**U.S. Department of Education**
**Office of Elementary & Secondary Education**
Charter School Programs
Session Transcript
FY 2023 Pre-Application Competition Webinar for the Credit
Enhancement Program

Recorded May 18, 2023

- [Courtney] Hello, and welcome to the Pre-Application Competition webinar for the fiscal year 2023 CSP Credit Enhancement Grant program. Thank you for taking time out of your busy day to join us to learn more about this grant competition from the U.S. Department of Education's Charter Schools Program. It's my pleasure to introduce the program supervisor for the Credit Enhancement Program, Karen Dorsey Hargrove, to get us started.

- [Karen] Good afternoon. Thank you, Courtney. Next slide. So, as Courtney said, my name is Karen Dorsey Hargrove, and I am the Supervisor and the Team Lead for the Charter Schools Program Facilities Team. The Facilities Team manages the Credit Enhancement Grant program, and over the next 90 minutes, we will review the competition eligibility requirements, the NIA, and steps required to complete the Grants.gov registration process.

So, welcome, and stay tuned. Next slide. Before we get started, a few logistics. This is a listen-only webinar that is being recorded. Our goal is to post the webinar slides on the CSP website, specifically on the FY23 Credit Enhancement Competition page by close of business today, and then we'll post the recording and a transcript as they become available.

Throughout the presentation, we have designated space and time for questions. We ask that you use the Q&A feature to ask your questions, and during that time, we will pause the presentation to allow the team to review questions, and determine which questions we can answer. So you'll be placed on hold, and there'll be no talking and probably no music, so don't be alarmed.

And before we get too far into the webinar, I want to provide clarification about the purpose of the Credit Enhancement grant program as we received several questions with registration related to applying for funds to purchase a building, or repair or renovate a building. If you are a charter school looking for funding to acquire, construct, or renovate a facility, this grant is not for that purpose.

Credit Enhancement grants are not used to directly pay for the purchase, lease, construction, renovation, or repair costs of a charter school facility. We do encourage charter schools who are seeking funds to do those things, to acquire or construct or renovate a facility, to reach out to one of our existing Credit Enhancement grantees that may be able to assist you in accessing capital needed to purchase, lease, renovate, repair, or construct.

You can find a list of our Credit Enhancement grantees on our Charter School Programs webpage, as well as on the National Charter School Resource Center's webpage. Links to both of these sites, as well as links to all of the webpages we're going to be providing are going to be provided to you by our team in a single document, so you can go to that document.

So again, if you're looking for funds directly to...for grant funds for purchasing, to construct or renovate, this is not that grant program. And you're welcome to stay on, but you can drop off if you need to. Next slide. So, we'll try to answer as many questions as possible, but we may not be able to answer all of the questions.

Sometimes we have questions that require us to consult with leadership or our office of general counsel, so we won't be able to answer those questions during this webinar. And if your question is soliciting sort of feedback or guidance specific to what you're planning for your project or design or approach, we can't answer those kinds of questions at all.

And we'll also be keeping an eye on the time, because we want to get through all of the slides. So if your question is not answered, please, you can feel free to draft it, develop an email, and forward it to the facility's mailbox. Next slide.

As I stated, we'll use the next 90 minutes to review the competition basics, preparing and submitting your application, but it's important that you read your...read the full text of the Notice Inviting Application, the NIA, that was published on May 10th, as well as thoroughly reading through the application package for instructions and additional information on the competition website.

This webinar should not be the sole information source used to prepare and submit a Credit Enhancement application. Next slide. So, here's our agenda, lots of information that we want to cover. I will start with a brief overview of CSP, Credit Enhancement, and the Credit Enhancement Grant Program.

I'll then turn it over to the team, who will walk you through the Notice Inviting Application, preparing and submitting your application, as well as some general information about award administration, and the application review process, and then we'll end with some final reminders. Next slide.

Great... Next slide. So before I jump into the overview, let me introduce you to the Facilities Team here at the Charter Schools program. Our director is Dr. Anna Hinton. I've already introduced myself. Program officers are Clifton, Cliff Jones, and Thea Fowles.

And so, Cliff and Thea will be presenting with me today as well. Next slide. As you may know, Section 4301 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides seven purposes for the Charter Schools program.

The CSP is tasked with expanding the charter schools sector, increasing the availability of high-quality charter schools. This task is inclusive of providing funding for planning, designing, and opening public charter schools, evaluating the impact of charter schools, sharing best practices among charter schools and other public schools, and strengthening the authorizing process, and providing facility support to charter schools.

