



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

DATE: April 20, 2016

TO: Eligible Applicants

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

**SUBJECT: NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS):
Illinois Statewide Assistive Technology Device Loan Program**

General Information

CSFA Number: 586-64-0417
CSFA Title: Special Education – Grants to States
CFDA Number: 84.027A
CFDA Title: Federal Special Education IDEA Discretionary

Purpose of Program: The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) seeks proposals from eligible applicants to loan assistive technology devices to school districts once the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team has identified the appropriate device to meet the student's assistive technology needs.

Eligible Applicants: Not-for-profit organizations, institutions of higher education, professional organizations, assistive technology and other technology providers, local education agencies (LEAs), special education cooperatives, regional offices of education/intermediate service centers and other entities that have the necessary expertise and capabilities of purchasing, distributing and maintaining assistive technology devices for use by Illinois students with disabilities are eligible to apply.

An eligible applicant may also apply for a grant under two other assistive technology Notices of Funding Opportunities (RFPs) (Illinois Statewide Assistive Technology Training and Resources Program and the Illinois Statewide Assistive Technology Exchange Network) being issued concurrently provided that they meet the eligibility requirements of that project.

NOTE: Applicants must register for pre-qualification on the State of Illinois GATA Web Portal before being awarded a FY17 grant. The state's Grant Accountability and Transparency Unit has indicated it expects the portal's prequalification function to be operating by approximately the end of April, 2016. In the meantime, applicants must submit their application by the application deadline below.

Grant Award: One grant will be awarded in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 (year one of the project) in an amount not to exceed \$635,500. It is the intention of the Illinois State Board of Education to fund this project for five years (through FY 2021). The annual grant award in successive years of the grant period will be \$635,500.

Grant Period: The initial grant period will begin no sooner than July 1, 2016, and will extend from the execution date of the grant agreement until June 30, 2017. Funding in the subsequent years will be through a continuation application process, contingent upon a sufficient appropriation for the program, and satisfactory progress in the preceding grant period.

Application Deadline: Mail the original and four copies (five applications in all) to Donna Schertz, Illinois State Board of Education, 100 North First Street, N-253, Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001, to ensure receipt no later than **June 3, 2016**. The original and four copies must be received by the due date in order for the proposal to be considered. Late proposals will not be eligible for consideration.

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

Springfield Office
Information Center
1st Floor
100 North First Street

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

Contact Person: For more information on this RFP, contact Donna Schertz, 217/782-5589, dschertz@isbe.net.

This grant is subject to the provisions of:

- 2 CFR Part 200 – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards
http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr200_main_02.tpl
- 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 Rule for GATA, 44 Ill. Admin. Code Part 7000
<ftp://www.ilga.gov/JCAR/AdminCode/044/04407000sections.html>

Background

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 602, directs school districts and special education cooperatives to maximize the accessibility of students with disabilities to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) through use of technology, including assistive technology devices and services. In order to assist districts and cooperatives in meeting this goal, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), through its funding under Part B of IDEA,

established the Assistive Technology Device Loan Program. This program is designed as a way to provide students with the loan of an assistive technology device for a trial period to ensure the device meets the student's identified need prior to the school district's purchasing the device. In the current fiscal year through February 2016, more than 1740 devices were loaned to 102 school districts across the state.

The use of the assistive technology, as required under a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), can help promote his or her involvement with general education peers and the curricula, and assist him or her in attaining their postsecondary goals. During the development of the IEP, assistive technology must be considered for every child and then provided by districts if required under the child's IEP to receive FAPE (34 CFR 300.105). As defined in regulations promulgated under IDEA, assistive technology means:

- any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability (see 34 CFR 300.5); and
- any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device (see 34 CFR 300.6).

