

Frequently Asked Questions – FY 2019 STEP

GENERAL APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose of the State Tribal Education (STEP) grant program?

The program purposes are: (1) to promote Tribal self-determination in education; (2) to improve the academic achievement of Indian children and youth; and (3) to promote the coordination and collaboration of Tribal educational agencies (TEAs) with State educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs) to meet the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of Indian students.

2. Who is eligible to apply for the FY 2019 STEP competition?

Federally-recognized or state-recognized Indian Tribes or Tribal organizations approved by an Indian Tribe that do not have a TEA

3. Can a Tribe with an existing TEA apply?

No. Only Tribes that do not have a TEA (as defined in the Notice Inviting Applications) are eligible to apply.

4. Can a Tribe that has an existing TEA apply to create a second TEA for the same Tribe?

No. Only Tribes that do not have a TEA (as defined in the Notice Inviting Applications) are eligible to apply.

5. Are there absolute priorities in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Notice Inviting Applications (NIA)?

No, there is no absolute priority for this program.

6. Are there competitive preference priorities (CPP) in the FY 2019 NIA?

No, there is no competitive preference priority for this program.

7. Are there invitational priorities (IP) in the FY 2019 NIA?

Yes, “Promoting Sustainability through Community Engagement” invitational priority is for applicants who propose to develop their TEA in coordination with local stakeholders, such as nonprofit organizations, private organizations, and local businesses, for the purposes of (1) improving alignment of planned educational services to be delivered by the TEA with the needs of Native students in the community and (2) ensuring sustained community engagement at the end of the 12-month project.

8. What is the length of the project?

The length of the project is up to 12 months.

9. What is the estimated award amount?

Estimated Range of Awards is from \$150,000 to \$500,000.

10. What is the type of award?

This is a discretionary grant program.

GROUP APPLICATIONS

11. Can multiple tribes apply for the program?

Yes, there are two ways multiple tribes might choose to apply together.

- (1) Eligible entities may form a consortium (a group application).
- (2) A Tribal Organization may apply on behalf of multiple tribes

12. For group applications, does each Tribe need to develop its own TEA?

No. Each Tribe may develop its own TEA or – if Tribes are located within a close geographic proximity – they may develop one TEA serving all Tribes in the consortium or represented by a Tribal organization.

13. What is a consortium?

Eligible entities may form a consortium (a group application) for the purpose of obtaining grants under the FY 2019 STEP competition. A consortium is made up of more than one eligible entity, with one entity identified as the lead applicant on behalf of itself and the other eligible entities.

All entities within a consortium, including the lead applicant, must meet the basic eligibility requirements for this program.

14. Which entities can form a consortium?

Any combination of eligible entities can form a consortium. Eligible entities for this program are: Federally-recognized Indian Tribes, state-recognized Indian tribes, and tribal organizations approved by an Indian tribe, or multiple Indian tribes if the tribal organization is proposing to work with more than one Indian tribe, that do not have a TEA.

15. What are the requirements for a consortium applicant?

The regulations in 34 CFR 75.127-129, governing Group Applications, must be followed in submitting a consortium application.

16. Who is the lead applicant in a consortium?

The lead applicant in a consortium can be any eligible entity that organizes a consortium and who completes the STEP application.

17. What are the responsibilities of the lead applicant in a consortium?

The entity identified as the consortium leader is responsible for being accountable for coordinating and leading the implementation of all program services and activities at all locations.

18. What are some of the ways an applicant can demonstrate adequacy of support to the implementation and success of the proposed project?

An applicant can demonstrate commitment by providing adequate support including facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources, from the applicant organization or the lead applicant organization.

19. How can a Tribal organization apply for a 2019 STEP grant?

A Tribal organization with the approval of an Indian Tribe (or multiple Indian Tribes) may apply for a grant independently or as part of a consortium with other eligible entities.