The Credit Enhancement program targets facility support to charter schools. Next slide. So in the next few slides, I'll provide an overview of the Credit Enhancement program and competition, starting with some basics about this year's competition.

We estimate $50 million will be available for awards. I want to stress that this is an estimate, and this amount may increase. Awards will range from $2 million to $20 million, the

maximum award amount being $20 million. And unlike other CSP grants, the Charter...the Credit Enhancement Grant has an unusual project period, as it is indefinite.

But on your grant award notification, if a grant is made to you, the GAN, the start date will be October 1st of this year, and the end date will be a placeholder of sorts. On previous grantees' GAN, the end date was 25 years after the start date. The application deadline is June 26th, at 11:59:59, so if you submit your application at midnight, it will be late, so both the date and the time are critical.

Finally, if you have not already done so, and if after this webinar you decide that you will apply to this opportunity, we ask that you email the facilities mailbox to notify us of your intent. We use intent to apply for planning purposes, and if you don't notify us about your intent to apply, you can still apply to Credit Enhancement.

So next slide, let's move on to the Credit Enhancement program. Next slide. So, the Credit Enhancement Grant provides funds to eligible entities so that they can in turn help charter schools with cost challenges of acquiring, construction...constructing, and renovating facilities by enhancing the availability of loans and bonds.

So again, if you're a charter school looking for funding to acquire, construct, or renovate, the Credit Enhancement grant is not for those purposes. Next slide.

Eligible applicants for Credit Enhancement Grants are public entities such as a state or local government, a private nonprofit entity, or a consortium of a state or local government entity, and a private nonprofit entity. Again, I cannot stress enough about reading the NIA in its entirety, as there is additional guidance in the NIA about eligibility, specifically as it relates to nonprofit entities.

So now that we've covered eligible applicants, let's talk about the Credit Enhancement project objectives, and other topics. Next slide. So, you should factor into your project design the program's objectives, the funding restrictions, and the use of reserve accounts, as well as other program considerations.

Next slide. Starting with the objectives and use of funds. The objective of Credit Enhancement is to deposit awarded funds into a reserve account, and then use those funds to help charter schools access private sector capital in order to start or continue the operation of a charter school through the acquisition of improved or unimproved real estate, with the construction of new facilities, or the renovation, repair, or alteration of an existing facility, or to assist with the pre-development costs required to assess a site to start or continue the operation of a charter school.

Next slide. As stated earlier, awarded funds are placed in a reserve account to accomplish the objectives. This slide provides a list of permissible as well as impermissible uses of grant funds, and those are the grant funds that are placed in that reserve account.

So, grant funds placed in the reserve account may be used to guarantee, insure, reinsure bonds, notes, loans, and leases of property. You can also use those funds to facilitate the financing by identifying potential lending resources, and encouraging private lending, and promoting lending to or for the benefit of charter schools.

And finally, to provide technical, administrative, and other assistance and support to facilitate the issuance of bonds for the benefit of charter schools. So, grantees may not use reserve account funds to directly pay for a charter school's construction, renovation, repair, or acquisition, or provide a down payment on facilities.

A grantee may, however, use funds to guarantee a loan for the portion of the loan that would otherwise have to be funded with a down payment. Next slide. Finally, as you plan your projects, there are other funding considerations to factor into your project.

Credit Enhancement does not require a match or cost sharing. If an award is made, you cannot make a sub-award to another entity or entities to execute your project. Charter schools that benefit from your project must meet the definition of a charter school that's in statute, and that's in Section 4310 of ESEA.

Next slide. Investment of grant funds must be issued or guaranteed by the United States, or a state, or in other low-risk securities. Grantees may use up to 2.5% of grant awards for administrative costs.

And lastly, any earnings on grant funds from interest or fees must be deposited in the reserve account, and used according to the Credit Enhancement program requirements. So I have covered eligibility, objectives, use of funds, and other areas of consideration for your Credit Enhancement project, which takes me to the end of my presentation.

So before we move on to the next topic, we're going to pause for some questions. So again, don't be alarmed if you hear silence, we will be back. So hello, this is Karen. I'm back. So, we have a couple of questions.

So, one of the questions, there are a lot of questions asking about eligibility and status as a current CSP grantee. So as long as you are an eligible entity, as we've described, as I described early on, and you propose a project for allowable uses, then you can apply to this grant program. So, the fact that you are a current CSP does not prevent you from applying for this, as long as you, again, understand the purpose of this grant program is not to make direct lending.

