May 21, 2018

TO: Eligible Applicants

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

SUBJECT: **REQUEST FOR APPLICATION (RFA): 2018 Competency-Based High School Graduation Requirements Pilot Program**

Eligibility and Application Information

Eligible Applicants: Public school districts may participate in the pilot program for some or all of its schools. School districts may collaboratively apply to participate in the pilot program. In the application of a collaborative of districts, each district participating in the collaborative shall comply with the requirements outlined in the application.

Application Award: No state funding is associated with this application.

Application Period: The initial project period will begin no earlier than August 10, 2018.

Application Deadline: An original application and a scanned copy on USB drive must be received by August 1, 2018. Mail the material to Jeannie Schulze, Illinois State Board of Education, 100 North First Street (S284), Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001.

Proposals also may be hand-delivered to the following locations:

Springfield Office
Reception Area
1st Floor
100 North First Street

Chicago Office
Reception Area
Suite 14-300
100 West Randolph Street

Contact Person: For more information on this RFA, contact competencypilot@isbe.net.

An informational event was held on June 26, 2018. More information on the event can be found at https://www.isbe.net/Competency.

Background and Program Specifications

Section 20 of Public Act 099-0674 creates the competency-based, high school graduation requirements pilot program. A school district participating in the pilot program may select the year and course graduation requirement it wishes to replace with a competency-based learning system. A school district with a student population of fewer than 500,000 may participate in the pilot program for some or all of its schools. Those with more than 500,000 students may only select six schools to participate in the project.

The pilot project has two phases. The first phase is the RFA and the selection process. The second phase is the full development and implementation of a detailed plan for a competency-based learning system for high school graduation requirements.

Elements that must be included in the competency-based learning system:
- Students shall demonstrate mastery of all required competencies to earn credit.
- Students must demonstrate mastery of adaptive competencies defined by the school district in addition to academic competencies.
- Students shall advance once they have demonstrated mastery. Students shall receive more time and personalized instruction, if needed, to demonstrate mastery.
- Students shall have the ability to attain advanced postsecondary education and career-related competencies beyond those needed for graduation.
- Students must be assessed using multiple measures to determine mastery, usually requiring application of knowledge.
- Students must be able to earn credit toward graduation requirements in ways other than traditional coursework, including learning opportunities outside the traditional classroom setting (such as Supervised Career Development Experiences).

A school district participating in the pilot program will do the following:
- Demonstrate that the proposed competency-based learning system is a core strategy supporting the community's efforts to better prepare high school students for college, career, and life. The application must identify the community partners that will support the system's implementation.
- Demonstrate that all groups of students within the participating schools will have access to the pilot program.
- Have a plan for administrator and educator professional development regarding the competency-based learning system and demonstrate prior successful implementation of professional development systems for major district instructional initiatives.
- Demonstrate how the competencies in the core academic areas of mathematics, English language arts, and science can be mastered in a competency-based learning system.
- Develop a plan for community engagement and communications.
- Develop a plan for assigning course grades based on mastery of competencies within the competency-based learning system.
- Establish a plan and system for collecting and assessing student progress on competency completion and attainment, including for learning opportunities outside of the traditional classroom setting.
- Establish a system for data collection and reporting and provide ISBE with such reports and information as may be required for administration and evaluation of the program.
- Actively partner with a community college and a higher education institution other than a community college for consultation on the development and administration of its competency-based learning system. The plan should address how high school graduates of a competency-based learning system will be able to provide information normally expected by postsecondary institutions for admission and financial aid.
- Have a plan for engaging feeder elementary schools with the participating high school or schools on the establishment and administration of the competency-based learning system.

Phase One of the pilot program requires the following:

- Demonstration of commitment from the school district superintendent, the president of the school board of the district, teachers within the school district who will be involved with the pilot program implementation, a community college partner, and a higher education institution other than a community college;
- An indication of which of the years and course graduation requirements set forth in Section 27-22 of the School Code the school district wishes to replace with a competency-based learning system;
- A general description of the school district's plan for implementing a competency-based learning system for high school graduation requirements making sure to address the requirements found under Elements that must be included in the competency-based learning system;
- The school district's prior professional development and stakeholder engagement efforts that will support its successful development and implementation of a competency-based learning system, including, without limitation, prior implementation of professional development systems for major district instructional initiatives;
- A description of how teachers have been engaged throughout the application development process; and
- Identification of any waivers or modifications of state law or rules for implementation of the proposed plan.

