

**PSC-ED-OCO**

**Moderator: Karen Stratman-Krusemark  
October 5, 2011  
2:00 pm CT**

Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by.

At this time, all participants are in a listen-only mode.

At the end of the presentation, we will conduct a question-and-answer session.  
To ask a question, please press star 1.

Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may  
disconnect at this time.

Now I will turn the meeting over to Ms. Karen Stratman-Krusemark.

Ma'am, you may begin.

Karen Stratman-Krusemark: Thank you, (Brandon).

Good afternoon everyone. Thank you for taking time out of your schedule to join us this afternoon for this third in a series of technical assistance efforts regarding the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge.

We have a number of folks here in the room for you today, most notably senior officials from the Department of Ed and the Department of Health and Human Services who are, as you know are jointly leading this effort on Early Learning.

As the operator mentioned to you, we're going to give you some information to get us started and then we will open it up to your questions and the answers we can provide.

So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Jacqueline Jones.

Jacqueline is a Senior Advisor on Early Learning here at the Department of ED.

Jacqueline Jones: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you so much for joining us. We know that you've been working hard to get these applications completed with the application due date of exactly two weeks from today. The main purpose of this call is to review the application submission procedures with you as you work on finalizing the last details of your Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge application.

We also want to share a few important reminders and see if you have any remaining questions. So I'm going to hand this over to Miriam Calderon from the Department of Health and Human Services.

Miriam Calderon: Thank you, Jacqueline.

Good afternoon states. It's great to be here today and go over some very important details that you'll need to know in order to submit your Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge application.

As a reminder, the deadline for this application is October 19th. The applications must be received by 4:30 pm Washington, D.C. time. Applications for grants under this competition must be submitted by mail or hand delivery. And you'll get a few more details on that in a moment. We strongly recommend the use of overnight mail. Any applications postmarked on the deadline date but arriving late will not be read.

You all should have received this morning some application submission tips. If you have those handy, please refer to that as I will be talking off of that regarding the format for application submission.

As a reminder, you can also review Page 111 of the Early Learning Challenge application for all of the details that are on this submission tips handout.

So to start us off, please remember that all applications must be submitted in electronic format on a CD or DVD. We strongly request that the application on a CD or DVD includes the following files: a single file that contains the body of the application including required budget tables that has been converted into a [searchable] PDF. Note that a PDF created from a scanned document will not be searchable. You'll need to include a single file in a PDF format that contains all of the required signature pages. The signature pages may be scanned and turned into a PDF. And finally, copies of the completed electronic budget spreadsheet with the required budget tables, which can be in a separate file from the body of the application.

Each of these items must be clearly labeled with your state's name and any other relevant identifying information. As a reminder, please do not use passwords to protect any files. You should not include hyperlinks to Web sites in your application. We recommend that your format of your applications be in black and white. When we print the applications for the reviewer, the application will not be printed in color.

And the applications suggest a specific page limit for the narrative text and the appendices. These page limits are recommended, but not required. Again, they are recommendations, but not requirements. So use your best judgment on that.

Finally, while the application should be submitted electronically, applicants must submit a signed original of Section IV of the application and a copy of that original section of the application.

With that, I'm going to hand it over to my colleague, Jennifer Tschantz, who's going to talk about submissions by mail or by hand delivery also on your tips sheet.

Jennifer Tschantz: Great. Thanks, Miriam.

And I also just wanted before I jump into the two different options you have for getting your applications to us, one is to point that Section IV of the application that Miriam just talked about is the place where everybody is signing your applications. And that is found on pages 20 through 23. So there are three pages there. So for that whole section, be sure that you follow the - our recommendations on what needs to be submitted.

The two options you have to get us your application are clearly through mail or hand delivery. As Miriam mentioned, if you are planning on mailing it to us, we strongly recommend that you send the applications by overnight mail. And there is - the address for mailing it is right here in this form. This is also as Miriam mentioned on - beginning on Page 111 of the application when you are looking for that specific address.

