



Illinois State Board of Education

100 North First Street • Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001
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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 Training and Resources**

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 provide technical assistance and training to educators and other users of assistive technology regarding how such technology is used to promote a student's involvement with the general education curriculum, interaction with peers, and to assist the student in attaining postsecondary goals.

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 experienced in providing technical assistance and professional development relative to the use of assistive technology for students with disabilities are eligible to apply.

An eligible applicant also may apply for a grant under two other assistive technology Notices of Funding Opportunity (RFPs) (Illinois Statewide Assistive Technology Exchange Program and Illinois Statewide Assistive Technology Device Loan Program) 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 \$250,000. It is the intention of the Illinois State Board of Education to fund this program for five years (through FY 2021). The annual grant award in successive years of the grant period will be \$250,000.

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, Special Education Services Division, Illinois State Board of Education, 100 North First Street, N-253, Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001*, to ensure receipt no later than **June 3, 2016**. No FAX copies will be accepted. The original and five 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 at 217/782-5589 or 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 the 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 Illinois Statewide Assistive Technology Training and Resources

project to provide technical assistance and training to educators and other users of assistive technology. In FY 2015, the grantee conducted 116 workshops and 47 webinars which were attended by nearly 4,300 educators. Two assistive technology Tech Camps were held in June and provided a three day, immersive technology training experience to 22 cross-functional school-based teams from across the state. Trainings were provided to educators in all 102 Illinois counties.

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 Individualized Education Program (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

Under this project, technical assistance training activities will be provided throughout the state at no cost to individuals employed in the school districts, special education cooperatives, and/or other users of assistive technology specific to a student with an IEP (e.g., parents and students). The objective of the initial training activities is to assist participants in expanding their knowledge and use of assistive technology in order to support student learning. Ongoing technical assistance and other resources also must be provided to strengthen participants' newly acquired skills. Ongoing support may be provided via telephone, email, and/or guidance documents that participants can access directly.

Previous assistive technology training activities have addressed no-cost/low cost resources, writing strategies, evaluating the need for assistive technology, legal issues, and strategies and devices, among others. Other areas of interest identified in previous statewide surveys regarding assistive technology included the need to increase knowledge, skills, and awareness of assistive technology; utilization of assistive technology to address Response to Intervention (RtI) and Universal Design for Learning; and collaboration and networking opportunities across the state. Annual stakeholder meetings must be utilized to identify current topics for trainings.

Eligible applicants must have demonstrated experience in providing and directing training and technical assistance activities. The training and technical assistance program must include the following activities and objectives:

- Guided and intensive training to assistive technology evaluators, teachers/providers, and users, to include parents and students with IEPs, on policies and procedures and use of assistive technology devices to promote the attainment of students' IEP goals.

Training should encompass assistive technology topics specific to serving students with high-incidence and low-incidence disabilities.

- Knowledge-based training to promote the principles of Universal Design for Learning through the use of assistive technology. The training must demonstrate the use of assistive technology to promote differentiated instructional strategies and RtI initiatives specific to at least one content-area (e.g., reading, writing, and math). Participants should be aware of and able to use technology to promote the involvement of students with disabilities in the general education setting, with the curricula, and their grade-level peers. Technology tools should include, but not be limited to assistive devices, computer access, learning and study tools, and student engagement.
- The provision of ongoing support and resources through a variety of resources to include a question-and-response system, guidance documents, and webinars.

The Illinois Statewide Assistive Technology Training and Resources project 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/state_performance.pdf):

- Indicator 3B: Proficiency rate for children with IEPs on statewide assessments against grade level and alternate academic achievement standards;
- 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 13: Percentage of youth with IEPs aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals that are annually updated and based upon an age appropriate transition assessment, transition services, including courses of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those postsecondary goals, and annual IEP goals related to the student's transition service needs. There also must be evidence that the student was invited to the IEP Team meeting where transition services are to be discussed and evidence that, if appropriate, a representative of any participating agency was invited to the IEP Team meeting with the prior consent of the parent or student who has reached the age of majority;
- 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; and
 - 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 types of training activities offered and impact of the trainings on the participants' students, including the impact on the attainment of student IEP goals, and the attainment of the Illinois State Performance Plan indicators outlined previously.

The successful applicant must secure approval as a continuing professional development provider in order for participants to claim credit for the training activities completed. (See Section 25.855 and 25.860 of rules governing Certification at <http://www.isbe.net/rules/archive/pdfs/25ark.pdf>). As part of the provider's responsibilities, the successful applicant must collect from each participant an evaluation of the training activity completed on ISBE form 77-21A (See Appendix A). The data collected from the participants must be included in the quarterly progress reports provided to ISBE.

Fiscal Information

One grant will be awarded in FY 2017 in an amount not to exceed \$250,000. The initial and subsequent grant awards will be dependent upon the needs addressed and scope of activities in each year of the grant and the total appropriation for the program. Allowable expenditures include:

- Maintaining support staff and trainers, including salaries, benefit provisions and management;
- Contracting with state and national experts to provide technical assistance specific to assistive technology;
- Conference space;
- Office space, if applicable, including utilities;
- Assistive technology education and training materials to include manuals, software, videos, webinars, and other materials necessary to aid technical assistance participants in implementing newly acquired skills;
- Travel and other costs associated with trainings and technical assistance;
- Program and office supplies directly related to the purposes of the project; 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 grants is approximately \$250,000.

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 cover 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.

- Indicate the number of staff to be employed, including their responsibilities and qualifications.
- If any of the applicant's facilities will be used to conduct the trainings, provide information relative to the location and how accessibility to participants statewide will be ensured.
- Include a plan for notifying participants of the training activities to be provided in a timely manner.
- Describe the process to be used to identify the needs of the training participants and to tailor activities to meet those needs.
- Include a detailed explanation of the ongoing technical assistance that will be provided to the participants.

- ___ 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 5).
- ___ 6. **Program Specific Terms of the Grant (Attachment 6):** Must be signed by the official legally authorized to submit the proposal, and to bind the applicant to its contents.
- ___ 7. **Certifications and Assurances (Attachment 7):** Each applicant is required to submit the certification forms 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 is likely to result in the provision of training activities that are relevant to the environments in which the participants work and respond appropriately to challenges of addressing assistive technology needs of students with disabilities. The ongoing technical assistance procedures will ensure that participants can effectively put into practice the knowledge and skills gained through the training. Sufficient advance notice of training opportunities will be provided.
- 2. Grantee Capability (35 points):** The applicant demonstrates the capacity to conduct training activities relative to assistive technology, and has demonstrated sufficient expertise about assistive technology and experience providing statewide training and technical assistance projects similar in scope to what is required under this RFP. Staff members proposed for the project appear to have the necessary capabilities to secure and organize the required trainings 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 the numbers to be served and is of an amount that may realistically be expected to have a positive 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".)