

Questions and Answers (December 24, 2009)

ISBE staff has received over 100 written questions in response to the December 16, 2009, webinar. Questions have been grouped and similar topics combined to provide answers in the areas of General, Request for Proposal, Budget, Professional Development, Reporting and Evaluation, Project Design and Non-Public School Participation.

Equipment

Q: Can funds be used to purchase carts for the docking stations?

A: Carts and docking stations would be allowable expenses.

Q: May we use grant funds to purchase either recharging carts for netbooks or storage carts for netbooks?

A: Recharging carts for netbooks or storage carts for netbooks are allowable.

Q: May full size laptops be purchased for teachers?

A: While there is no restriction on the technology platform acquired through this low-cost laptop/netbook initiative, the amount requested under this RFP for low-cost laptop/net book devices may not exceed \$500 per unit. Applicants may choose to purchase units which exceed \$500 per unit using local funds for any amount above \$500.

Q: Netbook models change frequently. If we list a specific model in our proposed budget and a newer, better model is released in advance of its purchase, how will we make that substitution? Will ISBE need to approve it? In other words, how specific does our initial budget need to be in terms of models for low cost laptops?

A: Successful grant recipients will have opportunities to negotiate with ISBE staff regarding final approvable expenditures.

Q: We would like to get Apple tablets, which won't go on sale until next year. Would it be possible to apply for the grant with the understanding that we won't make a purchase until the apple tablet is available?

A: Project implementation timelines should be addressed in the proposal. Projects with delayed implementation timelines for equipment purchases and professional development will need strong rationales to explain the delay in this highly competitive grant cycle.

Q: Must laptop/netbook be brand new or can it be refurbished or end of life machines?

A: It is up to the applicant to make decisions regarding the equipment to be proposed for use and implementation.

Q: Do they have to be laptops/netbooks? Are workstations covered at all?

A: Through funds made available through ARRA, 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. Proposals using laptops/netbooks will be more competitive proposals.

Q: I have been told there is a limit of \$500 for any single piece of equipment. Does this include laptops, projectors, etc?

A: The \$500 limit refers to the computing device and does not apply to peripheral equipment.

Q: RAM, power supplies, and other computer parts for upgrading existing school computers are also considered part of the grant, aren't they/?

A: Funds awarded may be used only for purposes that are specifically outlined in the successful applicant's approved proposal, and expenditures must be fully directed toward eligible classrooms. Funds may not be used for memory upgrades or batteries.

Q: Would server upgrades to cover the load of additional computers be allowable under the grant?

A: Yes

Q: Will the purchase and installation of a wireless infrastructure for public schools be allowed in this grant as a technology activity?

A: Yes

Q: What kind of specifications would be considered enough to be on the "cutting-edge" of technology-led education? What is ISBE's idea of lowcost laptops? Will OS upgrades be considered as part of the funding?

A: To learn more about comparable technologies already in schools and read more about successful practices and perspectives of one-to-one laptop initiatives, applicants are encouraged to refer to resource links provided on the state of Pennsylvania's Classrooms for the Future website. More information about this program is available at http://www.edportal.ed.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/classrooms_for_the_future/475/models%2C_research%2C___reports/202801.

Q: Would equipment like hard drive cloners be covered under the funding? The drive cloners would be used to image a setup and copy the setup for each computer.

A: Yes

Q: Our focus with this grant will be the purchase of several interactive whiteboards, with less emphasis on purchasing laptops/netbooks. Is this allowable?

A: As stated in the RFP, through funds made available through ARRA, 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). Proposals lacking a strong focus on integration of laptops/netbooks will be less competitive proposals.

Q: Would wireless infrastructure be considered part of Internet Connectivity and thus be applicable as part of the allowable equipment?

A: While an allowable expense, whether or not the wireless infrastructure will be considered part of Internet Connectivity and/or as part of the allowable equipment will depend on the needs and justification presented in the applicant's proposal.

Q: Will the grant cover electrical system upgrades?

A: Electrical system upgrades are allowable, but specific conditions exist and would be negotiated with successful applicants. This does not apply to non-public schools.

General

Q: Will the December 16, 2009, powerpoint be available?

A: The slide show of this presentation is posted online at <http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/default.htm>.

Q: If a letter of intent has not been sent, is consideration no longer an option?

A: The letters of intent are only encouraged, yet non-binding. Submission of a proposal is still an option.

Q: If my district is not on the list as a school with the highest need, what is the likelihood of us securing a grant?

A: If the district is not on attachment A, the district is not eligible to apply and the proposal will not be reviewed.

Q: What is the timeline for reading the grants and notifying the districts?

A: ISBE plans to notify districts of their award status within 60 days of the proposal due date.

