



# Illinois State Board of Education

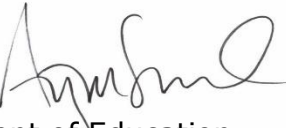
100 North First Street • Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001  
www.isbe.net

James T. Meeks  
Chairman

Tony Smith, Ph.D.  
State Superintendent of Education

April 12, 2017

**TO:** Eligible Applicants

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

**SUBJECT: NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO) / REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP):**  
Fiscal Year 2018 Early CHOICES

**CSFA Number:** 586-57-0420  
**CSFA Title:** Early CHOICES

## Eligibility and Application Information

**Eligible Applicants:** Public school districts, Regional Offices of Education (ROEs), Intermediate Service Centers (ISCs), special education joint agreements and cooperatives, not-for-profit entities, public universities, public university laboratory schools approved by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), charter schools, and area vocational centers with the necessary expertise pursuant to this RFP and demonstrated experience in providing technical assistance and training in Illinois are eligible to apply. ISBE will award one Early CHOICES grant to provide services across the State.

**NOTE:** The State of Illinois Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) requires applicants to complete pre-award requirements before applying for an FY 2018 grant. This includes completion of the Applicant Registration, Applicant Pre-qualification, and Fiscal and Administrative Risk Assessment (Internal Controls Questionnaire) available at the Illinois GATA Web Portal at <http://www.illinois.gov/sites/GATA/Grantee/Pages/default.aspx> and completion of a Programmatic Risk Assessment through the ISBE Web Application Security system. Grant applications must be submitted by the application deadline indicated in this NOFO/RFP.

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

(i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application. If you are not registered in SAM, you can do so at <https://www.sam.gov/portal/SAM/#1>;

- (ii) Provide a valid DUNS number in its application at <http://www.dnb.com/duns-number.html>; and
- (iii) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal, Federal pass-through or State award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal or State awarding agency. ISBE may not consider an application for a Federal pass-through or State award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable DUNS and SAM requirements.

**Code of Federal Regulations / Title 2 - Grants and Agreements / Vol. 1 / 2014-01-01192:** Guidance is found at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2013-title2-vol1/pdf/CFR-2013-title2-vol1.pdf>.

This grant is subject to the provisions of:

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

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

**Grant Award/Cost Sharing or Matching:** One Early CHOICES grant will be awarded to provide technical assistance across the State. The individual grant award for FY 2018 will be in the amount of \$409,000. Comparable amounts are anticipated for each of the remaining years of the grant. Final grant awards for each year of the grant will be contingent upon the total appropriation for the program.

**Grant Period:** The grant period will begin no sooner than July 1, 2017, and will extend until June 30, 2018 (i.e., FY 2018). Continuation funding is anticipated and will be made available to selected grantees for up to four additional fiscal years (i.e., FY 2019 through FY 2022) contingent upon a sufficient appropriation for the program and satisfactory progress in the preceding grant period.

**Submission Dates and Times/Other Submission Requirements:** Mail the original proposal and five copies to *Illinois State Board of Education, 100 North First Street, E-225, Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001, Attn: Early Childhood Division*. Proposals must be received no later than 4 p.m. on May 30, 2017. No electronic submissions, including facsimiles, will be accepted. The original and five copies must be received by the due date in order for the proposal to be considered. Late or substantively incomplete proposals will not be eligible for consideration.

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

Springfield Office  
Reception Area

Chicago Office  
Reception Area

1st Floor  
100 North First Street

Suite 14-300  
100 West Randolph Street

**Grant Award Notice:** It is anticipated that successful applicants will receive a Notice of State Award (NOSA) from the state superintendent via email or the U.S. Postal Service approximately 90 days after the application deadline. The NOSA is NOT an authorization to begin performance or expenditures. Applicants must sign and return a copy of the NOSA to confirm acceptance of the terms of the award. Once the signed NOSA is received by ISBE, a Uniform Grant Agreement will be prepared and sent to the applicant. Awardees will receive additional information from the programmatic contact approximately one week later via the U.S. Postal Service or email. This information will include important programmatic dates. Monies spent prior to programmatic approval are done so at the applicant's own risk.

**Technical Assistance Session:** A technical assistance session will be held via email. Questions can be directed to [earlychi@isbe.net](mailto:earlychi@isbe.net). Attendance is not required.

**Changes to NOFO/RFP:** ISBE will post any changes made to the NOFO/RFP prior to May 19, 2017, at <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Funding-Opportunities.aspx>. Applicants are advised to check the site before submitting a proposal.

