



Illinois State Board of Education

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Darren Reisberg
Chairman

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
State Superintendent of Education

March 17, 2021

TO: Eligible Applicants

FROM: Dr. Carmen I. Ayala 
State Superintendent of Education

SUBJECT: **NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO)/REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP):**
Fiscal Year 2022 Illinois Statewide Assistive Technology Device Loan and Evaluation Program

CSFA Number: 586-53-2247

CSFA Title: Fed - Sp Ed - IDEA Discretionary

CFDA Number: 84.027A

CFDA Title: Federal Special Education IDEA Discretionary

Program Overview

Eligibility and Application Information

Eligible Applicants: Local educational agencies, institutions of higher education, other public agencies, and private nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply.

An eligible applicant may also apply for a grant under two other assistive technology Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFO), the Illinois Statewide Assistive Technology Technical Assistance Training and Resources Program and the Illinois Statewide Assistive Technology Exchange Network, being issued concurrently provided the applicant meets the eligibility requirements of those projects.

NOTE: The State of Illinois Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) requires applicants to complete Pre-qualification requirements before applying for any grant. This includes completion of the Grantee Registration and Pre-qualification process through the Illinois GATA Web Portal at <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/GATA/Grantee/Pages/default.aspx> . Grant applications must be submitted by the application deadline indicated in this NOFO/RFP. Applicants are advised to complete the pre-qualification requirements well in advance of the NOFO/RFP deadline

Successful grant applicants will be required to complete an FY 2022 Fiscal and Administrative Risk Assessment in the form of an Internal Controls Questionnaire (ICQ) available through the GATA Web Portal, a FY 2022 Organizational Risk Assessment through the ISBE Web Application Security System (IWAS), and the FY22 Programmatic Risk Assessment that is found within the electronic Grant Management System (eGMS) budget. Grant awards will not be executed until the FY 2022 ICQ, Organizational Risk Assessment and Programmatic Risk Assessment are completed.

Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number and System for Award Management (SAM): Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal or State awarding agency that is exempt from those requirements under 2 CFR § 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal or State awarding agency under 2 CFR § 25.110(d)) is required to:

- (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application. If you are not registered in SAM, you may do so at www.sam.gov;
- (ii) Provide a valid DUNS number in its application <https://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>; and
- (iii) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active federal, federal pass-through or state award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal or state awarding agency. ISBE may not consider an application for a federal pass-through or state award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable DUNS and SAM requirements.

Code of Federal Regulations / Title 2 - Grants and Agreements / Vol. 1 / 2014-01-01192: Guidance is found at

This grant is subject to the provisions of:

- (GATA), 30 ILCS 708/1 et seq. <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=3559&ChapterID=7>
- Administrative Rules for GATA, 44 Ill. Admin. Code Part 7000 <ftp://www.ilga.gov/JCAR/AdminCode/044/04407000sections.html>

Merit-Based Review and Selection Process for Competitive Grants: The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is required to design and execute a merit-based review and selection process for applications. This process is incorporated by reference in all applicable funding opportunities. The full text of the ISBE merit-based review policy can be found at https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Merit_Based_Review_Policy.pdf. Applicants are advised to refer to the Merit Based Review policy document.

Grant Award/Cost Sharing or Matching: One grant will be awarded in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 (year one of the project) in an amount not to exceed \$900,000. It is the intention of ISBE to fund this project for five years (through FY 2026). The annual grant award in successive years of the grant period will be \$900,000.

Additional funding information can be found under Funding Information on page 5.

Proposals that score under 80 points will not be funded.

Grant Period: The grant period will begin no sooner than July 1, 2021 and will extend from the execution date of the grant until June 30, 2022. Successful applicants may reapply via continuing application for up to four (4) additional year(s). Funding in the subsequent years will be contingent upon compliance with federal and state law, state grant-making rules, passage of sufficient appropriations for the program, and satisfactory performance in the preceding grant period. No promise or undertaking made in this NOFO/RFP is an assurance that a grant agreement will be renewed, nor does this NOFO/RFP create any right to or expectation of renewal.

