

FY 2026
Nita M. Lowey
21st Century Community Learning
Centers (21st CCLC)
**Notice of Funding Opportunity/
Request for Proposals (NOFO/RFP)**

Technical Assistance Webinar

Oct 20, 2025

10 a.m.

This webinar is being recorded.
The video and slides will be
posted to the [21st CCLC webpage](#)
shortly after the conclusion of the
webinar.

Important Dates

Letter of Intent due by 11:59 p.m. on Oct 31, 2025. (Not required but highly encouraged.)

Any changes to the RFP will be made by Nov 17, 2025.

The last day to ask a question and have it included in the FAQ is Nov 17, 2025.

Proposals are due by 4 p.m. on Monday, Nov 24, 2025.

FAQ Document

- No questions will be answered during the live streaming.
- Please email questions to the 21st CCLC Team at 21cclcrfp@isbe.net.
- Questions will be answered utilizing an FAQ document on the [21st CCLC webpage](#).
- Please allow up to two business days for your question(s) and answer(s) to appear.

Purpose of Funds

- This program supports the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools.
- The program helps students and schools:
 - Meet state and local academic standards in core academic subjects.
 - Offer a broad array of enrichment activities that complement their regular academic programs.
 - Offer literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children.

Population to be Served

The law requires that 21st CCLC awards be granted only to applicants that will primarily serve students who attend schools with a high concentration of students from low-income families (defined as not less than 40% of the students being eligible for free or reduced-price meals).

Background & History



The Nita M. Lowey 21st CCLC program was created in 1994 by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It was expanded in 2001 by the No Child Left Behind Act to provide students in high-need, high-poverty communities the opportunity to participate in after-school programming.



These academic enrichment and youth development programs are present in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and three territories.



In 2002, states were given the 21st CCLC funds from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) as formula funds to be managed as statewide competitions and award grants to eligible entities.

Eligible Applicants

- 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)
- Faith-based organizations (FBOs)
- Indian tribes or tribal organizations
- Other public or private entities
- Consortiums

Joint Applicants

- A consortium of two or more eligible applicants may apply as co-applicants by submitting a joint proposal.
- An administrative agent must be designated; the co-applicant is equally responsible for the implementation of the grant.
- Joint proposals must have a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the co-applicants.
- Joint applications that do not include a signed MOU at the time of submission will not be scored.

Applicant Status

- Applicants may submit multiple proposals in response to this NOFO/RFP.
- All proposals will be entered into the same competition for 21st CCLC funds.
- Applicants will be restricted to receiving a maximum of three funded grants.

Applicant Status

- An applicant cannot propose to serve any school or other entity that will be receiving services during fiscal year 2026 under a 21st CCLC grant.
- A list of schools currently receiving services is posted on the 21st CCLC webpage using ISBE's 21st CCLC Grantees, Sites, and Allotments Dashboard.
- 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 must expire June 30, 2025, or have an approved continuation application to extend until Aug 31, 2025.

Applicant Status

- Entities wishing to apply to provide services to public schools 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 CPS District 299 is posted with NOFO/RFP information on the ISBE [21st CCLC webpage](#).

Allowable Activities

- Academic enrichment learning programs, mentoring programs, remedial education activities, and tutoring services that are aligned with the challenging state academic standards and any local academic standards.
- Local curricula that are designed to improve student academic achievement.
- Well-rounded education activities, including activities that enable students to be eligible for credit recovery or attainment.
- Literacy education programs, including financial literacy programs and environmental literacy programs.

Allowable Activities

- Programs that support a healthy and active lifestyle, including nutritional education and regular, structured physical activity programs.
- Services for individuals with disabilities.
- Programs that provide after-school activities for students who are English learners that emphasize language skills and academic achievement.
- Cultural programs.
- Telecommunications and technology education programs.
- Expanded library service hours.

Allowable Activities

- Parenting skills programs that promote parental involvement, family engagement, and family literacy.
- Programs that provide assistance to students who have been truant, suspended, or expelled to allow the students to improve their academic achievement.
- Drug and violence prevention programs and counseling programs.

Allowable Activities

- Programs that build skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), including computer science, and that foster innovation in learning by supporting nontraditional STEM education teaching methods.
- Programs that partner with in-demand fields of the local workforce or build career competencies and career readiness and ensure that local workforce and career readiness skills align with the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3101 et seq.).

