

# Nita M. Lowey 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Fiscal Year 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity/Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

**No Further Updates Will Be Made to this FAQ Document.**

## Updates

10/10/2025

- The CPS Protocols for submitting a FY 2026 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC application with CPS Schools have been added to the webpage.

10/15/2025

- Page 43 of the NOFO/RFP has been updated to correct the number of points an applicant must receive to be eligible for Priority Points.

- Question:** Who will be contacted by ISBE about the status of our application?  
**Answer:** ISBE will contact the Authorized Representative as identified on Attachment 1 of the NOFO/RFP.
- Question:** Page 37 of the RFP states: "Proposals must receive 111 points from Sections 1-6 of the Evaluation Rubric to be eligible for priority points." However, page 43 of the RFP states: "Only applications that receive a base score of 108 or higher from Sections 1-6 of the Evaluation Rubric will be eligible for Priority Points." Just to confirm, are proposals required to receive a base score of at least 108 or 111 points to be eligible to receive Priority Points?  
**Answer:** Page 43 of the NOFO/RFP has been updated to correct the number of points an applicant must receive to be eligible for Priority Points. According to the NOFO/RFP, an applicant must receive 111 points to be eligible for Priority Points.
- Question:** Is the NOFO stating that the applicant is required to have an RCDT code, or that the code for that district for which the applicant is partnering with, is required?  
**Answer:** According to page 2 of the NOFO/RFP, "Applicants will need to use their Region, County, District, Type (RCDT) code when applying."

## FY 2026 Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

4. **Question:** I would like to inquire about the eligibility to submit a proposal for an existing three-year 21st CCLC project that is currently being funded and will end August 2026. My online search provided some insight, but I am seeking knowledge about the following information:

Existing 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) grantees can apply for new funding, but generally cannot propose to serve a school that is already receiving services under a current 21st CCLC grant. The information further explains that current grantees are eligible to RE-APPLY with new schools. However, I don't know if schools that are currently receiving services for a project are eligible to submit a proposal in this round for the same schools. I understood that to continue these services, a new NOFO announcement would be required to cover the grant after the project term has ended. Would you please provide clarification about this type of submission, as there is no guidance for a three-year grant. Information is only available for a five-year grant, which would not apply in this instance.

**Answer:** According to page 3 of the NOFO/RFP, "An applicant cannot propose to serve any school or other entity that will be receiving services during FY 2026 under a 21st CCLC grant."

5. **Question:** In order to receive priority points for serving an eligible middle school, does the school partner have to serve ONLY middle school grades, or can the school contain those grades and ALSO contain younger grades?

**Answer:** As long as at least one proposed school is an eligible middle school or high school, and all other requirements for these priority points are met, the priority points will be awarded.

6. **Question:** Does CPS District 299 qualify as a "Tier 1 or Tier 2 School District Not Served"?

**Answer:** According to Page 2 of the NOFO/RFP, Tier 1 or Tier 2 School Districts Not Served and Joint Applications: These are programs between at least one LEA receiving funds under Title I Part A and at least one public or private community organization serving schools from Tier 1 or Tier 2 districts identified as not having been funded in Cohorts 22 or 25. This status is determined by Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) for FY 2025. See the ISBE [Evidence-Based Funding Distribution Calculation](#) webpage.

7. **Question:** Will we need to submit principal letters and sustainability charts for the proposed sites to be served?

**Answer:** Page 20 of the NOFO/RFP states: "The MOU must be established and signed by the LEA superintendent, the principal at each school to be served by the grant, and any other organization included as a co-applicant." Page 20 of the NOFO/RFP also states:

## FY 2026 Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

Applicants are required to submit a program sustainability plan that describes how the 21st CCLC program will be continued after the grant funding has ended. Attachment 13R is provided for the submission of the sustainability plan."

8. **Question:** Are grantees expected to spend down a full year of funding from March to June 2026? If not, will it be possible to rollover unspent funds or receive a budget extension?

**Answer:** According to page 6 of the NOFO/RFP, the grant period will begin no sooner than July 1, 2025. Awarded applicants will have the opportunity to back date spending to July 1, 2025, for FY 26. ISBE has not made any statements on the status or allowability to carry over funding for this grant.

9. **Question:** We would like to begin working on a new award application for the FY26 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC RFP. When logging in and selecting the correct system, I am not seeing the FY26 cohort application available. Can we please be provided with guidance on how to correct this?

**Answer:** To begin working on a new award application, please see the [RFP and the RFP attachments](#).

10. **Question:** I was just informed that the District cannot include any schools that are in its final year of funding. Including them in the new 21st Century Community Learning Center program application would reportedly disqualify the District's grant application. Can you please confirm if this is accurate?

**Answer:** According to page 3 of the NOFO/RFP, "An applicant cannot propose to serve any school or other entity that will be receiving services during FY 2026 under a 21st CCLC grant."