  Waivers cannot be applied for the following:
  - State assessments,
  - Accountability requirements,
  - Teacher tenure or seniority,
  - Teacher or principal evaluations,
  - Learning standards, or
  - Legal protections or supports intended for the protection of children or a particular category of students, such as students with disabilities or English Learners.

  Any waiver or modification of teacher educator licensure requirements to permit instruction by non-educators or educators without an appropriate license must ensure that an appropriately licensed teacher and the provider of instruction partner in order to verify the method for assessing competency of mastery and verify whether a student has demonstrated mastery.

Signatures for the application must be obtained from the district superintendent, the school board president, the president of the bargaining unit for teachers (if the school district has such a unit), a representative from the local community college, and a representative from a higher education institution other than a community college. If the president of the bargaining unit does not sign the statement of commitment for the application, the school district must submit either a statement by the president of the bargaining unit or provide a description of the school district's good faith efforts to obtain such a statement.

The selection of the school districts will be based upon the quality of the proposed plan; the strength of the local commitments, including, without limitation, teachers within the school district who will be involved in the program's implementation and postsecondary institution partnerships; and demonstration of prior professional development and stakeholder engagement efforts that will support the proposed system's successful implementation. Selection of applications will also take into consideration the diversity of school district types and sizes, the diversity of geographic representation from across the state, and the diversity of plan approaches (such as approaches that involve one subject only, multiple subjects, and the types of subjects).

Phase Two of the pilot program requires the districts selected in Phase One to work with an ISBE representative to develop a full pilot program implementation plan. A school district can be removed from the pilot program during this period if it does not submit a full pilot program implementation plan that meets ISBE's specifications.

The school district will establish and maintain a standing Planning and Implementation Committee that includes representation from administrators and teachers, including teachers who will be involved in the competency-based learning system's implementation. The teacher representatives should be selected either by teachers or the bargaining unit's representative. The number of teacher representatives should equal the number of administrator representatives, unless otherwise agreed to by the teachers or the bargaining unit's representative. The standing Planning and Implementation Committee will develop reports that are included within the initial application, the full pilot program plan, and any subsequent annual submissions to ISBE as part of the assessment and evaluation of the program. The reports will describe the members' assessment of the school district's plan or implementation of the school district's competency-based learning system and any recommendations for modifications or improvements to the system.

Fiscal Information

No state funding is associated with this application in fiscal year 2019.

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.

- Typed, using 1-inch margins, double-spacing, and 11-point font
- No spiral binding or binders
- Pages outside of attachments should be numbered and contain a header on each page identifying the applicant name and Region, County, District, Type (RCDT) number (RCDT numbers can be found at https://www.isbe.net/Pages/RCDTS-Lookup.aspx.)

___ 1. **Cover Packet (Attachment 1** Complete the requested information. Include all requested signatures...

___ 2. **Proposal Narrative**: Follow the instructions under Proposal Narrative Requirements.

___ 3. **Evaluation and Sustainability:** Describe how the plan will be monitored and evaluated and how results will be reported. Indicate how the impact on increasing student success and/or other stated goals and objectives will be shared within your district and beyond (parents, community, etc.). The narrative should follow the requirements under Proposal Specifications.

Proposal Narrative Requirements

Provide a general description of the district's plan for implementing a competency-based learning system for high school graduation requirements. Include a description of the plan's vision and goals as well as innovative features for student success that will be addressed. Indicate the intended impact of the flexibility requested in the plan. Provide activities and a timeline for meeting the goals. Indicate how all groups of students in the participating school(s) will be notified of the opportunities provided by the program. Describe the expected outcomes for students. Describe how the plan will address the assignment of course grades based on mastery of competencies. Share data, best practices, and additional information that support the plan.

