

Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated June 20, 2024

Application Process

1. Will districts need to apply?

Districts will need to complete a formula grant application in the ISBE electronic Grants Management System (eGMS). The application will be streamlined – the main components will be the district’s plans for the funds and proposed budget. Applications that have all the required components, are aligned to the purpose of the program, and contain allowable expenses will be approved. Applications will not be compared to one another as in a competitive grant, but rather will be evaluated against the standards/expectations for the program.

2. How will districts apply?

Districts eligible for a grant will have to apply for their funding through eGMS.

3. What will the application entail?

Districts will be required to explain the causes of the teacher staffing challenges in the district, submit a detailed budget to ISBE outlining the planned use of funds to address those staffing challenges, agree to grant-specific terms, and share how the programming will be sustained beyond the term of the grant.

4. Can a district refuse/reject funds?

Yes. Please send an email to teachervacancygrant@isbe.net indicating that you wish to refuse to participate.

5. When is the last date for applications to be accepted?

Please submit applications by Oct. 1, 2024.

6. What can districts use the money for?

Districts can use the money to meet local needs and challenges pertaining to teacher recruitment and retention. Districts have flexibility over how they spend the funds, but ISBE will issue guidance to support districts with evidence-based ideas, such as:

- Financial incentives to immediately impact recruitment/hiring (e.g., signing bonuses, housing stipends and/or down payment assistance, loan repayment).
- Programs and incentives to strengthen pipelines (tuition and e.g., fees, licensure fees to support employee advancement, partnerships to develop strategic pathways [such as residencies, apprenticeships]) .
- Investments to sustain teachers and reduce attrition (e.g., instructional materials and supplies, instructional coaching, school culture supports).

7. What specific guidance will ISBE be giving to districts for the use of this grant money?

Districts have flexibility over how they spend the funds, but ISBE will issue guidance to support districts with evidence-based ideas, technical assistance, consulting, and communities of practice to support those receiving funds. In reviewing applications, ISBE will look for alignment of the proposed solutions/expenditures to the suspected root causes of

shortages in that district and consistency with evidence-based practices. ISBE staff will be holding office hours for grantees to attend as they wish to go over specific items or answer broad questions. These office hours will be held from 10-11 a.m. on Tuesdays via Microsoft Teams. The link and specific dates can be found under the Teacher Vacancy Grant | Office Hours dropdown on the [ISBE Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program webpage](#).

8. Are there resources to help guide me on how to best spend our awarded dollars?

Yes! The grant team put together a series of strategy briefs that summarize a variety of solutions that may be beneficial to districts across the state. The information can be found under the Strategy Briefs dropdown on the [ISBE Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program webpage](#). Additionally, the ISBE team will continue to host Communities of Practice, which will start back up in October.

9. If I have questions, is there someone I can contact?

Yes! Our grant managers will be responding to emails as well as hosting office hours. Please email teachervacancygrant@isbe.net or consider attending office hours if they are convenient to your schedule. Office hours are posted on the ISBE Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program webpage.

Overview

1. What is the goal of the grant?

The Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program is aimed at addressing chronic shortages by providing the state's most understaffed districts with resources to attract, hire, support, and retain teachers. The grant

will allow districts maximum flexibility to use allocated funds in innovative, creative, and evidenced-based ways such as signing bonuses, housing stipends, down-payment assistance, or loan repayments; paying tuition and fees or providing residencies or apprenticeships; and sustaining current teachers by providing materials, supplies, coaching, and school culture supports.

2. Where can the grant application be accessed?

When the grant application is open, it will be accessible through IWAS. Log in to your administrative [IWAS account](#).

Eligibility

1. How were districts selected to participate?

Districts in Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) Tiers 1, 2, 3 (as calculated for fiscal year 2023) were considered for possible award. Districts in Tier 4 were excluded as were the 352 districts that report having no unfilled teaching positions at the beginning of the 2022-23 school year; those districts are ineligible for this program.