If you are going to hand deliver, we will accept the hand deliveries between 8:00 am and 4:30 pm, Washington D.C. time, during the week and except for Saturdays, Sundays and federal holidays. So we don't have any federal holidays too close. I doubt seriously anybody on Columbus Day will be ready to turn it in. But just in case, we will not be here and you cannot turn it in through hand delivery that day.

If you are going to hand deliver it, one thing to note is pay attention to time. There is a security desk at that location. And so I would not recommend that you hand deliver right at the 11th hour there at 4:20 because you may not get through security in time to get it delivered by 4:30.

I also wanted to point out that the addresses are different between mailing the application in and hand delivery. So please note that and make sure that you're copying down the correct address if you're giving it to a courier versus if you're giving it to - through a traditional mail source.

And also we wanted to note, please do not send the application to both of the addresses, just to one.

Another important thing to note when you are pulling your application and putting everything in the envelope, we get a lot of - we have a lot of different competitions that are ongoing here at the department and also at HHS. And so

it's really important that you, on the envelope, really clarify which competition this is. And that's the CFDA number. And it's this number 84.412. And that's really, really important to ensure that your application ends up in the right pile of applications to be reviewed.

And then if - the application control center does provide a notification of receipt once they've received your grant application. So if you don't receive that - and I'm not sure how quickly they turn these around, but I would encourage you to call the control center if you haven't heard anything and you're certain that it's been there because you definitely want that receipt.

Finally on this tips sheet, we again provided the resources that we've been providing hopefully all along. We hope these are very familiar to you and that we hope that you're visiting the Web site frequently. We try and get information out to you as quickly as possible through e-mail, but it doesn't hurt to check that Web site just in case to see if there are any updates.

One thing I wanted to note here was that we recently posted the transcript from our September 13th Technical Assistance Workshop. So hopefully you've seen that. And then as always, you can e-mail us at RTT Early Learning Challenge e-mail address or call the phone number. And we are trying to get back to you as quickly as possible.

And with that, I'm going to turn it over to my colleague from HHS, Richard Gonzales.

Richard Gonzales: Hello everybody. And thank you, Jennifer.

I'd like to start my comments with reminders about page lengths recommendations.

As noted in the tips sheet, there are recommended page lengths for your response to each selection criteria. These are indicated in the application narrative box associated with each selection criteria.

We have recommended that you limit your total narrative response to no more than 150 pages of state-authored text and that you limit your appendices to no more than an additional 150 pages. We realize that staying within these page limits may be difficult especially when you're including copies of such items of standards in the appendices. As we said during the training, these page lengths are not binding and you will not be penalized for exceeding these recommendations. But we do remind you to keep the reviewers in mind and strive for brevity and conciseness.

For all responses, we request that the following standards be used: a page is 8-1/2x11 on one side only with 1-inch margins at the top, bottom and both sides; you want to number each page and set the line spacing for the narrative to 1.5 spacing and use a 12-point Times New Roman font.

As a reminder, the page length recommendations can be found on Page 11 of the application under the Application Instructions.

I want you to know we've received questions about whether tables need to be 1.5 line spacing and 12-point font. We have not provided any specific guidance on this, so use your best judgment.

As far as the application checklist, we also wanted to remind you that we developed an application checklist for states to use and double check that they have included everything in their applications. This checklist can be found on pages 114 to 116 of the application.

Finally, key messages about the application that I would like to repeat. We want to make sure that you tell your state story and present your state's vision and plan, that you describe and support what you say was done and what will be done, and that you assume the reviewer knows nothing about your state.

Now I'm going to pass this onto (Beth) to continue the conversation.

Beth Caron: Thank you, Richard.

Before we open up to your questions, I just want to highlight a couple of things for you. One is that we posted the new FAQ document, the addendum, yesterday afternoon. Hopefully, you've all had a chance to take a look at that.

That addendum includes FAQs that clarify completing the tables in (A)(1), specifically Table (A)(1)-4, which we got quite a few comments and questions about in the training. So we've added some clarification around that.

