



Illinois State Board of Education

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James T. Meeks
Chairman

Tony Smith, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Education

December 30, 2016

TO: Eligible Charter School Applicants

FROM: Tony Smith, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Education

SUBJECT: **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP):** Dissemination of Best Practices and Effective Innovation Grants FY 2017

General Information

Program: Charter Schools Program – Quality Schools Option

Purpose: The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) seeks to disseminate best practices from charter schools that have achieved strong student academic outcomes for economically disadvantaged students through the Student Body Diversity Subgrants. ISBE also seeks to disseminate best practices from charter schools that have successfully implemented innovative education practices, attained high student achievement, or narrowed achievement gaps between demographics, relative to the state as a whole through the Student Achievement and Educational Innovation Subgrants.

Type of Submission: Application

Application Type: Federal Competitive Grant

Total Grant Award: Estimated total program funding for fiscal year 2017 is \$1,500,000.

Award Range: The Charter Schools Program Dissemination Grants are **competitive**. ISBE will convene a panel to review, score, and rank each application. The review panel will be composed of external, neutral, qualified, professional individuals selected for their expertise, knowledge or related experiences. All final award decisions will be made by the Quality School Options Division and the State Superintendent.

Funds for the Student Body Diversity Subgrants can be no more than \$50,000 for a maximum of 24 months. Funds for the Student Achievement and Educational Innovation Subgrant can be no more than \$150,000 for a maximum of 24 months. Individual grant awards will vary, depending on the needs addressed in the approved proposals and the total appropriation for the program.

Applicants must choose only one type of subgrant. Schools cannot be awarded both a Student Body Diversity and Student Achievement Subgrant.

CSFA Number: 586-00-1155
CSFA Program Title: Charter Schools

CFDA Number: 84.282A
CFDA Title: Charter Schools

GATA Requirements: [Grant Accountability and Transparency Act \(GATA\) website](#)
[GATA Rules](#)
[GATA Legislation](#)

2 CFR Part 200

Requirements: [Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#)

Federal Legislation: [Title V, Part B, Subpart 1 of ESEA as amended \(Section 5201-5211\)](#)

Federal Guidance: [Charter Schools Program, Title V, Part B, Non-Regulatory Guidance](#)

State Legislation: [105 ILCS 5/27A - Charter Schools](#)

State Rules: [See 23 Illinois Administrative Code 650](#)

ISBE Website: [Charter Schools Home Page](#)

Eligible Applicants: Not-for-profit organizations that operate existing charter schools that are fully certified by ISBE and authorized either by local boards of education or by the Illinois State Charter School Commission are eligible to apply. Additionally, charter schools must have been in operation for at least three consecutive years and have demonstrated overall success, including:

- a. Substantial progress in improving student academic achievement;
- b. High levels of parent satisfaction; and
- c. The management and leadership necessary to overcome initial start-up problems and establish a thriving, financially viable charter school.

Charter school operators with multiple charter campuses that are merely extensions of each other (i.e., one charter school with multiple campuses) or multiple campuses with multiple charters, including those authorized by multiple boards of education or ISBE, do not have an alternate application and should submit through this RFP.

Charter schools cannot have received funds previously through the public Charter Schools Program Dissemination Grants program, either directly from the federal government or through ISBE. Absent a waiver, a charter school may receive only one dissemination grant. 20 U.S.C. 7221c(f)(6)(B) and 7221a(d)(2).

A Waiver Request form is attached to this RFP as Exhibit A. Past awardees seeking a waiver should complete the form and submit it with the entire RFP. All requests will be compiled by ISBE and submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) for approval. ISBE may delay the final decision on an award until approval of a federal waiver is obtained.

Grant Period: The Student Body Diversity and Student Achievement and Educational Innovation Subgrants will each have a term of no more than 24 months. Grantee will determine the length not to exceed 24 months.

The grant period will begin no sooner than the execution date of the grant agreement until June 30, 2017 (FY 2017). Additional continuation periods are anticipated –July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2018 (FY2018); and July 1, 2018, to June 30, 2019 (FY2019). Total length of the grant period will not exceed 24 months, and the final end date will be dependent upon term proposed by grantee in this proposal.