So we also got that question, too, if grant funds could be used for direct lending, and that is not an allowable use of the Credit Enhancement funds. We also got a question about the 2.5% administrative fee, if it's a one-time fee or an annual fee. And so, the 2.5% administrative fee is over the life of the grant, so you can spread it out at your discretion.

But once you hit the 2.5 % cap of the original award amount, that is it for administrative costs. And, let's see... "Can a CMO apply for Credit Enhancement funding, and provide funding to one of our managed schools?"

So again, if you're an eligible entity, you can apply for this grant program. You can't use it for direct lending. And any grant that you support with Credit Enhancement, through enhancing their ability to access capital, that school must meet the charter school definition that's in our statute.

So, I think I've covered most of the questions, and I am going to now turn it over to Cliff to take us through the next part of the presentation. Cliff?

- [Cliff] Thank you, Karen. Next slide. So yes, I'm going to go over the section for components of the notice inviting applications, so next slide. So currently, we have the slide for the definitions, and the notice inviting applications is a section on some of the key definitions for applicants to be aware of.

And once again, I would like to repeat what Karen said, it's highlighting the definition for a charter school, so the schools that benefit from this program need to meet that federal definition of a charter school. And some of the other definitions we'll cover later in the slide, so... Next slide. So, I would like to now talk a little bit about the selection criteria for the Credit Enhancement program.

The selection criteria for the Credit Enhancement program can be found in our program regulations, and there are four selection criteria, and a way that we help grantees kind of look at the selection criteria is by highlighting two questions.

So, those two questions are has the applicant proposed a grant project that would make a significant contribution towards meeting the purpose of the Credit Enhancement program, and thereby increase charter schools' access to facilities financing? And so, those would be related to the first...that question would be related to the first two criteria, which is quality of project design, and significance, which is 35 points, and project services, which is 15 points, so a total of 50 points for those two criteria.

And then the second two criteria kind of address the question, does the applicant have the ability to carry out the proposed grant project? And so the third and fourth criteria are capacity, which is a maximum of 35 points, and quality of project personnel, which is a maximum of 15 points. And so the peer reviewers, when they review the application, they will review them based upon these four criteria.

There will be a total of 100 available points. And once again, they can be found in our program regulations. And they're pretty consistent, compared to the selection criteria used in previous years. So, next slide. So, I would like to talk about the first selection criteria, and the first selection criteria, the quality of the project design and significance, has eight sub-factors.

This criteria addresses the goals, objectives, and activities of the grant project, how the applicant will determine the viability of the individual school as an educational enterprise, and therefore as a target for investment, the number and type of charter schools that the applicant anticipates will obtain facilities as a result of the grant project, the amount and type of assistance they will receive, and the degree to which projects will serve charter schools in states with strong charter laws.

Most successful applicants are likely to provide services to a number of charter schools, including startups. They will accomplish this in part by leveraging a significant amount of capital for investment in charter school facilities. They will clearly document their activities and the resulting outcomes for the different types of schools served, and will demonstrate that their grant projects are likely to help other charter schools acquire appropriate facilities in the future.

So, we can go to the next slide. So, the next criteria is quality of project services. This criteria is concerned with the immediate benefits to be provided to charter schools as a result of the grant project.

In this regard, this criterion addresses questions about the fit between the assistance to be provided, and the need of the recipients of the services. This criterion also considers the cost effectiveness of the services to be provided. Successful applicants would demonstrate that charter schools participate in the development of the grant project, and in the identification of the specific needs to be addressed by the grant project. These applicants may have letters of endorsement from charter schools, or otherwise document charter school support.

In addition, these applicants will focus on quality charter schools with the greatest need for facilities, and an inability to access private sector capital. So, we can go to the next slide. And so once again, those first two criteria address the question, has the applicant proposed a grant project that would make a significant contribution towards meeting the purpose of the Credit Enhancement program, and thereby increase charter schools' access to facilities financing?

And then the next two criteria will address, does the applicant have the ability to carry out the proposed grant project? And so, the third criteria is capacity, and 35 available points. This criterion focuses on the applicant's expertise in capital markets financing, and its organizational capacity to implement the proposed project.

The applicant will need to document its financial track record and strength, ability to protect against unwarranted financial risks, experience in accessing credit, and evaluating the success of charter schools, and the ability to prevent conflicts of interest. The applicant content requirements section of the application package instruction document describes some of the specific data and documents the applicant needs to provide regarding business and organizational capacity.

And so, again, this is 35 points. And the next slide, please. There is a note to highlight. So, all applicants will not necessarily be able to address each of the eight sub-criteria for capacity, and so some of the sub-criteria only apply to specific types of entities.