There's some clarification on the lead agency, as well as FAQs on budgets and MOUs. So take a look at those if you have questions in those areas. And there's also information that's been included on the peer review process.

Some of the other common questions that we've received recently are on indirect cost rates and on the budget years that you should use in your budget tables.

As we indicated in the TA session, the budget years for your grant budget tables must coincide with the grant period, which is January to December for this program, so the calendar years for this program. Those are the budget tables that you'll be presenting in your budget section.

The question of indirect cost rates came up from a couple of different states. So we wanted to give you a little clarification on that.

Because the participating state agencies in your state may have different indirect cost rates, the state may choose to either allow each participating state agency to use its own approved indirect cost rates or to use the same approved indirect cost rate for all of the participating agencies. But keep in mind, if you choose to use a single indirect cost rate, you must use the lowest-approved rate among the participating state agencies in your state. If you choose to use different approved indirect cost rates for the different participating state agencies, you'll need to make a copy of the indirect cost form that's on Page 91 of your application and complete that form for each of your participating state agencies.

We also realize that there are other budget-related questions that may arise as you finalize your applications. And we want to make sure that you are aware that the Departments will be reviewing the budgets of the highest-ranking applications prior to making grant awards to ensure that they are compliant with necessary laws and regulations. And we will resolve any outstanding issues at that time.

I also want to point out that we will have someone manning our Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge phone number, which is 202-453-6400. On the day of submission, we'll have someone at that number and answering that line throughout the day. So if you have any last-minute submission questions on the day of submission, we will make sure there's someone manning that line to answer any questions.

Okay? I'll turn it over to you.

Karen Stratman-Krusemark: So we'd like now to turn to Q&A portion. Luckily, we have a good block of time to take your questions.

So, (Brandon), if you would remind people of the instructions, then we'll start doing that now?

Coordinator: Thank you.

We will now begin the question-and-answer session. If you would like to ask a question, please press star 1. Please unmute your phone and record your name. To withdraw your question, you may press star 2.

Once again, if you would like to ask a question, please press star 1.

One moment, please for our first question.

Our first question is from (Joan Blough).

Your line is now open.

(Joan Blough): Hi, we - hi. We have a question about our letter of support from our Head Start training and technical assistance agency. They let us know that they got direction from the federal level that they were not to support this grant application. And so we wanted to confirm that or if we should be working with them to get a letter of support.

Richard Gonzales: Yes, but it is not a required letter of support for the application.

(Joan Blowe): Okay.

Richard Gonzales: And there there's no penalty for not having such a letter.

(Joan Blough): Okay. Thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (Rolf Grafwallner).

Your line is now open.

(Rolf Grafwallner): Thank you.

Quick question about a provision in there that spoke to names of vendors, can we in the application include vendors that we currently work with? Or is the provision covered for current vendors and future vendors?

Jane Hess: So you're asking whether you should - we definitely don't want you to name any vendors in your application because that would potentially violate your procurement laws. Is there a reason why you feel it's necessary to include other vendors' names? We're not sure.

(Rolf Grafwallner): Well, it's - yes, I understand that it - you know, there are some procurement issues. But if you're currently working with vendors on particular project, can they be included? If it's a no, it's fine. I just need to know whether that's what the rules are.

Jane Hess: There's no prohibition on doing that, but in order to be conservative and careful, you probably should not name them because you still - in theory, even if it's someone you're still working with, if you wanted to somehow use grant funds for them to do something more than what they're currently doing, you would still probably have to go through some procurement to do that. So then

in my mind, it just falls in the same category as someone who isn't currently working for you.

(Rolf Grafwallner): Okay.

Beth Caron: But use your own judgment on it. But to be conservative, I would not name a vendor whether you're working with them currently or not.

(Rolf Grafwallner): Thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (George Lemma).

Your line is now open.