Other Allowable Activities

- High-quality early learning programs and services.
- Remedial education aligned with academic supports and other enrichment activities that provide students with a comprehensive academic program.
- Family engagement activities, including parental involvement, parent leadership, family literacy, and parent education programs.
- Mentoring and other youth development programs.
- Community services and service-learning opportunities.
- Job training and career counseling services.
- Nutrition services and physical activities.

Other Allowable Activities

- Primary health and dental care.
- Activities that improve access to and use of social service programs and programs that promote family financial stability.
- Mental health services.
- Adult education, including instruction of adults in English as a second language.
- Social-emotional learning.

Allowable Uses of Funds

- Program implementation costs
- Indirect costs
- Administrative costs
- Professional development costs
- Instructional staff costs
- Food costs are only allowable for two purposes:
 - Meetings that take place during regular mealtime hours **and** include family members.
 - The maximum expense is \$10 per person served.
 - Use in culinary classes.
- Transportation costs

Allowable Uses of Funds

- Technology costs
 - Restricted to the purchase of equipment for 21st CCLC student or family use only.
 - Must be reasonable, allocable, allowable, and directly related to academics and student achievement.
 - Prior approval from ISBE is required.
- Subcontracting costs
 - No subcontracting is allowed without prior written approval of the state superintendent or their designee.
- Program evaluation costs
 - Not to exceed 10% of the overall budget.

Non-Allowable Uses of Funds

- Proposal preparation costs
- Pre-award costs
- Overnight or out-of-state travel for students
- Food (see Allowable Uses of Funds for the only two exceptions)
- Clothing
- Purchase of technology without prior ISBE approval
- Incentives
- Furniture

Non-Allowable Uses of Funds

- Staff events
- Field trips that are purely recreational
- Membership dues
- Promotional or marketing items
- Decorative items
- Capital improvements
- Classes previously offered and paid for by district or other fund source
- Supplanting federal, state, or local funds

Program Objectives

1. Schools will improve student achievement in core academic areas.
2. Schools will show an increase in student attendance and graduation from high school.
3. Schools will see an increase in the social-emotional skills of their students.
4. Programs will collaborate with the community.
5. Programs will coordinate with schools to determine the students and families with the greatest need.
6. Programs will provide ongoing professional development to program personnel.
7. Programs will collaborate with schools and community-based organizations to provide sustainable programs.

Performance Measures

- Ten percent increase in proficiency and growth in core academic areas for program participants who attend 46 hours or more during the program year by the end of the grant award period.
- Ten percent higher attendance rates, increased homework completion rates, or positive changes toward school for 20% of student participants by the end of the program year.

Targets

- Semiannual increases of 2.5% in proficiency and growth in core academic areas for program participants who attend 46 hours or more during the program year.
- Attendance rates that are 2.5% higher, increased homework completion rate, and positive changes toward school for student participants quarterly.

Performance Standards

- Five percent annual growth in core academic areas for program participants who attend 46 hours or more during the program year.
- Five percent annual higher attendance rates or increased homework completion rates, or positive changes for student participants.

Deliverables and Milestones

1. Completion of annual local evaluation.
2. Completion of spring survey as part of the statewide evaluation.
3. Completion of triannual performance reports (Benchmarking) MyIRC.
4. Participation and completion of Tier I, II, and III monitoring by ISBE.
5. Attendance at ISBE-sponsored 21st CCLC workshops and trainings.
6. Administer teacher survey to core academic teachers of student participants in Grades 1-5.

Student Attendance Requirements

Must serve proposed number of students for a minimum of 12 hours per week for 28 weeks per programming year, not inclusive of proposed summer programming.

80% of students served must attend 46 or more hours of programming each programming year.

If summer programming is proposed, it is subject to a three-week minimum, and the number of weeks for summer programming may not decrease for the life of the grant.

Applications Will Be Ineligible If:

- Attachment 1, page 3 of the NOFO/RFP is not signed.
- The application is submitted prior to obtaining an RCDT code.
- Steps 1-3 of the GATA prequalification process are not completed prior to submitting application.
- The application is submitted after 4 p.m. on Nov 24, 2025.
- Any proposed school has less than 40% low-income students as reported on the 2023-24 Illinois Report Card.
- Proposed schools to be served are already being served by the 21st CCLC grant.

Applications Will Be Ineligible If:

- Attachment 1 does not contain the applicant's name, correct RCDT code, correct UEI number, and signature of an authorized representative.
- Attachment 3 does not contain the name and correct RCDTS code for all schools proposed to be served.
- Attachment 9 is not completed and/or does not contain a signature of an authorized representative.
- Attachment 14A does not contain a signed and dated MOU(s) between the applicant, all co-applicants, and the principals of each school proposed to be served.

