

Competitive Grants for State Assessment (CGSA) Applicant Webinar

February 25, 2022, 2-3pm Eastern Time

Below is a version of the chat transcript from the open Webinar that the U.S. Department held for all prospective CGSA applicants

Note: Names have been anonymized and some answers from the chat have been expanded for clarity for the reader (e.g., to provide necessary context to understand the question or response that may have been asked in response to a particular slide). These represent technical and logistical responses relating to the content of the Notice Inviting Applications (NIA) and application package. These responses are nearly identical to the actual transcript of the webinar Q&A, with some words added for context.

Q1. The intent to apply deadline is March 18 - is this a hard deadline/you can only submit by April 18 if you notified intent by March 18? Or more of an FYI?

A. The intent to apply deadline is optional. You do not have to provide an intent to apply, a State may just submit an application. We ask for the States to provide their 'intent to apply' to help us plan for the review process.

Q2. Under the purpose [for CGSA], is the definition of academic achievement constrained to only ELA, mathematics, and science?

A. No, other subject areas are also eligible. In the past CGSA has had applications that focus on Civics assessments, for example.

Q3. ESSA allows through course (i.e., through-year) – would that be acceptable for absolute priority 1 or 2?

A. This grant competition allows for fairly broad types of assessment research and development projects. It does not preclude any particular assessment design type, so it is possible that a 'through year' assessment design project could address this year's absolute priorities.

Q4. Do the “enhanced assessment systems” need to be connected to federal accountability requirements or can their purpose be focused on improving instructional practices

A. The 'assessment systems' are not limited to assessments for purposes of Federal accountability. In the past, applicants have proposed a variety of formative assessment (classroom level) projects.

Q5. Is it right to assume that the grant must be submitted by one lead SEA and that an SEA must also be the fiduciary agent? Or can other non-SEA groups be prime and fiduciary agent?

A. Only State educational agencies (SEAs) (or a consortium of State educational agencies) may apply for this grant opportunity.

Q6. Are there rules regarding ownership of final product? Does the SEA have to maintain full ownership or can that content be owned by the contracted vendor?

A. In the NIA document, please see the section on "Open Licensing Requirements." This information specifies the Department's requirements regarding availability of products produced with grant funds for use in the public domain. These requirements, for your convenience, are listed from the NIA text below:

"3. Open Licensing Requirements: Unless an exception applies, if you are awarded a grant under this competition, you will be required to openly license to the public grant deliverables created in whole, or in part, with Department grant funds. When the deliverable consists of modifications to preexisting works, the license extends only to those modifications that can be separately identified and only to the extent that open licensing is permitted under the terms of any licenses or other legal restrictions on the use of preexisting works. Additionally, a grantee or subgrantee that is awarded competitive grant funds must have a plan to disseminate these public grant deliverables. This dissemination plan can be developed and submitted after your application has been reviewed and selected for funding. For additional information on the open licensing requirements please refer to [2 CFR 3474.20](#)."

Q7. Absolute priority 2 mentions performance-based assessments -- how are you defining performance-based assessment?

A. We would expect the applicant to clearly describe how the proposed project represents a performance-based assessment. We will have external peers review the applications to help us ascertain whether an application sufficiently addresses an absolute priority.

Q8. Will these questions and answers be combined and sent after this webinar?

A. We are going to take the chat transcript and post it as a handout on our web page, probably next week. We also commit to emailing it to everyone here today in attendance.

Q9. If an SEA wished to apply for work that addresses both absolute priorities, how should the SEA communicate the coherence between those proposals, and how will USED consider such coherence?

A. In the case of an SEA that submitted two separate CGSA applications, each application would be evaluated on its own merits.

In addition, an applicant may choose to submit one application that addresses one or both of the absolute priorities. The NIA states that:

“To ensure that applicants are considered for the correct type of grant, applicants must clearly identify the specific absolute priority that the proposed project addresses. If an SEA (or consortium of SEAs) is interested in proposing separate projects (e.g., one that addresses Absolute Priority 1 and another that addresses Absolute Priority 2), the SEA (or consortium of SEAs) must submit separate applications.”

An applicant may propose a project that addresses both Absolute Priorities 1 and 2 in a single application. An applicant may submit two applications each proposing separate projects one that addresses Absolute Priority 1 and another that addresses Absolute Priority 2. To ensure that applicants are considered for the correct type of grant, applicants must clearly identify the specific absolute priority that the proposed project addresses. The Department further clarified that there are no “points” awarded for addressing a particular absolute priority, but rather applications are NOT considered at all UNLESS they address one of the absolute priorities. The only “extra points” that are available come from the one competitive preference priority listed in the NIA.

Q10. Do labor rates need to follow a GSA schedule for non-SEA groups?

A. The requirements are that any vendor performing work for an SEA that is compensated through CGSA funds must be secured through the State’s standard procurement procedures that exist for that SEA consistent with the requirements in 2 CFR 200.317.

Q11. It sounds like the absolute priority will be used to group proposals—they will be competing against others in the same category.

A. This is correct, in the NIA, the following statement:

“Absolute Priorities 1 and 2 each constitute their own funding categories. The Department may award grants under each of these absolute priorities provided that applications of sufficient quality are submitted.”

As noted in the above quote, the Department will fund at least one project under each absolute priority, provided there is at least one project of sufficient quality under that absolute priority.

Q12. At what point would the “overlap” constitute the need for a separate application?

A. If an SEA were considering two distinct scopes of work (one for each absolute priority), it might consider submitting two separate applications.