(George Lemma): Hi. Quick question on the notification of receipt, how quickly will those be sent out so we know more or less when to expect them and when we should call if we didn't?

Jennifer Tschantz: We don't - we're not exactly sure, but I think, you know - again use your best judgment. If you send it in on the 19th, it may take a little longer because they're going to be sending many receipts. If you send it in earlier, you might expect it sooner. So I think, you know, I think by the end of that week, if you haven't seen anything.

(George Lemma): Thanks.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (Glen Price).

Your line is now open.

(Glen Price): (All right), thank you.

We actually have three questions. Is it okay to ask all of them at once or should I go one by one?

Beth Caron: Sure.

(Glen Price): First question is, do you all require originals of letter of support?

Beth Caron: No, only the signature pages need to be original. The letters of support can be part of the PDF.

(Glen Price): Fantastic. Thank you.

Is it okay to have different or more than one format of an MOU?

Beth Caron: It - as long as you're following the requirements that are in the MOU guidelines, you're welcome to modify that and use it in different formats.  
Sure.

(Glen Price): Great.

And then also about MOUs, can a participating state agency complete an MOU and scope of work, but not submit budget pages if they are not asking for any grant fund?

Beth Caron: So you're saying you'll have a participating state agency that's not receiving any of the funds, but you want to still outline what scope of work they'll be doing?

(Glen Price): Yes.

Beth Caron: Yes, I think that's perfectly reasonable. Yes.

(Glen Price): Okay. Thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (Melissa Bailey).

Your line is now open.

(Melissa Bailey): We have a question about the indirect cost information. We use a cost allocation method. And so would we put no to the cost - to a cost rate agreement and use the 10% as a placeholder?

Rachel Peternith: Why don't you send us your question via the e-mail box and we'll get back to you on a one-on-one basis?

(Melissa Bailey): Okay.

Rachel Peternith: Thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (Phyllis Alexander).

Your line is now open.

(Phyllis Alexander): Yes. I noticed in your tips sheet, it did not specifically talk about the appendix. Would that be a separate document, PDF document?

Beth Caron: We have requested that, if at all possible, you put your narrative and your appendices in one PDF. But if that's too big a file to deal with, then it's fine to do your narrative as one PDF and your appendices as a separate PDF.

(Phyllis Alexander): Okay, thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (Karen Garver).

Your line is now open.

(Karen Garver): Hi. In the appendix, is it okay if there are documents that we do have to scan in and therefore aren't searchable? Just in the appendix.

Beth Caron: Yes. That's fine.

(Karen Garver): Great. Thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (Jaycee Holmes).

Your line is now open.

(Jaycee Holmes): I have a question regarding the budget and the distinction between Line 6 in the budget forms, which is for contractual services, and Line 11, which includes in its definition contracts. Is there a specific approach that we should be taking when making a distinction on where to apply our budget information?

Beth Caron: Yes. The Line 6 - I don't have it in front of me now.

Line 6 is the contractual that you would normally have when you're doing contracts. But Line 11 is the funds that you would be distributing down to the local level, which would probably be through a contract as well as another mechanism.

So the distinction is that that's the funds that are going to locals for the implementation of your plan versus Line 6, which is the other kind of larger-scale sort of statewide kind of contracts you'd be doing.

So you'll have to use your judgment to some extent. But 11 is really about funding down to the local level for implementation.

(Jaycee Holmes): Okay, thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (Joan Blough).

Your line is now open.

(Joan Blough): Good afternoon. This is (Joan Blough).

I understand from the comment that was - the guidance that was provided previously that we are not to list vendors. So how should we reflect on the budget, these differing amounts that would be going to different vendors? Should we just say Vendor 1, Vendor 2, Vendor 3, or Contract 1, Contract 2, Contract 3?

Beth Caron: Well you would describe them in whatever way you need to without naming them because, since you don't have the funds yet, you wouldn't be able to procure their services. And so we need to make sure that you don't violate anything by naming them.

