

THREE CIRCLE (FFA & SAE) GRANT

ISBE WEBINAR - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS*

1. Who is eligible to apply?

Illinois school districts and area vocational/career centers that employ full-time middle or secondary school teachers in an approved agricultural education program. The grant is with the district and the district will pay its employees according to its local policy. All ag teachers within a district (including if the district has multiple schools and ag teachers at each school) wanting to participate in the grant should be included in one district initial application submission.

2. Who should complete the initial application?

It is recommended the district identify a point person to complete this application. It is suggested this person be either the Superintendent or similar district administrative position since the nature of the information requested in the application can be of a sensitive nature (salary/benefits) especially if there is more than one teacher that will be applying in the district application for this grant. However, ultimately this is a district decision regarding who is appointed to complete the application. The person completing the application as well as the authorized district administrative official (i.e. typically the Superintendent) will receive a copy of information submitted in the application.

3. What is a full-time ag teacher?

"Full time" means an agricultural education teacher with at least a nine-month (180 day) contract based on an eight hour day where the teacher is teaching at least one approved agricultural education class.

4. Do part-time teachers qualify for the Three Circle Grant?

No, but check how you define part-time as this refers to part of a day/load. If an instructor teaches a full day with the district, but only teaches ag part of the time, it is possible the teacher qualified. The teacher must meet the requirement of a full-time teacher as indicated in the question above.

5. Are hours based on this current year or last year?

Record current year activity. In a typical year July 1 through June 30. However, for FY18, we do not yet know what the start date will be for this year

6. Can a teacher count time during the lunch period at school where the teacher is assisting students?

No. This is during the normal school day hours in which the teacher is already paid through the local contract with the district. These hours do not count as grant activity.

*Responses are based on the proposed rules which are subject to change until final publishing.

7. How are hours to be documented?

Each participating teacher must document 400 (or more) hours and should include district/school and teacher(s) names, activity description and relation to approved components, date and time, number of hours worked, and number of individuals impacted. The recommended method to record these hours is the Teacher Journal through AET which is anticipated to include all the required components and is free of charge to all Illinois agricultural education teachers. This documentation will be required to be uploaded into the grant in the performance (final) report prior to the approval of the grant in the subsequent fiscal year. Hopefully, the district will also accept this report in meeting their requirements for documenting payment of the teacher's time. However, this is the district decision and may require other reporting documentation.

8. How long does a teacher have to accrue the 400 hours? Does this have to be during the summer?

The activity (and grant expenditures) must occur between the beginning and end dates of the grant in any given fiscal year. Typically, this is July 1 to June 30, but can vary from year to year dependent upon application submission variances. The extended time can occur anytime outside of the regular teaching day (i.e. mornings, evenings, weekends, summer, etc.)

9. Do overnight hours count towards the 400 hours for approvable events?

It would be the working/waking hours of activity with students (not sleeping hours). If you have appropriate activity overnight as part of your student supervision that you must tend to, then it can be counted. One may need to provide a comment or explanation for activities of a questionable nature or time.

10. What hours count and how does this relate to the normal school day?

The extended hours are accrued in one of three areas: FFA, SAE, and Curricular. Travel hours as a part of one of these activities can count. The local district policy or contract typically identifies the start and end of the school day (i.e. 8am to 3:30pm) during the school week. No hours could be counted toward the grant during this time period unless it is on a non-school day where you are not required to be working (i.e. Saturday).

11. How do you count individuals impacted for community service projects like roadside pick-up?

There will be some activities that are difficult to measure the number of individuals impacted or may not impact individuals directly. For the impact numbers reported, the district should be able to document/justify the numbers through data collected. In cases where it is difficult to measure, then specific comments can be added in the comments textbox when reporting the number of individuals impacted to cover these types of situations as necessary.

12. What is the required district partnership or match?

The percentage of the total allocation required by the district vs what the grant covers is based on the years of operation of the district's agricultural education program (in each school in the district as applicable).

- If the program is in its first or second year of operation, then the grant will cover 100% of the personal services cost of the extended time.
- If the program is in its third or fourth year of operation, then the grant will cover 80% of the personal services cost and the district will be required to cover 20% of the personal services cost of the extended time.
- If the program is in its fifth or more year of operation, then the grant will cover 50% of the personal services cost and the district will be required to cover 50% of the personal services cost of the extended time.

13. What would be the district base salary and how do I know if the district meets the match?

Base salary would be an individual teacher's salary for the 9mo contract in the current year with a specific district. (not the first step on the districts salary schedule, but the step the teacher is currently on in the schedule this year). When the grant calculates the daily rate, it will also include TRS and THIS benefits the district pays on behalf of the employee. Here is a simple example that may help only looking at the salary (not including benefits).

Example: If an instructor's current base salary was 48,000 (9mo) and he/she has a 10.5mo (30 days) contract – so total salary of 56,000 (48K+8K for extended contract).

The value of the 60 days extended time would be \$16,000. ($\$48K/180*60$)

A district with an ag program in operation 5 yrs or more, then falls into the 50%/50% match with the district. The district would have to pay the \$8000 as it normally would for its 10.5mo contract. The grant will pay (the district) an additional \$8000 (to pay the teacher) for the additional 1.5mo (additional 30 days of activity – 60 days total).

In effect, the district pays for 9 months plus 30 days (10.5 months) of salary (grant pays the district for the other 30 days or 1.5 months) for the equivalent of 12 months (60 days; 400 hours) of work by the ag teacher.

14. Can the Incentive Funding Grant (IFG) funds be used as part of the district match?

No, the district cannot use the IFG state funds to fulfill its district match responsibility. While teacher extended time is an allowable budget expense in both the IFG and the now in the Three Circle Grant, the district should use one grant or the other and not both for extended teacher time. If a district has already budgeted teacher personal service costs for extended time in the IFG (for a teacher participating in the Three Circle Grant), then the district can amend their IFG budget to remove this expense. This avoids issues related to counting the same hours in both grants and allows the maximum number of hours for reporting in the Three Circle Grant.

15. Will this grant continue on or is it available only this year. If the district does not participate in this year, are we able to participate in future years?

This will depend upon an appropriation in the Agricultural Education line item in the ISBE budget each fiscal year. There are funds appropriated this year and the grant will start in FY18 (this year). It is anticipated to continue to be offered in future fiscal years (assuming an appropriation). The application process is annual for this formula grant so a district can chose each year if it wishes to participate or not.

16. What is a pro-rated allocation?

A pro-rated allocation will depend upon the amount of funds (appropriation) available for this grant as compared to the total amount requested through the initial application of the Three Circle Grant. A prorated allocation would occur when the requests for funds exceed the total amount of funds available. A district can choose to participate (or not) if a pro-rated allocation occurs. In FY18, there is not anticipated to be a pro-rated allocation as adequate funds are anticipated to be available.

17. What if a district is unable to submit the initial application in the 30 day time period?

The initial application is to be submitted within 30 days of release of the initial application so allocations can be completed and the budget application can be released in a timely manner. If a district is interested in participating, but feels it will need more than thirty days for whatever reason, then the district should contact the ISBE program consultant (Harley Hepner, hhepner@isbe.net, 217-524-4832) to discuss the situation.