

FY19 Comprehensive Centers (CC) Program Responses to Questions from Interested Applicants

Note: The following questions and discussion are in response to questions received during the webinars for applicants interested in the FY19 Comprehensive Centers (CFDA 84.283B) grant competition.

Eligibility

Who is eligible to apply for a grant under this program?

Research organizations, institutions, agencies, institutions of higher learning (IHE), or partnerships among such entities, or individuals, with the demonstrated ability or capacity to carry out the activities described in the Notice Inviting Applications.

Are SEAs, REAs, LEAs, and schools, or partnerships among such entities, eligible to apply for a grant under this program?

No. Per the design and purpose of the Comprehensive Centers Program, SEAs, REAs, LEAs, and schools are clients, recipients, and/or beneficiaries of Comprehensive Center services, not grantees.

Regions

Where does an applicant need to be located in order to be eligible to serve Region 13?

Applicant(s) must propose that the Center be located in New Mexico or Oklahoma.

Application and Program Requirements

Who are clients?

As described in the NFP, Chief State School Officers (CSSOs) or their designees are clients. Regional Centers must demonstrate that they have consulted and garnered commitment from CSSOs or their designees prior to carrying out capacity-building services.

Who are recipients?

As described in the NFP, Recipients are teams at the SEA, REA-, LEA-, or school-level and are identified in consultation with the CSSO.

Are State service plans developed after award for the first year? Do you require a five-year plan as part of the application, or should applicants address the process and requirements for developing five-year plans for all States?

Applicants must submit a five-year plan that describes how the Center will develop and implement effective capacity-building services and continuously monitor the outcomes of those services. In developing this five-year plan, applicants should propose how it will address the required service plan elements i.e., high-leverage problems to be addressed, phases of implementation (e.g., needs assessment), capacity-building services to be delivered, key personnel responsible, key Department-funded technical assistance partners, milestones, outputs, outcomes, and if appropriate, fidelity measures.

Successful applicants will submit their Year 1 State service plan to the Department upon award. Reporting deadlines and requirements will be included as part of the Department's cooperative agreement with each grantee.

Selection Criteria

Can the Department clarify the intent or scope of the selection criteria?

No. We cannot advise applicants on how they should respond to the selection criteria under this competition.

Competitive Preference Priorities

How do competitive preference priorities work and how many points can I earn in total?

As described in detail in our NIA, this competition includes a total of six Competitive Preference Priorities (CPPs).

Applicants for a Regional Center can earn up to an additional 12 points by writing well-developed responses to the following CPPs:

- CPP 1: Novice Applicants (0 or 3 points)
- CPP 2: Promoting Effective Instruction in Classrooms and Schools (up to 6 points)
- CPP 3: Empowering Families and Individuals To Choose a High-Quality Education That Meets Their Unique Needs (up to 3 points)

Applicants for the national center can also earn up to an additional 12 points by writing well-developed responses to the following CPPs:

- CPP 1: Novice Applicants (0 or 3 points)
- CPP 4: Promoting Effective Instruction in Classrooms and Schools (up to 3 points)
- CPP 5: Promoting Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math (STEM) Education, With a Particular Focus on Computer Science (up to 3 points)
- CPP 6: Empowering Families and Individuals To Choose a High-Quality Education That Meets Their Unique Needs (up to 3 points)

CPPs are points added in addition to points applicants may earn by responding to the selection criteria. In this competition, applicants may earn up to 100 points by writing well-developed responses to the selection criteria. If an applicant for either the Regional Center or national center earns all their available CPP points, they may have a total score of no more than 112 points.

If an eligible entity (e.g., institute of higher education) received a discretionary grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Department) in the last five years, will it qualify as a novice applicant?

No. In accordance with 34 CFR 75.225(a)(1)(iii), the entity is not considered a novice applicant and would be ineligible to receive competitive preference points under Competitive Preference Priority 1 for a Regional Center or the National Center.