11. **Question:** We operate a few of our after-school sites at non-school locations, we have some stand alone Clubhouses that students. Students are picked up from multiple schools and brought to this facility. Are we able to apply for a location that is not a school? If so, would we need to include all schools that are rolled into this location, or can we pick a few?

**Answer:** According to page 5 of the NOFO/RFP, "A site is defined as the physical location where grant-funded services and activities are provided to participating students and adults." Please see Attachment 4 of the RFP, which requests that you provide the name of the facility along with a list of all schools whose students will be served at this site.

## FY 2026 Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

**12. Question:** Just want to confirm that we can use column L “Eligibility Percent” from the ISBE Child Nutrition data in place of the Illinois Report Card data, and that it just needs to be above 40% for either data source.

**Answer:** According to page 3 of the NOFO/RFP, “Applications proposing services to schools with less than 40 percent low-income students as reported on the 2023-24 Illinois Report Card will not be considered” and “Note: Elementary schools also may use the number of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals to calculate the low-income count. The free and reduced-price count generated at a middle or high school or from the elementary schools that feed into the middle and/or high schools may be used to establish the low-income count at the receiving middle or high school. Data is readily available on the [ISBE Child Nutrition and Data Analytics and Mapping Tools](#) webpage. Please use the FY 2025 results.”

**13. Question:** Could you please send me the link to the grant attachments? The version available on the ISBE website isn’t allowing me to save.

**Answer:** Please see the following [link](#) to the grant attachments.

**14. Question:** Can you please provide additional clarity to Question #10 above?

**Answer:** Question 10 reads:

**Question:** I was just informed that the District cannot include any schools that are in its final year of funding. Including them in the new 21st Century Community Learning Center program application would reportedly disqualify the District’s grant application. Can you please confirm if this is accurate?

**Answer:** According to page 3 of the NOFO/RFP, “An applicant cannot propose to serve any school or other entity that will be receiving services during FY 2026 under a 21st CCLC grant.”

**Additional Clarification:** 21st CCLC Grant Cohorts FY 2022 and FY 2025 are currently active grants. Any schools being served by grants in those cohorts may not be included in schools proposed to be served by an FY 2026 21st CCLC grant.

**15. Question:** Do we need to have principal and partner letters of support for the RFP, including letters of intent to assist sustaining the grant?

**Answer:** Letters of support are not necessary for this RFP. Please see information on pages 12, 20, 36, and attachments 14, and 14A of the NOFO/RFP about MOUs.

## FY 2026 Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

16. **Question:** I am on the grants team, and we were wondering if we could apply for sites that already receive funding from other state agencies (such as IDHS)? The 21CCLC funds would supplement and not supplant existing state funding.

**Answer:** According to page 3 of the NOFO/RFP, “An applicant cannot propose to serve any school or other entity that will be receiving services during FY 2026 under a 21st CCLC grant.” Please see pages 9 and 19-20 of the NOFO/RFP where partnerships with other federal, state, or local organizations are discussed.

17. **Question:** Student attendance requirements: Wanted to confirm the requirement. Do we need to provide every student we propose to serve 12 hours of programming each for 28 weeks? If I am understanding that correctly, we would get to the minimum of 45 hours in 4 weeks (12 hours per week per student \* 4 weeks = 48 hours). Can you please clarify?

**Answer:** According to page 15 of the NOFO/RFP, “Students will need to attend 46 hours or more during the program year to be considered regular attendees. ISBE expects 80 percent or more of students served to be regular attendees.” “21st CCLC programs funded under this NOFO/RFP, however, must operate a minimum of 12 hours a week for a minimum of 28 weeks per year.”

18. **Question:** Definition of "sites": I work with a community organization that will partner with 2-3 schools to serve students both at the CBO's organization and at their schools. How many sites would this count as? Was initially assuming we would have three sites because we are serving students from three schools but wasn't sure that was correct. This information will guide our budget ask.

**Answer:** According to page 5 of the NOFO/RFP, “A site is defined as the physical location where grant-funded services and activities are provided to participating students and adults.” Please see Attachment 4 of the RFP, which requests that you provide the name of the facility along with a list of all schools whose students will be served at this site.

19. **Question:** Is it possible to submit the application for the RCDT code noting the UEID as pending so that we can get the process started?

**Answer:** According to page 5 of the NOFO/RFP, “An entity that submits an application prior to obtaining an RCDT code is ineligible.”

20. **Question:** Is this grant opportunity 3 or 5 years?

**Answer:** According to page 6 of the NOFO/RFP, "The grant period will begin no sooner than July 1, 2025, and will extend from the execution date of the grant until June 30, 2026, or Aug. 31, 2026, for grantees who propose and are approved to provide extended year

## FY 2026 Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

programming. Successful applicants may reapply via continuing application for up to two additional year(s)."

21. **Question:** I see the application for FY26 is open. Is that the cohort I want to apply for or do I need to wait until next year for FY27? Or, is it dependent on which schools we serve under each grant.

