

Illinois State Board of Education

State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) Illinois IHE Partnership RFP Bidders' Conference Questions & Answers

Please Note: If a topic has no questions and answers posted under it, this means that no questions about that topic have yet been received from interested applicants. Questions should be submitted by email to ihfrfp@isbe.net. Responses will be posted in this document within two business days of receipt of each question.

CHANGE IN NARRATIVE PAGE LIMIT

The page limit for the proposal narrative has been increased from 20 pages to 30 pages. The spacing, font, and margin requirements specified on page 13 of the RFP remain the same.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Eligible Applicants

1. As a smaller university preparing special and general educators, would we be eligible to participate in this grant? If so, do we initiate an application and find our own local partners among surrounding districts, concentrating on the neediest? Or, would we need to join an existing partnership?

All Illinois Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) that have state-approved educator preparation programs are eligible to apply for the grant to administer the Illinois IHE Partnership project. Each applicant is responsible for meeting the project's partnership requirements and would, therefore, need to reach out to entities identified in the RFP as required partners for this purpose. This could include an interested applicant making an inquiry to other IHEs about any existing partnerships that may have been formed for the purposes of submitting a proposal in response to the RFP. If such a partnership exists, you could also inquire with that entity about joining the partnership.

With regard to which IHEs may participate in the grant, all Illinois IHEs with approved educator preparation programs could potentially participate in the project services, although the number of IHEs that can be directly served will be determined by the available project resources. As stated in the RFP, once the project begins, services will initially target the eight Illinois IHEs with the largest educator preparation programs (provided those IHEs agree to receive and participate in project services). A process, which will include selection criteria, will also be established to identify additional IHEs to participate in the project across the five-year grant period.

Grant Period

1. In reviewing the details of the SPDG IHE Partnership grant, I wanted to ask if the cycle of funding can begin in 2012 (thus making it a four-year project), or must the project begin in 2011? In other words, can an IHE partnership apply for first-year funding (\$100,000 for planning and initial implementation of the partnership) in 2012, with subsequent refinement and full implementation funding to be requested in 2013?

No. The cycle of funding, as well as planning and initial implementation, must begin in FY 11. Because the project is time-limited, it is necessary that full implementation begin during Year 2 (FY 12). To delay full implementation to FY 13 would have a negative impact on the project and would not fulfill our obligations under the federal grant.

Application Deadline

1. Can proposals be postmarked, rather than received, on April 22, 2011, and still be on time?

No, an April 22 postmark is not sufficient for a proposal submission to be deemed “on time.” As stated on page 2 of the RFP, proposals must be received at ISBE on March 25. All mailed proposals must be received in the Springfield office by that date. See page 2 of the RFP for information about locations for hand-delivered proposals. Reminder: Be sure to submit the required number of copies—one original plus five copies (six applications in all)—plus two CDs containing the specified files.

PROGRAM SPECIFICATIONS

Required Partnerships and Collaboration

1. Can an IHE agree to partner in only one grant application, or could we sign on as a partner in more than one?

There is nothing in the RFP that excludes an entity from agreeing to partner in more than one application.

2. The partnership requirements for the IHE Partnership RFP state that “One or more representatives from at least three different IHEs must be involved in the development of the proposal.” Is the institution submitting the application counted in the total number of “three different IHEs,” or must there be three additional IHEs besides the applicant?

The IHE submitting the application may be counted as one of the three IHEs involved in the development of the proposal.

Project Personnel

1. Is there a minimum FTE requirement for the part-time project coordinator and the part-time technical assistance coordinators, e.g., .25 or .50 FTE?

The RFP does not specify a minimum FTE (full-time equivalency) for the project coordinator and technical assistance coordinator positions. The applicant must propose the FTE for these part-time positions and demonstrate that the proposed FTE will be sufficient to fulfill the associated responsibilities specified in the RFP.

2. Do we need to identify specific people who will fill the project personnel positions proposed in our grant application, or could those people be hired after the grant is awarded? To what extent does ISBE expect to play a role in selection and/or approval of personnel?

Under item B (Project Personnel) of the Proposal Narrative Requirements on page 13 of the RFP, it says “List each person to potentially be employed and/or contracted with by name (if known)...” Therefore, it is not required that specific individuals whom the applicant proposes to hire to fill key project personnel positions be identified in the grant application. As further discussed under item B, at a minimum applicants must describe the staff and staffing patterns to be used in providing training, technical assistance, and coaching; list all proposed positions and associated responsibilities; and describe the qualifications individuals to be hired will be required to have. If specific individuals the applicant proposes to hire under the project are known at the time the application is submitted, then their names and details of their qualifications for a particular position should be provided (it is recommended that resumes or vitas be included in an attachment).

In addition, we want to take this opportunity to reinforce the importance of equal opportunity/affirmative action in employment. As an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, ISBE is committed to providing equity in employment and services, irrespective of gender, race, national origin, color, disability or age. Therefore, the administrative agent of the Illinois IHE Partnership will be required to seek applicants from underrepresented groups and to provide any special accommodations required for an applicant to participate in the application or interview process. Accommodations must also be made in the workplace to enable employees to perform their roles efficiently and effectively.

Regarding ISBE’s role in selection or approval of project personnel, if individuals are identified for particular positions in the grant proposal, we will review the qualifications of those individuals and take that information into consideration when awarding points during the proposal review and evaluation process. For any proposal selected for funding, we will also work closely with the successful applicant to ensure that all individuals hired for project positions are appropriately qualified. This will include participating in the interview process for the project coordinator and possibly the technical assistance coordinators.

Professional Development, Technical Assistance and Coaching Plan

1.

Project Evaluation

1. Should the Project Evaluation Design be delineated on the Action Plan form or on the Evaluation Component Narrative form, or both?

