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FULL SERVICE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PROGRAM

(CFDA NUMBER: 84.215J)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Revised 7/ 8/ 2010

FULL-SERVICE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS CFDA 84.215J
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (Revised 7/8/10)

Purpose of the FAQs

The purpose of these Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) is to provide information about the Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) program. The FAQs do not impose any requirements beyond those included in the FSCS program notice inviting applications for new awards for fiscal year 2010 (notice) and other applicable laws and regulations. In addition, they do not create or confer any rights for or on any person.

The Department will provide additional or updated program guidance as necessary on its Full-Service Community Schools Web site: www2.ed.gov/programs/communityschools. If you have further questions that are not answered here, please email FSCS@ed.gov.

Eligible Applicants and Partners

1. What is the definition of a full-service community school?

A full-service community school means a public elementary or secondary school that works with its local educational agency and community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and other public or private entities to provide a coordinated and integrated set of comprehensive academic, social, and health services that respond to the needs of its students, students' family members, and community members. In addition, a full-service community school promotes family engagement by bringing together many partners in order to offer a range of supports and opportunities for students, students' family members, and community members.

2. Who is eligible to apply for a full-service community schools grant?

Eligible applicants under this competition are consortia consisting of a local educational agency and one or more community-based organizations, non-profit organizations, or other public or private entities.

3. Can an individual school be the lead applicant or partner?

Eligible applicants under this program are consortia consisting of a local educational agency (LEA) and one or more community-based organizations, non-profit organizations, or other public or private entities. Generally, an individual school does not have independent authority to apply for a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, or make the commitments required of a consortium partner. Consequently, in most cases -- public elementary and secondary schools -- while they can serve as Full-Service Community School (FSCS) sites -- could not be consortium partners or lead applicants. For that reason, a public elementary or secondary school that lacks the legal authority to apply for a grant on its own, but wants to participate in the FSCS program would need its LEA to form a consortium and submit an application to the Department.

4. Are there any circumstances under which a charter school can serve as a lead applicant or consortium partner?

Yes. In most cases, a charter school, to be an applicant or partner, would have to be an LEA -- as distinct from a school under the jurisdiction of an LEA. As noted in response to question 3, individual schools lack the authority, on their own and distinct from their LEA, to apply for a Federal grant. If the charter school is established as a school under the jurisdiction of an LEA, and does not have the authority to apply for a Federal grant, then the LEA, as part of a consortium, could apply and designate the proposed charter school as the site of the FCSC.

5. Can private schools be part of your full service schools as well as public?

Private schools can serve as partners, but a full-service community school site must be a public elementary or secondary school.

6. Can a consortium applying for FSCS funding include more than one LEA? For example, if a community-based organization (CBO) is countywide and that county

has three local education agencies, can the CBO and multiple LEAs apply collectively as a consortium?

Yes. There is no limit to the number of partners that can be part of an FSCS consortium, including LEA partners.

7. Can a statewide agency (for instance state education agency or statewide non-profit) apply with multiple LEAs?

Yes, although the services provided would need to be at the local level coordinated through one or more FSCS sites.

8. Can a single non-profit entity submit more than one application as the lead applicant?

Yes. However, the Department will not fund applications that are carrying out duplicate or overlapping activities. In other words, the Department will not pay for the same activity twice, even if the activity is included in two separate grant applications. For that reason, if a non-profit entity, or any other eligible entity, is part of more than one application, it should be sure that the activities proposed in the various applications they are part of do not duplicate one another.

9. Can an LEA be part of more than one consortium, and thus be part of multiple application submittals?

Yes. However, as noted in response to question eight, the activities in these various applications cannot duplicate one another.

10. What entity may act as the fiscal agent for an FSCS grant?

The Department will award an FSCS grant to the applicant, which then becomes the grantee. Under all Department grant programs, the grantee is the fiscal agent. A grantee may rely on a third party to perform fiscal management functions related to its FSCS grant. The grantee, however, remains the fiscal agent for the grant and, as such, is responsible for ensuring that grant funds are used for allowable and documented costs.