So you can give them whatever euphemistic description you need to, to describe. But the idea in your budget is to say that you're looking for a vendor that will do these sorts of activities at this cost, for this purpose.

(Joan Blough): Thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (Chad d'Entremont).

Your line is now open.

(Chad d'Entremont): Hi. I have a question about the filling out of the budget tables compared to the other tables in the document. You said that for the budget tables, it should be the calendar year from January through December. My notes to the TA session that was previously held said that other tables in the application could be the fiscal year which matched how funding was allocated in individual states. Is that correct?

Beth Caron: Yes, that's correct. There are some tables that you can certainly do in fiscal year because they're about your past state budgets. It's only the budget ones that have to be in the calendar year specifically.

(Chad d'Entremont): Excellent. Thank you.

Coordinator: At this time I would like to remind participants, if you would like to ask a question, please press star 1.

Our next question is from (Joan Blowe).

Your line is now open.

(Karen Robeck): Hi. This is (Karen Robeck) from Michigan. And we're still trying to understand the procurement process. And specifically, we have an evaluator that we've been working with for a larger project of evaluating our Great Start System. And that includes a quality rating and improvement system. And that was - they were found. They won that contract through competitive bid process. And so if I'm understanding you correctly, even in an evaluation piece, we would not name the vendor because we would be violating their procurement process.

Rachel Peternith: I would recommend that you talk to your state procurement office about what is required in your state. So the bottom line is you guys have to follow your own state procurement laws if you got this grant. And then you're going to sort of, you know, give it to various contracts, which may include the entity you're going to name.

So if naming them is going to violate your procurement laws, you're not going to be able to give the money into this program. So I'd recommend you talk to them. But we've given the sort of blanket recommendation to all of the applicants not to include vendors for that reason.

(Karen Robeck): Okay. Thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (Karen Woodhouse).

Your line is now open.

(Karen Woodhouse): Thank you.

This is (Karen Woodhouse) and (Ida Rose Florez) from Arizona. We were wondering if you could give us a little bit more information about the type of evidence that you're requesting for each of the tables. Are you looking for an actual copy of a report or for us to name the source from which the data was extracted?

Jennifer Tschantz: We're looking for the source. And anything - you know, for each of those tables, in the bottom of each of those tables, there's a place for you to explain the data, describe if there're any anomalies and also give us the source. And there were a couple of places where we actually requested that that be included, but, you know, I would air on the side of providing as much information as you can about your data source.

And then, you know, making - use your best judgment. If there are reports or anything that you want to add in the appendix, you know, you are free to do that. But use your best judgment.

(Karen Woodhouse): All right. Thanks.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (Glen Price).

Your line is now open.

(Glen Price): Yes, thank you.

Just a quick question around links, you mentioned earlier a request not to include hyperlinks to Web sites in the application. But we assume it's okay to include links in footnotes as long as they're not hyperlinks.

Beth Caron: We are instructing reviewers not to go to links.

(Glen Price): Right.

Beth Caron: So if you're expecting them to find information at a link, then they're not going to be going there and getting that information. So you need to include everything in there that you want them to look at. If you're using a link in a footnote as a reference saying that's where you got it from, that's perfectly acceptable. But the reviewers will not be following that link to find out where it goes.

(Glen Price): Great. Thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (Rolf Grafwallner).

Your line is now open.

(Rolf Grafwallner): A question about a state that is collaborating with another state, is it sufficient to have a letter of commitment between those two states or does it have to be an MOU?

Beth Caron: We have not given any guidance on what that should look like, so you should use your discretion.

(Rolf Grafwallner): Thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (Stephanie Siddens).

Your line is now open.

(Stephanie Siddens): Hello. This is Ohio, and we have a question about Table (A)(1)-10, the number and percentage of early childhood educators who have the credential. We can tell you how many have their credentials, but what is the denominator that you want to use for the percentage?

Beth Caron: So the idea in the Workforce section was that you would give us your - the number in the credential and the denominator would be all of the early childhood educators in your state. So if you pulled all of those credentials together, that would be your total and that would be what you'd use as your denominator.