REQUIREMENTS QUESTIONS

20. What are the application requirements?

Applicant must describe the objectives to be achieved and the activities to be conducted to develop a TEA and to meet the program outcomes in program requirement (c) (outlined in the Notice Inviting Applications for this competition) by the end of this grant period.

Applicants must submit an assurance that they do not have a TEA as defined in this notice.

Applicants must provide a description of and evidence of past collaboration with state and local education entities.

Applicants must have resources, including at least one full-time staff assigned to education issues, and may include funding or in-kind resources from the Tribe dedicated to supporting Tribal students' education.

Applicants must provide a timetable for accomplishing each of the objectives and activities that the applicant will undertake.

Applicants must provide a description of the method to be used for evaluating the effectiveness of the activities for which assistance is sought and for determining whether such objectives are achieved.

21. Is there a specific form for the Assurance of Not Having a TEA?

No. There is no specific form. Applicants may draft a statement attesting to not having a TEA.

22. What are the program requirements?

The following program requirements are listed in the Notice Inviting Applications:

- (a) Each grantee must use program funds to create a TEA, as defined in the Notice Inviting Applications.
- (b) Grantees must engage in collaborative efforts that will allow the TEA to build partnerships with state educational agencies and local educational agencies.
- (c) Program outcomes: At the end of the project period, grantees must demonstrate that their TEA has at least one full-time staff member dedicated to education issues and at least two of the following:
 - (1) A tribally sanctioned education code that is informed by available research on improving Indian student outcomes.
 - (2) Tribally sanctioned and culturally relevant curricula and professional development strategies focused on culturally relevant instruction.
 - (3) A partnership with an SEA or LEA that--
 - (i) Promotes Tribal self-determination in education;
 - (ii) Is designed to improve the academic achievement of Indian children and youth;
 - (iii) Promotes coordination and collaboration with SEAs and LEAs to meet the unique education and culturally related academic needs of Indian students;
 - (iv) Builds capacity to administer and coordinate education programs, and to improve the relationship and coordination with SEAs and LEAs that educate students from the Tribe;
 - (v) Includes training and support from the SEA and LEA to the TEA, in areas such as data collection and analysis, grants management and monitoring, fiscal accountability, and other areas as needed; and
 - (vi) Includes training and support from the TEA to the SEA and LEA in areas related to Tribal history, language, or culture.

(4) Committed resources (e.g., funding, staff, office space) from the Tribe or Tribes.

23. What evidence may a Tribal organization submit showing approval from every Tribe for which is it applying to be the applicant on their behalf?

Evidence could consist of a Tribal resolution, a letter of approval from an authorized Tribal official, or other documentation in accordance with the Tribe's protocols.

24. What are some of the examples of past collaboration with States and local education entities?

Application requirement (d) requires applicants to describe and provide evidence of past collaboration with State and local education entities. Below are some examples of past collaboration between the Tribe and State and local education entities:

- Teaming up with relevant departments in the State Educational Agency (SEA) to increase the role of the Tribe in curriculum standards, assessment, and culturally-responsive teaching strategies and materials for AI/AN students. Joining forces with local educational agencies (LEAs) to provide pre-service and in-service teacher education programs to promote Indigenous knowledge and culturally-responsive education for district staff, administrators, and paraprofessionals.
- Enhancing operations of federal, state and local education programs and resources through cross-agency training, information sharing and collaborative partnerships.
- Teaming up with LEAs to develop and host trainings on federal programs for Indian parent committees and school administrators.

SELECTION CRITERIA QUESTIONS

25. How should the selection criteria be used and result in program outcomes?

Applicants should utilize the selection criteria to provide a plan that clearly specifies how the goals, objectives, and measurable outcomes will be achieved by the proposed project and lead to a TEA as defined in this notice and result in program outcomes.

26. What is meant by Relevant Outcome?

For this program, it means outcome that the key project component is designed to achieve, consistent with the specific goals of the program. This means creating a TEA, by the end of the grant year, that has delegated authority from the Tribe and is primarily responsible for supporting Tribal students' elementary and secondary education (as defined in the Notice Inviting Application).