11. Do applicants have to submit a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for each partner or can it be a single MOU that includes all the partners?

Although there must be an MOU between the applicant and all partners, there is no standard format for the MOU. We strongly encourage applicants, however, to submit a single comprehensive MOU that outlines the roles and responsibilities (see EDGAR 75.127-75.129) of all partners. The MOU should be included in the appendix.

12. Can partners and/or MOUs be changed post-award?

While it is possible to add new partners or alter MOUs post-award, such changes can only be made if they will not alter the scope and objectives of the project as described in the approved applications. Because projects are selected for funding on the basis of their applications, it would undermine the integrity of the competitive review process if changes that alter the scope and objectives of a project were permitted after a grant award has been made. While planning can take place during the first year of an FSCS grant, the planning cannot result in changes to the scope and objectives of the project.

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Since applicants were evaluated by the readers based on the capacity and other attributes of the members of the consortium originally proposed, changes in consortium membership can only be done if the scope and objectives of the project are not altered as a result.

13. If an applicant did not notify the Department of its intent to apply, is the applicant still eligible to apply for an FSCS grant?

Yes. Submitting an intent to apply is not mandatory. Applicants may submit an application for an FSCS grant regardless of whether or not they notified the Department in advance of their intent to apply.

Budget

14. Are costs associated with summer program components or evening and weekends allowable?

Yes. Project services can be delivered before, during, and after regular school hours, as well as during the summer and holiday breaks.

15. Can services occur outside the school building?

Yes. Services can be provided at the school site, off the school site or a combination of both. However, it is important to note that the intent of the FSCS is to serve as a conduit for coordinating and/or providing services. Although supporting schools is an underlying premise of the FSCS program, and schools will likely be the location of many services and opportunities, learning occurs in many settings within a community, not just school buildings. The specific location of the services, while important, is not as critical as the delivery of the services in a well coordinated, results-focused and integrated manner.

16. Can grant funds be used to pay various types of specialized personnel, such as health care professionals, probation officers, and others?

Grant funds could be used to pay such personnel if those personnel are providing services that were related to carrying out an allowable activity, and those personnel are not being compensated for providing this service by their primary employer. Grant funds could only be used to compensate such staff for the amount of time that they were providing services described in and necessary to the implementation of grant activities.

17. Can funds be used to purchase equipment?

Yes. Funds may be used to purchase equipment, provided the costs are reasonable and necessary to carrying out the project's scope of work.

18. What is the Department's definition of planning and what types of planning activities are allowable during the planning year?

The Department has not specifically defined planning and encourages applicants to define planning in the context of their proposals. Interagency collaborative efforts are highly complex undertakings and, as such, require extensive planning and communication among partners and key stakeholders. Therefore, applicants may devote funds received during the first year of the project period to comprehensive program

planning and capacity building. However, planning should be for the purpose of fine tuning the details of the scope of work described in the application submittal, not creating a new or significantly altered scope of work or MOU. Examples of planning and capacity building activities include planning meetings; developing/refining/clarifying administrative procedures and protocols; staff recruitment and training; development of outreach materials; and curriculum development.

19. Must we ask for the same amount of money for each year or can it change from one year to the next?

An applicant can request up to \$500,000 per year for each of five years for total maximum funding of \$2,500,000 over the five-year period. The applicant should specify the amount of funding needed for each of the five years in the original application submittal. The amount of money requested per year can vary, depending on the costs associated with the work proposed in a given year. For instance, costs for program planning may be less than the cost of program implementation. Hence, it is reasonable for an applicant to request less money in year 1 if the grantee is opting to use year 1 for program planning and more funding to cover costs for program implementation in years 2-5. In no event, however, can an applicant request more than \$500,000 of funding for any particular year.

20. For organizations proposing a planning year, what is the expectation with regard to identification of a target population, project objectives, activities, and performance indicators? Specifically, will there be flexibility for organizations to revise/amend these components based on the outcomes of a planning year?