Priority Points

- Priority points will be given for the following conditions:
 - Comprehensive, Intensive, or Targeted eligible schools **and** joint applications.
 - Tier 1 or Tier 2 school districts not served **and** joint applications.
 - Middle schools and high schools **and** joint applications.
 - Rural schools **and** joint applications
 - Novice grantees **and** joint applications
- See pages 2-3, 10-11, and 43-44 of the NOFO/RFP for more information.

Attachment 1

- 5 points if Attachment 1 is fully completed.
- Ineligible if:
 - Applicant name is missing.
 - Correct applicant RCDT code is missing.
 - Correct applicant UEI number is missing.
 - Signature of authorized representative is missing.
- Application will not be read if this attachment is missing.

Attachment 2

- 5 points if completed.
- Must be filled out if application has a co-applicant.
 - If no co-applicant exists, write "N/A" and sign.
- May duplicate as needed.

Attachment 3

- 5 points if NCES locale code and low-income rates are provided for each school proposed to be served.
- Ineligible if:
 - Names of proposed schools are missing.
 - Correct RCDTS codes for each proposed school served are missing.
 - Any one school does not have 40% or more low-income students.
- Application will not be read if this attachment is missing.

Attachment 4

- 5 points if the entire attachment is fully completed.
- Don't forget to number the sites in the upper left corner and the number of projected students to be served. This helps delineate how much will be awarded.
- May duplicate as needed.

Attachment 5

- 5 points if 12 or more hours per week for the school year are proposed.
- 5 points if 28 or more weeks per school year are proposed.
- 5 points if summer programming is 12 or more hours per week or N/A.
- 5 points if summer programming is three or more weeks or N/A.
- May duplicate as needed.

Attachment 6A

- 5 points if the attachment is fully completed.
 - N/A, a map showing no private schools in the area, and a signature from the applicant also counts as fully completed.
- This attachment applies to all applicants.
- May duplicate as needed.

Attachment 6B

- 5 points if the attachment is fully completed.
 - N/A, a map showing no public schools in the area, and a signature from the applicant also counts as fully completed.
- This attachment mainly pertains to non-LEA applicants, but all applicants need to complete it.
- May duplicate as needed.

Attachment 7

- 5 points if the attachment is completed and signed.
 - If the proposed program is offering state-required graduation courses, the attachment must be signed by both the superintendent of the district issuing credit and the fiscal agent for the proposal.
 - If the proposed program is not offering state-required graduation courses, N/A and a signature also constitutes a completed form.
- May duplicate as needed.

Attachment 8

- 5 points if all goals and objects are completed.
- There are seven goals total.
- Applicants must have:
 - At least one objective per goal
 - At least one measurable outcome per goal
 - At least one strategy or activity per goal
 - At least one target date for completion per goal.
- Up to 5 points if program goals and objectives are adequately SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) and relate to the targets, measures, and objectives of 21st CCLC programming.

Attachment 9

- Ineligible if:
 - Attachment is not completed.
 - Attachment is not signed.
- Application will not be read if this attachment is missing.

Attachment 10

- 5 points if the attachment is completed.
- 5 points if everything listed on the attachment is allowable for 21st CCLC.
- Please refer to pages 12-13 and 22-25 of the NOFO/RFP for specific information on what is/is not allowable.
- May duplicate as needed.

Attachment 11

- 5 points if attachment is completed and signed.
 - Completed could be indicating "yes," answering all questions on the page, and signing the attachment.
 - Completed could be indicating "no," writing N/A for all questions on the page, and signing the attachment.
- Please note: It is becoming increasingly rare for ISBE or ED to approve program income.

Attachment 12

- Up to 5 points if the applicant adequately describes the overall objectives and activities of the 21st CCLC program, including students' and families' needs, the activities proposed, how the activities are expected to improve student academic achievement and overall student success, the intended outcomes, and key people who will be involved in the project.
- Do not exceed the space provided.

Attachments 13A-13R

- Only use the attachment provided, and do not exceed the page limit specified for each response.
- Portions of responses that exceed the page limit will not be read.
- If an attachment is not applicable to your proposal, indicate N/A on the attachment.

Attachment 13A

- Up to 5 points if:
 - The applicant adequately describes how the community will be notified at least 45 days prior to submission of the proposal.
 - It describes how information about the 21st CCLC program, including its availability and location, will be disseminated to the community in a manner that is understandable and accessible.
 - The applicant describes the method for outreach and a plan for securing the students' regular participation.
 - It indicates how the entity will maintain before- and after-school programming that will meet the needs of working families and students.