Funding will be contingent upon a sufficient appropriation for the program and satisfactory process toward meeting the goals and intent of the approved plan.

Start Date: Upon award

End Date (Budget Period 1): June 30, 2017

Funding Note: Payment under this grant is subject to appropriation authority granted by the General Assembly for the program. Obligations of ISBE will cease immediately without further obligation should the agency fail to receive sufficient funds (i.e., state, federal, or other) for this program.

Subgrants will operate on a reimbursement basis. All incurred expenditures are submitted for reimbursement to ISBE on a minimum quarterly basis. See Expenditure Reports section below for additional information.

Receipt of funding is contingent upon federal appropriation to ISBE as well as meeting substantial progress toward program goals.

Application Deadline: Ensure that the application is postmarked or delivered in sufficient time to arrive at ISBE no later than **4 p.m. on February 14, 2017**. Proposals received after the deadline will not be reviewed or scored.

Proposals may be mailed or hand-delivered to either of the following locations:

Springfield Office

Claudia Quezada
Illinois State Board of Education
Innovation and Improvement
100 North First Street
Springfield, IL 62777-0001

Chicago Office

Claudia Quezada
Illinois State Board of Education
Suite 14-300
100 West Randolph Street
Chicago, IL 60601-3283

Informational Webinar: A recorded informational webinar has been posted to ISBE's Charter School website at <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Charter-Schools.aspx>.

Contact Person: For more information on this RFP, contact Claudia Quezada at (312) 814-2220 or by email at cquezada@isbe.net.

Expenditure Reports: Cumulative expenditure reports (submitted quarterly) and a final expenditure report are required.

Program Performance Reports: Observations and /or site visits may be conducted if a grant is awarded. In addition, grant recipients will be required to report to ISBE's Office of Innovation and Improvement as described below. Also, standard financial reporting is required for reimbursement of subgrant funds throughout the grant period. The reports should be submitted via email to charter@isbe.net:

- Brief and standardized quarterly reports providing evidence of progress as it pertains to the completion of the approved dissemination plan and target dates, as well as the intended successes of the approved activities.
- Within 30 days of the conclusion of the subgrant, recipients must submit a final narrative report along with a copy/sample of any products/materials created as part of the dissemination project. This final report should describe the school's own evaluation of the project outcomes and must provide links to any web-based dissemination component of the project.

Review Criteria: Applicants should indicate on the Proposal Cover Page which funding they are applying for: Student Body Diversity or Student Achievement and Educational Innovation. Each proposal will be reviewed and scored on the extent to which each addresses the criteria listed below for each subgrant type.

Student Body Diversity Proposals (100 points)

Need: The proposal indicates a demonstrated demand (identifies specific outside educational participants) for the specific programs or services that would be provided through the proposed project. (15 points)

Educational Program and Student Support: The quality of the charter school's educational program, in operation for at least three years, to increase student outcomes and the extent to which it structures its educational decisions around individual physical, emotional, socioeconomic, and cultural factors, and successfully retains students with diverse needs. (30 points)

Parent Satisfaction: The charter school and the educational program demonstrate a high level of parent satisfaction. (15 points)

Dissemination Plan: The quality of the school's plan to disseminate methods or practices deemed responsible for success to other schools, Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and charter development teams through a variety of methods. (15 points)

Budget: The extent to which the proposed budget is consistent with the proposal's activities and appears to be cost-effective. (15 points)

Capacity: The applicant demonstrates that the charter school has the organizational capacity to successfully manage and complete the proposed project. (10 points)

Student Achievement and Educational Innovation Proposals (100 points)

Need: The proposal indicates a demonstrated demand (identifies specific outside educational participants) for the specific programs or services that would be provided through the proposed project. (15 points)

Educational Program: The demonstrated quality of the charter school's educational program, in operation for at least three years, including successfully implemented education innovation, high student achievement, or narrowed achievement gaps between demographics, relative to the state as a whole. (30 points)