Table 1. Comparison of Districts Receiving and Not Receiving an Award

Metrics	Districts receiving an award	Districts not receiving an award
Total Count of unfilled teaching positions	2,849	662
Average Count of unfilled teaching positions	16.8	0.65
Median Count of unfilled teaching positions	5.2	0
Range of Counts of unfilled teaching positions	2-1,094	0-17
Average Vacancy Rate for Teachers	6.7%	1.00%
Median Vacancy Rate for Teachers	4.8%	0%
Range of Vacancy Rates for Teachers	0.5%-36.5%	0%-25%
Percent Districts with Chronic Unfilled Teaching Positions	71%	17.50%

2. Was historical data used to account for districts that have ‘chronic’ shortages?

Historical data was overlaid and showed that more than 70% of the selected districts have reported vacancies more than three times in the past six years while 17.5% of those not selected have chronic vacancies by the same definition.

3. What are school districts are eligible?

[Link to eligible school districts document.](#)

4. How were the schools selected to reflect both rural and urban districts?

Initial modeling identified 170 districts – 60% rural and 40% urban. All of them are underfunded districts, with 49% in EBF Tier 1 (most underfunded), 43% in Tier 2, and 8% in Tier 3.

The 60/40 split is aligned to the composition of all Tier 1, 2, and 3 districts in the state. National Center for Education Statistics locale classifications were used to determine which districts were rural and which were urban.

5. If funds are appropriated in subsequent fiscal years, will the same set of districts be awarded?

Yes. The governor's proposal was for three years of funding to the same set of districts. Future awards are subject to appropriation, but the intention is for three years of funding. We are currently in Year 2 of funding.

Funding Allocation

1. How will the funding be allocated?

In order to allocate funding for selected districts with lower counts of unfilled teaching positions, the proposed awards use three different

base funding levels determined by the count of reported unfilled teaching positions in each selected district. Selected districts with more than 11 unfilled teaching positions receive a base funding level of \$200,000, selected districts with between six and 10 reported unfilled teaching positions receive a base funding level of \$125,000, and selected districts with fewer than six unfilled teaching positions receive a base funding level of \$75,000.

In addition to base funding, each selected district receives a variable funding level determined by awarding \$8,582.20 per reported unfilled teaching position. The total proposed funding for each selected district is equal to its base funding plus the specific variable funding calculated based on unfilled positions reported by that district. Two examples are shown below.

Chicago Public Schools reported 1,094 unfilled teaching positions, so that allocation would be calculated as follows.

$$\$200,000 + (\$8,582.20 * 1094) = \$9,588,926.33$$

Pleasant Hill CUSD 3 reported four unfilled teaching positions, so that allocation would be calculated as follows.

$$\$75,000 + (\$8,582.20 * 4) = \$109,328.80$$

Use of Funds

Reporting Requirements

1. What are the reporting requirements?

Reporting requirements are outlined on pages 266-269 of an [Amendment to House Bill 3817](#)

Measurement of Success

1. How will we learn from this effort? Will there be an evaluation?

ISBE will report on the program progress as part of the annual budget process and will complete final report for the General Assembly at the end of the three-year pilot.

2. How will ISBE monitor progress/measure effectiveness?

The overall success measure for the program is a reduction in unfilled teaching positions. ISBE also will collect leading indicators of success, such as applicants per job posting, numbers of candidates on a strategic pathway to employment as a teacher in the district, and teacher attrition rates.

Miscellaneous

1. Why (only) 170 districts?

Eighty percent of current teacher vacancies are in 170 or 20% of school districts and we want to provide sufficient levels of funding to implement effective strategies.

2. Is this for those currently employed at public schools only or for others as well? Are early childhood education community-based programs included in this work?

This program is for public school districts. The state is supporting early childhood education pipeline efforts through the [Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity Scholarship Program](#), in which ISBE is a partner.