**Agency Contact/Contact to Request Application Package:** For more information on this NOFO/RFP, contact the Early Childhood Division at 217-524-4835 or [earlychi@isbe.net](mailto:earlychi@isbe.net).

## **Program Description**

### Federal Description:

The purpose of Early CHOICES is to provide training and technical assistance to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and special education cooperatives with a specific focus of increasing high-quality, inclusive options for all Illinois early childhood children with disabilities.

### Program Background/History:

Early CHOICES is the preschool least restrictive environment (LRE) initiative in Illinois, with an overall goal of providing professional development (PD) and technical assistance in increasing high-quality, inclusive options for early childhood students with special needs. Early CHOICES provides training, consultation, and resources to the early childhood community in Illinois. Early CHOICES supports research and evidence-based effective practices in Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE).

Early CHOICES is supported with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, Section 619 discretionary funds and supports [ISBE's goals](#) and the Illinois State Performance Plan for IDEA [Part B](#) and [Part C](#). Early CHOICES delivers workshops and training activities to increase the awareness, knowledge, and skills of early childhood education professionals and families in supporting the education and development of young children with special needs. Training opportunities are designed to incorporate the [Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards](#) and to provide practical ways for professionals and families to help children meet these standards. Workshops are developed based on research-based practices appropriate to the development of young children and provided through a variety of methods. Potential methods include, but are

not limited to, consultations, mentoring, practice-based coaching, program visits, development and dissemination of resources, distance education opportunities, and lending library materials.

Program Objectives:

The focus of Early CHOICES is to increase knowledge acquisition and facilitate skill application. The following are goals and objectives for the program to be carried out in consultation, and when applicable, collaboration with ISBE Early Childhood staff:

**1. Qualified Staff**

**Goal:** Programs will be offered PD and other resources by qualified staff with the appropriate education level, certification, or credential to provide quality PD and technical assistance.

**The successful applicant will:**

- Hire a Project Leader and LRE Specialist(s) who will provide training and technical assistance to professionals and families across the State.
- Maintain a staffing structure that provides sufficient support to programs. Staff members providing training must, at a minimum, have a bachelor’s degree and maintain the appropriate certification, credential, or accreditation required by the specific PD that is being offered. In addition, trainers should have relevant experience in providing training and PD on early childhood education and, ideally, experience with Preschool for All (PFA) and ECSE.
- Hire a Project Leader. This person will oversee the planning of grant activities, the staff hired through the grant, the budget, and reporting requirements. He/she serve as a main communicator with ISBE.
  - The Project Leader hired under this grant will meet regularly with the ISBE’s 619 Coordinator, including attending monthly meetings (in person and via conference call). A schedule will be set at the beginning of the fiscal year for the upcoming year.
  - The Project Leader must be a qualified content expert and have knowledge of research-based practices in early childhood/ECSE and adult learning theory.
- Hire LRE Specialist(s), who will assist in developing and presenting PD and technical assistance activities. They must be qualified content experts and have knowledge of research-based practices in early childhood/ECSE and adult learning theory.
- Hire support staff who will assist in registration, data input, and other administrative functions, as needed.
- Attend one statewide PD meeting in the fall and one statewide PD meeting in the spring with the STARNET system. The responsibility for planning the statewide meetings is rotated on an annual basis among the regional STARNET projects and the Early CHOICES grantee.

- Maintain a sufficient budget for PD for the Project Leader and LRE Specialists to stay current in the early childhood field.
- Select an appropriate staff member to represent the project on applicable statewide committees for early childhood.

## **2. Professional Development and Technical Assistance**

**Goal:** Develop PD training and technical assistance, including workshops, webinars, consultation, fellowships, referrals, and materials loan and dissemination. Identify needs and respond to requests for PD support of staff involved in ECSE.