**Answer:** Page 3 of the NOFO/RFP states, "An applicant cannot propose to serve any school or other entity that will be receiving services during FY 2026 under a 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grant."

22. **Question:** We have finalized our proposal and are ready to submit the required PDF package ahead of the deadline. However, when logged into our main account, the "ISBE Attachment Manager" feature or link does not appear under our available applications or tools. Is there a specific permission or profile setup we are missing that enables the Attachment Manager?

**Answer:** To submit an application via Attachment Manager, please go to [isbe.net](https://isbe.net) and in the upper lefthand corner, click on the *System Quick Links*. From there you will select, *Send ISBE a File*. The direct link can also be found [here](#). Please see page 6 of the NOFO/RFP for more information about submitting an application.

23. **Question:** Our organization is considering submitting a joint application with our affiliated school. At the same time, we are exploring a partnership with a Community Based Organization (CBO) which plans to submit its own 21st Century grant application. I wanted to confirm whether we may submit a joint application with the LEA serving the upper elementary, while also serving as a beneficiary and partner under the CBO's separate application with the LEA's lower elementary.

**Answer:** Page 3 of the NOFO/RFP states: "Applicants may submit multiple proposals ... [but] will be restricted to receiving a maximum of three funded grants." This maximum applies to entities that apply as the primary applicant, i.e. it is permissible that an entity may be awarded three grants as the primary applicant while still serving as a co-applicant on other awarded grants, provided there is no overlap of schools being served among those various grants.

24. **Question:** Wanted to confirm that we can have more than one co-applicant. The grant references "two or more eligible applicants" but the grant attachments template only allows space for one co-applicant agreement. If we can have more than one co-applicant, where or how should we provide that additional agreement?

## FY 2026 Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

**Answer:** Attachment 2 may be duplicated as needed.

**25. Question:** I wanted to inquire about a certain requirement for the grant, which requests that public schools applying must inform area private schools (and vice versa for private schools,) of its intent to apply for funds and of potential programming. The school my organization is hoping to apply with is a charter school with no specific catchment area. This school has students attend from across the city of Chicago. My question is, how would we define the 'local area'? Is it up to us to determine which schools to inform, or is there a definitive way for us to do this based on your specifications?

**Answer:** Page 5 of the *Title VII, Part F of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965: Non-Regulatory Guidance* states, "A charter school LEA may consult with private school officials representing private schools and may limit consultation and services to eligible children and educators in private schools within a reasonable proximity of the charter school, even if the charter school LEA serves a larger geographic area."

**26. Question:** Under the Eligibility section of the RFP, a rural school meets the eligibility requirements to apply for the grant. However, under the Grant Award section of the RFP it reads: "Applicants are eligible to apply for funding based on the amount needed to operate the proposed program AND the minimum number of 21st CCLC participants they are proposing to serve for at least 45 hours or more during the program year. Maximum funding tiers per site are as follows: \$50,000 = 25-40 minimum students served 45 hours or more." Does this mean a school needs to serve a minimum of 25 students to be eligible to apply?

**Answer:** Page 5 of the NOFO/RFP indicates:

*Applicants are eligible to apply for funding based on the amount needed to operate the proposed program AND the minimum number of 21st CCLC participants they are proposing to serve for at least 45 hours or more during the program year.*

*Maximum funding tiers per site are as follows:*

- *\$50,000 = 25-40 minimum students served 45 hours or more.*
- *\$75,000 = 41-55 minimum students served 45 hours or more.*
- *\$100,000 = 56-70 minimum students served 45 hours or more.*
- *\$125,000 = 71-85 minimum students served 45 hours or more.*
- *\$150,000 = 86 or more minimum students served 45 hours or more.*

An applicant must propose to serve a minimum of 25 students for 45 hours or more at a site for that site to be eligible for funding.

## FY 2026 Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

27. **Question:** Do we need to submit a joint application in order to apply for the 21st CCLC Grant, or can we apply being a sole entity on an application?

**Answer:** Page 1 of the NOFO/RFP states, “Public and private entities or a consortium of two or more such agencies, organization, or entities are eligible to apply.” Page 12 of the NOFO/RFP further states, “Each non-LEA applicant must actively collaborate with the LEAs and school(s) from which participating students attend to develop and implement the proposed program.”

28. **Question:** Can a joint application be submitted between two nonprofit organizations if one of them is a vendor and has an agreement with CPS 299 serving middle school students, while the other organization serves high school students but with no agreement with CPS-299?

**Answer:** Page 3 of the NOFO/RFP states, “Those entities wishing to apply to provided services to public school(s) in the city of Chicago must obtain appropriate permission via original signature from the designated official with authority to act on behalf of Chicago Public Schools District 299. Additional information required for applications proposing to serve Chicago Public Schools District 299 is posted with NOFO/RFP information on the [ISBE 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC webpage](#).”

29. **Question:** If we have multiple school districts we’re working with within one application, can they both be joint applicants? Do we just need to submit multiple forms for the attachments that require the joint applicant signature?

