

Education of Homeless Children and Youth State Grant Electronic Bidders' Conference Response to Questions

11-19-08

Question: Eligible Applicants. In reading the RFP, I cannot find the location of the list of eligible applicants, where is this located?

Answer: Eligible applicants are listed on page 1 of the RFP, under General Information. The *Electronic Bidders' Conference Powerpoint* slide #8 also includes this list:

- School districts;
- Public university laboratory schools approved by the Illinois State Board of Education; and
- Charter schools.

In addition, joint applications for funds may be submitted by any combination of eligible applicants. An administrative/fiscal agent is designated to oversee the joint program. An eligible applicant may participate in only one proposal.

Question: Grant Funding Distribution. Are these state grant funds being regionalized so that a specific amount of funding will be available to each area of the state?

Answer: No. Funding will not be based upon regions of the state. Approximately \$3 million will be available to fund programs statewide under this RFP in FY 2009. It is anticipated that approximately 75 – 100 programs will be funded, with the final number of projects subject to the needs addressed and the total amounts requested in the top-ranked proposals.

11-20-08

Question: Needs Assessment Documents: What are some examples of documenting need in the school district that can be used for writing this RFP to show the need for services in the school district?

Answer: This is not an inclusive list of all the documents that might provide information regarding need for services to homeless families, children, and youth, but are examples of some information that should be readily available to the school district in writing its proposal include:

1. **IWAS Education for Homeless Children and Youth** data report for 2007 and 2008;
2. **U.S. Census Bureau State and County Quick Facts from 2000 – 2006** by county and city (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/17000.html>);
3. **Illinois Census Data from the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity for 1990 and 2000** (<http://www2.illinoisbiz.biz/censusprofile/>) with data facts that include information by county, township, and place addressing geography, people, housing, and economic information;

4. **U.S. Department of Agriculture's free and reduced-price meal eligibility statistics** for the last two years (http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/eligibility_listings.htm);
 5. **McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program Quarterly Reports** of homeless students and service provision from the school district homeless liaison or the area lead liaison for your area. See map for location and contact information: <http://homelessed.net/Directory/directoryindex.htm>;
 6. **Locally developed data reporting instruments, ISBE Student Identification System data elements/program indicators** for students identified as homeless and other reports of service delivery in the area of the applicant;
 7. **Information from local homeless shelters and domestic violence shelters** of the numbers of families specifically using the residential services and the number and ages of children using those shelter services in the last two years;
 8. **Information from the American Red Cross and other service providers** regarding disaster service delivery to families in fire, flood, or other natural disasters and the number of children served; and
 9. **United Way and other local social service organization online annual reports.**
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11-21-08

Question: Charter Schools. In Chicago, charter schools are under the Chicago Public Schools. Can charter schools also write for grant funds independently of the Chicago Public Schools grant?

Answer: Yes, charter schools are eligible applicants. As with any eligible applicant, a charter school applicant must show that a need exists for the funding provided under the state homeless education program and that the services it will be providing are not currently being provided by City of Chicago School District 299, as all funds under the program must be used for activities and services that supplement rather than supplant the charter school's current program.

Question: Allowable Activities of the Grant: How have districts used this grant in regard to homeless children?

Answer: This is the first time this grant has been available. The list of allowable activities and services that can be provided under the grant can be found on pages 4 and 5 of the RFP.

Question: Allowable Uses of the Grant Funds: Can the grant funds for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth State Grant be used to provide the same services to non-homeless kids along with homeless kids using these funds?

Answer: No. The Education of Homeless Children and Youth State Grant is intended to supplement the services and activities that a homeless student would

receive or participate in as part of the regular school program. The grant's intent is to facilitate the enrollment, attendance, and educational success of homeless children and youth. The funded activities and services of the state should be designed to meet the individual needs of homeless children and youth attending the schools of the district.

Question: Joint Applications: Our school has only one homeless student; but we believe that there may be more. Can we find other school districts close to us and work together to write one application for all of us?

Answer: Yes, joint applications are encouraged. Any combination of eligible applicants may submit a single proposal, and the members of the joint proposal designate one of them to serve as the administrative/fiscal agent for the grant (see item 33 on the attachment to the RFP titled "Certifications and Assurances, and Standard Terms of the Grant" for a list of administrative/fiscal agent responsibilities). The applicants work together to define the needs they have for the funding and identify the services and activities that will be provided to meet those needs.

12-3-08

Question: Grant Dollar Totals: What is the specific amount that a school district can apply for in this grant application?