And so depending on whether you are one of those entities or not, we will divide the points equally amongst the applicants. So if factors six through eight of capacity don't apply to you, then we would divide the 35 points by five, the five remaining sub-factors, to then determine how to score your response to this selection criteria.

But if you do have additional sub-factors that apply, then we would divide the 35 by the appropriate number of sub-factors to figure out the point spread for this particular criteria. And so, can we go to the next slide? And so, the last selection criteria is the quality of project personnel. This criterion focuses on the relevant training and experience of key grant project personnel, consultants, subcontractors, and all personnel associated with the grant.

And so, once again, we have four selection criteria, and we will score the selection criteria using a 100-point system, and so every applicant has the ability to receive 100 points, depending on the quality of their response. So, next slide.

So, we have some application content requirements that are based upon our program statute. We're highlighting four of those application content requirements on this slide right here, and you can also find a detailed explanation about these application content requirements in the application package instructions document.

But if you thoroughly address the selection criteria I just covered, then you will address the content requirements. So it's definitely important to make sure you give a review to this information, but if you thoroughly address your selection criteria, then you should be able to address the application content requirements. Next slide.

Performance measures. So, the Credit Enhancement program has program-specific performance measures, which are our GPRA measures, and then grantees are also asked in the notice inviting applications to include project-specific measures. Next slide.

So like I said, the Credit Enhancement has program-specific measures. We have two, and the measures are the amount of funding grantees leverage for charter schools to acquire, construct, and renovate school facilities, that's our first measure, and the second measure is the number of charter schools served. We have to report on these measures, we have to report grantees' performance on these measures annually to Congress, and so these are program-specific measures that we collect from every single grantee under this program every year, so that we can report to Congress.

Next slide, please. So, the next few slides kind of get at some of the project-specific measures, and how to look at the project-specific measures. These can vary from grantee to grantee, depending on their grant design, and so there's language also in the notice inviting applications around how grantees can thoroughly address their project-specific performance measures, and ensure that their project-specific performance measures have targets as well.

An example of a project-specific measure might be a grantee stating that they are going to provide X-amount of hours of technical assistance to charter schools annually. Some grantees have stated that they're going to provide technical assistance to a certain number of charter schools a year, so the number of hours a grantee may devote towards technical assistance, or the types of...or the number of schools a grantee is providing technical assistance, or maybe attending conferences, developing reports could be an example of a project-specific goal.

It kind of, you know, addresses the specific nuances of the project, and it doesn't really...it's not the same as the GPRA measures, which are what we have to report to Congress. So, grantees are expected to include project-specific performance measures in their application. Next slide.

And so, like I said, the project-specific performance measures also should have targets, and the targets should be ambitious, yet achievable. One thing to note is that this grant program really doesn't have an end date. All of the grants that have been awarded are still open and supporting charter schools, and so that's something to keep in mind when it comes to thinking about the measures and the targets, are that there will be a point where, like, the measures and targets will have to end in your projection, but that doesn't mean necessarily the grant program will end at that time.

So usually at that time, then we update the goals with updated measures and targets. So, grantees are expected to include targets that cover and thoroughly address, you know, the grant design, and how they plan to implement their grant, but they won't actually be able to cover the full life of the grant because the grants don't end.

So, I did want to make that a little...just highlight that a little bit. Next slide. And so, the Credit Enhancement grantee also has to report to Congress. I mentioned that we report to them on those two goals, and so in order to do that, we have to collect information from our grantees, and we have authority to collect certain pieces of information from our grantees that's based upon our statute.

So as you review the statute, you'll see some of the requirements for Credit Enhancement grantees in the reporting, and what we will be looking at to collect from grantees. But we do collect grantees' performance data on an annual basis. Next slide.

So, are there any questions regarding this information? I think we'll take a break, and maybe see if there's any questions, and come back and try to answer them. So, I'm going to answer some of the questions that we just received. One question, "Can you go over any changes to this application as compared to the last application?"

There really aren't any changes. It's pretty much the same competition as last time, same selection criteria, same as far as priorities. There really aren't any changes as far as the content of the application. There's a couple of slight changes to forms, which are just standard information that we'll cover in some of the upcoming slides, but as far as, like, selection criteria, or what to include in the narrative, there aren't any changes to that.

"Can you share some examples of Credit Enhancement activities that a recipient can...that a recipient of a grant can do with the charter school?" So, we direct individuals, when we receive questions about, like, projects, like specific types of projects, to go to our Credit Enhancement web page, our awards page to see the list of our current grant recipients, and you can see their abstracts, as well as their project narratives from their applications, as well as the technical review forms from the competition when they were reviewed.