Parent Satisfaction: The charter school and the educational program demonstrate a high level of parent satisfaction. (15 points)

Dissemination Plan: The quality of the school's plan to disseminate methods or practices deemed responsible for success to other schools, LEAs, and charter development teams through a variety of methods. (15 points)

Budget: The extent to which the proposed budget is consistent with the proposal's activities and appears to be cost-effective. (15 points)

Capacity: The applicant demonstrates that the charter school has the organizational capacity to successfully manage and complete the proposed project. (10 points)

All eligible applications will be scored by an external review panel. The panel will use the Dissemination Student Body Diversity Rubric (Exhibit B) & Dissemination Student Achievement and Innovation Rubric (Exhibit C), when assessing each applicant's responses to the Review Criteria.

Recommendations for grant awards will be made by the Quality School Options Division, with final approval by the State Superintendent of Education, and will be based upon results from the review process used to determine the extent to which each proposal meets the criteria listed below. Reviewers may include proven charter school operators, staff of Illinois charter schools organizations, and ISBE program staff.

Background and Program Specifications

Background: Article 27A of the Illinois School Code, known as the Charter Schools Law, creates opportunities within the public school system of Illinois for the development of innovative and accountable teaching techniques and educational programs. ED currently makes funding available under Title V, Part B of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 for the Charter Schools program. This funding provides support for the dissemination of best practices from charter schools.

The Charter Schools Law permits the creation of up to 120 charter schools statewide, including 70 in the City of Chicago and 45 in the remainder of the state. In addition to these charter schools, up to, but no more than five, charter schools devoted exclusively to re-enrolled high school dropouts may operate in the City of Chicago. Each of these "dropout charters" may operate up to 15 campuses within the city. Any of these dropout charters may have a maximum of 1,875 enrollment seats, with any single attendance center that is part of the charter having a maximum of 165 enrollment seats. Each attendance center of the dropout charter must be operated by the same legal entity as that for which the charter is approved and certified.

Charter schools operate largely free from the requirements imposed by the School Code, ISBE's administrative rules, and the local board policies. In return for this degree of flexibility, charter schools are directly accountable for their performance, both to the families who choose them and to the public in general through their charters, which specify the schools' contractual obligations. If a school fails to deliver on its promises, then families can decide to send their students elsewhere, thus removing financial support for the charter school. The entity issuing the charter can also elect not to renew the charter when the agreement expires.

The purpose of charter schools is to:

- A. Improve pupil learning by creating schools with high, rigorous standards for pupils;
- B. Increase learning opportunities for all pupils, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for at-risk pupils, consistent, however, with an equal commitment to increase learning opportunities for all other groups of pupils in a manner that does not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, creed color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, marital status, or need for special education services;

- C. Encourage the use of teaching methods that may be different in some respects than others regularly used in the public school system;
- D. Allow the development of new, different, or alternative forms of measuring pupil learning and achievement;
- E. Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site;
- F. Provide parents and pupils with expanded choices within the public school system;
- G. Encourage parental and community involvement with public schools; and
- H. Hold charter schools accountable for meeting rigorous school content standards and provide those schools with the opportunity to improve accountability.

ISBE uses the definition of a "high-quality charter school" as set forth in the Federal Register. A high-quality charter school shows evidence of strong academic results for the past three years based on the following factors:

1. Increased student academic achievement and attainment (including, if applicable and available, high school graduation rates and college and other postsecondary education enrollment rates) for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter school;
2. Either
 - a. Demonstrated success in closing historic achievement gaps for the demographics of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(2)(C)(v)(II)) at the charter school; or
 - b. No significant achievement gaps between any of the demographics of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 6311) at the charter school and significant gains in student academic achievement for all populations of students served by the charter school;
3. Results (including, if applicable and available, performance on statewide tests, annual student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college and other postsecondary education attendance rates, and college and other postsecondary education persistence rates) for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter school that are above the average academic achievement results for such students in the state;
4. Results on a performance framework established by the state or authorized public chartering agency for the purpose of evaluating charter school quality; and
5. No significant compliance issues, particularly in the areas of student safety, financial management, and equitable treatment of students.