Program Specifications

Eligible applicants must have demonstrated experience in purchasing, storing, repairing, and maintaining the assistive technology devices that are available for loan to school districts. The loan is made to a district without charge so the district can evaluate the device's effectiveness in order to determine whether a like or similar device should be purchased for the student's use. School districts may keep the equipment for a five-week trial period. The objective of the program is for the use of the assistive technology device to assist students in participating more fully in their educational environment, developing positive social interactions, and functioning more independently in the school and other settings.

An additional responsibility of the grantee is to evaluate a student for his or her assistive technology needs. A school district may request that the grantee conduct an assistive technology evaluation by a qualified evaluator, prior to applying for the loan of a particular device. It is expected that the entity will also provide office and inventory space necessary for program operations. Packing and shipping costs of the device to and from the school district will also be a responsibility of the grantee.

The applicant must address each of the following activities in its proposal:

- The capability to maintain assistive technology devices to meet the device loan needs of school districts.
- The provision of devices to school districts whose loan applications are approved, to the greatest extent possible. In the event the grantee cannot meet the need of one or more school districts, then it must purchase additional devices and maintain a waiting list, if needed, to ensure that the needs of all school districts are met.
- The capability to conduct repairs and updates, as needed, on loaned equipment returned by school districts.

- The provision of ongoing communication to school districts on at least a quarterly basis during the school year that includes an inventory of the available devices and the process for requesting a loan.

The successful applicant will be responsible for securing the transfer of any assistive technology devices purchased with IDEA funds from the current grantee and ensuring their full repair for use in loans starting in fall 2016.

The Illinois Statewide Assistive Technology Device Loan Program also has as an objective to contribute to the agency's ability to ascertain the state's attainment of certain indicators in the Illinois State Performance Plan for IDEA, Part B (see http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/pdfs/annual_partB.pdf):

- Indicator 5A: Percentage of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 served inside the general education classroom for 80 percent or more of the day;
- Indicator 7B: Percentage of preschool children aged 3 through 5 with IEPs who demonstrate improved acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy);
- Indicator 14: Percentage of youth who are no longer in secondary school, but who had IEPs in effect at the time they left school, and were:
 - Enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school;
 - Enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school; or
 - Enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program, or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school.

Performance Reporting: The successful applicant will be responsible for reporting, to ISBE on a quarterly basis, data and information relative to the type of equipment purchased and loaned to school districts and the impact of the loan (i.e., school district eventually purchased like or similar equipment for use by the student); and the progress toward accomplishing the program objectives above.

Fiscal Information

One grant will be awarded in FY 2017 in an amount not to exceed \$635,500. The initial and subsequent grant awards will be dependent upon the needs addressed and scope of activities in each year and the total appropriation for the program. Allowable expenditures include:

- Salaries and benefits of a qualified assistive technology evaluator and project staff;
- Costs associated with the purchases, maintenance, and repair of assistive technology devices;
- Office space (e.g., utilities, leasing, renting);
- Supplies directly related to the purposes of the grant, including packing and shipping costs; and
- Indirect costs shall not exceed three percent of the amount requested.

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 initiative are derived from federal sources. The total amount of federal funds available for this grant is approximately \$635,500 for FY17 and subsequent years of the grant.

Proposal Format

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 Assistance [Cover] Page (Attachment 1):** Include the entity name, address, telephone and fax numbers, e-mail, name and telephone number of the contact person; Federal Employer Identification number, DUNS number, SAM Cage Code; and all other listed information. The Application page must be signed by the official authorized to submit the proposal.

