



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

**EDUCATION**

## **Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers Fiscal Year 2022 Competition Award Procedures**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this document is to outline the award procedures for the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) grant competition.

**Background:** The 21st CCLC program (CFDA 84.287C) is intended to establish or expand community learning centers to provide students with academic and enrichment activities designed to complement the academic program of the students' regular school day. Centers located in elementary or secondary schools or other similarly accessible facilities must provide a range of high-quality program activities and services to support student learning and academic development (e.g., tutoring, mentoring, homework help, academic supports); science, technology, engineering and math (STEM); community service opportunities; sports; the arts; and other cultural activities.

Eligible applicants include any public or private organization. Examples of agencies and organizations eligible under the 21st CCLC program include, but are not limited to, the following: nonprofit agencies, city or county government agencies, faith-based organizations, institutions of higher education, and for-profit corporations. The statute encourages eligible organizations applying for funds to collaborate with the schools the students attend. The statute also allows a consortium of two or more agencies, organizations or entities to apply.

### **REVIEWER SELECTION**

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) selects grant reviewers with at least one of the following: (1) knowledge of the impact that afterschool learning opportunities have on improving the academic achievement of students; (2) experience in an education-related field; (3) STEM education experience; (4) specialized education experience; (5) English learners experience; (6) social and emotional learning experience; (7) experience working with a variety of community members to forge meaningful partnerships that foster commitment to improving the lives of youths and families; or (8) previous experience/expertise as a grant reviewer.

### **EXTERNAL REVIEW**

Each review panel for the 21st CCLC FY22 grant competition is composed of external, neutral, qualified, professional individuals, selected for their unique qualifications in the fields of elementary and secondary education and youth development. Each panel will receive four applications (or more if the number of applications received is not evenly divisible by four) for review and scoring.

Reviewers are expected to draw upon their expertise to review each application and score all required components. Evaluations must be based on the extent to which each application meets the criteria outlined in the scoring rubric (see p. 34 of OSSE's Request for Applications (RFA)). Reviewers must make an objective assessment of each application using only the information provided within the application and provide detailed comments to support each evaluation.

Through statistical analysis, OSSE has determined triggers for facilitated discussion when there is a certain amount of variance among scores from peer reviewers at the individual criteria and total score levels. Similarly, if substantive discrepancies are found among reviewer comments (e.g., Reviewer 1 comments favorably while Reviewers 2 and 3 suggest responsive information was not included) a facilitated discussion is also required. External review teams are provided with written comments from OSSE, outlining any discrepancies in scoring or reviewer comments. During facilitated discussions reviewers are required to discuss the reasoning behind their respective scores and determine whether a change in scores and/or comments is appropriate. Reviewers are required to document what triggered the facilitated discussion, the date of the facilitated discussion, attendees at the facilitated discussion, which applications were discussed, and any changes in reviewer scores and/or comments in a Facilitated Discussion memo and submit to OSSE.

## INTERNAL REVIEW

Internal OSSE reviews are based on an assessment of the scores and comments of each external reviewer for each application and how they meet or do not meet the quality control standards set forth by OSSE. Internal review staff will assess the external peer reviewer's scores and comments for which they are assigned. This includes reviewing each reviewer's scores and comments for:

- A variance between the highest and lowest scores at the criteria level or total score level that would trigger a facilitated discussion;
- Comprehensive, reasonable, justifications for ALL panel scores and comments; and
- Discrepancies among peer reviewer scores or comments for the same application (e.g., Reviewer 1: "The applicant clearly identified X"; Reviewer 2: "The applicant didn't have any mention of X").

This review and assessment results in approval or return of external peer reviewer scores and comments. In the event scores and/or comments are rejected, external peer reviewers are required to participate in a facilitated discussion for each rejected application and any relevant criterion. Once all reviewer scores and comments have been accepted, OSSE determines the ranking of each application. If all applications for any review panel fall closely in rank order (either at the top, middle or bottom of the rankings), OSSE will convene a panel of three internal reviewers to complete a secondary review of each application within that panel. If secondary review scores are drastically different from those of the initial review, an average of scores from both reviews will determine each applicant's final score and ranking. If secondary review scores are similar to those of the initial review the original external peer reviewer scores will stand.

## AWARD DETERMINATIONS

In general, grant applications will be funded in accordance with the Priority Tier System identified in Criteria 2 of the RFA with Tier 1 being given the highest priority. Once final review scores have been determined during the internal review, applications will be further sorted based on the highest priority Tier selected on their application. Within each tier, applications will be sorted into ascending order, according to their final review score. The first, second, and third quartiles will be determined for each tier. Applications will be funded with the following priority, beginning with Tier 1:

- Tier 1: 70th percentile or higher (upper portion of Q2-Q4)
- Tier 2: 80th percentile or higher (Q3-Q4),
- Tier 3: 90th percentile or higher (Upper portion of Q3-Q4)

OSSE reserves the right to make final decisions regarding any applicant's priority status. OSSE also reserves the right to inspect the proposed 21st CCLC program site and facilities before an award is approved. Regardless of an application's score, OSSE maintains the discretion to determine final award decisions based on any other factors consistent with the federal statute, particularly once it has funded applications according to the priorities above. A denied applicant may appeal OSSE's decision only on the grounds that OSSE has violated a District or federal statute or regulation in denying its grant application. For more information on appeal procedures, please contact Tanisha L. Brown, Ed.D., manager, Education Policy and Compliance at [Tanisha.Brown@dc.gov](mailto:Tanisha.Brown@dc.gov).