

Fiscal Year 2027 Teacher Vacancy Grant Selection FAQ

1. Why was my district not selected?

Fiscal year 2027 awards were determined using an updated methodology that prioritized districts with the highest numbers of unfilled teaching positions while continuing to focus on eligible districts in Evidence-Based Funding Tiers 1, 2, and 3. Districts that were not selected for FY 2027 funding did not rank among the districts identified for funding under the updated methodology.

2. Can my school district apply for this grant?

The application process is not competitive. Districts are chosen based on ISBE's methodology. In order to receive funds, districts have to fulfill a number of obligations associated with the grant. Districts can choose not to accept the funding. Selected districts will use the application to determine and justify their expenditures, linking all items back to recruitment and retention of teachers.

3. What data did you use from my district?

ISBE used data from the annual Unfilled Positions Report, including the number of unfilled teaching positions reported by districts. ISBE also used NCES locale classifications to identify rural and urban districts and considered eligibility requirements, including Evidence-Based Funding tiers. For FY 2027 identification, the 2026 unfilled positions data and FY 2026 Evidence-Based Funding tiers were utilized.

4. Why did ISBE prioritize vacancy counts instead of vacancy rates?

ISBE focused on directing resources where they could address the greatest number of unfilled teaching positions statewide. While vacancy rates remain an important indicator of local staffing challenges, the FY 2027 methodology prioritized districts with the highest numbers of unfilled positions in order to maximize the impact of available funding. The 100 funded districts account for 77% of all reported statewide teacher vacancies.

5. How many districts will receive FY 2027 funding?

A total of 100 school districts will receive FY 2027 Teacher Vacancy Grant funding under the updated methodology. These districts represent approximately 12% of Illinois Local Education Agencies but account for 77% of reported unfilled teacher positions statewide.

6. How were districts selected for the FY 2027 cohort of grantees?

ISBE identified need by analyzing unfilled Full Time Equivalent (FTE) counts along with NCES locale codes to determine rural and urban classifications. Consistent with prior years, only districts in Evidence-Based Funding Tiers 1, 2, and 3 are eligible for possible award.

The 100-district cohort is designed to concentrate resources on the highest-need districts. It captures 77% of all statewide unfilled teacher positions (2,062 of 2,677 FY 2026 vacancies) while representing only 12% of the state's total Local Education Agencies (100 of 851). The reduction in available funding (\$30 million in FY 2026 to \$15 million in FY 2027) required the program to concentrate dollars where vacancy impact is greatest.

As done in previous years, the formula ties award size directly to unfilled FTE severity using a tiered base plus per-FTE structure. Baseline funding tiers have been adjusted based on available funding.

- Base 1 (\$125,000) + \$3,336.47 × Unfilled FTE — districts with 11+ unfilled FTEs
- Base 2 (\$65,000) + \$3,336.47 × Unfilled FTE — districts with 6-10 unfilled FTEs
- Base 3 (\$45,000) + \$3,336.47 × Unfilled FTE — districts with five or fewer unfilled FTEs

7. How does the methodology define "vacancy"? Is it consistent with the previous definition?

An unfilled position is defined as “a position that is not filled by an appropriately licensed, permanent educator as of Oct. 1.” The definition of vacancy is consistent with previous years.

8. How were the 100 districts selected, and how many are newly eligible versus previously funded?

- Rural (60 districts): 36 of 60 (60%) were part of the pilot; 24 of 60 (40%) are new for FY 2027.
- Urban (40 districts): 32 of 40 (80%) were part of the pilot; eight of 40 (20%) are new to the program for FY 2027.