Submission Dates and Times/Other Submission Requirements: Proposals should be submitted electronically through the no later than May 3, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. Completed proposals should be scanned into PDFs with all supporting documents and required signatures. The ISBE Attachment Manager is found at <https://sec1.isbe.net/attachmgr/default.aspx>. Choose Assistive Technology Device Loan and Evaluation Program (ATDLE) from the drop-down menu in Receiver Information. Submit the application using the button at the bottom of the page.

Late proposals will not be accepted.

Grant Award Notice: It is anticipated that successful applicants will receive a Notice of Award via e-mail approximately 90 days after the application deadline. The award letter is NOT an authorization to begin performance or expenditures. After the Merit Based Appeal timeframe has ended, awardees will receive additional information from the program area that includes the next steps for finalizing the grant. Monies spent prior to programmatic approval are done so at the applicant's own risk.

Technical Assistance Session: A technical assistance session will not be held for this application; instead, all questions will be addressed in a <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/AT-RFP-FAQ.pdf>.

Changes to NOFO/RFP: ISBE will post any changes made to the NOFO/RFP prior to April 26, 2021, at <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Request-for-Proposals.aspx>. Applicants are advised to check the site before submitting a proposal.

Agency Contact/Contact to Request Application Package: For more information on this NOFO/RFP, contact Tammy Greco at tgrec@isbe.net.

General Information

Program Background and Description

Program Purpose:

The purpose of this program is to carry out the following authorized activities under IDEA part B section 611 (e)(2)(c)(iv) Support the use of technology, including technology with universal design principles and assistive technology devices, to maximize accessibility to the general education curriculum for children with disabilities. (viii) Support capacity building activities and improve delivery of services by local education agencies to improve results for children with disabilities.

Program Description:

The Assistive Technology Device Loan and Evaluation (ATLE) Program assists school districts and related service providers in evaluations of students regarding the need for Assistive Technology (AT) and/or Augmentative and Adaptive Communication (AAC) and trialing devices and assisting in the acquisition of AT. Comprehensive evaluation protocols and trialing devices allow this program to support a student's access to learning. The device loan program can bridge the gap in student learning while waiting for devices to be ordered and delivered as other devices are being repaired and for trialing new devices without significant monetary investment by the LEA.

Federal Description:

Section 602 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) directs school districts and special education cooperatives to maximize the accessibility of a student with disabilities to a free and appropriate public education using technology, including AT devices and equipment. ISBE, using the funding it receives under Part B of IDEA, established ATLE to help districts and cooperatives meet this goal. This program provides student evaluations conducted by a qualified evaluator to establish his or her AT needs. This program is also designed to provide students with the loan of an AT device for a trial period to ensure the device meets the student's identified need prior to the school district's purchase of the device. A school district may request that the grantee conduct an AT evaluation prior to applying for the loan of a particular device.

Program Background/History:

ISBE established a Statewide Assistive Technology Program in 1998. The current grantee conducted 141 AT evaluations and 724 device loans in FY 2020. The need for AT devices increased exponentially when schools transitioned to remote learning in the spring of 2020. The device loan library was able to support students with new AT devices and extending the free loan time period if there was no waiting list for the device. This shift also prompted the need to think differently about how to conduct AT evaluations outside the school setting. The use of personal protective equipment enabled the continuation of home visits. Virtual evaluations, in conjunction with family members, were conducted otherwise.

Historically, in typical school year conditions, the grantee has established an evaluation process which begins with initial referral and completion of a referral packet. The evaluation is then conducted within 30 days and the requestor is provided with a report.

Program Objectives:

The objective of this grant program is to provide an AT device loan library with a lending process. The program also establishes qualified AT evaluators to assist Illinois school districts in meeting the regulations set forth by IDEA such as Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Qualifications of AT evaluators is addressed in the [Illinois Administrative Code 226.840](#). Program AT evaluators also assess student needs for AT, as determined by an IEP team.