### **The successful applicant will:**

- Assist the ISBE Early Childhood Division staff with the implementation of other statewide activities including improvement activities specific to Indicators 6 and 7 of the ISBE, Part B State Performance Plan.
  - PD and technical assistance must focus on providing research-based practices to assist LEAs and other early childhood education and care providers with the inclusion of children with disabilities into regular early childhood education environments with their typically developing peers and with improving outcomes for children with disabilities.
    - Early CHOICES staff will collaborate with districts as they support and increase the percentage of children ages 3-5 with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) attending a regular early childhood program and receive the majority of special education and related services in that environment.
    - Early CHOICES staff will collaborate with districts as they support and increase the percentage of preschool-aged children 3-5 with IEPs who demonstrate improved early childhood outcomes.
    - Early CHOICES will maintain a data-sharing agreement with ISBE for the purposes of sharing meaningful data with school districts regarding their indicator data.
  - PD and technical assistance must be developed and provided in a variety of formats, including, but not limited to, workshops, sustained training, consultation, mentoring, practice-based coaching, webinars, distance learning, social networks, podcasts, and training DVDs.
- Align PD and technical assistance with the [Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards](#), the [Illinois Professional Teaching Standards](#), and the [Standards for Professional Learning](#) to ensure high-quality programming. Training should also be aligned with the concepts and strategies of Adult Learning Theory.
- Maintain compliance with the ISBE [Professional Educator Licensure requirements](#) for PD providers and establish a system to provide credentialing.
- Embed opportunities for reflection, feedback, and integration of skills learned into PD offerings.
- Establish a center for the provision of training and technical assistance to the early childhood community.

- Develop a comprehensive website for information dissemination, registration, etc.

### **3. Family Support**

**Goal:** Develop and deliver training and support for parents/guardians and families, including workshops, webinars, consultation, fellowships, and material loan and dissemination. Identify needs and respond to requests for support of families involved in ECSE.

#### **The successful applicant will:**

- Provide support and assistance for families of children with disabilities and include families in all training and technical assistance opportunities.

### **4. Collaboration**

**Goal:** Collaborate and coordinate with other early childhood initiatives, agencies, technical assistance providers, and personnel.

#### **The successful applicant will:**

- Maintain regular and ongoing communication with ISBE Early Childhood Division regarding the PD planning and implementation.
- Collaborate with other technical assistance projects serving the early childhood community through trainings and statewide planning efforts.
- Lead the statewide LRE Stakeholders Consortium to increase awareness and opportunities for inclusion for children ages 3-5. The group should include stakeholders throughout the State, identify priority areas, and provide support to implement the work of the Consortium.

### **5. Evaluation**

**Goal:** Implement an evaluation system to collect and provide critical data for Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and provide information and data to the ISBE Early Childhood Division.

#### **The successful applicant will:**

- Develop a system for maintaining records of participation in PD and utilization of library resources. Collect and provide data to the ISBE Early Childhood Division, as requested, regarding number and type of trainings, technical assistance, number of participants, and trends in utilization of PD and resources.
- Develop a written framework and implement a system for PD evaluation and CQI, guided by written policies and procedures. The framework should include data and information to be collected as well as the measures, methods, and processes to be used to evaluate specific PD. The evaluation framework and plan will also include

strategies for measuring the quality and impact of the PD provided. The data elements, measures, methods, and processes must be specific and consistent with CQI. This framework will be developed in consultation with the ISBE Early Childhood staff.

- Analyze the data collected and adjust PD in consultation with ISBE Early Childhood Division.
- Provide an annual report to the ISBE Early Childhood Division in a timely manner.
- Maintain regular and ongoing communication with ISBE Early Childhood Division regarding data and evaluation.
- Conduct an ongoing evaluation to ensure trainings meet the needs of ECSE professionals, parents/guardians, and families throughout the project region.

Policy Requirements:

Early CHOICES goals and objectives support [IDEA](#).

Deliverables and Milestones:

Deliverables and Milestones are outlined in Program Objectives above.

Goals and Measurements (Performance Measures):

Performance Measures are outlined in Program Objectives above.

Performance Standards:

One hundred percent of Performance Measures will be completed.

## **Funding Information**

Introduction:

Applicants may apply for funds not to exceed \$409,000. The proposal should include an annual budget for the period of July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2018. Examples of allowable and non-allowable expenditures are listed below. Applicants are advised that these lists are not exhaustive, and all budget items are subject to ISBE approval prior to expenditure.

### **Allowable Expenditures:**

- Salaries for staff for which a need is clearly demonstrated in the proposal;
- Consultant fees to develop and/or implement training, technical assistance, and evaluation;
- Costs related to project staff travel in providing training and technical assistance;
- Costs related to PD for project.
- Supplies and materials costs associated with the development and provision of training and technical assistance;
- Room/facility rental associated with provision of training;
- Interpreters and language translators at training sites;
- Project evaluation activities;
- Office space rental when grantee does not own the office space;
- Purchase of equipment to support activities of the project;

- Postage, printing, duplicating, telephone, and fax costs;
- Informational announcements of training and technical assistance opportunities;
- Administrative OR indirect costs.

