

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)  
Enhancing Education through Technology (EETT) Competitive Grant  
Illinois School Reform Through Technology Initiative (IL-SRTT)



## Questions and Answers

Answers to the Questions will be in blue

### Location of RFP

Q. Where can I find the RFP and official forms for the IL-SRTT – ARRA/EETT grant?

A. The primary link to the grant is available online at <http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/elearning/default.htm>. Please continue to monitor this page for additional information as it becomes available.

### RFP Due Date

Q. When is the due date for the competitive IL-SRTT – ARRA/EETT grant?

A. January 8, 2010 is the due date. Additional date and forms information are available online at [http://www.isbe.net/funding\\_opps/htmls/rfp.htm](http://www.isbe.net/funding_opps/htmls/rfp.htm).

### Eligibility Requirements

Q. Do LEAs need to complete The Interactive ISTE/CEO Forum STaR Chart assessment if one or more of their schools are in improvement status?

A. No. Completion of The Interactive ISTE/CEO Forum STaR Chart assessment is only required by district applicants that do not serve one or more schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under Section 1116 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

Q. Do the results (of the ISTE/CEO Forum STaR Chart) have to be dated within a certain period relative to the date of proposal submission?

A. No. A dated copy of the results must be sent along with the applicant's proposal.

Q. We recently received a letter indicating that we received [funding] in ARRA EETT Title II-D Competitive grant funds that we applied for last year. Is the grant funding

application that was recently sent out a different grant? Are we eligible to apply for that one as well?

A. The IL-SRTT Competitive Grant is separate from the previous ARRA EETT Title II-D Competitive Grant and yes, districts that received funds through prior EETT grant opportunities are eligible to apply. However, greater consideration will be given toward high-need applicants demonstrating the greatest ability to influence teaching and learning, toward the desired programmatic goals, within the period specified within the grant.

Q. Is a partnership required? Does it enhance the grant?

A. A partnership is not required. Each proposal will be read and evaluated according to the published rubric on its own merits. The presence of a partnership may or may not enhance the planned program implementation created by the applicant. If present, the partnership should certainly demonstrate how combined efforts will help the applicant achieve the expected educational outcomes.

Q. Since one portion of our grant application will include one or possibly two districts, do we need to submit as a partnership or can we submit our grant application as a single agent with the capability to share resources (i.e. equipment in this case) with district(s) that will share services with us if we are successful?

A. Yes, you will need to submit the application as a partnership. An applicant that is submitting a proposal as a partnership must designate a fiscal agent from among the LEA participants (i.e., school district, regional office of education) of the partnership. In any partnership, all of the activities funded by EETT/IL-SRTT ARRA funds must be used only to address the needs of the high-need school districts participating and not the needs of other school districts or entities that are members of the partnership.

See: What is an “eligible local partnership”?

(D. 6 <http://www.ed.gov/programs/edtech/guidance-arra.doc> )

An “eligible local partnership” is a partnership that includes at least one high-need LEA and at least one of the following –

1. An LEA that can demonstrate that teachers in its schools are effectively integrating technology and proven teaching practices into instruction, based on a review of relevant research, and that the integration results in improvement in classroom instruction and in helping students meet challenging academic standards.
2. An institution of higher education that is in full compliance with the reporting requirements of section 207(f) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, and that has not been identified by the State as low-performing under that act.

3. A for-profit business or organization that develops, designs, manufactures, or produces technology products or services or has substantial expertise in the application of technology in instruction.
4. A public or private nonprofit organization with demonstrated expertise in the application of educational technology in instruction.

The partnership may also include other LEAs, educational service agencies, libraries, or other educational entities that are appropriate to provide local programs.

Q. We are an eligible applicant, listed as a high-need school district. We are a grade 9-12 school district. Are we able to apply for funds alone, or must we partner with our elementary school district, which is also on the high-need list?

A. An eligible high need 9-12 school district may apply. As stated in the RFP, in addition to the funding to be provided under the federal EETT/IL-SRTT ARRA program, the General Assembly has included \$10 million in state funding for the state Low-Cost Laptop Initiative for students in grades 3 through 8. Should that funding become available during this award period, preference among substantially similar proposals submitted under this competition will be given to those that plan to serve students in grades 9 through 12. No preference will be provided, however, if the state laptop initiative is not underway during this grant competition.

Q. If a high need 9-12 high school district applies in partnership with its elementary school district, will both high-need school districts be able to receive benefits from the services or activities of the partnership grant?

A. An applicant that is submitting a proposal as a partnership must designate a fiscal agent from among the LEA participants (i.e., school district, regional office of education) of the partnership. In any partnership, all of the activities funded by EETT/IL-SRTT ARRA funds must be used **only** to address the needs of the high-need school districts participating and not the needs of other school districts or entities that are members of the partnership.

### **Technology Plan Requirements**

Q. The application says we must have an "approved three-year Technology Plan" in place in order to apply for funds. Our plan expires in June of 2010. Is that considered "in place" in order to apply?