- Maintain AT devices to meet the device loan needs of school districts.
- Provide devices to school district whose loan applications are approved, to the greatest extent possible.
- If the grantee cannot meet the need of one or more school districts, the grantee will purchase additional devices and maintain a waiting list, if needed, to ensure that the needs of school districts are met.

- Conduct repairs and/or updates as needed on equipment returned by school districts.
- Establish and implement an evaluation process for student AT/AAC needs as determined by the IEP team and/or school district requests.
- Provide ongoing communication to school districts at least on a quarterly basis during the school year to update inventory of available devices and inform about the process for requesting a loaned device.
- Engage in promotion and networking opportunities to build awareness of the program and availability of no-cost services throughout the state.

Performance Measures:

Grantees are expected to complete all of the following:

- Conduct 175 AT and/or AAC evaluations each fiscal year.
- Loan 800 AT devices to students/school districts by the end of the fiscal year.
- Conduct at least two meetings with the ISBE grant administer each fiscal year.

Targets:

- Respond to 100% of requests for AT/AAC evaluations.
- Complete 100% evaluations by processing referrals, conducting evaluations, and providing a report to the requestor within 60 business days.
- Respond to 100% of AT Loan requests.
- Fulfill 100% of device loan requests by processing loan applications and fulfilling device loans and/or maintaining the device loan wait list for accepted applications within 30 business days.

Performance Standards:

Grantees that do not complete all of the following will require technical assistance and monthly reporting to ISBE.

- Complete at least 75% of evaluations requested by processing referrals, conducting evaluations, and providing a report to the requestor within 60 business days.
- Fulfill at least 75% of device loan requests by processing loan applications and fulfilling device loans and/or maintaining the device loan wait list for accepted applications within 30 business days.

Funding Information

Introduction:

One grant will be awarded in FY 2022 in an amount not to exceed \$900,000. The initial and subsequent grant awards will be dependent upon the needs addressed and scope of activities in each year and the total appropriate for the program. Allowable expenditures include:

- Salaries and benefits of qualified AT evaluator(s) and project staff
- Costs associated with the purchases, maintenance, and repair of AT devices
- Facility costs (e.g., utilities, leasing, renting)
- Supplies directly related to the purposes of the grant, including packing and shipping costs
- Travel and other costs associated with participation in conferences and other networking opportunities to publicize the project
- Advertising costs

Indirect Cost Rate:

The federal Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 requires that grantees be provided the opportunity to seek indirect cost reimbursements based on negotiated indirect cost reimbursement rates. Rates are determined and applied as follows.

LEAs

- LEA indirect cost rates are developed in accordance with a delegation of authority agreement between ISBE and USDE. The plan includes both a restricted and unrestricted rate for each individual LEA. Both the restricted and unrestricted LEA rates are published annually on the ISBE website. The FY19 rates are

available at: <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Indirect-Cost-Rate-Plan.aspx>. In the past, only the restricted rate was allowed when budgeting indirect cost reimbursements.

LEAs have the ability to seek indirect cost reimbursement at the published unrestricted rate for any program other than those identified as restricted by USDE.

- Newly organized LEAs, Regional Offices of Education Intermediate Service Centers, area vocational centers, charter schools, university laboratory schools and governmental entities formed by a joint agreement among LEAs utilize either the statewide average of LEA unrestricted or restricted indirect rates as appropriate, depending on program.
- LEAs which jointly administer federal program(s) utilize either the approved unrestricted or restricted indirect cost rates for the administrative district of the joint program as appropriate, depending on program.

Non-LEAs

- For programs eligible for an unrestricted indirect cost rate, not for profit entities, community/faith based organizations and other non-LEA, non-university subgrantees utilize rates negotiated through the GOMB centralized process where they will have the option to:
 - o Select the 10% diminimus rate
 - o Submit documentation supporting a rate determined through negotiation with their federal cognizant agency
 - o Negotiate a rate.

Non-LEA, non-university grantees may initiate the unrestricted indirect cost rate negotiation process through the GATA grantee portal at: <https://grants.illinois.gov/portal/>.