**Answer:** Page 2 of the NOFO/RFP states, “A consortium of two or more eligible applicants may apply as co-applicants by submitting a joint proposal.” Attachment 2 may be duplicated as needed.

30. **Question:** The 66-page document of forms is onerous to navigate. Is it possible for you to share each attachment as a separate PDF? Or unlock the NOFO/RFP document so users can pull-out the different pages?

**Answer:** ISBE is unable to unlock the PDF forms or share them as individual PDFs.

31. **Question:** What will be the anticipated amount of program delivery provided if the grant is not awarded until February or March of 2026?

**Answer:** According to page 6 of the NOFO/RFP, "The grant period will begin no sooner than July 1, 2025, and will extend from the execution date of the grant until June 30, 2026, or August 31, 2026, for grantees who propose and are approved to provide extended year programming."

## FY 2026 Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

32. **Question:** If our co-applicant has been a co-applicant with other CBOs since FY15 but not with our organization, would the applicant still qualify for novice priority points?

**Answer:** According to page 2 of the NOFO/RFP, "These are grantee applicants, including all co-applicants, and programs that have not been awarded a 21st CCLC grant since before FY 2015."

33. **Question:** We are a CBO. Is it required to submit a joint application with an LEA?

**Answer:** According to page 12 of the NOFO/RFP, "Each non-LEA applicant must actively collaborate with the LEAs and school(s) from which participating students attend to develop and implement the proposed program."

34. **Question:** What if one of the schools we plan to serve does not have an NCES code? (They have an RCDTS code; it's a private religious school.) Is it ineligible to be served under this RFP?

**Answer:** Please utilize the NCES locale code for the district in which the private school resides.

35. **Question:** Do the 25 students minimum for programming need to be the same 25 students each day program is offered?

**Answer:** According to Assurance 14 on page 29 of the NOFO/RFP, "Grantees will keep attendance records of program participants. Participants are required to be enrolled in the before- or after-school program. Drop-in services cannot be funded by 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funds. Grantees are expected to maintain attendance at the level for which funding is requested. Enrollment and retention activities should be described in the proposal." Please also see Section K on page 15 of the NOFO/RFP for more information.

36. **Question:** Under the heading Community Connections on page 19 and 20 of the RFP it states: "Once partnerships have been determined, applicants should execute letters of agreement with those entities that will serve as community partners in the 21st CCLC program and include roles and responsibilities of each entity. *These letters can be submitted as an attachment to the proposal as evidence of a commitment to partner with community organizations.* The letters should describe the roles and responsibilities of the partners in the 21st CCLC, including any cash or in-kind services. The letters should indicate the names of the partners and be signed by the partners' chief executive officers or persons authorized to commit the partner's staff and/or resources to the center." Should these attachments be combined with the MOUs between co-applicants (14A) or should a separate attachment section be added (14C)?

## FY 2026 Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

**Answer:** Letters of agreement may be submitted in addition to the MOU.

37. **Question:** “If an application has multiple co-applicants, separate MOUs must be submitted between the primary applicant and each co-applicant.” In the past, we have had all co-applicants, including our external evaluator and the school principals, sign one MOU. They all sign on an individual line, and there is a different MOU for each application that is submitted. Is this still allowable?

**Answer:** According to Attachment 14A of the NOFO/RFP, “If an application has multiple co-applicants, separate MOUs must be submitted between the primary applicant and each co-applicant.”

38. **Question:** Every cycle, I run into the same challenge when trying to identify which private schools to include. I’m not sure if CPS expects us to list private schools located within the CPS school’s attendance boundary, or private schools located within a certain mile radius of the CPS school (e.g., 1–2 miles). Could you help me understand which geographic criteria CPS prefers for this attachment? And if there are any other eligibility details I should keep in mind?

**Answer:** Page 5 of the Title VII, Part F of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965: Non-Regulatory Guidance states, “A charter school LEA may consult with private school officials representing private schools and may limit consultation and services to eligible children and educators in private schools within a reasonable proximity of the charter school, even if the charter school LEA serves a larger geographic area.” Additionally, page 3 of the NOFO/RFP states, “Additional information required for applications proposing to serve Chicago Public Schools District 299 is posted with NOFO/RFP information on the [ISBE 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC webpage](#).”

39. **Question:** “Wet ink signatures (and date), printed name, and title of individuals authorized to commit the partners' staff and/or resources to the grant (see below for authorized individuals).” Normally we have these routed through Docusign so that signatures are time stamped. Is that still allowable?

**Answer:** According to Attachment 14A, wet ink signatures are required.

40. **Question:** Our school is a special education cooperative supporting five surrounding school districts. Our program serves students with diverse disabilities, ages 3 to 22, and we are always seeking opportunities to enhance our students’ academic and independent living skills. I would like to inquire whether our program qualifies us to apply for this grant.

