Section 260.30 Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are public school districts, charter schools, and public university laboratory schools providing instruction in grades K-6. Commencing with Fiscal Year 2002, eligible applicants shall be only those that have made performance progress as required by Section 2-3.51 of the School Code (see Section 260.55 of this Part).
Section 260.50  Procedure and Criteria for Approval of Applications

a) The State Board of Education shall provide application forms and shall notify each eligible applicant of the maximum amount of its entitlement pursuant to Section 2-3.51 of the School Code. Each application form shall require the applicant to provide:

1) a total grant request equal to or less than the amount for which the applicant is eligible;

2) assurance that the applicant will comply with the provisions of Section 2-3.51 of the School Code and this Part;

3) information identifying the purposes for which the applicant plans to use the funds provided pursuant to this Part;

4) a description of the program or initiative to which the planned expenditures pertain, including evidence that the program or initiative is derived from scientifically based reading research as defined in Section 2-3.51 of the School Code and complies with the applicable requirements of subsection (a-5) of that Section; and

5) the information called for in Section 260.55(a) through (d) (e) of this Part.

b) Applications must be submitted to the State Board of Education by the date specified on the form. This date will be determined so that all eligible applicants will have at least 30 days to complete and submit the form. An applicant’s failure to comply with this requirement will delay its receipt of program assistance pursuant to Section 260.70 of this Part.
c) Information provided in the application will be reviewed by State Board of Education staff to determine that the information demonstrates compliance with Section 2-3.51 of the School Code and this Part.

d) State Board staff shall notify applicants of any requested information that is missing from the application. An application shall not be approved for funding until it is complete.

(Source: Amended at 26 Ill. Reg. ____ , effective ____________)

Section 260.55 Eligibility for Continued Funding

Section 2-3.51 of the School Code provides that DISTRICTS NOT DEMONSTRATING PERFORMANCE PROGRESS USING AN APPROVED ASSESSMENT METHOD SHALL NOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING IN THE THIRD OR SUBSEQUENT YEARS UNTIL SUCH PROGRESS IS ESTABLISHED. Each application for funding under the Reading Improvement Block Grant program SHALL INCLUDE A PROPOSED ASSESSMENT METHOD OR METHODS FOR MEASURING STUDENT READING SKILLS THE READING GROWTH OF STUDENTS WHO RECEIVE DIRECT INSTRUCTION AS A RESULT OF THE FUNDING AND THE IMPACT OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ON STUDENT GROWTH IN READING and shall be submitted by the deadline announced by the State Superintendent of Education.

a) Each application shall list or describe the method or methods the applicant proposes to use to measure students’ reading skills. SUCH METHODS MAY INCLUDE THE READING PORTION OF THE ILLINOIS GOALS AND ASSESSMENT STANDARDS ACHIEVEMENT TESTING PROGRAM (Section 2-3.51 of the School Code).

1) If a proposed assessment instrument is a standardized or commercially available criterion-referenced test, the applicant shall assure the State Superintendent that the instrument meets the generally accepted standards of validity and reliability set forth in “Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing” (1985) published by the American Psychological Association, 1200 7th St., N.W., Washington, D.C.
20036. (No later amendments to or editions of these standards are incorporated.)

2) If a proposed assessment instrument is locally developed or chosen, the applicant shall:

A) indicate the acceptable standard of performance on that measure; and

B) certify to the State Superintendent that the instrument measures what it is intended to measure and can be expected to yield consistent results, including a description of the methods by which the applicant’s staff arrived at the conclusion that this is the case.

3) Results of the proposed method(s) must be expressed in quantifiable terms, such as the percentage of students achieving a passing score or meeting an established standard.

b) Each application shall describe the population of students whose reading performance will be measured.

1) For purposes of demonstrating performance progress, measurement may be conducted on a districtwide basis (e.g., all fourth-graders) or may involve only the students who are affected by the provision of services under this program. However, a proposed districtwide method shall be approved only if it permits disaggregation of the achievement of students who receive direct instruction in reading and/or whose reading teachers engage in staff development as a result of the funding provided pursuant to Section 2-3.51 of the School Code.

A) If measurement is to be conducted on a districtwide basis, the population of students whose performance is assessed by the proposed method(s) must include at least all the students who would be required to participate in the reading portion of the
State assessment pursuant to Section 2-3.64 of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/2-3.64] if they were in grade 3 or 5.

B) If measurement is to involve only groups of students affected by the provision of services under the Reading Improvement Program, all affected students shall be included. For example, if Reading Improvement Program funds are used to lower class size, all the students in all affected classrooms must be included in reporting of results.