The purpose of this RFP is to: Solicit from charter schools already in operation proposals that meet the purposes of the federal public dissemination program, which are listed below:

- A. Provide financial assistance for the dissemination of best practices from charter schools;
- B. Disseminate methods or practices deemed responsible for success to other schools, LEAs, and charter development teams through a variety of methods; and
- C. Evaluate the effects of these dissemination methods or practices.

Specific ISBE objectives for the federal public Charter Schools Program Dissemination Grants:

- A. Promote best practices in achieving and serving a diverse student body from charter schools that have successfully achieved student body diversity with strong student outcomes.
- B. Encourage the dissemination of high-quality charter schools' best practices as it pertains to educational innovation, high student achievement, and narrowing of the achievement gaps between student demographics.
- C. ISBE's objective is to promote the discussion and sharing of best practices and innovations to all schools across Illinois, charter and non-charter. The goal is to provide a knowledge base of programs that have had a dramatic impact on student growth and achievement.

Possible Dissemination Activities

Dissemination subgrants may be used by successful charter schools to partner with and/or assist other schools (both charter and non-charter) in adopting the charter school's program (or certain aspects of the charter school's program) or to disseminate information about the charter school's successful practices.

Activities may include:

1. Assisting individuals with the planning and start-up of one or more new public schools, including charter schools, that are independent of the assisting charter school and its developers and that agree to be held to at least as high a level of accountability as the assisting charter school;
2. Developing partnerships with other public schools designed to improve student academic achievement and sharing best practices with them;
3. Developing curriculum materials, assessments, and other materials that promote best practices in increased student achievement and are based on successful practices within the assisting charter school; and
4. Conducting evaluations and developing materials that document the successful practices of the assisting charter school and that are designed to improve student performance at other schools.

Best Practices

Best practices are methods or guidelines that are accepted standards in delivering results. These practices are research-based and evidence-supported. These activities can include balanced and integrated curriculum, differentiated instruction, and hands-on active learning opportunities. School structure and leadership also have their own base of best practices that are evolving to meet the challenges of the 21st-century learning needs. These include data-driven, decision-making practices, and the integration of rigorous accountability systems.

Educational Innovation

The pursuit of excellence and continuous improvement in education is what drives innovation. Educational innovation can take many forms. The organizational structure of a school or a new accountability system may provide a more rigorous and dynamic teaching and learning environment. Instructional delivery may be enhanced by the introduction of new technology in the classroom. The methods by which teachers or staffs are recruited, prepared, or compensated may need take on new forms.

Required Narrative Components

Each program funded must include the components listed below:

- A. A description and evidence of the education program to be disseminated by the charter school, including:
 1. How the program has enabled all students to meet challenging state student academic achievement standards; and
 2. The curriculum and instructional practices used.
- B. A description of:
 1. The objectives of the charter school; and
 2. The methods by which the charter school determines its progress toward achieving those objectives.
- C. A description and evidence of charter school practices related to student discipline and school climate and how they ensure equity in school discipline practices.
- D. A description of how the subgrant funds will be used, including a description of how such funds will be used in conjunction with other federal programs administered by the ED secretary.
- E. A description and evidence showing how the charter school is of high quality (as defined in the Federal Register).
- F. A description of demonstrated demand (identifies specific outside educational participants) for the specific programs or services that would be provided through the proposed project.
- G. A description that demonstrates that the charter school has the organizational capacity to successfully manage and complete the proposed project.

Additionally, each Student Body Diversity program funded must include:

- H. A description and supporting evidence of the charter school's diversity among recognized demographics and how the charter school structures its decisions for the educational program around the individual physical, emotional, socioeconomic, and cultural factors, and how it successfully retains students with diverse learning needs.

Additionally, each Student Achievement and Educational Innovation program funded must include:

- i. A description and supporting evidence of the charter school's successfully implemented educational innovation or high student achievement or narrowed achievement gaps between student demographics.