**Answer:** See page 1 of the NOFO/RFP for eligibility information.

## FY 2026 Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

41. **Question:** I wanted to know the earliest day we can start programming if our district was awarded the grant.

**Answer:** According to page 6 of the NOFO/RFP, "The grant period will begin no sooner than July 1, 2025."

42. **Question:** For attachment 12, do we need to have a separate document for each school, or do we name all the schools in the tab for attachment 12?

**Answer:** Attachment 12 may not be duplicated.

43. **Question:** Our organization and an elementary school are interested in applying in partnership – the school as a Local Education Agency and our organization as a Community-Based Organization. While the two entities are functionally distinct, they operate under the same Employer Identification Number. Would you be able to confirm whether the school and the organization would be eligible to apply to this grant opportunity as LEA/CBO partners under these circumstances? Again, the organizations are distinct, but do technically share an EIN.

**Answer:** See page 1 of the NOFO/RFP for eligibility information and page 2 of the NOFO/RFP for information about joint applications.

44. **Question:** We have previously hosted a 21st Century Community Learning Center (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) program. I wanted to ask if we would be eligible to apply for FY 2026 funding?

**Answer:** See page 1 of the NOFO/RFP for eligibility information. In addition, see the third note on page 3 of the NOFO/RFP about schools currently/previously served by the 21st CCLC program.

45. **Question:** I received the press release regarding the funding for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Grant Competition, and I'm wondering how our district can qualify for the eligibility requirements to compete for this funding. We are not a current grantee, but are there eligibility steps we can take to qualify?

**Answer:** See page 1 of the [NOFO/RFP](#) for eligibility information.

46. **Question:** This is a K-8 school so there is not a "technically" middle school. Can we still apply?

**Answer:** See page 1 of the NOFO/RFP for eligibility information.

47. **Question:** I have a follow up question. How do you show evidence of wet ink on MOUs that are scanned and uploaded into the system?

## FY 2026 Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

**Answer:** The signature should appear as though it has been physically signed by the signor. I.e., it should not be a Docusign (or similar) signature nor should it indicate “digitally signed by...” or similar.

48. **Question:** We currently have a school in our district in FY22 - that will be ending this year and we are wondering if we can apply for new sites in FY26 (never before served)? In the RFP it states, "District needs to currently not be served by a 21st CCLC grant from Cohorts 22 OR 25. If this is the case, are we able to partner as a co-applicant?"

**Answer:** According to page 3 of the NOFO/RFP, “An applicant cannot propose to serve any school or other entity that will be receiving services during FY 2026 under a 21st CCLC grant.” Also, according to page 2 of the NOFO/RFP “Joint Applications: A consortium of two or more eligible applicants may apply as co-applicants by submitting a joint proposal.”

49. **Question:** Can you please help me understand the definition of Expanded Learning Time? Is it different from after school programming?

**Answer:** According to page 8 of the NOFO/RFP, “ELT is the time that an LEA or school extends its normal school day, week, or year to provide additional instruction or educational programs for all students beyond the state-mandated requirements for the minimum hours in a school day, days in a school week, or days or weeks in a school year.” Applicants seeking 21st CCLC funds for ELT programs must provide ALL students at the school with at least 300 additional program hours before, during, or after the traditional school day.

50. **Question:** Is the 15% allowed for indirect above the amount allocated per site? For example, if we are asking \$75K per site for a total of \$225,000, will that be our total grant ask?

**Answer:** According to page 23 of the NOFO/RFP, “Indirect costs may be requested for some 21st CCLC activities. Indirect costs are subject to the indirect costs rate established by ISBE.” Also see pages 21-22 for an explanation of indirect costs. Indirect costs would be included in the total grant award, so if \$75,000 is awarded for a single site, and the grantee elects to use indirect costs, it would come from the \$75,000 award.

51. **Question:** Is there a time frame where a previous awardee is eligible for novice priority again? As an example, if my school was awarded before but it has been 22 years ago, does that exclude from getting the novice priority points?

## FY 2026 Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

**Answer:** According to page 2 of the NOFO/RFP, “These are grantee applicants, including all co-applicants, and programs that have not been awarded a 21st CCLC grant since before FY 2015.”

52. **Question:** Do we need to submit a joint application in order to apply for the 21st CCLC Grant or can we apply being a sole entity on an application?

**Answer:** According to page 1 of the NOFO/RFP, “Eligible Applicants: Public and private entities, including Local Education Agencies (LEAs) such as public school districts; public university laboratory schools approved by ISBE; state-authorized charter schools; 1 area vocational centers; Regional Offices of Education (ROEs); Intermediate Service Centers (ISCs); community-based organizations (CBOs), including faith-based organizations (FBOs); Indian tribes or tribal organizations (as such terms are defined in section of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Act); and other public and private entities or a consortium of two or more such agencies, organizations, or entities are eligible to apply.” Also, according to page 12 of the NOFO/RFP, “Each non-LEA applicant must actively collaborate with the LEAs and school(s) from which participating students attend to develop and implement the proposed program.”