And so, all that information is on our Credit Enhancement awards page. And then also, we have bios of our grantees on the National Charter School Resource Center, and so there are some descriptions of things our grantees did on the National Charter School Resource Center as well.

"What kinds of efforts could a government entity use to document that they are working to increase allocations for charter schools to be able to address facility needs?" That's actually a pretty interesting question because the Facilities Team here at the Department of Education also works on another program called the State Incentive Grant Program, and that program incentivizes states to either create or increase a per-pupils facilities aid program within the state, and in order to do that, the states have to then get a state appropriation, because there's also a match requirement as a part of that program.

So, a document such as, like, the state appropriation showing an increase in per-pupils facilities aid can be an example of a document that a government entity could provide that shows an increase in allocation. So like, showing their appropriation that highlights the increase can be an example of a document you can use.

"What are the report requirements?" So, grantees have to report annually, and every year they have the grant. So, every grant that has ever been awarded has to submit an annual performance report this year, and then every grant next year will have to submit a performance report, and it just continues.

So once you receive an award, and you're able to draw down the funds, we have a report that we're actually working to update as a program, but you will be required to report annually. And so, it's being tweaked a little bit, so it'll change a little bit in the near future, but yeah, grantees have to report annually.

"Can a nonprofit building company apply to a grant in partnership with a bank/credit union?" We have a lot of diverse types of grantees. Some are CDFIs, some are public entities, some are real estate developers. So if you do go to our awards page and look at the list of our current grantees, you'll see, you know, diversity within the group.

But as long as you meet the eligibility requirements that we previously covered, then you can apply. But we do have a diverse group of grantees. So, that seems to cover the questions, so if we can go to the next slide? So, preparing your application.

Next slide. So, yeah, this is where I said the next few slides are going to go over, like, some of the forms that are part of the competition. We have required forms, which are just standard forms that grantees have to complete in order to submit an application.

We have the application narrative, this is the text where grantees are going to address selection criteria. And so, the application narratives are where grantees will include the project abstracts, project narratives, and then the budget narrative. We'll talk a little bit more in detail about that. And then also, there's the other attachments the grantees would then support, provide the program-specific forms, because the Credit Enhancement program has program-specific forms, as well as any supporting documentation the grantee wants to provide.

And also, if you go to Grants.gov, the top right is the search bar, you can find the application using our opportunity number. You can also use our assistance listing number, 84.354A, it'll come up. So yeah, it's just a search bar. If you type in anything kind of related to Credit Enhancement, it should come up. But definitely, that opportunity number will bring you right to our application.

Next slide. So again, we have some required forms. These are pretty much standard that most Department of Education programs require the applicants to complete. The GPRA form has changed since the last submission.

That was one of the things I was talking about when I answered the question about what are the changes from the last competition. The GPRA form has changed, but that's not related to the selection criteria, where grantees...or the project narrative. Next slide.

So, the first form is a standard form, 424 form. This is pretty much the cover sheet. You put in your name, dates, you know, estimated funding. It's pretty much just the cover page. Next slide. This is the new GPRA form. So before, grantees would have to, like, write a one-pager, maybe a one-paragraph responding to the GPRAm and then upload it into the attachments, but now it's its own standalone form in Grants.gov.

So I mean, we've had grantees respond to GPRA before, it's just the process is a little bit different. So, grantees now have their own specific...or applicants have... There's its own specific form for applicants to use to address the GPRA. The form is electronic, and there's text boxes that allow 400 characters, and the applicants will have to address the questions that are listed in the form.

Next slide. And this is just a screenshot of a possible error message, because it's a new process. Hopefully you don't receive any error messages. Hopefully it will be pretty straightforward. If you do, you can reach out to the Grants.gov help desk to see if they can troubleshoot it, or you can reach out to the program, if they're not able to help you.

Next slide. And so, this slide just provides you some, you know, helpful resources in order to, you know, develop responses to those questions for the GPRA form. Next question...I mean next slide. So, applicants need to upload an abstract for their grant in the abstract attachment form.

So you pretty much complete a one-pager, and then you'll upload it using the abstract form in Grants.gov, and it pretty much is just a summary of your project. Next slide.

So, we have the project narrative. This is where you'll address the selection criteria, the one through four selection criteria. We have a recommended page limit of 40 pages for the response...or for the project narrative. And so when you're done with your project narrative, you'll upload it to the project narrative form in Grants.gov.

