

Frequently Asked Questions from the Application Preparation Webinar for the 2014 NRC/FLAS Competition

June 4, 2014

Priorities

Q1. Where should we address the competitive and invitational priorities in the application?

Applicants must address all competitive preference priorities (CPPs) within the 50- or 60-page application narrative because the peer reviewers evaluate and score all information in the application. The reviewers are required to evaluate and score the extent to which applications address the selection criteria for the NRC and/or FLAS programs and the extent to which applications meet the announced CPPs.

In terms of where to insert information to address the CPPs, you may include the information in the “Program Planning and Budget” section. You may also integrate CPP information in other sections, as appropriate. For example, activities that address the teacher preparation programs on your campus (NRC CPP 2) could be described under Quality of Curriculum Design. The FLAS CPPs can be integrated into the FLAS Awardee Selection Procedures discussion.

Regardless of where you integrate the CPPs, be sure to clearly identify them.

The invitational priorities (IPs) are not scored; therefore, you are not required to discuss them in the Application Narrative unless you wish to. Insert notations about the IPs in the detailed budget.

Q2. Do HBCUs count as MSIs?

Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are not necessarily also Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). The Notice Inviting Applications defines an MSI as an institution that is eligible to receive assistance under sections 316 through 320 of part A of Title III, under Part B of Title III, or under Title V of the HEA. Applicants can also meet this priority by conducting collaborative activities with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The NIA, therefore, refers applicants to 34 CFR 608.2 for the list of HBCUs.

Q3. Where can we find the lists of HBCUs and HSIs?

The list of Title III part B HBCUs may be found at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2011-title34-vol3/xml/CFR-2011-title34-vol3-sec608-2.xml>

The list of Title V Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) may be found at: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/idades/hsi-presidents-pds.pdf>

Q4. I am an Eastern Europe center. Should I still address the invitational priority for linkages with overseas institutions in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia?

Keep in mind that the priorities for NRC and FLAS that focus on sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia are invitational priorities only. There will be no points given or taken away if a center decides not to address this priority or does not address it well.

Evaluation

Q5. Is there a limit on the number of Performance Goals and Project Measures that a PMF should have?

No. There is no limit on the number of Goals or Performance Measures. The number of goals should reflect what the projects want to achieve and be broad enough in scope for the entire duration of the grant project. Each goal should have an adequate number of performance measures that, when achieved, would lead to goal attainment. Each goal statement should describe (an/the) ultimate outcome(s) to be attained, including goals related to the priorities that the applicant chooses to address. Collectively, the goals should be designed to achieve national impact and, to the extent applicable, GPRA measures.

The term “Performance Measures” is used interchangeably with “Measurable Objectives” or “Measurable Outcomes.”

Q6. Do applicants need to complete a PMF for the FLAS grants?

No. The PMF is only for the NRC grants.

Q7. Should we directly address GPRA measures in our grant, or can we assume it will be simply part of the evaluation process? Should the NRC PMF goals directly respond to the GPRA measures?

GPRA measures are those established to measure the progress and outcomes of the NRC program as a whole, not an individual project. As such, the Department of Education will aggregate data from all NRC projects on GPRA measures, using data gathered from project performance reports in the IRIS system. To ensure that the Department has the capacity to report against these measures, and to ensure that individual projects aim to contribute to the overall outcomes established under GPRA, it is critical that each applicant state how its project aims to achieve these outcomes, and how the institution plans to provide the data that will address these measures. Ultimately, these efforts contribute to an understanding of measurable benefits of the NRC program and, hence, may affect future decisions regarding the program.

As stated the application package (page 59), all proposals must address the GPRA Measures in their evaluation plan. The evaluation plan must address all IFLE GPRA measures, as well as include project-specific measures that are tied to the project’s goals and objectives.

The approved GPRA measures for the NRC program are found on pages 58-59 of the application package.

- NRC GPRA Measure 1: Percentage of priority languages defined by the Secretary of Education taught at NRCs.

NRC GPRA Measure 5: Percentage of less and least commonly taught languages as defined by the Secretary of Education taught at Title VI NRCs.

NRC GPRA measures 1 and 5 require no additional information from applicants, who will have provided this information when they identify the world regions and languages addressed in their proposal.

- NRC GPRA Measure 2: Percentage of NRC grants teaching intermediate or advanced courses in priority languages as defined by the Secretary of Education.