If an office or unit (e.g., college of education) has not received a discretionary grant from the Department in the last five years, but its parent entity (e.g., institute of higher education) has received a grant from the Department in the last five years, will the office or unit qualify as a novice applicant?

No. Generally, the office or unit (e.g., college of education) that carries out grant activities is not the applicant; rather, the parent organization (e.g., IHE) is the applicant. Because the IHE is the applicant, the office or unit of the IHE would not be considered a novice applicant because the IHE has received a Federal grant in the last five years.

If entities elect to submit a group application, do those entities also need to meet the criteria of novice applicants for the application to be awarded competitive preference points?

Yes. In accordance with 34 CFR 75.225(a)(2), all entities in the group application (as defined in 34 CFR 75.127) need to meet the novice applicant criteria in order to be awarded an additional three points. However, these criteria do not apply to subrecipients, subcontractors, and consultants that are not part of the group.

Where can I find more information on group applications?

Please refer to 34 CFR 75.127-75.129 to understand what constitutes a group application.

Regional Educational Laboratories (REL)

What are the differences between the goals of the REL program and the CC program and what types of services do they each provide?

RELs help SEAs, LEAs, schools, state higher education agencies, postsecondary institutions and other education stakeholders solve problems using research, data analysis, or evidence-based practices. RELs work with education stakeholders to solve an education problem or program by providing technical support for: data collection, data analysis, research studies, and understanding the implications of data and study findings that were produced with REL support and taking the next steps to identify and implement an appropriate evidence-based practice or policy.

In contrast, CCs help SEAs and LEAs implement ESSA programs using evidence-based practices. CCs work with SEAs, REAs, LEAs, and schools to implement ESSA programs and continually improve those programs by supporting the SEAs/LEAs in the selection and implementation of evidence-based practices and the use of improvement science to improve those practices over time.

Are letters of support from RELs or other organizations such as Federally-funded technical assistance providers required as part of my application?

No. Within 90 days of receiving funding for an award, grantees must provide copies of memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) in the region that the Center serves and Department-funded technical assistance providers that are charged with supporting comprehensive, systemic changes in States or Department-funded technical assistance providers with particular expertise (e.g., early learning or instruction for English language learners).

Application Submission

Can I apply for more than one Regional Center?

Yes. If an eligible entity wants to apply for funding for more than one Center, it must submit a separate application for each Center. In addition, the Department prefers, but does not require, that an eligible entity applies for either the National Center or one or more Regional Centers. The Department will, however, consider multiple applications from one entity applying for one or more Regional Centers and the National Center as long as the entity submits a separate application for each Center. An eligible entity must indicate the other Centers to which it is applying in its application consistent with 34 CFR 75.126.

Can I apply for multiple Regional Centers and the National Center?

Yes. While we prefer that eligible entities apply for either the National Center or one or more Regional Centers, we will consider multiple applicants from one entity applying for one or more Regional Centers and the National Center if the entity submits a separate application for each Center. An eligible entity must indicate the other Centers to which it is applying in its application consistent with 34 CFR 75.126.

Do I need to submit a separate application for each Regional Center?

Yes. If an eligible entity wants to apply for funding for more than one Center, it must submit a separate application for each Center and indicate in its applications the other Centers to which it is applying consistent with 34 CFR 75.126.

What are some factors to consider when applying for multiple Centers?

If an applicant submits multiple applications that fall within the funding range, after review and comparison of those applications, the Department may choose not to fund all applications that propose using the same project personnel or providing duplicative services as other fundable applications.

Funding and Budgets

What steps has the Department taken to ensure adequate funding to serve rural populations?

We have established a minimum award amount of \$1 million for each Regional Center, contingent on appropriations. This award amount should enable centers that serve rural areas to account for the increased cost burdens of service delivery.

Are estimated awards for the first year of the grant or for the entire five-year grant?