Attachment 13B

- Up to 5 points if the applicant provides brief background information about the applying entity, including:
 - A summary of the types of services they provide and to whom.
 - Evidence of the applying entity's cultural and linguistic competence to provide services as described in this proposal.
 - A description of existing linkages, or a plan to establish linkages, with community resources and services, particularly the organizations addressing substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, and other human services that will not be provided by the applying entity.

Attachment 13C

- Up to 5 points if the applicant provides:
 - An adequate statement describing past after-school programming, whether through 21st CCLC programs or not.
 - Included are the length, frequency, average number of students served, and any differences between proposed services and actual services delivered.
 - They describe the successes and challenges of the previous after-school programs.

Attachment 13D

- Up to 5 points if the applicant adequately addresses the results of the needs and resources assessment. Included is a gap analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the youth developmental needs and available community services.
 - The gap analysis is used to draw conclusions and discuss how the proposed program will address the needs of the community; the students, including homeless children; neglected, delinquent, and migrant youth; and families, including the needs of working families.

Attachment 13E

- Up to 5 points if the applicant adequately describes how the program will identify, recruit, and retain those students who are underperforming academically and most in need of academic assistance, including what criteria will be used to recommend students for services, and what process will be used to select students for participation.

Attachment 13F

- Up to 5 points if the applicant adequately describes the partnership between the LEA, CBO, and any other public or private entity, and the relevance and commitment of each collaborative partner in the proposed program to the implementation and success of the project. The applicant describes how the historical performance of each partner demonstrates its capacity to collaborate with the applicant to implement the services as described in either a written agreement or an MOU, including the commitment of the partners to sustain the project after the grant has expired.

Attachment 13G

- Up to 5 points if the applicant adequately identifies and describes how program systems, policies, services, and activities are developed and delivered in equitable ways for all students served. This includes:
 - Ensuring that there is adequate funding for staff training in issues such as equity;
 - There is capability to collect robust data at disaggregate levels, establish high standards, and differentiate learning;
 - There is allocation of resources in responsive ways;
 - All programming takes place in safe and accessible facilities;
 - Facilities comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act;
 - Students are able to travel safely between the center and home;
 - And there is collaboration with key stakeholders to better leverage and coordinate supports.

Attachment 13H

- 5 points if the attachment is completed.
 - N/A is also considered to be completed.

Attachment 13I

- Up to 5 points if the applicant adequately describes how the transportation needs of participating students will be addressed.

Attachment 13J

- Up to 5 points if the applicant adequately demonstrates how the proposed program will coordinate with federal, state, and local programs.

Attachment 13K

- Up to 5 points if the applicant adequately describes how proposed activities will meet the measures of effectiveness (Targets, Objectives, Goals).

Attachment 13M

- Up to 5 points if the applicant substantially describes the evaluation process, including:
 - Indicating who will be responsible for conducting the evaluation along with rationale for selecting evaluator.
 - Having a compelling rationale for the selected evaluation approach.
 - Being technically sound with regard to the evaluation design and measurement of the program toward goals and objectives.
 - Being clearly tied to the state and local goals and objectives.
 - Describes the methods to be used to gather, organize, summarize, analyze, and present data, including dissemination of feedback and data to the staff and community for the purpose of continuous program improvement.
 - Identifies the quantitative and qualitative data to be collected. Describes and/or includes the data collection tools, if applicable.
 - Facilitates the collection of both formative and summative evaluation data.
 - Provides the organizational structures that will be employed to oversee the evaluation process.
 - Indicates how the resulting recommendations will be incorporated into the program on an annual basis for continuous improvement.
 - Describes the process to disseminate the evaluation results to the target audiences.

Attachment 13N

- Up to 5 points if the applicant adequately describes how federal, state, and local funding will be used in coordination with 21st CCLC grant funds to maximize the effective use of public resources. They indicate any after-school programs already in operation and identify specifically all other funding sources that will be used to supplement the program. Grant funds will not be used to supplant programs that already exist or previously existed.

Attachment 13Q

- Up to 5 points if the applicant adequately identifies and describes ongoing staff professional development, including activities, frequency, format, etc., and explains how the opportunities will contribute to student achievement. They describe how the staff will be trained on the [Illinois Statewide Afterschool Quality Standards](#) and how they plan to use ED's [NTAC website](#) and/or other applicable offerings for professional development purposes.