The narrative should address all of the following elements:

- How students will demonstrate mastery of all required competencies to earn credit.
- How students will demonstrate mastery of adaptive competencies defined by the school district in addition to academic competencies.
- How students will advance once they have demonstrated mastery. How students shall receive more time and personalized instruction, if needed, to demonstrate mastery.
- How students will have the ability to attain advanced postsecondary education and career-related competencies beyond those needed for graduation.
- How students will be assessed using multiple measures to determine mastery, usually requiring application of knowledge.
- How students will be able to earn credit toward graduation requirements in ways other than traditional coursework, including learning opportunities outside the traditional classroom setting (such as Supervised Career Development Experiences).

Criteria for Review and Approval of Proposals

The selection of the school districts will be based upon the quality of the proposed plan; the strength of the local commitments, including, without limitation, teachers within the school district who will be involved in the program's implementation and postsecondary institution partnerships; and demonstration of prior professional development and stakeholder engagement efforts that will support the proposed system's successful implementation.

Selection of applications will also take into consideration the diversity of school district types and sizes, the diversity of geographic representation from across the state, and the diversity of plan approaches (such as approaches that involve one subject only, multiple subjects, and the types of subjects).

Following the notification of application awards, districts may request copies of reviewer comments by contacting competencypilot@isbe.net.

Grant Scoring Rubric

Strength of Local Commitment (20 Points)		Yes (5)	No (0)
Completion of chart of participating schools that includes signatures of school principals (Attachment 1, #2)			
Completion of chart of teachers participating in the implementation of the project. (Attachment 1, #4)			
Completion of chart of the Planning and Implementation Committee that includes signatures of all participants (Attachment 1, #9)			
Completion of the plan for the local community college and an institution of higher education. Signatures from both entities are included. (Attachment 1, #6 and Attachment 1, #11)			
Demonstration of Prior Professional Development and Stakeholder Engagement (20 Points)	5 - 4	3 - 2	1 - 0
Description of how teachers have been engaged throughout the application development process. (Attachment 1, #5)	Thorough description of how teachers were engaged throughout the process. Meeting details have been provided and give clear indication of teachers' role in the process and how they will be included during the implementation of the plan.	Basic description of how teachers were engaged throughout the process. Some details have been provided about meetings that have occurred with teachers. Some details are included as to how teachers will be included during the implementation of the plan.	No description or no relevant description was provided about meetings that have occurred with teachers. No description or no relevant description as to how teachers will be involved in the implementation of plan.

Description of how the local community college and an institution of higher education other than a community college have been actively engaged throughout the application development process. (Attachment 1, #6)	Thorough description of how both the local community college and an institution of higher education that is not a community college have been actively engaged throughout the process. Meeting details have been provided as well as how the entities will be included during the implementation of plan.	Some description of how both the local community college an institution of higher education other than a community college have been actively involved in the process. No meeting information has been provided nor any details as to how partnership will work in program implementation	No description or no relevant description was provided in the plan. One or both of the entities needed are missing from the plan. No indication has been given that the district is actively partnering with either entity.
Description of district's prior professional development and stakeholder engagement efforts to support successful development of application and implementation of the plan. (Attachment 1, #7)	Thorough description of professional development and stakeholder engagement is included. There is a clear indication as to how the prior professional development will help with the implementation of the plan. There is a clear indication of how stakeholders will be involved during implementation of the plan.	Basic description of professional development and stakeholder engagement is included. There is some indication as to how the prior professional development will help with the implementation of the plan. There is some indication of how stakeholders will be involved in implementation of the plan.	No description or no relevant description of professional development and stakeholder engagement is included. There is no clear indication as to how the prior professional development will help with implementation of the plan. There is no clear indication of how stakeholders will be involved in implementation of the plan.
Description of community partners that will support the system's implementation. (Attachment 1, #8)	Thorough description of community partnerships is included. There is a clear indication as to how the partnerships will help with the	Some description of community partnerships is included. There is some indication as to how the partnerships will help with the	No description or no relevant description of community partnerships is included. There is no clear indication as to how the