Next slide. So with the Credit Enhancement program, it's a little bit different than other grant programs here at the department, where we have a standard budget form that applicants use to, you know, complete during their application, but we also have a program-specific budget that actually the program uses more than the standard budget.

So for the standard budget, we ask that applicants put their total requests in project year one in the row for others. So for example, if an applicant was requesting $12 million for Credit Enhancement, in the ED524 form you would put $12 million in the column for project year one, in the row for other, you'll put $12 million.

Next slide. And the reason for that is because we have our own project-specific budget that allows us to collect information based upon the nuances of the Credit Enhancement program, and that grant funds really aren't being spent. So like Karen said, when grantees draw down the grant funds, and they put the grant funds in a reserve account, some grantees may use a portion of those grant funds for expenditures, but they're mostly not used for expenditures.

So Karen kind of talked a little bit about the administrative funds, so grantees are able to request 2.5% of the initial grant award for admin, and so in this budget form, you'll put in how much you project to spend each year until you reach the cap, if you decide to do that, and then in the narrative for this budget chart, you would describe the justification for those expenditures.

And so, this chart really is to get at the allowable expenditures for the grant program. And like we kind of said throughout this presentation, the grant funds aren't really being used to,

like, pay for any of the acquisition, construction, or renovation, and so there really aren't a lot of expenditures.

Sometimes there's expenditures when it comes to paying lawyers, or just paying fees that need to be paid in order to, you know, complete a transaction. Sometimes there's personnel friends and benefits that need to be paid by a grantee. We don't envision that that would be a significant portion of the grant, but these are the allowable expenditures, and not necessarily like grant funds being used in the case of a default, or in the case of, you know, a grantee needing to use the grant fund to cover a loss.

So, next slide. So again, grantees and their budget are supposed to address allowable expenditures, and we will review them to make sure that they're reasonable, allowable, and can be used under the grant. And so, it's also helpful to, if you have any expenditures, include a narrative to describe the expenditure, and what the expenditure is.

So, next slide. We have the attachments forms, and this is where you will submit some of the Credit Enhancement program-specific forms, as well as consortium agreements, resumes of key personnel, and you may want to include a statement of proprietary information.

We have a slide on that, so next slide. So yeah, statement of proprietary information. So, before we... So like I said, we post the narratives to our program web page. We redact the information from the narrative, and before we post the information, we ask...we give grantees the opportunity to review what we're going to post online to ensure that there isn't any information in there that they don't feel comfortable with being made public.

But if you do include any information in your application initially that you have concerns about it being made publicly available, you can include a statement notifying of that in the other attachments forms. So, you can let us know what you consider proprietary in the other attachments forms. Next slide.

So in the other attachment forms, grantees will have to, you know, upload the program-specific forms that can be found in our application package instructions document, as well as any other supporting documents, such as resumes, consortium agreements, things of that nature.

Next slide. And so, this slide is pretty much just a chart that allows applicants to see where they need to upload certain components of their application. So on the left are the components of the application, and on the right is like where you will find it in the Grants.gov system, once you go to start working on your application in the workspace. Next slide.

And so again, we have the recipients of our Credit Enhancement awards on our program web page, and applicants can go take a look at the abstracts, narratives, and technical review forms from those applications to get a sense of what others in the field are doing.

Next slide. And so, I think we'll take a quick break for questions, so please bear with us. Give us one moment, we'll be right back. So, we will post the webinar on our webpage after the webinar is completed, so everyone will have access to the webinar and the slides.

We had a question about some of the eligible expenses, "Are legal expenses related to facilitating finance on behalf of the charter school allowable? And are legal expenses related to documented Credit Enhancement agreements with lenders allowable?" Yes.

Can we go back two slides to the chart that had the comparison...yeah, this slide. Thank you. I do want to highlight in the application package instructions document, there's language that talks about the standard form 424(b). That form is required, but it's actually completed in SAM.gov when entities register with SAM.gov.

So there isn't a specific form in our application package instructions document, nor in Grants.gov is there a form for you to complete the standard form 424(b), but as you go through the process for registering with SAM, you should take care of the standard 424(b) form, so you don't have to complete that in Grants.gov.

And we had a question about single audits would be required. So, grantees draw down the grant funds once they have an approved performance agreement with the program, and once they have an approved performance agreement with the program, we require our grantees to complete audits.

That is a requirement based upon our statute, but then also a requirement based upon federal government uniform guidance. So based upon those two requirements, we'll determine if a single audit is required for that particular grantee, but most likely the answer is yes, the grantee will need to conduct a single audit versus a different type of audit.