53. **Question:** Can a joint application be submitted between two nonprofit organizations if one of them is a vendor and has an agreement with CPS 299 serving middle school students, while the other organization serves high school students but with no agreement with CPS 299? Or do all entities on a joint application need an agreement with a respective school they serve?

**Answer:** According to page 2 of the NOFO/RFP, “Joint Applications: A consortium of two or more eligible applicants may apply as co-applicants by submitting a joint proposal.” An administrative agent must be designated for each proposal. The co-applicant is equally responsible for the implementation of the grant and will sign off on all certifications and assurances. All proposals must have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between co-applicants that includes the signature of each district superintendent or official authorized to submit the proposal signifying that they agree to participate in the joint application. Also, according to page 12 of the NOFO/RFP, “Each non-LEA applicant must actively collaborate with the LEAs and school(s) from which participating students attend to develop and implement the proposed program.”

54. **Question:** I am very interested in applying for the Title IV - 21st Century Comm Learning Centers: 21st CCLC, and I wanted to confirm whether a private social enterprise is eligible to submit a proposal under this funding opportunity.

## FY 2026 Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

**Answer:** According to page 1 of the NOFO/RFP, “Eligible Applicants: Public and private entities, including Local Education Agencies (LEAs) such as public school districts; public university laboratory schools approved by ISBE; state-authorized charter schools; area vocational centers; Regional Offices of Education (ROEs); Intermediate Service Centers (ISCs); community-based organizations (CBOs), including faith-based organizations (FBOs); Indian tribes or tribal organizations (as such terms are defined in section of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Act); and other public and private entities or a consortium of two or more such agencies, organizations, or entities are eligible to apply.”

55. **Question:** Does the start date need to be August of 2025 (or the start of FY26) to ensure we can expend grant dollars this fiscal year? Is the expectation that grant winners expend funds this fiscal year (FY26)? If we were to be awarded the grant, then we would have the rest of this year plus two more to implement a program. Or is the grant timeline from July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2029? This means we could not expend grant funds this fiscal year but then would have grant dollars for FY27, FY28, and FY29.

**Answer:** According to page 6 of the NOFO/RFP, "The grant period will begin no sooner than July 1, 2025, and will extend from the execution date of the grant until June 30, 2026, or Aug. 31, 2026, for grantees who propose and are approved to provide extended year programming. Successful applicants may reapply via continuing application for up to two additional year(s)."

56. **Question:** Are we required to *provide* transportation home or just simply ensure that they have it (e.g. parent pickup or bus cards)?

**Answer:** According to page 29 of the NOFO/RFP “The grantee will ensure that students participating in the program carried out by the community learning center will travel safely to and from the center and home. Program funds may be used to cover reasonable transportation costs for program participants. If transportation is provided, the transportation plan must be clearly and appropriately related to project activities.”

57. **Question:** Is it possible to see a successful application of a previous year's awardee?

**Answer:** Parties interested in viewing previously submitted proposals may request them directly from the applicant who submitted them. Those entities have discretion on whether or not to honor such a request. Requests may be made directly from ISBE in accordance with the Illinois [Freedom of Information Act](#).

## FY 2026 Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

58. **Question:** If our program is held at a center and serves multiple schools, are we allowed to initially allocate a certain number of seats, or cap the number of enrollees from each school to ensure that we serve each school equitably? In other words, we're looking to prevent a scenario where one school recruits and enrolls its students at a faster pace than another school, resulting in all slots being taken by their school.

**Answer:** According to page 5 of the NOFO/RFP "A site is defined as the physical location where grant-funded services and activities are provided to participating students and adults." Additionally, an applicant must propose to serve a minimum of 25 students for 45 hours or more at a site for that site to be eligible for funding.

59. **Question:** One additional question we had was whether there are any upcoming webinars.

**Answer:** Please check the [21st CCLC: Prospective Grantees website](#) for any upcoming webinars.

60. **Question:** I was entering the budget in the attachments PDF and cannot click into the column total on the right side to enter the proper dollar amounts for each category. Every other box is clickable with a cursor showing up, but for the total ones, they're all zeroed out and I cannot click in the box to change the amount. I tried downloading another copy of the attachments PDF to see if it may work in a different document and I encountered the same problem. Please advise.

**Answer:** Once dollar amounts are entered into the various categories, ie Salaries, Employee Benefits, etc., that total is then automatically calculated and will show up in the total column. Dollar amounts cannot be entered into the total column.

61. **Question:** Our grant is from Y25-Y27. Are we eligible to apply in this grant application process?

**Answer:** According to page 3 of the NOFO/RFP "An applicant cannot propose to serve any school or other entity that will be receiving services during FY 2026 under a 21st CCLC grant. As such, applications that propose services to schools that are already being served by another 21st CCLC grant during FY 2026 will not be funded."