**Non-Allowable Expenditures:**

- Supplant salaries of existing staff;
- Supplant activities and services funded by other Federal, State, and local sources;
- Office space rental when the grantee owns the office space;
- Costs of moving, remodeling, or building.

Cost Sharing or Matching:

Cost sharing or matching is not required for purposes of this grant.

Indirect Cost Rate:

In accordance with a Delegation Agreement between the U.S. Department of Education and ISBE, and pursuant to its authority under the GATA and administrative rules, the Governor's Office of Management and Budget has granted ISBE an exception to the Federal Uniform Guidance and GATA regarding the determination of indirect cost rates that may be utilized by all grantees that receive a State award or Federal pass-through award for grant programs administered by ISBE.

LEAs may utilize either the indirect cost rate the LEA negotiates annually with ISBE (school districts) or the statewide average indirect cost rate calculated by ISBE (ROE, ISC, special education cooperatives, area vocational centers, charter schools, and university laboratory schools approved by ISBE). These LEAs will also utilize the ISBE-established indirect cost rates for State and federally funded grant programs administered by other state agencies.

Not-for-profit agencies, community/faith-based organizations, and for-profit entities may utilize the statewide average indirect cost rate calculated by ISBE for all State and Federal grant programs administered by ISBE. Colleges and universities will be restricted to a maximum indirect cost rate of 8 percent or other indirect cost rate calculated by their cognizant Federal agency, whichever is less, for State and Federal grants administered by ISBE. These non-LEA entities may choose to negotiate a separate indirect cost rate to utilize for State and federally funded grant programs administered by other state agencies.

Funding Restrictions:

Not Applicable

For purposes of compliance with Section 511 of P.L. 101-166 (the "Stevens Amendment"), applicants are advised that 100 percent of the funds for this program are derived from federal sources. The total amount of federal funding involved is \$409,000.

**Content and Form of Application Submission**

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



- 1. Uniform Application for State Grant (Attachment 1):** Include the entity name, address, telephone and fax number, email, name, and telephone number of the contact person; Federal Employer Identification number; DUNS number; SAM CAGE Code; and all other listed information. The Application page must be signed by the official authorized to submit proposals.
- 2. Proposal Abstract (Attachment 2):** Briefly describe the overall objectives and activities of the project. Not to exceed one page.
- 3. Program Narrative (Attachments 3-6):** Follow the specifications for the proposal set forth under Program Narrative Requirements beginning on page 11.
- 4. Objectives and Activities (Attachments 3-7):** The objectives and activities to be implemented to support the Early CHOICES program should be fully described in the proposal narrative.
- 5. Evaluation Design (Attachment 7):** The evaluation design to be implemented will be described in the Evaluation section of the proposal narrative.
- 6. Budget Summary (Attachment 8):** The budget MUST be submitted on this form. No other budget form will be accepted. District budgets MUST be signed by the district superintendent. Other applicants should have the official authorized signatory sign the form.
- 7. Budget Breakdown (Attachments 9 & 10):** The budget breakdown MUST include descriptions of the anticipated expenditures, correlated to the line items set forth on the Budget Summary. The budget breakdown should also include subcontract information, if applicable (see item 6 Certifications and Assurances, and Standard Terms of the Grant, Attachment 12). Attachment 10, the Budget Amendment Form, should NOT be included in the application. It should be kept with the applicant for future reference.
- 8. Certifications and Assurances (Attachments 11-17):** Each applicant is required to submit the certification forms attached (Certifications and Assurances, and Standard Terms of the Grant and Program-Specific Terms of the Grant). These must be signed by the official signatory legally authorized to submit the proposal and to bind the applicant to its contents.
  - a. Program-Specific Terms of the Grant (Attachment 11)
  - b. Grant Application Certifications and Assurances (Attachment 12)
  - c. Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility, and Voluntary Exclusion (Attachment 13)
  - d. Certificate Regarding Lobbying (Attachment 14)
  - e. Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (Attachment 14A-14C)
  - f. General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) 427 Notice and 442 Assurances (Attachments 15 & 16)
  - g. Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) (Attachment 17)

## **Program Narrative Requirements**

Use the appropriate attachment to respond to each of the following. Duplicate each form as needed. Assemble your proposal narrative in the order in which each requirement is presented below.