- For federal programs requiring the use of a restricted indirect cost rate, not for profit entities, community/faith based organizations and other non-LEA subgrantees shall utilize the 8% default rate described at 34 CFR 76.564.
- Colleges and Universities will be limited to a maximum indirect cost rate of 8% or other indirect cost rate calculated by their cognizant federal agency, whichever is less, for grants administered by ISBE.

Costs associated with Fiscal Support Services (2520), Internal Support Services (2570), Staff Support Services (2640), Data Processing Services (2660) and Direction of Business Support Services (2510) charged to the Educational Fund are properly budgeted as indirect costs.

Funding Restrictions:

This program is a federally restricted indirect cost rate program. Funds received under this program must be used to supplement, not supplant, funds that would otherwise be used for authorized activities.

Stevens Amendment:

For purposes of compliance with Section 511 of P.L. 101-166 (the “Stevens Amendment”), applicants are advised that one hundred percent (100%) of the funds for this program are derived from federal sources. The total amount of federal funding involved is \$900,000.

Reporting Requirements

The successful applicant will be responsible for providing semiannual programmatic reports via the IWAS Grant Periodic Reporting System. Quarterly expenditure reports shall include data relative to Program Targets, Performance Measures, And Evaluation Design sections of this NOFO/RFP. Additional reporting requirements are listed below.

Content and Form of Application Submission

Instructions: Each application must be submitted in the format outlined below to be considered complete. A complete application will include all required components (the numbered items below) and signatures when mentioned. Please use the checkboxes in front of the numbers as a checklist when assembling your completed application. It is advised to attach a copy of the completed checklist with the application.

1. Uniform Application for State Grant (Attachment 1): Include the entity name, address, telephone and fax number, email, name, and telephone number of the contact person; Federal Employer Identification number, DUNS number, SAM CAGE Code; and all other listed information. The Application page must be signed by the official authorized to submit proposals.

2. Program Narrative (Attachment 2) maximum 5 pages:

Follow the specifications below:

Expertise and Experience

- Describe the applicant's expertise and experience with acquisition, maintenance, and storage of AT/AAC devices.
- Describe the applicant's expertise and experience in establishing and maintaining a process to receive and respond to requests for AT/AAC devices.
- Describe the applicant's expertise and experience in responding to requests for and completing AT/AAC evaluations.
- Describe the applicant's expertise and experience in promotion and networking to increase awareness of programs/opportunities.
- Identify program staff to be employed, including their qualifications and responsibilities as it relates to program objectives and activities.
- Describe the applicant's experience in maintaining communication with program stakeholders.

Program Implementation

- Describe the process to be used to acquire AT/AAC devices.
- Describe the process to be used to store, clean, and maintain AT/AAC devices including the facilities where devices will be stored.
- Describe the process to be used to receive and respond to device loan requests.
- Describe the process to be used to collect and clean/maintain devices from school districts when the loan period has ended.
- Describe the process to be used to receive and respond to AT/AAC evaluation requests.
- Describe the process to be used to maintain communication with school districts regarding program activities, technical assistance, and awareness around program opportunities.
- Describe processes to be used to maintain a wait list for AT/AAC device loans when needs cannot be met immediately.

Creating Program Awareness

- Describe the applicant's plan for promotion and networking to increase awareness of the program and the availability of no-cost services statewide.

3. Objectives and Activities (Attachment 3) maximum 5 pages:

Follow the specifications below:

The applicant should describe how it plans to address all program objectives and activities which are found in the Program Background and Description: Program Objectives section of this NOFO/RFP.

4. Proposal Evaluation Design (Attachment 4) maximum 1 page:

Follow the specifications below:

The Applicant should describe how it plans to address all components of program evaluation outlined in this section.