A. Yes, your technology plan is approved (June 30, 2010 expiration) and will be considered "in place" for the application. Please be aware your district must have a new technology plan approved to take effect on July 1, 2010, in order to continue receiving funds past June 30, 2009.

Q. We do not currently have an approved Technology Integration Plan, but are in the process of writing a plan for approval in 2010. May we apply for the grant?

- A. No. An eligible applicant must have an approved three-year technology plan at the time the EETT/IL-SRTT ARRA application is submitted to ISBE. All applicants (including school district partnership members) must present evidence of having an approved plan by submitting a copy of the technology plan approval letter as part of their application. The approval letter must include the expiration date of the technology plan.

### **Private/Non-public School Requirements**

- Q. Can non-public partner schools implement programs that are markedly different from the LEA program, as long as those programs meet the core requirements of the grant?

- A. Non-public partner schools must participate in accordance with the program specifics of the grant, but may develop their own program of implementation. Non-public partners are not bound to the 25% professional development or assessment requirements to which district applicants are bound. However, applicant districts are required to make grant funded professional development opportunities available to the non-public partners.

Bear in mind that all materials and resources, including hardware and software purchased by the district for the non-public participants remain the physical property of the district applicant. More information about inclusion and support of non-public participants is available online at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/equitableseguidance.doc>.

- Q. If the public school is rolling out the grant in grades 4 & 5, can they require that the local private/non-public schools have the same grade levels in order to participate?

- A. Non-public partner schools must participate in accordance with the program specifics of the grant, but may develop their own program of implementation based upon timely and meaningful consultation with the public school which clearly shows the private/non-public schools' need.

- Q. What is the public school's obligation for ramping up the private/non-public school's infrastructure? Can they set minimum infrastructure readiness requirements?

- A. Guidance regarding technology acquisitions on behalf of non-public school participants is available online at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/edtech/guidance-arra.doc>. Question G-4 on page 15 of the guidance states, "An LEA may use Ed Tech funds to purchase computer equipment for use by private school students and teachers, but not to support wiring for computer networks or access to the Internet. The LEA maintains title to equipment purchased with Ed Tech funds and placed in private/non-public schools and should be clearly labeled and identified as the district's property. Furthermore, the equipment may not be used for religious purposes."

### **Program Specifications**

Q. Is the competitive grant that was just announced by the state superintendent's office last week solely a 1:1 laptop/netbook initiative? I am hearing and reading conflicting reports on the objective of the ARRA EETT grant, so I wanted to clarify it with you before we proceed.

A. See the response to the question that follows.

Q. Will only projects that implement one-to-one computing be funded?

A. The questions above are of a similar nature, to which the response is, "yes." As stated under the program specifics of the RFP (pg. 4) the IL-SRTT Initiative is a one-time opportunity for Illinois schools districts to apply for funds specifically targeted toward the purchase of low-cost/ultra-portable netbook computers and supporting peripheral devices by which the district is able to create fully integrated, state-of-the-art learning environments.

Q. The ARRA guidance emphasizes, "...using advanced technology systems to collect, manage, and analyze data in order to track student progress from pre-K through college and career and foster continuous improvement." Would applications to implement these types of programs be given equal consideration?

A. Advanced technology systems designed to collect, manage, and analyze data in order to track student progress from pre-K through college and career and foster continuous improvement would be allowable as a portion of the proposal or project expenses, but should be secondary in consideration to the acquisition of the purchase of low-cost/ultra-portable netbook computers and supporting peripheral devices, as noted in a previous response.

Q. There is a consistent reference [with the RFP] to low-cost laptop/netbook initiative. Is the grant meant to develop 1 to 1 computing at each school or is the purpose to increase the amount of laptops to make them more accessible for students without necessarily being a 1 to 1 ratio?

A. As stated on page 4 of the RFP, "ISBE is offering an unprecedented one-time opportunity for eligible applicants to acquire low-cost laptop/ultra-portable netbook computers to create fully integrated, state-of-the-art learning environments (see Question A-1 of the guidance). The guidance is available online at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/edtech/guidance-arra.doc>.

Districts are afforded the freedom, through this funding opportunity, to make such a distinction as proposals are locally developed, but readers will focus on intent by the applicant to "demonstrate the ability to implement and integrate technology acquired through this grant into the process of teaching and learning, with a focus on literacy and mathematics. Proposals must specify how the technology, to be acquired, will be "useful and meaningful" to the students served within the district." Successful demonstration may not be achievable if attempting to deliver low-cost laptop/ultra-portable devices to every student in every building served by the district. The grant does not require the district to include all students or schools within the district in the proposals to be developed. The district should focus on high need-low performing

schools within its boundaries that will most greatly benefit from inclusion in this initiative.

Q. Is this grant (ARRA EETT) the same as the 1 to 1 Laptop Initiative?

A. No. This grant is not the same grant as the 2006 Technology Immersion Pilot Project. It is also a separate funding opportunity from the Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) Competitive Grant.

