17 school year, and third-party nonprofit organizations that demonstrate a partnership with at least one eligible LEA by submitting a signed partnership agreement.

10. Q: How should early childhood charter school LEAs meet the SEEF competitive grant's second 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.

11. Q: May applicants apply for the maximum grant award of \$500,000? Will there be only three awards granted, for the maximum of \$500,000 each, or will more than three awards be granted at lower amounts? 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.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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.

15. 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."

16. 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 Memorandum of Agreement with each partner or is one MOA sufficient?

A: The third-party nonprofit partner may submit one MOA or multiple MOAs, 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/page/special-education-enhancement-fund-seef-competitive-grant>. 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.

17. 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.

18. 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 2016-17 school year are eligible, either as lead applicants or as partners with third-party nonprofit organizations as the lead applicant.

19. 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.

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

A: Yes.

21. 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.

22. 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 fiscal year 2018 competition shall be eligible to receive continuation funding for up to two additional years.

23. 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 two years.

24. 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 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.

25. Q: The logic model example used in the webinar focused on a theoretical example of a person experiencing a migraine wishing to return to work. Can OSSE give an example of how to complete a higher quality logic model related to education?

A: This example was used as a component of the presentation, and was intended to demonstrate how to approach the development of a logic model. As shared during the presentation, it was not intended to represent a fully developed logic model. 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>.

26. 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 2016-17 PARCC data, or 2015-16 data, in the required needs assessment?

A: Applicants should use the latest data available for the needs assessment.

27. 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. Just to be safe, applicants may wish to briefly describe any other attachments in the narrative sections of the application.

28. Q: Are the SEEF grants subject to supplement-not-supplant requirements?

A: No.

29. 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.

30. 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 fiscal year 2018.

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.