But we have a statutory requirement for audits, as well as we have the uniform guidance which requires audits. Can we go to the next slide? So, I would like to turn it over to Thea to take us through the next section of the presentation. Thank you.

- [Thea] Thanks, Cliff. Now we will discuss the process for submitting your application. Next slide, please. On this slide, the Grants.gov website and funding opportunity for this grant competition are linked for your reference. Applications must be submitted electronically via Grants.gov, unless you qualify for an exception to this requirement in accordance with the instructions in the NIA, and Grants.gov is an external application system used throughout the federal government.

Next slide, please. Thank you. So in order to submit an application for the FY23 Credit Enhancement Grant Competition, an applicant must be registered in Grants.gov. Please note that it can take multiple weeks to register in Grants.gov, so we suggest that you start sooner rather than later.

The Grants.gov registration process consists of registering in SAM.gov, setting up an authorized organization representative profile, also known as an AOR profile, getting authorized as an authorized organization representative, and tracking your authorized organization representative status.

To create a Grants.gov applicant account, you will need an email address, phone number, and your organization's name. In addition, you will need to create an account with Login.gov, if you don't already have one. After logging into Grants.gov, an applicant should link their Grants.gov account with their Login.gov account.

Next slide, please. So I won't read through every bullet on this slide, but provided is a list of Grant.gov submission tips. We advise reviewing the tips provided during today's webinar, and also reviewing the Grants.gov submission procedures and tips for applicants web page...or excuse me, section in your application package instructions.

Lastly, it is highly advised for applicants to download and save a copy of your grant application outside of Grants.gov for your organization's records. Next slide, please. So now we're going to discuss Workspace, which is a shared online environment, where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different web forms within an application.

Grants.gov applicants can apply online using Workspace, and can fill out forms on or offline. It is highly advised for applicants to review the Workspace overview website, which is linked in today's presentation, before working in Workspace.

Next slide, please. When an application is successfully submitted, applicants should receive a confirmation email with a time and date stamp, and an assigned tracking number from Grants.gov. Applicants should also receive a validation email from Grants.gov, and this means the application is ready for the department to pick up.

An applicant should also receive an email with their assigned PR award number. It is advised for applicants to review the encountering error messages webpage in Grants.gov if a confirmation email, validation email, and an email with the assigned PR award number is not received after submitting a grant application.

And that webpage that I mentioned, the encountering error messages webpage is also linked on this slide here, for your convenience. Next slide, please. It is advised to verify the submission of your grant application on Grants.gov, in addition to ensuring that you received a confirmation email, validation email, and an email with your assigned PR award number.

To do so, log into your Grants.gov account, and click on Track My Application. When reviewing your application submission, the date and time received should be earlier than 11:59pm on June 26th, 2023, and the application status should be validated. And again, we want to emphasize do not solely rely on the email.

Please go to your Grants.gov account, and check to see that your submission has been verified. Next slide, please. So if you're experiencing technical problems when submitting your grant application in Grants.gov, you should immediately contact the Grants.gov support desk at the number and email listed on this slide.

Again, we recommend starting your grant application sooner rather than later to troubleshoot any technical problems that may arise when submitting your grant application. Extensions to the June 26th, 2023 deadline apply only to the unavailability of or technical problems with Grants.gov.

If your application is submitted after 11:59 Eastern Standard Time on June 26th due to technical issues, please email...please send an email, excuse me, to the charter facilities email address, which is charter.facilities@ed.gov, and it's also listed on this slide for your convenience, with your Grants.gov case number.

The department will contact you after confirming the technical issue in Grants.gov with a decision after a determination is made. Next slide, please. So now we're going to pause quickly, and review some of the questions that have been dropped in the Q&A, and we will get back to you.

Thank you. Okay, so I've been notified that there aren't any questions, so we're going to proceed. Next slide, please. Thank you. So, if your grant project is funded at the close of this competition, this section will provide an overview of items you should be aware of.

Next slide, please. So, a performance agreement establishes the goals of the grant...excuse me, establishes the goals the grant project is designed to achieve, and is used to determine the substantial progress of the grant project. Grantees may not draw down funds prior to the approval of their performance agreement unless written permission from ED is provided to draw down a specific amount of funds.

Your assigned program officer will be providing one-on-one support when establishing your performance agreement. Next slide, please. Okay, so there was a question earlier about reporting, and this slide is the slide for you. So, applicants must ensure that your organization possesses the capacity to comply with the reporting requirements outlined into CFR Part 170.