- The program evaluation plan must describe the applicant’s plan for collecting and reporting customer satisfaction and demographic data (geographic area of the state as identified by Regional Office of Education, grade level(s) served) from, at a minimum, districts and parents/families.
- The plan should also collect demographic information (age, grade, disability, race, ethnicity, and gender) from individual student requests.
- Student data collection must include, but not be limited to, follow-up data, such as:
 - Did the student utilize the equipment provided?
 - Did the district purchase the equipment, or similar equipment, after receiving equipment through this program?
 - Did the district and parent/family consider the equipment to be feasible for purchase for student use?

The program evaluation design must also describe the applicant’s plan for evaluating success in fulfilling device loan requests within 30 calendar days of the request. This portion of the design must include, but not be limited to:

- The number and percentage of requests fulfilled within 30 days of the request
- The number and percentage of requests not fulfilled within 30 days of the request
- Reasons why any requests were not fulfilled within 30 days of the request

Additionally, the program evaluation design must also include how the student evaluation services will be evaluated. This portion of the design must include, but not be limited to:

- The number of and percentage of student evaluations completed within 60 days of the request
- The number of and percentage student evaluations not completed within 60 days of the request
- Reasons why any evaluations were not completed within 60 days of the request

Furthermore, the evaluation plan should describe the applicant’s plan to evaluate the effectiveness of advertising and networking strategies for the services offered.

- 5. Federal Budget Summary (Attachment 5):** The budget **MUST** be submitted on this form. No other budget form will be accepted. District budgets **MUST** be signed by the district superintendent. Other applicants should have an authorized official sign the form. Salaries and fringe benefits should be requested in equal intervals.
- 6. Budget Summary Breakdown (Attachment 5A):** The Budget Summary Breakdown **MUST** include descriptions of the anticipated expenditures, correlated to the line items set forth on the Federal Budget Summary. The Budget Summary Breakdown should also include subcontract information, if applicable.
- 7. Certifications and Assurances (Attachments 6 - 14):** Each applicant, *including each entity that is participating in a joint application*, is required to submit the forms below. These must be signed by the official legally authorized to submit the proposal and to bind the applicant to its contents.
 - A.** Program Specific Terms of the Grant (Attachment 6)
 - B.** Grant Application Certifications and Assurances (Attachment 7)
 - C.** Equitable Participation of Private Schools (Attachment 8)
 - D.** Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility, and Voluntary Exclusion (Attachment 9)
 - E.** Certificate Regarding Lobbying (Attachment 10)
 - F.** Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (Attachment 11)
 - G.** General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) 427 Notice and 442 Assurances (Attachment 12-13)
 - H.** Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) (Attachment 14)
- 8. Letters of Support or Letters of Intent to Participate:**
Letters of support may be included as part of the application package.

Review Criteria

Application Review and Selection Process

The selection of the grantees will be based upon the overall quality of the application. The scoring is based upon the following criteria:

- Expertise and Experience – the applicant’s description of previous work that demonstrates the ability to perform all duties needed for this work.
- Program Implementation –the applicant’s capacity and description of proposed plans and methods for carrying out the work of this grant.
- Creating Program Awareness – the applicant’s plan for informing customers of the program and the equipment and services offered.
- Evaluation Design – the applicant’s plan for program evaluation and continuous improvement.

Proposals that score under 80 points will not be funded.

Tiebreaker

In the event of a tie, the applicant with the most years of experience assisting Illinois school districts in meeting the regulations that pertain to providing assistive technology to students within the educational setting will be given priority.

Evaluation Criteria

These overall criteria are built into the rubric below. The attachment number in the parentheses following the criteria lists the portion of the proposal that will be used to determine if the criteria has been met. The points for each section as well as the individual criteria are also included in the rubric. Maximum points possible: 100.

Following the notification of grant awards, an applicant may request copies of reviewer scores and comments by contacting Tammy Greco at tgrec@isbe.net.

Selection criteria and point values are as follows:

Not Provided	Very Limited	Somewhat Limited	Moderate	Strong	Very Strong
0	1	2	3	4	5
Proposal requirements are absent.	Proposal provides very few details to meet the project outcomes.	Proposal is unclear and lacks enough evidence to meet project outcomes.	Proposal provides moderate detail and conveys potential to meet project outcomes.	Proposal provides good detail and strong evidence to meet project outcomes.	Proposal exceeds expectations and provides a solid plan to meet project outcomes.