Program Participation Requirements

As part of the grant program evaluation, each grantee will be required to annually submit at a minimum the following information:

1. Demographic information about the community that the charter school serves or intends to serve;
2. Student achievement data, particularly results on state assessments for reading and mathematics, from the surrounding schools and the existing charter school;
3. Rates of attendance, graduation, transfers, and other similar information;
4. Evidence of all events, meetings, and conferences administered with grant funds;
5. A description of all activities completed with grant funds and an analysis of their impact on other schools, LEAs, and charter development teams; and
6. Additional information as is required by ISBE Rule 650.55 (23 Ill Adm Code 650.55) and Section 27A-12 of the School Code.

Fiscal Information

The total amount of available funding in FY2017 for grant awards under this RFP is \$1,500,000.

Eligible applicants may receive up to 24 months of funding under the federal public Charter Schools Program Dissemination Grants program, contingent upon available funds. The program includes two different types of funding – Student Body Diversity and Student Achievement and Educational Innovation. Each subgrant type is eligible for up to 24 months of funding. Receiving continuation funding is contingent upon federal appropriation to ISBE as well as meeting substantial progress toward program goals.

Charter schools in Illinois draw their funding from the school districts in which their students reside, receiving between 75 percent and 125 percent of the respective district's average per-capita tuition for each student enrolled, plus a proportionate share of any state and federal categorical resources for which their students may be eligible. They have no taxing authority similar to that exercised by school districts, and the relatively short term of an initial charter (five to 10 years) may make obtaining financial loans difficult. The experience of charter school operators in other states has shown that the absence of a funding source for dissemination makes it very difficult to share charter school practices.

The federal public Charter Schools Program Dissemination Grants program has been structured to address this problem by providing a source of dissemination funding. Grant funds are available for Student Body Diversity and/or Student Achievement and Educational Innovation to assist with expenses that a charter school cannot meet from other state or local sources. The following conditions apply:

1. Funds may only be used for costs associated with the dissemination of practices related to Student Body Diversity or Student Achievement and Educational Innovation of a charter school.
2. In general, grantees may not use grant funds for normal operating costs. Under certain circumstances, written approval from ISBE based on justification may be entertained.
3. Grant funds may not be used for the administrative fees or expenses of the school district with which the applicant is working unless the applicant voluntarily enters into a mutually agreed upon arrangement with the school district for the provision of administrative services.
4. Grant funds may not be used for Americans with Disabilities Act compliance, building construction or renovation, or for related salaries and benefits.
5. Normal operating expenses, including, but not limited to, salaries, benefits, postage, ADA compliance, and utilities, are **not allowable** grant expenditures. NOTE: A stipend may be an eligible expense in the event school personnel perform activities in direct support of the subgrant proposal, outside of their normally scheduled duties. Please seek guidance from ISBE's program team prior to incurring the expense.

6. In the event that the subgrantee's renewal or recertification is delayed, no additional funding will be disbursed after the renewal date has lapsed. Immediately contact the project administrator, Claudia Quezada, for next steps at cquezada@isbe.net.

The New Uniform Guidance effective December 2014 replaces OMB Circulars. All grantees are required to follow the regulations and the GATA noted below:

[The Uniform Guidance is available here](#)

[The GATA legislation is available here](#)

Key Financial Management Requirements

Eligible Applicants must:

- A. Maintain proper stewardship of taxpayer dollars.
- B. Maintain effective internal controls and fund accountability procedures.
- C. Expend funds only on activities consistent with the approved application and only during the approved project period.
- D. Follow cost principles (See Section 200, Subpart E, Cost Principles.)
- E. Follow procurement standards (See Section 200.318, General procurement standards.)
- F. Costs charged to a federal grant must be:
 1. Allowable - either permitted or not specifically prohibited and necessary for project success.
 2. Allocable - expended for a particular purpose or time period that benefits the grant.
 3. Reasonable - costs that would be incurred by a reasonably prudent person.