Attachment 13R

- Up to 5 points if the applicant adequately describes how the community learning center will continue after the 21st CCLC funding ends.

Attachment 14A

- Up to 5 points if the applicant includes the written agreements from each co-applicant and partner listed on Attachments 2 and 3 of the proposal. The agreements must adequately describe the roles and responsibilities of the co-applicants and partners in the 21st CCLC program, including any in-kind services, such as, but not limited to, access to grades, access to the facilities, janitorial services, transportation, etc. The letters must indicate the names of the co-applicants and partners and be signed by the co-applicants' and partners' chief executive officers or persons authorized to commit the co-applicants' and partners' staff and/or resources to the center.
- Application will not be read if this attachment is missing.

Attachments 7 (if applicable), 8, 13H (if applicable), and B

- Up to 5 points if the applicant provides an adequate sample program schedule of operation for one week of programming for each location. If summer programming is taking place, they provide a sample schedule for one week of summer programming, as well. For each activity proposed in the sample schedule, they provide:
 - Name of the proposed activity;
 - Rationale for the proposed activity;
 - Description of the proposed activity, including covered content;
 - Frequency of the proposed activity (e.g., daily, weekly);
 - Number of sessions the proposed activity will meet;
 - Length of each session of the proposed activity (e.g., 1 hour);
 - Target population for the proposed activity (e.g., grade levels, parents, etc.).
- The provided sample program of operations adequately aligns to the 21st CCLC grant objectives and the goals identified by the applicant.

Attachments 7 (if applicable), 13H (if applicable), and 13L

- Up to 5 points if the applicant describes in detail how the proposed activities are expected to improve student academic achievement and overall student success, including how they will:
 - Support college and career readiness skills;
 - Aligned to the Illinois Learning Standards;
 - Use best practices, including research- or evidence-based practices, to provide educational and related activities that will complement and enhance academic performance, achievement, postsecondary and workforce preparation, and positive youth development of the students;
 - Explain how the proposed program will incorporate innovative and evidence-based practices to support the enhancement of students; academic, social, and career skills.
- Sufficient detail is provided to relay that the program will supplement programs already being provided to improve student achievement and not supplant federal, state, or local funding.

Attachments 13O and 13P

- Up to 5 points if the applicant adequately includes detailed job descriptions with duties and required qualifications for each position to be funded by the 21st CCLC grant. They describe how appropriately qualified persons will be encouraged and used to serve as volunteers if they plan to use volunteers in activities carried out through the community learning center. The applicant adequately describes how these positions will support the objectives of the grant.

Application Submission

- Completed proposals should be scanned into PDF with all supporting documents and required signatures and submitted via the ISBE Attachment Manager.
 - Choose 21st CCLC RFP from the dropdown menu in Receiver Information.
 - Label application with applicant's name.
 - If submitting multiple applications, include the number of the submission. (Example Name #1, Name #2, Name #3)
 - Submit the application using the button at the bottom of the page.
- The submission confirmation page should be printed and retained as proof of submission.
- Please contact 21cclcrfp@isbe.net PRIOR to the close of the NOFO/RFP if the ISBE Attachment Manager isn't accepting applications.
 - In this event, include your complete proposal along with evidence of a failed attempt to submit via ISBE Attachment Manager in your email.

Curability

- If application is eligible for curability, applicant will have 24 hours to cure items.
- Cured items submitted after the end of the 24 hours will not be considered.
- ISBE will reach out via email to the authorized representative listed on the application if curability is needed.

Evaluation of Grants

- All eligible proposals will be read, reviewed, and scored by readers who have been selected for their expertise and experience with extended learning programs and grants management. A proposal must receive a minimum of 148 points to be considered for funding. The maximum proposal score is 185 points. Proposals submitted as joint applications must score a minimum of 111 points from Sections 1-6 of the Evaluation Rubric to be eligible for priority points. Eligible proposals may have a total of up to 50 competitive priority points assigned, meaning that after the assignment of competitive priority points proposals may receive a maximum score of 235 points. Please refer to the [Merit-Based Review Policy](#) for more information.

Evaluation of Grants

- ISBE intends to award grants equitably to the extent practicable among geographic areas within the state, including urban and rural communities. ISBE has divided the state into seven regions based on the Illinois Association of Regional School Superintendents regional service model; it aims to award not more than 50% of eligible funds to any one region. Among substantially similar proposals, priority will be given to applicants that propose to serve students from schools that either are listed as priority schools or are in areas of the state that are currently underrepresented by 21st CCLC awards.

Thank you