62. **Question:** The document on Eligible Applicants says, that applications are ineligible if "The applicant proposes services to one or more schools with less than 40 percent low-income students as reported on the 2023-24 Illinois Report Card." I just wanted to make sure we have to use data from 2023-2024 Illinois Report Card as our Elementary School was not at 40% then, but with our 2025 School Report card is at 40.6%.

## FY 2026 Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

**Answer:** According to page 3 of the NOFO/RFP, “Applications proposing services to schools with less than 40 percent low-income students as reported on the 2023-24 Illinois Report Card will not be considered” and “Note: Elementary schools also may use the number of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals to calculate the low-income count. The free and reduced-price count generated at a middle or high school or from the elementary schools that feed into the middle and/or high schools may be used to establish the low-income count at the receiving middle or high school. Data is readily available on the [ISBE Child Nutrition and Data Analytics and Mapping Tools](#) webpage. Please use the FY 2025 results.”

63. **Question:** We may still submit an application despite not meeting the 45-day community notice timeline?

**Answer:** According to page 19 of the NOFO/RFP “Applicants must give a 45-day prior notice to the community of their intent to submit an application for a 21st CCLC grant in an effort to generate community partnerships. Notification to the community can be made concurrent with proposal submission. Notification must be disseminated to the community in a manner that is understandable and accessible. The community should be aware that this notice is not a guarantee that an award will be received; it is only the intent to apply.”

64. **Question:** Are there any alternative compliance options available, given our late notification of the opportunity?

**Answer:** There are no alternative compliance options available.

65. **Question:** Can any accommodations be made, considering we were not aware of the grant until November 5?

**Answer:** : No accommodations can be made regarding the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)/Request for Proposals (RFP): Fiscal Year 2026 Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC).

66. **Question:** We will be collaborating with multiple schools on this project. Is it allowable to have these collaborations but not as co-applicants?

**Answer:** According to page 2 of the NOFO/RFP “A consortium of two or more eligible applicants may apply as co-applicants by submitting a joint proposal. Also, page 12 of the NOFO/RFP states “Each non-LEA applicant must actively collaborate with the LEAs and school(s) from which participating students attend to develop and implement the proposed program.”

## FY 2026 Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

67. **Question:** On the FAQs, it says that attachment 2 may be duplicated as needed for all co-applicants. However, it does not say that other attachments must be duplicated. Does each attachment require each co-applicant's signature or is attachment 2 the only required co-applicant signature document?

**Answer:** The co-applicant's signature is only required where specifically indicated.

68. **Questions:** One of our partners will collaborate with us on this grant to provide a tertiary location and additional recreational services for our program. Do they have to be a co-applicant in order to use their location as an additional site?

**Answer:** According to page 2 of the NOFO/RFP "A consortium of two or more eligible applicants may apply as co-applicants by submitting a joint proposal. Also, page 12 of the NOFO/RFP states "Each non-LEA applicant must actively collaborate with the LEAs and school(s) from which participating students attend to develop and implement the proposed program."

69. **Question:** After reviewing the MoU, it is clear we need wet ink signatures from the applicant, co-applicant, and all principals associated with the project sites as a requirement. But the RFP also states that: "All applicants, regardless of co-applicant status, should obtain an MOU or agreement to formally outline planning, spatial and communication responsibilities between the school district, schools being served, and any *partners*." Thus, aside from the required applicant, co-applicant, and schools, does the final MoU need to be signed by all programmatic partners listed on Attachment 3?

**Answer:** According to page 2 of the NOFO/RFP "All proposals must have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between co-applicants that includes the signature of each district superintendent or official authorized to submit the proposal signifying that they agree to participate in the joint application."

70. **Question:** We would love to apply; however, we do not have the ability to turn this around for this year. Is this a grant that is offered annually? Will there be other opportunities in the future?

**Answer:** This grant is not offered annually. Parties interested in funding opportunities are encouraged to regularly monitor ISBE's [Funding Opportunities](#) page, which is where future grant competitions will be announced.

71. **Question:** Attachment 13J states "Describe how the proposed program will coordinate with Federal, State, and local programs." Does this refer to Federal, State, and local funding sources or program content? Or both?

## FY 2026 Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

**Answer:** According to page 35 of the NOFO/RFP, "Attachment 13J Management and Resources: Demonstrate how the proposed program will coordinate with federal, state, and local programs." No further specifications to this question are provided.

72. **Question:** Attachment 13H states "Describe the established plan for implementing extended learning time (ELT)." Does ELT have to adhere strictly to classroom curriculum, meaning it is essentially extended school time, or can we provide ELT via our organization's academic support programming?

**Answer:** According to page 8 of the NOFO/RFP, "ELT is the time that an LEA or school extends its normal school day, week, or year to provide additional instruction or educational programs for all students beyond the state-mandated requirements for the minimum hours in a school day, days in a school week, or days or weeks in a school year.

73. **Question:** I am interested in applying for the 21st Century Grant, however I wanted to know if child care centers were eligible to apply.