NRC GPRA Measure 3: Percentage of NRCs that increased the number of intermediate or advanced level language courses in the priority and/or LCTLs during the course of the grant.

To address Measures 2 and 3, the applicant would identify the intermediate or advanced courses in priority languages that it teaches and whether it expects to increase those numbers over the course of the grant period.

- NRC GPRA Measure 4: Percentage of NRCs that increased the number of certificate, minor, or major degree programs in the priority and/or LCTLs, area studies, or international studies during the course of the 4-year grant period.

To address Measure 4, the applicant would identify the certificate, minor, or major degree programs in priority languages and/or LCTLs, area studies or international studies that it offers and whether it expects to increase those numbers over the course of the grant period.

Applicants are not required to complete a PMF for each GPRA measure. However, to the extent that project-specific goals are closely related to the GPRA measures, the measures may be addressed in the PMF.

Similarly, applicants must also address all the FLAS GPRA measures in the application (page 72).

- FLAS GPRA Measure 1: Percentage of FLAS graduated fellows who secured employment that utilizes their foreign language and area studies skills within eight years after graduation based on FLAS tracking survey.

Data for FLAS GPRA Measure 1 are collected through the FLAS tracking survey that is administered by the IFLE program office every other year after a FLAS fellow graduates. Applicants can discuss the commitment and support they will provide to ensure that their FLAS graduates will receive and respond to the survey so that our data will be complete and meet the highest statistical standards.

- FLAS GPRA Measure 2: Percentage of FLAS master’s and doctoral graduates who studied priority languages as defined by the Secretary of Education.

For FLAS GPRA Measure 2, data will be collected from grantees annually on the number of master’s and doctoral graduates who studied priority languages.

- FLAS GPRA Measure 3: Percentage of FLAS fellows who increased their foreign language reading, writing, and/or listening/speaking scores by at least one proficiency level.
- For FLAS GPRA Measure 3, data will be collected on FLAS fellows who increased at least one proficiency level in their language study.

Applicants should discuss how they plan to address these measures in their evaluation plan.

Q8. If the Performance measure is timebound to years 1, 2, or 3, does the institution need to provide targets for following years? Likewise, if the targets are applied to all four years, then does the Performance Measure statement need to include a time-bound clause (e.g. "By the end of year 2...")?

If a Performance Measure identifies the attainment of a proposed measure in a specific year and if the data in the PMF show that the target has been met, there is no need to report that specific measure in subsequent years. For example, if a Performance Measure states: “By the end of year 2.....” the project is expected to identify the target for Year 1, the data for Year 2. If the data reported for Year 2 are the same as what was originally proposed, the project has met the target and thereby may input “Met” for subsequent years’ reporting on this measure.

Please keep in mind that applicants do not need to provide the actual targets at the application stage. Definition of the baseline and annual targets will only be required of successful applicants when they become grantees.

Q9. Should the information included on the PMFs within the appendix be repeated in the evaluation narrative section?

The PMF is designed to assist grantees in collecting and reporting information on their progress and annual attainment of their proposed performance measures. Thus, it may be used as a general guide to develop an evaluation plan as stated in the Evaluation Guide page 53: “The Performance-Measure Form (PMF) serves as a guide for applicants to plan and articulate key aspects of a well-designed evaluation plan.”

In the application narrative section 9C under “Impact and Evaluation” (worth 15 points for NRC and 5 for FLAS in the selection criteria), applicants must describe their proposed goals and performance measures and discuss the activities they plan to carry out in order to achieve the proposed performance measures. Most applicants include a table or graphic organizer to capture key information described in their evaluation plan narrative. Applicants may use the PMF or whatever form they wish to present information on their evaluation in an organized and logical way. Although most applicants include a graphic/tabular representation of their overall evaluation plan, this

is not a requirement. It is up to the applicants to determine how best to meet the criteria in the Impact and Evaluation section based on the Evaluation Guidance included in the application package. Readers will be instructed to look for strong evaluation plans with characteristics described in the Evaluation Plan Development Guidance included in the application package.

Budget

Q10. Could IFLE clarify range of the funding spectrum in the Notice Inviting Applications?