Target population, project objectives, activities, and performance indicators need to be addressed in the original proposal. If an organization proposes a planning year, objectives, activities and performance measures will need to be developed for both the planning year and the remaining years of the project. Under these circumstances, the objectives, activities and performance measures for the first year of the project may be different from those for subsequent years of the project. While a grantee can propose changes to a project after it has been funded on the basis of conclusions reached during their planning year, the Department cannot approve any change that alters the scope and objectives of a project.

21. When is the funding likely to start in terms of planning budget cycles for each year of the grant?

Notification and commencement of funding will begin no later than September 30, 2010. If the Department is able to make awards earlier, we will make every effort to do so. Continuation funding in subsequent years will be based on the year 1 budget start and end dates.

22. When preparing the budget and detailed budget narrative, should the applicant break out costs for each of the partners for each budget year?

Yes. The ED SF-524 (budget information worksheets contained in the application package) should show a summary budget for the project, for each year and each of the

budget categories. The budget narrative should break out those costs for the lead applicant and each of the partners for each year of the project.

23. Should applicants show break out costs for Federal grant funds as well as non-Federal contributions?

Yes. Applicants are required to complete ED SF-524 Section A Budget Summary (U.S. Department of Education Funds) to show a break out of U.S. Department of Education Federal grant funds as well as ED SF-524 Section B Budget Summary (Non-federal Funds) to show matching funds or other non-Federal resources to the project.

24. Should we include money in our budget for a project director's meeting in Washington, DC?

Yes. Applicants should budget for a two-day meeting in Washington, DC for each year of the project period.

25. Is there a minimum amount of funds that an eligible applicant must request in its application for an FSCS grant?

No. The Department has not prescribed a minimum amount of funds that an eligible applicant must request in its application. An eligible applicant should request the amount of funds necessary to carry out the activities described in the notice. The Department estimates that awards will range between \$400,000 and \$500,000. The Department will not award any grant to an applicant with a budget, for any budget period, exceeding \$500,000.

26. Is there a requirement for matching?

Yes. There is a matching or cost share requirement. To be eligible for an award, a portion of the services provided by the applicant must be supported through non-Federal contributions, either in cash or in-kind donations. The applicant must propose the amount of cash or in-kind resources to be contributed for each year of the grant. Applicants should demonstrate the match commitment by including letters in their applications explaining the type and quantity of the match commitment.

27. What is the minimum requirement for matching ?

Although some matching support, either in-kind or cash, must be provided, there is no minimum matching requirement. The amount of matching funds should be based on the needs of the target population and the services to be provided. In addition, applications will be evaluated on the adequacy of resources of the proposed project, including the adequacy of facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources to be provided by the applicant and consortium partners; and the demonstrated commitment of each partner. It is important to note that FSCS Federal grant funds are of greatest benefit when used to coordinate existing resources and services. Community schools cannot be sustained if administrators rely entirely on Federal FSCS funds to provide services.

28. If we have consortium partners that indicate that they're going to provide in-kind services, can we eliminate them from the budget altogether and just include that in the memorandum of understanding?

If consortium partners will be providing in-kind services vital to the successful execution of the proposed scope of work, information about these services should be provided in the budget so that reviewers can thoroughly evaluate the adequacy of resources. A grantee will be held accountable for any in-kind or other contributions by the lead applicant or a consortium partner that are necessary to the project achieving its scope of work and objectives.

29. Can funds from another existing grant be counted toward the matching funds requirement?

Only non-Federal resources will be counted toward the matching funds or cost share requirement.

30. Can we charge indirect costs to the grant?

Yes. Indirect costs can be charged to the grant using a federally approved indirect cost rate. If an applicant does not have a federally approved indirect cost rate at the time of the application submittal, the applicant should include the proposed rate in their proposed budget. Should the applicant receive a grant award, the applicant must apply for a federally approved rate from its cognizant federal agency within 90 days of receiving the award.

Project Design

31. Is there a preferred model or project design that applicants are encouraged to use?

No. The Department encourages the applicant to determine the strategies and models that will best meet the needs of the target populations. The strategies and models must be based on scientifically based research.

32. How does the Department define scientifically based research?

Section 9101 (37) of the ESEA provides a broad definition of scientifically based research. That definition provides, in part, that the term scientifically based research: means research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs.