Your organization should also be able to submit an annual performance report that consists of current performance and financial expenditure information, and also cooperate with any periodic financial and compliance audits. Next slide, please.

So, applicants approved for funding under this competition must attend the meeting for project directors at a location to be determined in the continental United States during each year of the project. Applicants may include the cost of attending this meeting as an administrative cost in their proposed budgets.

Next slide, please. Grantees under this competition must participate in all Credit Enhancement program technical assistance offerings provided by the department and its contractual technical assistance providers and partners throughout the life of the project. Next slide, please.

On this slide, I'm not going to read every single bullet, but we just have provided a list of applicable regulations and CSP statute for your review. This information can also be found in the NIA for the FY23 grant competition. Next slide, please.

So, all department grantees awarded competitive grant funds, unless an exception applies, must openly license to the public all copyrightable grant deliverables that are created with department grant funds, including such deliverables as educational software, curriculum materials, professional development training materials, assessments, etc.

Now, based on the project design, this requirement may or may not be applicable to your grant project, and so if you are...if your project is funded, then you will work with your program officer, if the open licensing requirement applies to your grant project. Next slide, please.

Okay, so now we are going to review the application review process. Next slide, please. Okay. So as you can see here on the screen, the application is going to close on June 26th, 2023. Then there's going to be an eligibility review, which will be conducted by department staff.

And then we're going to conduct a peer review, and that's going to be a three-person non-federal panel, and so those individuals will be reviewing eligible applications. Then, ED staff is going to look at the scores provided by the peer reviewers, then we're going to rank order the applications based off of those scores, and then we will have an award notification for all the awarded applicants no later than September 29th, 2023, and that will be conducted by the ED staff.

And if there's any changes to this timeline, again, that information will be posted on our website, but this is the timeline we are going to be adhering to at this moment for this grant competition. Next slide, please. Lastly, as a reminder, if your application is successful, we will notify your representative and your senators, and send you a grant award notification, which is also known as a GAN.

If your application is seen ineligible, or not selected for funding, you will be notified via email, and/or mail. Next slide, please. And with that, I'm going to pass the rest of this presentation over to Karen. Thank you.

- So, thank you, Thea. We're going to be coming up to final opportunities for questions, so just wanted to alert you to that. So, just some final reminders. Next slide. We've said this a number of times, but we do really encourage you to read the complete notice, the application package, as well as take a look at our competition website for additional information.

For planning purposes, it would be really helpful to us if you notified us if you are planning to apply. You can just send an email to the Charter Facilities mailbox, just write intent to apply, and just some basic information in the body of the email. We've received a couple of questions asking for examples and samples, and we've shared this link earlier in this presentation, and provided it here again.

Take a look at some of the current projects that we have funded. That information is available on our department website. Registration on SAM.gov, that can take some time. So if you decide that you are going to apply, right after you send your intent to apply email, if you are not already registered in SAM.gov, that is number two on your list of things to do.

Reminding you, for the most part, any questions that you have about using Grants.gov, you need to use those support services. We at CSP, this is not a platform that we work in, and we don't really see the same view as you would see, so you are...you should take your questions to Grants.gov.

Can't say, again too many times, the deadline for transmitting applications is June 26th, before midnight, 11:59:59. You are strongly encouraged to submit early.

If you submit early, and then you realize there was something that you wanted to do, you can always resubmit your application, as long as you do that before the closing date and time. So, our advice is submit early, as early as possible. Next slide.

So, our last call, so we're going to just take a quick pause and jump to look at the questions, and then we'll be right back. So, we're back, and we have a couple of questions, so I will answer. There was a question about uploading Excel spreadsheets.

So, all attachments uploaded in Grants.gov should be PDFs. There was a question about the maximum amount that you can apply for, and that is $20 million. The intent to apply, will we be sharing or posting that? No, we are using it internally for planning purposes.

And then there was a question about travel to annual meetings. So for now, grantees should put that, include that as part of their admin costs. And we understand that there is a cap on that, and the project period of this grant extends well beyond maybe that 2.5% as it relates to the travel, and the program will handle that on a case-by-case basis.

So, those are all the questions that we have that we can answer at this time, so... And we're right at time. We have four minutes. So, next slide...I want to, first of all, ask you to complete a survey to give us some feedback. We are always...we always have an eye for continuous improvement, so we want to make sure that these pre-application webinars are as helpful as possible, so we ask that you do that.

It will pop up automatically, that's what my tech folks are telling me. And then next slide... Again, thank you for joining, and have a great rest of the day. This marks the end of the FY23 Credit Enhancement Pre-Application Competition Webinar. Thank you.