Q. Is there a local match for this grant?

A. No.

Q. How do we get an ISBE waiver for the 25% Professional Development? (We are already spending over \$500,000 in Professional Development this year through local funds, Title I, Title I ARRA, Rural and Low-Income, School Improvement Section 1003(g) Grants, etc. in the areas of literacy, mathematics, and technology.)

A. Federal Guidance on Enhancing Education through Technology (Ed Tech) Program Funds, made available under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), states that, "each recipient of Ed Tech funds (including Ed Tech ARRA and regular FY 2009 Ed Tech funds) must use at least 25% of its total FY 2009 Ed Tech funds to provide ongoing, sustained, and intensive, high-quality professional development. (See Question E.4 of the guidance). The guidance is available online at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/edtech/guidance-arra.doc>.

IL-SRTT applicants seeking a waiver of the 25 % professional development requirement must demonstrate, to the satisfaction of [ISBE], that it already provides professional development that is (ongoing, sustained, and intensive, high-quality professional development, which is based on a review of relevant research, to all teachers in core academic subjects.) Additionally the evidence provided must demonstrate that teachers involved in the IL-SRTT Initiative will receive professional development that targets the following:

- the integration of low-cost/ultra-portable netbook computers and supporting peripheral devices,
- implementation and integration of advanced technologies acquired through this grant into the process of teaching and learning, with a focus on literacy, and
- seeks to create new learning environments.

As stated additionally in the guidance, "In such cases, the remaining funds are to be used to carry out other activities consistent with the purposes of the program and the district's local technology plan."

Q. How do we plan and budget for the LTC training expenses?

A. Applicants are encouraged to contact their Learning Technology Center (LTC) Directors for support in preparing the professional development portion of the proposal, as well as other applicable portions of the IL-SRTT Proposal. The

applicant has the decision making authority to determine how the required professional development portion of the proposal is developed and applied as well as the payment schedule regarding funds to support professional development. Applicants have the freedom to determine the percentage of the 25% professional development to assign to the LTC for the participation in locally developed professional development. Funds to be applied (for) after June 30, 2010 for professional development but before September 30, 2011 will have to be noted within the proposal.

Q. Are we required or do we have the option to hire an external evaluator?

A. Districts have the option to hire an external evaluator, but are not required to do so. Evaluation requirements are addressed on page 6 of the RFP. As stated, Grant recipients will be required to utilize the Illinois Data Portal to export and report on their project implementation. Assessment and evaluation tools available on the portal include measures in student, educator, and school proficiency and effectiveness. Further information regarding reporting will be provided to successful applicants. ISBE will be contracting with an external evaluator to measure the effects of projects funded under EETT.

Q. One of the biggest problems we will have in our buildings is providing adequate power to charge and power the laptops for and during student use. Can any of these funds be used for electrical upgrades or laptop charging stations/carts?

A. Yes, as stated in the RFP (page 4), "in addition to low-cost laptop/netbook devices, awardees may use a portion of available funds to support building or network infrastructure to ensure the equipment runs effectively and efficiently with sufficient bandwidth." These expenses should be secondary to the primary purpose of the grant, which "allows applicants the opportunity to acquire low-cost laptop/ultra-portable netbook computers to create fully integrated, state-of-the art learning environments."

Q. Can salary/benefits be allocated towards a person to serve as the "manager" of the project since our technology staff is extremely small and very concerned about the workload?

A. This is an allowable expense as long as the applicant realizes that the salary benefits may not supplant services already in place. The question of sustainability of the paid position beyond the grant period should also be addressed in the proposal.

Q. I am inquiring if it is possible to spend a portion of the funding on wiring and infrastructure that may need to be added to accommodate the addition of the net books?

A. This is an allowable expense for public school applicants only, not non-public participants.

Q. If a district receives a grant award and expends only a portion in FY10 is the balance carried over and applied to a continuing application for FY11.

A. Funds that are not obligated in FY10 will need to be carried over to FY11. Award districts will receive appropriate guidance and the necessary forms in the Spring of FY10 to carry over unspent dollar amounts.

Q. Will there be additional funds that could be come available beyond the amount of the initial grant award?

A. No. This is a one-time funding opportunity.

Q. There has been some confusion among Apple districts as to whether or not the iPod Touch is considered to be a primary device alongside laptops and netbooks. The RFP is very specific in mentioning laptops and netbooks but other similar "mobile internet" devices like iPods are not mentioned anywhere within.

A. The RFP is written in such a way as to remain vendor neutral. iPods would be considered eligible, taken under consideration as "related advanced technologies." Please refer to item 1 under Program Description in the Proposal Narrative Requirements section of the RFP as well as the rubric as you formulate your proposal for the inclusion of the devices you seek to acquire.

Resources:

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/edtech/guidance-arra.doc>

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/edtech/guidance.doc>

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/equitableserguidance.doc>