Project evaluation should be addressed in both the Evaluation Narrative and the Action Plan. The Evaluation Narrative (Attachment 4) should be used to describe in detail the evaluation plan in a narrative format (see Proposal Format, item 5 (Evaluation Design) on page 11 of the RFP for further details). From this narrative, you should identify one or more key evaluation tasks for the evaluation objective, specific activities to accomplish each key task, and timelines for completing each activity. In turn, these key tasks, activities, and timelines should be outlined in the Action Plan (Attachment 3).

2. Please clarify the evaluation roles of the Illinois IHE Partnership project coordinator and the State external evaluator and how they will interact and support each other.

The external project evaluator will have primary responsibility for implementing the project evaluation plan (see Appendix F of the RFP), which will include development and/or refinement of project evaluation tools, development and/or refinement of the project evaluation platform/system through which data will be collected, analysis of project data, and preparation of project evaluation reports. The IHE Partnership project coordinator will be responsible for working collaboratively with the external evaluator to finalize the evaluation tools and data platform/system and to ensure that evaluation activities are carried out within the Partnership, including the responsibilities listed in detail on page 8 of the RFP.

3. Will the State external evaluator be responsible for developing an online data collection system and evaluation tools, or will that be the responsibility of the Illinois IHE Partnership grantee?

As stated above, the external evaluator will have primary responsibility for developing, executing, and maintaining the online data collection platform/system and development/refinement of evaluation tools. Keep in mind, though, that at certain times, the Illinois IHE Partnership project coordinator will be required to collaborate in these tasks and to oversee completion of evaluation activities at the project level, as outlined on page 8 of the RFP.

4. How much of the proposed annual budget and time would need to be allocated to evaluation efforts? I did not find that information in the RFP.

The RFP does not specify an amount of project staff time or funds that must be allocated to evaluation efforts. It is the responsibility of the applicant to determine, based on the evaluation responsibilities delineated in the RFP, the amount of staff time and dollars that would be required to adequately fulfill those responsibilities and include that information in the proposal.

Project Website

- 1.

Communication with ISBE

- 1.

FISCAL INFORMATION

1. The RFP states that funds may not be used to supplant salaries of current staff. Does this mean that existing IHE faculty could not be paid with grant funds to conduct work for the IHE Partnership?

No. If a current full-time faculty member is selected to fill one of the project positions, then a portion of his or her current salary could be paid with grant funds as long as a portion of that individual's current full-time equivalency (FTE) is allocated exclusively to fulfill the responsibilities of the grant position. If an individual is currently in a part-time faculty position, then grant funds could also be used to pay him or her for time beyond the current FTE to fulfill the grant position responsibilities. It would be considered supplanting, however, if a current faculty member was expected to continue all current responsibilities plus conduct grant responsibilities at the same FTE and have part of his or her current salary paid with grant funds.

PROPOSAL FORMAT

Application Components

1. **Application Forms:** Is it permissible for an applicant to replicate the application forms in a Word document or an Excel file in order to complete the application?

Provided the content and format are identical to those of the replicated form, it is permissible to replicate Attachments 2 – 4 in Word format and Attachments 5a and 5b in an Excel file. Any specified margin, font, and spacing requirements and page limitations must be followed. For Attachments 6 – 9c, the PDF forms provided must be used and may not be replicated in another format.

2. **Budget Summary Breakdown:** On the budget breakdown forms, what is required related to the "detailed description of anticipated expenditures?" Is this simply listing each specific staff member, materials/supplies, equipment, stipends, or is there an expectation of a narrative budget justification?

The budget breakdown page should clearly show how you have calculated the total amount of each line item. For example, if you propose to contract with a technical assistance coordinator for a total of \$12,000, you would need to provide a breakdown using an hourly or daily rate (e.g., \$300 per day X 40 days) to show how you arrived at the \$12,000 total. If you propose to purchase equipment, you would need to specify the type of equipment and the corresponding cost for each unit (e.g., 2 laptop computers @ \$700 each = \$1,400). Although a budget narrative is not required, it can prove useful in justifying costs. If you complete a budget narrative, it should be included as an attachment to the proposal.

- 3. Letters of Intent to Partner/Letters of Support:** On p. 18 of the RFP, it states we must attach a letter of intent from each participating entity. Is a "partnering entity" (1) partners listed under C of Attachment 1 or (2) all IHEs interested in participating in the funded project?

Partnering entities include the partners that an applicant lists in the table under C on page 1 of Attachment 1. Letters of support, rather than letters of intent to partner, may also be included from entities that are not specifically identified as a partner but wish to express support for the application.

Clarification: All letters of intent to partner and letters of support should be submitted with the grant application as an attachment or appendix. Such letters should not be mailed separately to ISBE.

Proposal Narrative Requirements

1. Does the 12-point font, double-spaced requirement for the narrative also apply to tables included within the narrative, or can they be formatted for best presentation?

The 12-point font, double-spaced requirements apply to all parts of the narrative, including tables.

Other

1. Where can I find the appendices to the Illinois SPDG application? I have the link for the application itself. It mentions the Appendices in the document, but it's not included.

The appendices for the Illinois SPDG application are not posted, as the ones considered relevant and necessary for responding to the RFP have been included as appendices of the RFP itself (in particular, see Appendices B and C). Other appendices from the SPDG application were taken from documents readily available online, such as the Illinois State RtI Plan (http://www.isbe.net/pdf/rti_state_plan.pdf), the I-ASPIRE project evaluation tools (<http://www.luc.edu/cseit/i-aspireresourcesforcoordinator.shtml>), and Illinois State Advisory Council (ISAC) members (http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/pdfs/isac_members.pdf).