	implementation of the plan.	implementation of the plan.	partnerships will help with the implementation of the plan.
Quality of Proposed Plan (50 Points)	5 - 4	3 - 2	1 – 0
Project Goals (10 points)			
The proposal identifies clear, realistic, measureable goals. (Proposal Narrative Requirements)	Goals are very clear, realistic, and easily obtainable.	Goals are somewhat clear and realistic. There is some question as to whether a goal is obtainable.	Goals are either missing or they are not clear, realistic, or obtainable.
The goals clearly specify how student achievement will be impacted. (Proposal Narrative Requirements)	The goals clearly will significantly impact student achievement.	The goals will have some impact on student achievement.	The goals will have no significant impact on student achievement.
Project Narrative (25 points)			
The proposal relates to innovative practices based upon research, previously collected district data, best practices, or additional information. (Proposal Narrative Requirements)	The proposal clearly indicates that the project is based upon research, best practices, and district data collection.	There is some indication that the project is based upon research, best practices, and district data collection.	There is no indication that the project is based upon research, best practices, and district data collection.
The proposed implementation timeline is realistic and includes all major activities. (Proposal Narrative Requirements)	The implementation timeline is clear and realistic. All major activities necessary for program success are easily found.	The implementation timeline is somewhat realistic. Some major activities necessary for program success are missing or are not easily found.	The implementation timeline is either missing or isn't realistic. Significant portions of major activities necessary for program success are missing or no activities are found within the plan.
The proposed activities are likely to produce measurable results and improve student achievement. (Proposal Narrative Requirements)	The activities listed in the plan will clearly produce measurable results that significantly improve student achievement.	The activities listed in the plan should produce measurable results that will somewhat improve student achievement.	There are either no activities listed in the plan or those listed will not produce measurable results or any impact to

			student achievement.
The proposal provides a description of how it will meet all elements required to be included in the competency-based learning system. (Proposal Narrative Requirements)	The plan clearly indicates how it will meet all requirements included in the competency-based learning system.	The plan indicates how it will somewhat meet all requirements included in the competency-based learning system.	The plan does not indicate how it will meet all requirements included in the competency-based learning system.
The proposal provides a description of the district's plan for engaging the high school(s) with their feeder elementary school(s) on the establishment and administration of the competency-based learning system. (Proposal Narrative Requirements)	The plan clearly indicates how the high schools will work with their feeder elementary school(s).	The plan indicates somewhat how the high schools will work with their feeder elementary school(s).	The plan does not indicate how the high schools will work with their feeder elementary school(s).
Evaluation (15 points)			
The proposal includes a description of the process for evaluating the project, including a preliminary timeline for the collection of data. (Evaluation and Sustainability)	An evaluation plan is included. It provides a clear process for evaluating the project. A clear timeline for data collection is included.	An evaluation plan is included. The process for evaluating the project is indicated, but has some missing pieces. A timeline for data collection is included, but has some missing pieces.	The evaluation plan is either missing or isn't clear. The timeline for data collection is either missing or isn't clear.
The data from the proposed evaluation plan will be evaluated to determine if progress toward attaining the project goals is being made. (Evaluation and Sustainability)	The evaluation plan clearly indicates how data will be evaluated.	The evaluation plan has some indication as to how data will be evaluated.	The data portion of the evaluation plan is either missing or isn't clear.
The proposal provides a plan to that provides multiple opportunities to share the results of the project with all stakeholders. (Evaluation and Sustainability)	The evaluation plan clearly indicates how results of the project will be shared with all stakeholders. The plan includes more than three avenues to share results.	The evaluation plan provides some indication of how project results will be shared with all stakeholders. The plan provides one or two avenues to share results.	The evaluation plan provides little or no indication that results will be shared with all stake holders.

Diversity Points (10 Points)
School District Type (Up to 2 points)
School District Size (Up to 2 points)

Geographical Location (Up to 2 points)
Plan Approach (eg. one subject, multiple subjects, and types of subjects) (Up to 4 points)