Additionally, if we apply for the grant with our program that has already been established with ISBE, (PI & PFA), do all of the children need to be housed at that particular location, or would it be acceptable to have children in a rented space?

**Answer:** According to the first page of the NOFO/RFP, "Public and private entities, including Local Education Agencies (LEAs) such as public school districts; public university laboratory schools approved by ISBE; state-authorized charter schools; area vocational centers; Regional Offices of Education (ROEs); Intermediate Service Centers (ISCs); community-based organizations (CBOs), including faith-based organizations (FBOs); Indian tribes or tribal organizations (as such terms are defined in section of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Act); and other public and private entities or a consortium of two or more such agencies, organizations, or entities are eligible to apply."

74. **Question:** Is ANY programming provided during the school day considered expanded learning time?

In Attachment 4 (Program Sites and Schools) it says "After school site" and on Attachment 5 (Project Service Chart) in the "During school hours per week" it says "ELT only." Does that mean that everything that is provided during the day counts as ELT or that we should differentiate the number of hours that are considered ELT from those that are not?

**Answer:** Page 8 of the NOFO/RFP states Expanded Learning Time (ELT), may occur only if it aligns to the 21st CCLC activities. No more than 25 percent of the total budget can be allocated to ELT activities.

## FY 2026 Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

i. ELT is the time that an LEA or school extends its normal school day, week, or year to provide additional instruction or educational programs for all students beyond the state-mandated requirements for the minimum hours in a school day, days in a school week, or days or weeks in a school year.

ii. Applicants seeking 21st CCLC funds for ELT programs must provide ALL students at the school with at least 300 additional program hours before, during, or after the traditional school day programming.

**75. Question:** I am writing the FY 26 CCLC grant and I need a clarification. Our district currently has the 22 Cohort for three of their schools. I am writing the grant for a high poverty elementary school in the district that DOES NOT HAVE a 21st Century grant. Is that allowable under the rules- since it is not served?

**Answer:** Page 3 of the NOFO/RFP states: “An applicant cannot propose to serve any school or other entity that will be receiving services during FY 2026 under a 21st CCLC grant. As such, applications that propose services to schools that are already being served by another 21st CCLC grant during FY 2026 will not be funded. A list of schools currently receiving services is posted on the [ISBE 21st CCLC Grantees, Sites, and Allotments Dashboard](#). (Scroll to the bottom of the page.) Any schools proposed to be served under this NOFO/RFP must either not be receiving services under a 21st CCLC grant OR the 21st CCLC grant providing services must expire June 30, 2025, or have an approved continuation application to extend until Aug. 31, 2025.”

**76. Question:** Do you know anything about the 21st century grant? We would like to apply for it, but I cannot find it on IWAS.

**Answer:** To begin working on a new award application, please see the [RFP Document](#) and the [RFP Attachments](#).

**77. Question:** I am a new administrator to the Grant process. I have searched for the application, but keep coming up with the NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO) / REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP): Fiscal Year 2026 Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) CSFA Number: CSFA Title: CFDA Number: CFDA Title: 586-46-0423

I have acquired the other documents needed, but not the application. Is it created from the notice?

**Answer:** To begin working on a new award application, please see the [RFP Document](#) and the [RFP Attachments](#).

## FY 2026 Request for Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

78. **Question:** I need some clarity - I don't think my district is eligible to apply for the new 21st CCLC 3-year grant because we are not finishing our current grant cycle until June 30, 2026. Would that be your understanding as well?

**Answer:** Page 3 of the NOFO/RFP states: “An applicant cannot propose to serve any school or other entity that will be receiving services during FY 2026 under a 21st CCLC grant. As such, applications that propose services to schools that are already being served by another 21st CCLC grant during FY 2026 will not be funded. A list of schools currently receiving services is posted on the [ISBE 21st CCLC Grantees, Sites, and Allotments Dashboard](#). (Scroll to the bottom of the page.) Any schools proposed to be served under this NOFO/RFP must either not be receiving services under a 21st CCLC grant OR the 21st CCLC grant providing services must expire June 30, 2025, or have an approved continuation application to extend until Aug. 31, 2025.”

79. **Question:** Can we still apply if we did not give a 45-day prior notice to the community of our intent to submit an application for a 21st CCLC grant in an effort to generate community partnerships?

**Answer:** Page 34 of the NOFO/RFP states applicants must notify the community “at least 45 days prior to submission of the proposal.”

80. **Question:** Is 13F a requirement? What if we did not partner with anyone last year or this year?

**Answer:** The *Program Narrative Requirements (Attachments 13A-13R)* on page 33 states “if an attachment is not applicable to your proposal, do not leave the response field blank. Enter N/A.”

81. **Question:** Can you give me more clarification on 13 J? How the program will coordinate with Federal, State and Local programs?

**Answer:** According to page 35 of the NOFO/RFP, “Attachment 13J Management and Resources: Demonstrate how the proposed program will coordinate with federal, state, and local programs.” No further specifications to this question are provided.