The full definition of scientifically based research can be found at this link: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg107.html#sec9101>. For the purposes of the FSCS program, an applicant could, for example, cite research, such as that which has been published in a peer reviewed journal, that supports the effectiveness of the models, interventions, strategies, or activities described in their application narrative. There should be some body of evidence that suggests that the strategies that the applicant proposes to employ have been found to be promising or effective.

33. Can FSCS funds be used to continue a project that was established using funds from another grant or are funds only for new FSCS school sites?

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FSCS funds can be used to establish a new or expand an existing FSCS. As long as monies from other funding sources are not commingled with FSCS grant funds, FSCS grant funds can be used to leverage those other funding sources to support the FSCS project.

34. Are there any requirements on the number of pupils served?

No. There is no specific requirement regarding the number of pupils served. The applicant needs to consider whether the cost per pupil is reasonable in relation to the number of students served and the overall impact of grant funds on meeting the needs and particular circumstances of the target population. Serving a large number of students is not in and of itself necessarily a measure of success. The applicant should be able to demonstrate that the project is cost effective, and will achieve its intended results. On the other hand, the project should not serve such a small number of students that it will only have minimal impact. The applicant will need to determine what seems an appropriate balance between available resources and pupils served.

35. Can grant funds be used to deliver services or coordinate services?

FSCS grant funds can be used to deliver services, coordinate services, or a combination of both.

36. What is the Department's definition of need in the context of FSCS?

The Department has not provided a definition of need in the context of the FSCS program. While the Notice Inviting Applications does not specifically include a definition of need, applicants are required to include a description of the needs of the students, students' family members, and community members to be served, including information about (a) the basic demographic characteristics of the students, students' family members, and community members; (b) the magnitude or severity of the needs to be addressed by the project; and (c) the extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructures, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project. Thus, it is up to the applicant to define need in the context of the target population being served.

37. Do FSCS school sites have to be identified in the application or can they be identified after receiving the grant award?

While the application requirements do not specifically include designation of the school site(s), those requirements do include a description of the needs of the students, students' family members, and community members to be served, including information about the basic demographic characteristics of the students, students' family members, and community members; as well as a memorandum of understanding between the applicant and all partner entities, describing the role each partner will assume, the services or resources each one will provide, and the desired results and outcomes. In many cases, such descriptions could be specific to the particular school(s) that would participate in the project. Ultimately, an FSCS project must involve a public elementary or secondary school that will serve as the FSCS site.

38. Are there specific types of demographic data an applicant must provide in the application submittal?

Under the Absolute Priority that was published in the Federal Register for the FSCS program, applicants must provide a description of the needs of the students, students' family members, and community members to be served, including information about the basic demographic characteristics of the students, students' family members, and community members. In addition, applicants must provide a comprehensive plan that includes the estimated total number of individuals to be served, disaggregated by the number of students, students' family members, and community members and the type and frequency of services to be provided to each group. Applicants should provide demographic characteristics appropriate to the needs and context of services proposed in the application. For example, an application proposing early childhood activities might involve different demographic information than an application proposing a high school-level dropout prevention and counseling program.

39. Must each proposed full-service community school have a full-time full-service community school coordinator?

Yes. The FSCS coordinator must be employed full-time in that position at the full-service community school. The FSCS coordinator should work closely with school leadership and community stakeholders to plan and implement a community school strategy that aligns with and strengthens core instruction. Further, the role of the FSCS coordinator should be closely linked to the leadership and management of the school, beyond simply coordinating additional programs and services. Such joint planning entails a full-time commitment and encourages (1) identification of and support for mutually defined results and outcomes that are responsive to students' needs, (2) alignment of services with those needs, and (3) shared accountability for achieving intended outcomes and results.

