PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to answer questions from potential applicants related to the fiscal year 2022 grant competition for the Equity Assistance Centers (EACs) program, Assistance Listing Number (ALN) 84.004D.

Disclaimer

Other than statutory and regulatory requirements included in the document (such as those pursuant to the authorizing statute and other applicable laws and regulations), the contents of the guidance do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies. In addition, it does not create or confer any rights for or on any person.

The U.S. Department of Education (Department) may provide additional or updated information, as necessary, on the Department’s website at: https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/program-and-grantee-support-services/training-and-advisory-services-equity-assistance-centers/

If you have questions that are not answered in this document, please email: OESE.EACcompetition@ed.gov.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Must an applicant be based in the region to which they apply?

No. An applicant is not required to be based in the region at the time it applies for funding. However, the EAC regulations require a grantee to operate the EAC in the geographic region to be served (34 CFR 270). Therefore, to receive an award, an applicant must demonstrate how it will meet the requirement to operate in the region it proposes to serve. An applicant should demonstrate how it will serve the region, its familiarity with the region, and its capacity to respond to requests for technical assistance in the region.

The Department intends to create four separate funding slates, one for each geographic region and anticipates funding a single EAC in each geographic region, per the below language in the Notice Inviting Applications (NIA):

Geographical Regions: One EAC will be funded under this grant program in each of four geographical regions, in accordance with 34 CFR 270.5 and 270.20. One award will be made
in each region to the highest-ranking proposal from that region. If an applicant wishes to apply to serve more than one region, the applicant must submit a separate application for each region it wishes to serve.

2. **Must the director of the EAC be 100% full-time equivalent (FTE) in that role?**

Yes. As outlined in [34 CFR 270.30](https://www.federalregister.gov/a/36-24729) of the program regulations, recipients of a grant must have “a full-time project director.” This means one individual at 100% FTE.

3. **To meet the invitational priority, may an applicant for an EAC propose partnerships with either public or private Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Minority-serving institutions (MSIs), and/or tribal colleges and universities (TCUs)?**

Yes. An EAC applicant may meet this invitational priority by partnering with any institutions that meet the definitions in the NIA for HBCUs, MSIs, and TCUs. Partnerships are not limited based on the institutions’ public or private status. An applicant submitting a joint application must meet the joint application regulations in [34 CFR 75.127-129](https://www.federalregister.gov/a/36-24729).

As a reminder, no additional points are awarded for meeting the invitational priority.

4. **May an EAC provide technical assistance to schools that are part of the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) as part of the EAC’s proposal to further desegregation work?**

Yes. An EAC may provide assistance to school boards or other responsible governmental agencies located in its geographic region ([34 CFR 270](https://www.federalregister.gov/a/36-24729)). **Responsible governmental agency** means any school board, State, municipality, local educational agency, or other governmental unit legally responsible for operating a public school or schools. **Public school** means any elementary or secondary educational institution operated by a State, subdivision of a State, or governmental agency within a State, or operated wholly or predominantly from or through the use of governmental funds or property, or funds or property derived from governmental sources. BIE schools meet these definitions and may be served by the EAC in the geographic region in which they are located.

5. **Who qualifies as a novice applicant?**

“Novice” is defined in [34 CFR 75.225](https://www.federalregister.gov/a/36-24729) as the following:

   a) has not previously received an EAC grant.
   b) has not previously been a member of a consortia which received an EAC grant; and
   c) has not received any discretionary grant awards from any Federal agency, including, but not limited to, the Department, in the 5 years prior to May 16, 2022 (the EAC application due date).

Therefore, an entity that has not previously received—or been a member of a consortia that received—an EAC award and has not received in the previous five (5) years any discretionary grant from the Department or any other Federal agencies meets the definition of “novice.”
Please note that this competition does not consider an applicant’s status (such as novice or returning) in awarding points for this competition. Rather, this status is used to inform technical assistance activities of the program office after award.

See the related application instructions on page 23.

6. **Are subgrants allowed under the EAC program?**

No. As indicated in the NIA in Section III (“Eligibility Information”), paragraph 3 (“Subgrantees”), a “grantee under this competition may not award subgrants to entities to directly carry out project activities.

7. **What are some examples of technical assistance and training activities delivered by EACs?**

As noted in the NIA, technical assistance and training activities provided by the EACs in response to requests from responsible governmental agencies may include:

- Dissemination of evidence-based resources;
- Assistance and advice;
- Consultation and training designed to improve the ability of teachers, supervisors, counselors, parents, community members, community organizations, and other elementary or secondary school personnel to ensure all students have a full opportunity to participate in educational programs; and
- Assisting schools in fostering positive and safe learning environments that meet all students’ needs, and that are free of bullying and violence related to race, national origin, sex, or religion.

Additional examples are provided with the program performance information at this website: https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/program-and-grantee-support-services/training-and-advisory-services-equality-assistance-centers/performance-training-and-advisory-services-equality-assistance-centers/.

8. **In addition to each EAC collecting and reporting progress toward performance measures, will there be a program-wide evaluation of the EACs?**

Yes. The Department will outline the specific responsibilities of both the grantee and the Department for evaluating performance in the post-award cooperative agreement. Each successful applicant will have the opportunity to adjust its proposed budget, where necessary, to meet the specific terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement after being notified of its selection for a new award. Information about past evaluations of the program can be found here: https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/program-and-grantee-support-services/training-and-advisory-services-equality-assistance-centers/performance-training-and-advisory-services-equality-assistance-centers/.
9. **Is a county office of education eligible to apply?**

According to the EAC regulations, a public agency (other than a State educational agency or a school board) or private, nonprofit organization is eligible to receive a grant under this program. Whether or not a county office of education is eligible for an EAC grant is a fact-based analysis and will depend upon whether the county meets the requirements in 34 CFR 270.2.

10. **Are institutions of higher education eligible to apply?**

Yes, an institution of higher education that is either a public agency or private, nonprofit organization is eligible to apply.

11. **What emphasis should applicants place upon addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic within the proposed project design?**

As the Department recognized in the Background section of the NIA, requests for EAC services may arise from desegregation-related issues caused or exacerbated by the COVID–19 pandemic and conditions necessitated by it. In the application narrative, applicants should address the needs within the geographic region related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Applicants may address how their project design addresses local needs relating to the pandemic in their responses to the selection criteria. In the Background section of the NIA, the Department generally encouraged applicants, in their responses to the selection criteria, to:

> Describe how they will consider the unique and diverse local and cultural needs of communities within their regions (e.g., taking into account differences in the racial, ethnic, or religious diversity of the student populations in rural communities, communities with newcomer families, communities with high instances of languages other than English spoken in the home, Tribal communities) and consider appropriate staffing and partnerships that can assist the EAC in meeting diverse regional needs.

Specifically, through the Quality of the Project Design selection criteria for this competition, applications will be evaluated on “the extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project are appropriate to the needs of the intended recipients or beneficiaries of those services.”

* * *