Answer: No minimum or maximum grant award has been established. A total of \$3 million is available for the entire state with no limits set on the amount for which a school district can apply. In determining the grant amount to be requested, an applicant should carefully consider its need for the funds and the type of services and activities that it proposes to provide in order to meet those needs. The proposed cost in relation to the services and activities to be provided will be considered in the proposal review process.

Question: Needs Assessment: Does a school district need to have a specific percentage of their school population homeless in order to apply for this grant?

Answer: No. An applicant does not need to meet a minimum percentage of homeless students in order to submit a proposal. As stated above, the need of the homeless students for services and the ability of the applicant to provide those services will be considered in determining the amount of a grant to be awarded to an applicant submitting a high-quality proposal.

Question: Budget Cell for the Cost of the Evaluation: Which budget cell do you place the cost of a program evaluation?

Answer: The cost of the evaluation should be placed under Function 2620, Object 300 on the Budget Summary and Payment Schedule.

Question: Allowable Activity #16: Is it necessary for all proposals to include information and budget amounts for #16 – “other extraordinary or emergency assistance”?

Answer: No. An applicant determines which services and activities that will best meet the needs of the homeless students that it services. Applicants can apply to provide any or all of the 16 allowable services. Each applicant must identify its needs and develop a plan that meets those needs identified.

However, as with any allowable activity, the applicant must provide an explanation of the use of grant funds for “extraordinary or emergency assistance” on the Budget Narrative. Any proposed cost may be subject to negotiations with the State Board of Education staff, should the applicant be considered for a grant.

Question: Projecting Homeless Numbers: When projecting the number of homeless students for an area/school/school district/joint application, is there a known percentage that can be used to make that estimate?

Answer: Several tools may be used to estimate the potential number of homeless students who could be residing in the area to be served.

- IWAS NCLB Homeless Children and Youth report for the last several years.
- U.S. Census data from the most recent year to identify the poverty level.
- Any other local or community information that assists with the identification of economic hardships affecting the community and its families.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture data about recipients of free meals under the federal school meals program. Using this data, an applicant could estimate that between 4% and 8% as of this number may represent homeless students.

Note: Use only free breakfast or lunch data, not free and reduced-price meal counts for this calculation. This calculation is offered only as an option for estimating the percentage of children in poverty who may either be homeless or who may become homeless during the school year. Applicants are advised against considering the use of free meals data as the only means to estimate the number of homeless students to be served.

Question: Activities That Are Not Allowed: What happens if the proposal includes activities that are specifically stated as not allowed in this grant application?

Answer: The services and activities to be provided must be from among those listed on pages 4 and 5 of the RFP. If services and activities other than those listed are proposed, then it is likely the proposal will be rated lower in the proposal review process. If a proposal is recommended for funding that contains nonallowable activities or expenditures, then no final Grant Agreement will be executed if an agreement to remove those activities and expenditures is not made between the State

Board and applicant and no grant will be awarded. If a grantee spends grant funds for activities and services other than those approved by the State Board and made part of the Grant Agreement, then the grantee may be required to return any funds inappropriately spent.

Each applicant is advised to carefully review the document titled “Certifications and Assurances, and Standard Terms of the Grant” before signing the form and submitting it with the proposal. This form covers all conditions upon which a grant may be made and each grantee is subject to these terms and conditions.

Question: Joint Applications: Are school districts required to submit joint applications?

Answer: No. The joint application option is offered for those applicants that wish to consolidate their efforts in order to more efficiently and effectively provide services to homeless students residing the each of the areas served by applicants participating in the joint proposal.

12-5-08

Question: Grant Funding Distribution: Will school district requests only be funded in their entirety or if not, might they receive a portion of their funding request?

Answer: If school district’s proposals are recommended for funding, the funding will be determined by the funds available. It is possible a grantee may receive a reduced portion of their funding request.

Question: Eligible Applicants: If the county Regional Office of Education currently has a federal grant, can our school district still apply for this state grant or do we need to go back to the Regional Office of Education and have them apply?

Answer: The eligible applicants for this state grant do not include the Regional Offices of Education. Only school districts, university laboratory schools approved by the Illinois State Board of Education, and charter schools are considered eligible applicants. School districts can combine together to submit a joint application in any configuration with the proviso that one of the school districts takes the lead for the administration and accountability for the grant and acts as the grant manager and administrator.

Question: Transportation Activities: Can a school district apply just for the excess transportation monies and nothing else.

Answer: School districts must assess their own needs, determine what services are required, and apply for those services that can be documented with the needs of homeless children and youth.