Applicants are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the following ISBE handbooks to learn how to complete a proposed budget and learn about timing of payment reimbursements.

[State and Federal Grant Administration Policy, Fiscal Requirements and Procedures](#)
[Requirements for Accounting, Budgeting, Financial Reporting, and Auditing](#)

Allowable Expenditures

Subgrant funds may be used to develop materials documenting successful practices of the charter school for the educational purpose of assisting other public schools in adapting the charter school's program or improving student academic achievement.

Other possible allowable costs dependent on justifications provided may include:

- Meeting costs (excluding food)
- Staff needed to execute the dissemination grants
- Promotional materials related to dissemination meetings/gatherings

Non-allowable Expenditures

Grant funds **may not** supplant the regular operating budget of the charter school and **may not** be used, directly or through a contractor, for marketing or recruitment activities designed to promote itself or its programs to parents or the community. Any costs that are not adequately justified and aligned to the dissemination project will not be allowed.

For purposes of compliance with Section 511 of PL 101-166 (the Stevens Amendment), applicants are advised that 100 percent of the funds for this program are derived from federal sources.

Proposal Format

Proposal Specifications: Each proposal must be submitted in the format outlined below. Please use the following as a checklist in assembling your completed proposal.

- Pages must be 8.5" x 11" with print on one side only and 1" margins on the top, bottom, and both sides of the paper;
- Text in the proposal narrative must be typed and double-spaced;
- Font must be 12 points;
- Pages must be consecutively numbered;
- Page headers that identify the bidder (i.e., name of institution/school and date of submission) on the proposal narratives must be included;
- Proposals submitted with spiral binding or in binders will not be accepted. Binder clips are accepted; supplementary materials other than information requested in this RFP, such as videotapes, CD-ROMs, files on disks, publications, press clippings, testimonial letters, and newsletters, are prohibited and will not be reviewed.

Sequence for Assembling Proposal:

- ___ 1. **Uniform Application for State Grant Assistance (Attachment 1):** Include the entity name, address, telephone and fax numbers, 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 the proposal;
- ___ 2. **Cover Page (Attachment 1A):** Must be signed by the chief charter school official authorized to submit the proposal. The cover page must contain the applicant/organization name; school name; and contact information for both the administrator and main contact person, including names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses. The cover page should also include type of subgrant and amount of funding for which the applicant is applying.
- ___ 2. **Proposal Abstract (Attachment 2):** Briefly describe the overall purpose and major activities of the project. Not to exceed one page.
- ___ 3. **Proposal Narrative (Attachment 3):** Follow the specifications either for a Student Body Diversity proposal or a Student Achievement and Educational Innovation proposal. When completing this section, applicants should carefully review the requirements presented under the "Required Program Components" and "Criteria for Review and Approval of Proposals" sections.

The narrative should **not** exceed 10 pages.
- ___ 4. **Goals, Activities, Timelines, and Evaluations (Attachment 4):** Use the form provided to list at least one set of Goal Information (Goal, Activity, Timeline, and Evaluation). Up to four sets of information may be included.
- ___ 5. **Budget Summary and Breakdown (Attachment 5, 5A, & 5B):** Must be submitted on the form provided and signed by the official authorized to submit the proposal. The payment schedule should be based on the projected date of expenditures. Stipends and fringe benefits should be requested in equal intervals on the schedule. Supplies, equipment, contracted services, and professional development should be requested in the month for which the expenditure is anticipated. Assistance in constructing a Budget Summary and Payment Schedule can be obtained from Funding and Disbursements staff (217) 782-5256. Must include descriptions of the anticipated expenditures, correlated to the line items set forth on the Budget Summary. Must include subcontract information, if applicable (See item 6 of the document titled "Certification and Assurances, and Standard Terms of the Grant," Attachment.)
- ___ 6. **Certifications and Assurances (Attachments 6, 7, 8, 9, 9A, 9B, 9C, 10, & 11):** Each applicant is required to submit the certification forms attached ("General Assurances"; "Grant Application Certification and Assurances"; "Program-Specific Terms of the Grant"; "Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility, and Voluntary Exclusion"; "Certification Regarding Lobbying"; "GEPA 427 Notice" ; and "GEPA 442 Assurances"). Include the "Certification Regarding Lobbying" form if the federal grant per applicant exceeds \$100,000. These must be signed by the official legally authorized to submit the proposal and to bind the applicant to its contents.