- _____ 2. **Proposal Narrative (Attachment 2):** Describe in detail the objectives, activities and timelines for addressing each of the project elements set forth under “Background,” “Program Specifications,” and the information below. Not to exceed five (5) pages.
 - Provide a description of the organization, to include any prior experience with technology equipment purchasing and repair, with particular emphasis given to assistive technology devices.
 - Describe the process to be used to evaluate an individual student’s need for an assistive technology device.
 - In the event the grantee cannot meet the needs of the state for device loans, describe how requests for equipment will be maintained through a waiting list to ensure districts’ needs for device loans are met in a timely manner.
 - Identify the staff to be employed, including their qualifications and responsibilities, with particular attention paid to prior experience working with assistive technology devices and evaluating students’ needs for assistive technology.
 - Describe any limitations on the loan program, as stated in the proposed procedures, specifically the length of the loans, include procedures for ensuring the return of equipment from school districts once the loan period has concluded.
 - Describe the facility to be used for the program to include storing equipment.
 - Provide examples of the organization’s previous on-going assistance and support in the use of assistive technology.
 - Specify the process for ongoing communication with the educational community about the availability of the loan program and the process for requesting loans..

- _____ **3. Evaluation Design (Attachment 3):** Describe the evaluation procedures and instruments to be used to determine the extent to which stated objectives will have been met. Limit to one page.
- _____ **4. Federal Budget Summary (Attachment 4):** Must be submitted on the form provided and signed by the official authorized to submit the proposal.
- _____ **5. Budget Summary Breakdown (Attachment 5):** Must include descriptions of the anticipated expenditures, correlated to the line items set forth on the Budget Summary. Must include subcontract information, if applicable (see item 6 of the document titled *Certification and Assurances, and Standard Terms of the Grant Attachment.*)
- _____ **6. Program Specific Terms of the Grant (Attachment 6)** Must be signed by the official legally authorized to submit the proposal and to bind applicant to its contents.
- _____ **7. Certifications and Assurances (Attachment 7):** Each applicant is required to submit the certification form attached. These must be signed by the official legally authorized to submit the proposal and to bind the applicant to its contents.
- _____ **8. Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion (Attachment 8)**
- _____ **9. Certificate Regarding Lobbying and Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (Attachment 9 – 9c)**
- _____ **10. GEPA 427 – Notice to All Applicants (Attachment 10)**
- _____ **11. GEPA 442 Assurances – Federal Funded Grants (Attachment 11)**
- _____ **12. Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) (Attachment 12)**

These must be signed by the official legally authorized to submit the proposal and to bind the applicant to its contents.

Criteria for Review and Approval of Proposals

Proposals will be evaluated in comparison with other proposals received by the Illinois State Board of Education, based upon the criteria below. Final determination for selection will be made by the State Superintendent of Education and will be based upon recommendations resulting from the proposal review process.

- 1. Proposed Project (35 points):** The proposed plan provides an adequate description of the entity, identifies any prior experience with the acquisition and refurbishing of assistive technology equipment, describes the process the entity will use to recruit,

refurbish, store, maintain, and distribute the equipment, and identifies the procedures for notifying school districts, special education cooperatives and parents about the availability of the assistive technology and for assessing their needs.

The applicant is likely to actively and regularly recruit donors to the program and promote the assistive technology loan program at conferences and other networking opportunities. The proposed plan is likely to result in a sufficient number of assistive technology devices to meet the needs of the school districts seeking loans in a timely manner. The applicant has described the facility to be used for refurbishing and storage and supplied information specific to the provision of on-going assistance and support in the use of assistive technology.

2. **Applicant's Capability (35 points):** The applicant demonstrates the capacity to implement a project of this magnitude and scope, including sufficient evidence of expertise and experience with projects similar in scope to that required under this Request for Proposal. The procedures for evaluating student's needs demonstrate that evaluations will be conducted by a qualified evaluator who reflects knowledge of special education and the use of assistive technology to improve learning experiences. The applicant's staffing plan, along with the qualifications of proposed staff, have a high likelihood of ensuring successful implementation of the proposed project within the established timeframe.
3. **Budget and Cost-Effectiveness (30 points):** The proposed budget is cost-effective and reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and expected outcomes and is of an amount that may realistically be expected to have an impact on the stated needs.

Following the notification of grant awards, an applicant may request copies of reviewer comments by contacting the division responsible for issuing the RFP. (See "Contact Person" under "General Information".)