Estimated awards are for the first year of the grant. Consistent with 34 CFR 75.253, continuation awards are contingent on (among other factors) appropriations, if the grantee has made substantial progress and submitted all required reports, if continuation of the grant is in the best interest of the Federal government, and if the grantee has maintained financial and administrative management systems specified in 2 CFR 200.302-303.

How are Regional Center award amounts calculated?

Consistent with section 203 of the ETAA (20 U.S.C. 9601 et seq.), we consider the school-age population, proportion of economically disadvantaged students, and the increased costs of service delivery in areas of sparse population when determining the amount of funds to make available to each Regional Center.

When will awards be made, and what will be the start date for projects receiving funds?

We expect all CC grants to be awarded by September 30, 2019. The project period for all CC grants is to officially begin on October 1, 2019 at which time grantees will be able to draw down funds. Under 2 CFR 200.308(d), no prior approval is required for pre-award costs incurred up to 90 days before the budget period begins. These expenditures, however, must be in the approved budget, properly documented, and meet other statutory and regulatory requirements, including those set out in the Uniform Guidance. All costs incurred before the Federal awarding agency makes the Federal award are at the recipient's risk (i.e., the Federal awarding agency is under no obligation to reimburse such costs if for any reason the recipient does not receive a Federal award or if the Federal award is less than anticipated and inadequate to cover such costs).

Am I required to submit a budget only for the first year or for all budget periods (FY2020 through FY2024)?

Yes. You are required to submit a budget for each budget period (60 months) as part of your application.

What amount should I propose for each subsequent budget period (FY2021 through FY2024)?

You may use the estimated award amounts in the NIA, if you so choose. Funding for the subsequent budget periods of years two through five (FY 2021 through FY 2024) is contingent on appropriation levels. The program office will provide allocation estimates for the subsequent budget period before the end of the current budget period.

Where must I document subcontractor/sub-awardee and consultants in the Budget?

Record subcontractor/subawardee and consultant costs in the Contractual category if you have secured a binding agreement with those entities or individuals.

On page 38, under suggested guidelines for the budget narrative, it asks us to provide the salary for each position. Is an average salary acceptable when there is more than one staff member for each position?

Please provide the salary for each key personnel or staff member.

On page 38, under suggested guidelines for the budget narrative, it asks to give the fringe benefits of all personnel, do we need to provide the base for each position listed, or is it acceptable to combine all personnel costs?

You may provide a total for fringe benefits for all key personnel. In your budget narrative, you should give the fringe benefit percentages of all personnel included under Personnel and provide the rate and base on which fringe benefits are calculated.

Formatting and Page Limit Recommendations

What formatting restrictions apply with regard to font size?

There are no formatting restrictions. We recommend, but do not require, the use of font size 12 point or larger for the application narrative. For footnotes, quotations, references, captions, as well as text in charts, tables, figures, and graphs we recommend being no smaller than font size 10 point.

What formatting restrictions apply with regard to spacing?

There are no formatting restrictions. We recommend, but do not require, double-spacing all text except in cases where such double-spacing will cause formatting issues (e.g., misalignment) or impact responses to the application requirements. The logic model, for example, could be presented in single-spaced size 10 font.

Are references cited included in the application narrative page limit?

There is no page limit. No references cited are not included in the page limit. Moreover, an applicant does not need to submit references as part of the application narrative. An applicant may include references as an attachment.

Can I submit the communications plan (requirement 5), evaluation plan (requirement 6), and logic model (requirement 7) in the appendices section of the application?

Yes. We prefer, but do not require, that you submit these documents in the appendices section of the application.

Are appendices, such as supplemental exhibits and references cited, permitted as attachments to the Other Attachments Form?

Yes. We prefer, but do not require, that you provide an annotation that concisely describes how the attachment, such as a supplemental exhibit, responds to a selection criterion or selection criteria, application requirement(s), or program requirement(s) in the Notice Inviting Applications.