- Q: I am still unclear on the additional \$10 million. Can you give us the scenario IF we don't get that \$10M.
- A: Should state funding from the Capitol Bill become available, then 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 funding is not available.
- Q: If there are over 200 applicants, from where do you expect to find 'highly qualified' reviewers?
- A: ISBE will follow established procedures to secure readers.
- Q: The requirement to spend most of the money in the Spring ensures that this program will be rushed, and that countless taxpayer dollars will be wasted in that rush - shouldn't you be more flexible in regards to how quickly funds should be spent?
- A: The intent of ARRA investment dollars is to stimulate economic recovery. Delaying purchases of equipment and implementation of projects does not support the basic purpose of these one time funds. Proposals will be evaluated on soundness, completeness, and quality of planning to ensure only solid, non-wasteful proposals will be funded.
- Q: Last spring when we applied for the competitive E2T2 we completed the STAR chart for each of our schools. Can we use this assessment since nothing substantively has changed?
- A: Applicants should provide a newly updated STAR chart assessment for this new funding opportunity.
- Q: If a school is on the State Warning List but not in Federal Status, would it be eligible for funding under this grant?
- A: If the school's district is listed on Appendix A, yes.
- Q: With only 7 working days prior to the deadline, is there any chance of extending the time when this is due?
- A: No.
- Q: Will peer review begin immediately upon receipt for the grant to begin on 1/15/10?
- A: Proposal review will begin promptly, but the granting of awards and budget finalization is an additional process requiring more time. 1/15/10 represents the earliest date ISBE anticipates making awards.
- Q: Is there any requirement for asset tracking? Usage?
- A: Inventory, tracking and usage of equipment purchased through Title IID will be specified within the program specifics.

Request for Proposal

- Q: Where will changes be posted within the ISBE website- front page?
- A: Changes to the RFP will be posted online at <http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/default.htm>.
- Q: If Conditions Change because of this presentation today or before apps are due, how will ALL be informed beside it being posted to isbe website?
- A: It is the responsibility of the applicant to monitor changes posted online at <http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/default.htm>. LTC Directors will also be notified of changes and will be asked to share notice of changes with the districts they serve electronically.
- Q: The RFP outlines Narrative requirements on page 9, item #3 seems to be incomplete can you please provide the rest of the text?
- A: This typographical error was previously noted and correct. Please make sure you are refer to the latest version of the RFP posted online at <http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/elearning/default.htm>

Q: Regarding question 12 under Proposal Narrative Requirements--Is this asking for supporting resources our district already has in place? Or is this asking for supporting resources we are asking for in this grant?

A: Describe the supporting resources, such as professional services, software, and other electronically delivered learning materials, that will be acquired.

Q: On the application you want to know how many students and teachers in each grade. How do I account for the special ed. teachers and students?

A: Information that will guide you concerning your question is available on the required attachments available online at <http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/elearning/default.htm>. The applicant determines the implementation of inclusion of special education students and related staff as the proposal is written.

Q: Can the sustainability issue be addressed on a separate page or must it be part of the 7 page narrative?

A: It must be contained within the maximum number of pages stated in the RFP.

Budget

Q: Does the component of the grant that allows for training technology leaders in the school fall under the 3% administrative cap, or can additional funds be applied for this purpose in the grant.

A: The training technology leaders could be budgeted separately from the administrative uses of funds.

Q: What will the max percentage be for carryover?

A: ISBE staff will monitor program implementation and budget expenditures. During the budget negotiation process, successful applicants will create a monthly payment schedule to match proposed expenses. No set maximum percentage for carryover has been determined at this time. However, be aware that the intent of ARRA funding is to stimulate economic recovery. Delayed project implementation and expenditure timelines will make a proposal less competitive in the review and scoring process. A good rule of thumb would be planning to make significant equipment expenditures in FY09 and use both FY09 and FY10 as opportunities to provide on-going professional development to fully integrate the equipment into the professional instructional practices of school staff.

Q: Are the laptops/netbooks required to come from a bidding environment, or can we find a vendor on our own?

A: The award recipient must purchase equipment through their own business offices. Successful applicants should refer to their local procurement policies and procedures.

Q: Also, can you hire an outside evaluator with this grant? If so, is that part of the 3% administrative dollars?

A: An outside evaluator is not required for this grant. If an LEA chooses to hire one, such an expense is allowable under the 3% administrative dollars. A statewide external evaluator will be hired for the program and will require data reporting from grant recipients.

Q: Are the laptops intended to be taken home or do they stay in school. Are costs allowed for home internet access?

A: Home use of laptops would be a district decision. Grant funds may NOT be used to purchase home internet access.