7. **Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act – FFATA (Attachment 12):** The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (31 U.S.C. 6102; P.L. 109-282, as amended by section 6202(a) of P.L. 110-252) requires a Prime Awardee, such as a state agency, to report an award of \$25,000 or more made to a subrecipient as of Oct. 1, 2010 (also see CFR part 170). Fulfill reporting requirements by providing a brief but succinct description of how the funding received will support the activities and actions to meet the purpose and goals of the federal grant. If there are multiple funding actions, provide a description for each funding action.

Merit-Based Review and Selection Process for Competitive Grants

ISBE has designed and adopted a merit-based review and selection process for competitive grant applications. The merit-based review process is incorporated herein by reference. The full text of the ISBE merit-based review policy can be found at <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/ISBE-merit-based-review.pdf>. Applicants are advised to refer to the policy document for complete information regarding the merit-based review and appeal processes. Below is a brief summary of the processes:

All competitive grant applications submitted will be reviewed for eligibility requirements and for completion of all documents.

All grant applications will be reviewed by an evaluation committee. The evaluation committee will consist of a minimum of three members. An evaluation committee member may not be a grant applicant. An evaluation committee member may not have any conflicts of interest or apparent conflicts of interest. Confidentiality Agreement and Conflict of Interest Disclosure will be signed by all committee members. Evaluation committee members will be assigned a code for confidentiality purposes.

The grant applications will be scored based on the criteria for review listed in this RFP.

Each evaluation committee member will score independently from the whole committee on an individual score sheet. The scores of the committee members will be averaged. Any significant or substantial variance between evaluator scores will be reviewed and documented, including the revision of any individual score. A summary score sheet will show the comparative scores and the resulting finalist(s). Grant applications will be ranked from high score to low score. Funds will be applied to these grant applications based on rank order and available funding.

The grantee must complete the prequalification, fiscal and administrative Internal Control Questionnaire, and programmatic risk assessment before any grant can be awarded. Merit-based award finalists will be sent a Notice of State Award Finalist form to identify outstanding requirements, if any, that must be completed prior to a grant award.

An award shall be made pursuant to a written determination based on the evaluation criteria set forth in the grant application and successful completion of finalist requirements.

A Notice of State Award (NOSA) will be issued to the merit-based finalists that have successfully completed all grant award requirements. Based on the NOSA, the merit-based finalist will be positioned to make an informed decision to accept the grant award. The NOSA shall include:

- a. The terms and conditions of the award.
- b. Specific conditions assigned to the grantee based on the fiscal and administrative ICQ, and programmatic risk assessment.

The grant award(s) will be published on the grants.illinois.gov website and on isbe.net. A written Notice of Denial will be sent to the applicants not receiving an award.

Appeal Process (see link above for complete appeal process)

Competitive grant appeals are limited to the evaluation process. Evaluation scores may not themselves be protested. Only the evaluation process is subject to appeal.

Submission of Appeal

- a. An appeal must be submitted in writing and mailed as indicated below.
- b. An appeal must be received within 14 calendar days after the date that the first grant award notice has been published on grants.illinois.gov.
- c. The written appeal shall include at a minimum the following:
 - The name and address of the appealing party.
 - Identification of the grant.
 - A statement of reasons for the appeal.
 - The appealing party must supply any additional information requested by ISBE within the time period set in the request.

Resolution

- a. ISBE will resolve the appeal by means of a written determination.
- b. The determination shall include, but not be limited to:
 - Review of the appeal
 - Appeal determination
 - Rationale for the determination

Mail a hard copy of the appeal to:

Appeals Review Officer
c/o State Superintendent of Education
Illinois State Board of Education
100 North First Street S-405
Springfield, IL 62777-0001