All estimated amounts in the Notice Inviting Applications (NIA) were based on the amounts IFLE awarded in the current grant cycle. This allowed IFLE to estimate the funding parameters for the amounts that applicants are likely to request for the FY 2014 competition. The NIA amounts are not binding; they are intended to provide ballpark amounts. Within the budgeted range, you should develop a budget that reflects the costs that you need to develop and implement your projects. We suggest that you use the higher end of the estimated range, recognizing that for centers that are recommended for grants, your budgets are likely to be reduced.

Q11. Are we allowed to budget for activities commencing on August 15, or should we select a later start date for activities?

Although FY 2014 (year 1) grant awards will not be issued on or before August 15, 2014, you may budget for activities commencing on August 15, 2014.

Q12. How much should we budget for an evaluator?

We defer to applicants to make a judgment about evaluation-related costs.

The amount budgeted for evaluation activities should be allowable, allocable, and reasonable, given the overall project scope.

Q13. Can FLAS awards support salary?

No. FLAS awards support academic year and summer fellowships only, including the institutional payment and the subsistence allowance (stipend).

Q14. Can NRC awards be used to pay for students' study abroad?

No. NRC awards can fund activities such as the faculty and staff travel to establish linkages for study abroad programs or to evaluate study abroad programs. NRC funds, however, cannot be used to pay the costs for students to participate in study abroad.

Q15. Can graduate students be used as research assistants on the NRC grants?

Yes, the NRC grant may support graduate assistants or teaching assistants who are working on activities that are directly related to the proposed NRC project scope.

Q16. Can we carryover FLAS funds from Year 1 to Year 2?

In accordance with §74.25 of the Education Department General Administrative Regulations, institutions may request prior approval to carry over FLAS funds from one budget period to the next budget period.

Q17. 100 percent of language instruction can be funded with the grant. Is that only for the instruction of less commonly taught languages (LCTLs)?

We allow 100 percent support for LCTLs and priority languages on the NRC budget, given the significance of these languages in training students for future employment in areas of national need. Applications that include 100 percent support for commonly taught languages are likely to be less competitive.

Q18. May we use NRC funds for student assessments?

The allowable activities listed in §602 of the Title VI statute and in §§656.1 and 656.3 of the NRC program regulations do not include student assessment activities. Grant funds are for establishing, strengthening, or operating a center or program. Applications that include costs for student assessments must clearly demonstrate how testing is necessary for operating the center or program.

Q19. May we use NRC funds to support professional development and the training necessary for administering and analyzing assessments?

Yes. Providing this kind of specialized professional development contributes to strengthening the training and instruction that the center or program offers.

Formatting

Q20. Can we use 10 point font in tables and charts and other parts of the application besides the narrative?

Yes, you may use 10 point font and single spacing in the tables, charts, and appendices of the application. The font must be one of the allowable fonts mentioned in the Notice Inviting Applications. The formatting on the abstract is flexible, but the abstract cannot be more than a page.

Q21. In the faculty bios, what does “academic experience” mean?

“Academic experience” refers to the faculty member’s experience in academia, such as academic advising (number of students advised) over the past five years, and recent academic conferences (convener, presenter, etc.). The “academic experience” does not have to be represented separately—you may integrate it in other parts of the profile, such as “Department and tenure status.” Please be advised that you may use your discretion on how to present the attributes and experiences listed on page 75 of the application package in the profiles, i.e., combine items that logically relate.

Q22. Should we still include a timeline even though it is not now expressly mentioned for appendix material?

A timeline is not required or requested because this is included in the “Program Planning and Budget” narrative response, i.e., “the extent to which the applicant provides a development plan or timeline ...”

Q23. What is the correct abbreviation for the U.S. Department of Education?

The abbreviation for the Department of Education is “ED” or “US/ED.” “DOE” refers to the Department of Energy.

Application Checklist

Q24. Do we use the Application Checklist to organize our applications?

No. The “U.S. Department of Education Application Checklist” is provided to remind applicants of what is required in applications before they submit their applications on or before the deadline date. With the exception of the Appendices information, applicants may use their discretion in organizing/presenting the other sections and forms in their NRC/FLAS grant applications.

Q25. Where can I find fillable forms for the standard forms and assurances?

The link to the standard forms and assurances is on the NRC and FLAS webpages. The link is also here: <http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>.

Deadline

Q26. When is the application due?

The application must be postmarked or hand delivered on or before June 30. There is no electronic submission for this competition. Please see the instructions on page 82 of the application package.