Q: Does the computer device limit of \$500 just cover the equipment. For example, OS/security, asset tracking, monitoring, instructional software would be in addition to the \$500 limit?

A: The computer device limit of \$500 is limited to coverage of cost of the computing device and does not include add ons including, but not limited to OS/security, asset tracking, monitoring, and instructional software.

Q: Can a teacher technology coach be hired as the teacher leader and the salary for that person be claimed to the grant?

A: Such would be conditionally allowable, in consideration of rules regarding supplementing versus supplanting.

Q: Is the cost of course credit from a local university for courses in instructional technology an allowable activity?

A: Yes

Professional Development

Q: [Do] the LTCs have a plan in place already for PD/training for staff?

A: The LTCs are preparing to provide information on state-wide use of the Illinois Data Portal from which training will be designed for roll-out to awardees. Additional training will be designed based on common needs of successful grant applicants. Information will follow after the grants are awarded.

Q: For the PD sponsored by the LTC, how do we incorporate that into the grant/budget? Is it just sub/travel?

A: Please contact your local LTC with budgeting questions in this area.

Q: What is the best way to estimate the amount for LTC professional development since we do not know the specifics like the time and number of trainings?

A: Please contact your local LTC with budgeting questions in this area.

Reporting and Evaluation

Q: If the grant expires June 30th, how are we supposed to report the data quarterly with the Illinois Data Portal?

A: Further information regarding reporting will be provided to successful applicants.

Q: What are the requirements for the Longitudinal Evaluation?

A: Please refer to the section of the RFP titled "Program Evaluation and Reporting Requirements."

Project Design

Multiple questions were received by ISBE regarding project design and ISBE preference in design (e.g. grade level, subject matter, one-to-one laptop, mobile lab, types of equipment, etc). Such questions and answers are not included in this document and cannot be answered by ISBE in order to fully maintain and preserve the open, competitive process.

Non-Public Participation

Q: Our district has a k-8 private school. We are only implementing this grant in our high school. Are we required to follow any of the equitable participation rules since they do not include grades 9-12?

A: Yes, if the district applicant is a K-12 unit district. The program implemented by the LEA should address the needs of the private school students and teachers and does not have to be identical to the program offered to public school students and teachers.

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/web-conferences.html>

Q: How is the non-public share calculated?

- A: Expenditures for services on a per-pupil basis shall be equal to the expenditures for participating public school children; however, during the timely and meaningful consultation process, the needs of non-public school students, including academic and socio-economic needs, must be taken into account when determining how many pupils will be served in the non-public school(s) . §9501(a)(4) of ESEA (See the complete PowerPoint online at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/web-conferences.html>)
- Q: Do the private schools need to use 25% of their funding for PD?
- A: "The program requirement for LEAs to use at least 25 percent of their total Title II, D grant funds for professional development does not apply to the funds allocated for services for private school students and teachers." (<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/web-conferences.html>)
- Q: Do the private schools have the evaluation requirements of the District's plan?
- A: "Timely and meaningful consultation during the design and development of the programs is required on such issues that include how the services [acquired] will be assessed and how the results of the assessment will be used to improve those services."
(<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/web-conferences.html>) Therefore, yes, private schools have the evaluation requirements to which they will be held accountable.
- Q: Can the private schools have a summary of the portal info so they can determine their participation?
- A: Yes. Private schools will be able to generate their own reports based on Portal assessments.
- Q: If we have no private school within our district boundaries, how to we address private school participation?
- A: If you have no non-public schools, submit Attachment 4 indicating such with your proposal.
- Q: If public schools have the responsibility for filtering in private schools, how can we do that if we do not have control of their networks?
- A: It is not the responsibility of public schools to provide filtering for private schools. "Private schools that receive computers under the Title II, D program used to access the Internet should have an Internet Safety Policy with respect to any computers with Internet access and a policy that includes technology protection measures (blocking or filtering software)." (See the complete PowerPoint online at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/web-conferences.html>)
- Q: Should participating private schools be listed as a "partner" on Attachment 1A?
- A: Not necessarily. Only if it is characterized by one of the bulleted points on page 2 of the RFP. See attachment 4 online at http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/elearning/pdf/arra_eett_srtt_forms_10.pdf for additional guidance.
- Q: If a non public school denies participation via a phone call. Can this be documented by the LEA and satisfy consultation requirements?
- A: The burden is on the LEA to provide evidence of meaningful consultation in accordance with the law and to provide strong evidence that steps were taken to engage eligible non-public schools in meaningful consultation. Please see further guidance online at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/web-conferences.html>. If a non-public refuses via phone call, please document that on Attachment 4 when submitting the proposal.