Competitive Preference

40. Is the Department giving any preference for projects serving particular types of schools?

Yes. The Department is giving competitive preference priority to applications that propose schools that are currently identified as persistently lowest-achieving schools and are currently undergoing or plan to undergo one of three school intervention models to become full-service community schools. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i) we award up to an additional 2 points to an application, depending on how well the application meets this priority. Applicants are required to describe (a) the school intervention model that would be implemented to improve academic outcomes for students; (b) the academic, social, and/or health services that would be provided and why; and (c) how the academic, social and/or health services provided would align with and support the school intervention model implemented. Definitions of persistently lowest-achieving schools and school intervention models can be found in the Notice Inviting Applications for the Full-Service Community Schools program, 75 FR 13781, published in the Federal Register on June 8, 2010.

41. Can a school that used to be a persistently lowest-achieving school but is no longer a persistently lowest-achieving school be eligible to receive the competitive preference?

No. Applications that include schools that are not persistently lowest-achieving may still apply for funds under the FSCS program, but would not be eligible for the competitive preference. In order to meet the competitive preference applicants must propose to serve schools currently identified by the State as persistently lowest-achieving schools that are currently implementing or plan to implement one of three school intervention models to become full-service community schools. Definitions of persistently lowest-achieving schools and school intervention models can be found in the Notice Inviting Applications for the Full-Service Community Schools program, 75 FR 13781, published in the Federal Register on June 8, 2010.

42. Must one of the three school intervention models already be in place for an entity to be eligible to apply for a grant under the FSCS program?

Applications that propose to serve persistently lowest-achieving schools that are planning to implement or are currently implementing one of the three school intervention models are eligible for the competitive preference. Applications that do not propose to serve persistently lowest-achieving schools implementing or planning to implement one of the three school intervention models may still apply for an FSCS grant; however, such applications will not be eligible to receive the competitive preference.

43. Must all of the schools in the application cohort need to be characterized as persistently lowest-achieving schools to qualify for competitive preference?

No. Applicants must propose to serve at least one persistently lowest-achieving school to be eligible for the competitive preference. If an applicant proposes to serve multiple schools, the proposed cohort can include only a persistently lowest-achieving school or schools, or a combination of a persistently lowest-achieving school or schools and schools not identified by the State as persistently lowest-achieving.

44. Where can applicants find a list of the persistently lowest-achieving schools identified by their State?

*Information regarding the persistently lowest-achieving schools for a number of States can be found at the following Department Web site:
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/summary/index.html>. This list includes only those States whose School Improvement Grant applications have been approved by the Department; applications from other States are currently under review and will be added to the Web site as they are approved. Applicants from States whose applications are not provided on this Web site should contact their State educational agencies directly for this information.*

45. Is the Department giving any preference for projects serving particular states or regions?

No. There is no preference based on state, region, type of community (i.e., rural vs. urban), number of FSCS sites, or the number of partners.

Services

46. What are the Department’s definitions of the eligible services under FSCS listed in the Federal Register notice?

The Department has not provided definitions of the eligible services under FSCS and encourages applicants to define those services in the context of their proposals.

47. Must services be delivered only during regular school hours?

No. Services can be provided before, during, or after regular school hours, as well as on weekends, holidays, and during the summer.

48. Can FSCS grant funds be used to pay for physical education?

No. We consider physical education to be a component of the in-school curriculum that, and as such, should not be supported using FSCS grant funds. Physical activities, however, are allowable if carried out in association with nutrition services or with mentoring and youth development services.

49. Is the provision of corrective eyewear an allowable use of FSCS funds?

Yes. Vision screening and vision care, including the provision of corrective eyewear, are allowable activities under the primary health care and dental care service category.

50. What types of mental health services can be provided using FSCS grant funds?

Mental health services encompass a broad range of school- and community-based services, including but not limited to clinical mental health services. The type of mental health interventions may vary and should be based on the needs of the service recipient. Applicants may define the appropriate type of mental health interventions needed to meet the needs of their target population.

Evaluation

51. Do we need to have an independent evaluator, or can one of our partners serve as an evaluator?

An applicant can use an independent evaluator or can utilize the expertise of the consortium partners if such capability is available in-house.

52. How much money should be allocated for evaluation?

There is no minimum designation on the amount of funds to be allocated for evaluation activities. Applicants should allocate funds commensurate with the resources required to effectively implement their evaluation plan.