### **Qualified Staff** (Attachment 3)

1. Describe prior experience in providing training and technical assistance. Provide information that demonstrates the applicant's experience and knowledge of Illinois early childhood and ECSE systems.
2. Provide the following information for each position to be employed using grant funds.
  - A. Position to be filled.
  - B. List of project responsibilities assigned to each position.
  - C. The required qualifications for each position, including education and experience.
  - D. Percentage of time based on full-time equivalency (FTE) that each position will be dedicated to the project and paid with grant funds.
3. Describe how consultants will be identified, utilized, and evaluated. Please include how trainings will be assigned to each staff member and how PD needs will be determined.

### **Professional Development and Technical Assistance** (Attachment 4)

1. Describe the proposed training and technical assistance for early childhood professionals and describe how the project will help school districts improve activities specific to Indicators 6 and 7 of the ISBE Part B State Performance Plan.
2. Describe how data received from ISBE will be utilized for program improvement.
3. Describe all methods of training and technical assistance to be utilized, such as study groups, regional library, professional grants, and various uses of technology.
4. Describe how training and technical assistance will be aligned with standards and the Adult Learning Theory.
5. Describe the credentialing system for participants, including how compliance with the ISBE [Professional Educator Licensure requirements](#) will be maintained.
6. Describe how opportunities for reflection, feedback, and integration of skills will be embedded into PD and technical assistance.
7. Describe the function of the website and what information will be provided on the website. Describe the online registration process to be used, if applicable.

### **Family Support** (Attachment 5)

1. Describe project activities regarding families of children with disabilities. Include a description of how families will be involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the project activities.

### **Collaboration** (Attachment 6)

1. Describe how regular and ongoing communication will be maintained with the ISBE Early Childhood Division regarding planning and implementation of activities.

2. Describe how training and technical assistance will be coordinated across the State, other training and technical assistance entities, and statewide activities.
3. Provide information regarding the LRE Stakeholders Consortium, including how often the group will meet, who will be the members of the group, and the function of the group.

**Evaluation** (Attachment 7)

1. Describe the development/maintenance of an evaluation database and plans to participate in the evaluation. Include how data will be maintained by the regional project and the process for submitting an annual report
2. Describe how ongoing evaluation of trainings will be conducted and how the information will be used toward continuous quality improvement.

## **Application Review**

### **Review and Selection Process:**

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

- Need is defined as the identification of stakeholders, facts, and evidence that demonstrate the proposal supports the grant program purpose;
- Capacity is defined as the ability of an entity to execute the grant project according to the project requirements;
- Quality is defined as the totality of features and characteristics of a service, project, or product that indicate its ability to satisfy the requirements of the grant program;
- Proposals will be evaluated in comparison with other Early CHOICES FY 2018 discretionary grant proposals received by ISBE and conducted by an expert panel of reviewers with experience in and knowledge of early childhood education and ECSE services. Proposals will be scored on the criteria outlined below, ranked by score, and awarded according to rank and region. Final determination for selection will be made by the State Superintendent of Education and will be based upon recommendations resulting from the evaluation/review process.

### **Criteria:**

Following the notification of grant awards, an applicant may request copies of reviewer comments by contacting the Early Childhood Division at [earlychi@isbe.net](mailto:earlychi@isbe.net).

### **Selection criteria and point values are as follows:**

1. Experience and Qualifications (30 points)
  - a. The proposal provides sufficient evidence of applicant's experience and knowledge of Illinois early childhood and ECSE systems and demonstrated ability to provide PD training and technical assistance. The proposal provides evidence of the applicant's commitment to employ staff members who possess a wide range of experiences and expertise in administering local and national initiatives and training and experience in adult education (Attachment 3).
2. Quality of Proposed Program (40 points)
  - a. The proposal clearly explains how the grantee will develop PD training and technical assistance, including workshops, webinars, consultation, fellowships, referrals, and materials loan and dissemination. Identify needs and respond to requests for PD support of staff involved in ECSE (Attachment 4).
  - b. The proposal clearly explains how the program will develop and deliver training and support for parents/guardians and families, including workshops, webinars, consultation, fellowships, and material loan and dissemination. Identify needs and respond to requests for support of families involved in ECSE (Attachment 5).

- c. The proposal clearly explains how the program will collaborate and coordinate with other early childhood initiatives, agencies, technical assistance providers, and personnel (Attachment 6).

3. Evaluation (20 points)

- a. The proposal explains how the grantee will implement an evaluation system that will provide critical data used for CQI and provide information and data to the ISBE Early Childhood Division (Attachment 7).

4. Budget (10 points)

- a. The proposed budget is consistent with the proposal's activities and appears to be cost-effective in light of the services being provided and number of participants being served. (Attachments 8 and 9)