2) Measurement shall involve affected cohorts of students at several points in their educational careers or may involve successive groups of students at the same point. For example, students whose performance was measured in the fourth grade may be retested in the fifth grade to demonstrate progress; or fourth-grade students may be pre- and post-tested or tested for several years in a row to demonstrate progress.

c) Each application shall describe how the proposed method or methods will permit the applicant to demonstrate performance progress as defined in subsection (h) (i) of this Section. If the proposed methods differ from one year to the next, this description shall provide a rationale for the proposed change and specific information about how the necessary comparisons can be made.

d) Each application shall include a proposed method for measuring the impact of staff development activities on student growth in reading. The proposed method shall permit linking the recipients of professional development under this grant program with the students who subsequently receive instruction from them.

e) Each application shall assure the State Superintendent that the applicant will take such measures as may be necessary to prevent inappropriate disclosure of test
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questions or other materials that form part of the proposed assessment method(s).

f) The State Superintendent of Education shall approve the method or methods proposed if the application complies with subsections (a) through (e) of this Section.

g) No later than 60 days after the due date established for applications, the State Superintendent shall notify each applicant whether its proposed method of measuring students’ reading skills is approved. Failure to apply in a timely manner may delay an applicant’s receipt of this response. In the case of a disapproval, the applicant shall be notified of the reason for the disapproval and of any modifications that would bring its proposed method into compliance with the requirements of this Section. An applicant may revise and seek approval of its proposed method so long as time remains in which to implement the method after its approval.

h) Commencing with the 1999-2000 school year, each applicant shall annually report to the State Superintendent of Education its reading results for the previous school year, expressed in terms of students’ performance on at least the assessment measures approved pursuant to Section 260.55 of this Part. This report shall also include a summary of the results of the staff development provided in terms of its effects on students’ reading performance. This report shall be made no later than November 1 on a form to be supplied by the State Superintendent, unless an extension of the deadline is granted by the State Superintendent due to the timing of a district’s local assessment. An applicant that fails to submit its report of reading results in a timely fashion shall forfeit any grant funds to which it would otherwise be eligible for the affected school year pursuant to this Part, due to the necessity for the State Superintendent to calculate grant allocations and notify all districts and affected public university laboratory schools and charter schools of their eligibility and allocation amounts.

i) Commencing with the 2001-2002 school year, an
applicant will be eligible for continued funding only if its assessment results on the approved measure(s) for the preceding year indicate that it made “performance progress” as required by Section 2-3.51 of the School Code. “Performance progress” means any of the following:

1) A higher percentage of students scored at or above the locally established standard on the approved measure(s) of reading performance (e.g., achieved passing scores, grade-level equivalents, criterion reference points, or local benchmarks) than in the preceding testing cycle.

2) The average score achieved by students on the approved measure(s) rose in comparison to the average for the preceding testing cycle.

3) A higher percentage of students scored in the top two quartiles on the approved measure(s) than in the preceding testing cycle, or a lower percentage of students scored in the bottom quartile.

4) An increased percentage of students moved into a higher quartile than was the case in the preceding testing cycle.

5) The degree by which students fell short of meeting the established standard on the approved measure(s) lessened in comparison to the preceding testing cycle.

6) A lower percentage of students in grades higher than those served by this program required ongoing remedial services than in the preceding year.

7) An applicant with 90% or more of scores at or above the established standard maintained its performance in comparison to the preceding testing cycle.

Beginning with the 2001-2002 school year, the State Superintendent shall notify any applicant whose results on its approved measure(s) of reading performance
contradict its State assessment scores in reading for either grade 3 or grade 5. No later than 30 days after receipt of such notification, the applicant shall provide to the State Superintendent an analysis of this discrepancy and the applicant’s rationale for concluding that it has nevertheless made performance progress.

k) An applicant may appeal either disapproval of its proposed assessment method(s) or a determination that it has failed to make performance progress. In the latter case, the applicant may appeal either on the grounds that it has made performance progress or on the grounds that the factors that led to such failure were beyond the applicant’s control.

1) The superintendent or chief administrator of an eligible applicant may request a conference at which representatives of the applicant will have an opportunity to discuss the issues involved with representatives of the State Board of Education.

2) If a conference is held and the areas of concern are not resolved, the school board may submit an appeal by adopted board resolution. The appeal must identify the ways in which the proposed method meets the requirements of Section 2-3.51 of the School Code and this Section, the way in which the information submitted demonstrates that performance progress has been made, or the external factors that led to its inability to make performance progress, as applicable.

3) The applicant will be given an opportunity to present information relevant to the issues appealed. The State Superintendent of Education will consider the appeal and issue a final written determination.

4) An applicant’s eligibility for funding shall not be interrupted for failure to make performance progress if the State Superintendent determines that such failure was beyond the applicant’s control and that the applicant plans to take
specific steps in the immediate future to enable it to resume making performance progress.

(Source: Amended at 26 Ill. Reg. _____, effective ____________)

Section 260.80 Year-End Reporting

a) In order to permit compliance with subsection (a-15) of Section 2-3.51 of the School Code, recipients of funds under this program shall annually report to the State Board of Education, on a form supplied by the State Board, regarding their uses of the funds provided and the results achieved in terms of improving the reading skills of students in grades kindergarten through six. Annual reports shall address such areas as at least the following areas, as applicable to the recipient’s use of the funds:

1) the numbers of students served who received direct instruction in each of the grades K through 6;

2) the numbers of teachers involved summary information about the number and characteristics of students who have been referred for additional reading intervention or support;

3) any transitional grades created the number of staff members hired and their positions and grade levels;

4) the impact of reductions in class size the number of staff members who received professional development; and

5) the nature of staff development provided.

b) At the end of each fiscal year, each grant recipient shall also be required to submit a financial report that reflects the actual expenditures charged to the Reading Improvement Program.

(Source: Amended at 26 Ill. Reg. _____, effective ____________)