Section 1: Expertise and Experience 30 Points	Possible Points
Applicant has expertise and experience with acquisition, maintenance, and storage of AT/AAC Devices (Narrative, Attachment 2)	5
Applicant has expertise and experience with establishing and maintaining a process to receive and respond to requests for AT/AAC devices. (Narrative, Attachment 2)	5
Applicant has expertise and experience in responding to and fulfilling requests for AT evaluations. (Narrative, Attachment 2)	5
Applicant has expertise and experience in promotion and networking to increase awareness of the program and the availability of no-cost services statewide. (Narrative, Attachment 2)	5
Applicant identifies program staff to be employed, including qualifications and responsibilities as it relates to program objectives and activities. (Narrative, Attachment 2)	5
Applicant has expertise and experience in maintaining communication with stakeholders (follow-up, technical assistance). (Narrative, Attachment 2)	5
Section 2: Program Implementation 35 Points	Possible Points
Applicant's proposal demonstrates capacity and a plan to receive and respond to requests for AT devices. (Narrative, Attachment 2; Objectives and Activities, Attachment 3)	5
Applicant's proposal demonstrates capacity and a plan to fulfill device loan requests within 30 business days. (Narrative, Attachment 2; Objectives and Activities, Attachment 3)	5
Applicant's proposal demonstrates capacity and a plan to maintain a wait list for AT/AAC devices when needs cannot be met immediately. (Narrative, Attachment 2; Objectives and Activities, Attachment 3)	5
Applicant's proposal demonstrates capacity and a plan to receive and respond to requests for AT/AAC evaluations. (Narrative, Objectives and Activities)	5
Applicant's proposal demonstrates capacity and plan to complete AT/AAC evaluations within 60 business days. (Narrative, Attachment 2; Objectives and Activities, Attachment 3)	5
Applicant describes procedures for ensuring the return of equipment from school districts/cooperatives once the loan period has concluded. (Narrative, Attachment 2; Objectives and Activities, Attachment 3)	5
Applicant's proposal describes the capacity and a plan to store, maintain, and clean devices including a description of the facility where the devices will be stored. (Narrative, Attachment 2; Objectives and Activities, Attachment 3)	5

Section 3: Creating Program Awareness 10 Points	Possible Points
Applicant's proposal demonstrates capability and a plan to promote the program by informing school districts, special education cooperatives, programs, and parents/families about the program and the availability of no-cost services statewide. (Narrative, Attachment 2; and Objectives and Activities, Attachment 3)	5
Applicant's proposal demonstrates capability and a plan to participate in technology conferences and other networking opportunities to publicize the program and the availability of no-cost services statewide. (Narrative, Attachment 2; Objectives and Activities, Attachment 3)	5
Section 4: Evaluation 25 Points	Possible Points
Applicant describes the process for collecting and reporting satisfaction data and demographic information from districts, students, and parents to determine, at a minimum, whether the student utilized the equipment, whether the district purchased the equipment or similar equipment, and the feasibility of the equipment provided. (Evaluation Design, Attachment 4)	5
Applicant describes process for collecting and reporting student demographic data including age, grade, disability, race, ethnicity, and gender.	5
Applicant describes the evaluation plan for evaluating device loan services to include the percentage of device loan requests fulfilled within 30 business days, the percentage not fulfilled within 30 business days, and reasons for not fulfilling the requests within 30 business days. (Evaluation Design, Attachment 4)	5
Applicant describes the evaluation plan for evaluating AT evaluation services to include the number and percentage of student evaluations completed within 60 business days, the number and percentage not completed within 60 business days, and reasons for not completing the evaluations in 60 business days. (Evaluation Design, Attachment 4)	5
Applicant describes the evaluation plan for determining the success of the advertising and networking strategies regarding the services offered. (Evaluation Design, Attachment 4)	5