PROGRAM COSTS QUESTIONS

27. Can the STEP grant provide direct services to students?

No, STEP program is not a direct service program and funds from this program cannot be used to provide direct services to students.

28. What costs are permitted under these grants?

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that the costs stipulated in their proposed budget are reasonable and necessary for addressing the proposed project effectively. The application must adequately describe the rationale for the proposed activities and their costs; an activity and its cost might be reasonable, allowable, and allocable in one project, but not necessarily in another. Applicants should review carefully the cost principles, particularly the guidance concerning “reasonable,” “allocable,” and “necessary” costs. The Uniform Administrative Requirements and Cost Principles are published in 2 CFR part 200.

29. Are there funding restrictions?

Yes, in general:

- (a) An Indian Tribe may not receive funds under this section if such Tribe receives funds under section 1140 of the Education Amendments of 1978 (20 U.S.C. 2020).
- (b) No funds under this section may be used to provide direct services.

30. What happens if a grantee’s Indirect Cost Rate Agreement is scheduled to expire shortly after it receives an award?

Applicants that include indirect costs in their budget need to be aware of when their Indirect Cost Rate Agreement is due to expire, and must include their current Indirect Cost Rate Agreement in Part 6 of their application. If the current rate expires prior to the start of the first grant year, the Department will attach special conditions to the grant, under which the grantee has the option of not charging indirect costs, or of using a temporary rate issued by the Department until the grantee obtains a new rate from its cognizant agency.

OTHER QUESTIONS

31. What is ISDEAA Hiring Preference?

- (a) Awards that are primarily for the benefit of Indians are subject to the provisions of section 7 (b) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act

(Pub. L. 93-638). That section requires that, to the greatest extent feasible, a grantee--(1) Give to Indians preferences and opportunities for training and employment in connection with the administration of the grant; and (2) Give to Indian organizations and to Indian-owned economic enterprises, as defined in section 3 of the Indian Financing Act of 1974 (25 U.S.C. 1452(e)), preference in the award of contracts in connection with the administration of the grant.

(b) For purposes of this section, an Indian is a member of any federally recognized Indian tribe.

32. Is FY 2019 STEP program a partnership grant?

No. The purpose of this grant is for Federally or State recognized Tribes, or Tribal organizations approved by an Indian Tribe, that don't have a TEA to develop one.

33. What is meant by Indian Tribe?

An Indian Tribe is a federally-recognized or a state-recognized Tribe.

34. What is meant by Tribal Education Agency (TEA)?

A TEA is the agency, department, or instrumentality of an Indian Tribe that is primarily responsible for supporting Tribal students' elementary and secondary education.

Note: For purposes of this program, this term also includes an agency, department, or instrumentality of more than one Tribe, if the Tribes are in close geographic proximity to each other.

35. What are grantees expected to have at the end of the 12-month project period?

As outlined in the program outcomes, the expectation is for the grantee to have a TEA with at least one full-time staff member and at least two of the following:

- (1) A tribally sanctioned education code that is informed by available research on improving Indian student outcomes.
- (2) Tribally sanctioned and culturally relevant curricula and professional development strategies focused on culturally relevant instruction.
- (3) A partnership with an SEA or LEA that--
 - (i) Promotes Tribal self-determination in education;
 - (ii) Is designed to improve the academic achievement of Indian children and youth;
 - (iii) Promotes coordination and collaboration with SEAs and LEAs to meet the unique education and culturally related academic needs of Indian students;
 - (iv) Builds capacity to administer and coordinate education programs, and to improve the relationship and coordination with SEAs and LEAs that educate students from the Tribe;

- (v) Includes training and support from the SEA and LEA to the TEA, in areas such as data collection and analysis, grants management and monitoring, fiscal accountability, and other areas as needed; and
- (vi) Includes training and support from the TEA to the SEA and LEA in areas related to Tribal history, language, or culture.

(4) Committed resources (e.g., funding, staff, office space) from the Tribe or Tribes.