Does that make sense?

(Stephanie Siddens): Well, it - I understand that, but that would certainly not cover all folks that were currently working in the field. And many of those folks may even have more than one of the credentials that we're listing. So I'm not...

((Crosstalk))

Beth Caron: Yes. And that's where you'd use that bottom section of the table to really explain your data in your state.

(Stephanie Siddens): Okay. Thank you.

Miriam Calderon: Folks, I want to remind everyone that we have about another 20 minutes to take questions. We had scheduled this call from 3:00 to 4:00 and that we will not be taking any additional questions beyond this call unless they are logistical in nature or related to your submission as my colleague, (Beth), described.

We in no way want to cause states to rework applications as we are nearing the deadline by issuing late guidance. So please take a moment or two and think about those remaining questions you have during the time that we've got set aside for you and let us know if there's anything else that we can answer for you.

Coordinator: And at this time I would like to remind participants, if you would like to ask a question, to please press star 1.

I'm showing no further questions at this time.

Miriam Calderon: Yes. Okay, great folks. So we are going to then move onto wrapping up this call.

Just a few notes, we will be taking logistical questions. And you should continue to submit those through the RTT-ELC email box.

Again, we want to reiterate that applications received after 4:30:00, including 4:30:01 and 4:30:02 will not be accepted. So please consider the options that you have for submission of your applications, and remember the deadline is 4:30:00 sharp, Washington, D.C. time. Okay?

I'm seeing that we have two questions that have just come in. So we're going to go ahead and take those.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (Julie Smith).

Your line is now open.

(Julie Smith), your line is now open.

(Julie Smith): In the Chart (C)(3)(d), “Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual statewide target,” there are columns - or rows that ask for the number of children with high needs who participate in ongoing health care. And our Medicaid numbers don’t exactly meet up with this criteria, so creating performance standards and targets around these numbers is very difficult. Do you have any recommendations on how to go about doing that?

Richard Gonzales: We recognize that states have very different ways of collecting this data. And that’s why the box below really allows you to explain what you are providing in terms of numbers. We - there’s really no guidance to give other than to use your best judgment to explain what the realities are in your state, so that the reviewer reading it will understand what they’re looking at and that this was how you pulled those numbers.

(Julie Smith): Thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (Penny Millburn).

Your line is now open.

(Penny Millburn): Thank you.

This is a question related to your earlier comments about page numbering. As we insert our narrative and try to meet the guidelines you have provided in the application itself, can we feel free to renumber all the page numbers within the application and delete things such as the definitions or should we leave those in? Which would you advise?

Beth Caron: That's certainly fine for you to change the page numbers. And you can delete the definitions.

As we've said in the TA session, we'd like you to leave in the instructions and the other information that would be helpful to reviewers to orient themselves to your narratives. But certainly, you can remove all the front matter and the back matter and change the page numbers.

(Penny Millburn): Yes, thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question is from (Glen Price).

Your line is now open.

(Glen Price): Yes, thank you.

I'm wondering, if we confront a case where we're simply unable to get data for a particular table or reliable data, what would you suggest that we do?

Beth Caron: As we mentioned in the training, if you don't have data, you can provide estimates and explain that and describe that. Beyond that, we can't really advise you how else you would handle it. So you have to use your judgment and provide what you can and explain. And then that's the most guidance we can really give.

(Glen Price): Thank you.

Coordinator: We have no further questions at this time.

Miriam Calderon: Great. Thank you.

Well, folks, it's a homestretch and we've been just incredibly excited by all of the interest in this competition and all of the hard work that we know is going out there and is happening out there in states and on behalf of young children. We look forward to receiving these applications by October 19th at 4:30 pm and continuing to be responsive to any of your questions related to application submission.

Thank you on behalf of both Departments, and continue the great work out there.

Woman: Good luck, everybody.

Coordinator: This now concludes today's conference. You may disconnect at this time.

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