



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Elementary & Secondary Education

Charter School Programs

Session Transcript

FY 2023 Pre-Application Competition Webinar for the Developer
Program – Office Hours

Recorded June 22, 2023

- [Stephanie] Good afternoon, everyone. For those of you who don't remember me from last week, I supervise, as Courtney said, both the developer and CMO grant programs here within the Charter Schools Division. This is our second live pre-application webinar. If you did not attend last week's, please note that it is available on the competition website, and we're going to make...we're actually going to be dropping links into the chat.

So you can go to that website, and you can access for last week the recording, the transcript, and the slide deck. So today's webinar, though, is going to focus on providing answers to your questions. So, questions were submitted to us after last week's webinar. They were submitted via the competition inbox, they were submitted through registration.

And there were a few questions that were asked last week that we thought were worth revisiting this week, so some of this information may look familiar to those of you who participated last week, but we want to make sure to cover everything. So, we hope you find today's technical assistance webinar helpful as you complete your grant application.

So, just the logistics, today's webinar is listen-only, but you are able to ask questions by entering them in the Q&A box. We have allotted time at the end to go over any questions that you submit. And just as a reminder, we're going to be going over the questions that you all submitted up to this point, so there will be a large chunk in the middle where we are going to go over questions by category.

We are recording today's webinar, and this slide deck, just like last week's, will be posted on the website. It will be posted by tomorrow, and then the recording and the transcript will be posted by next week. As a reminder, in addition to me, the Developer program has two tireless program officers, Porscheoy Brice and Leslie Hankerson, and you will be hearing from both of them whenever we get to the questions.

And also, the entire CSP is led by Anna Hinton. Here is our agenda. I'm going to do a recap of important information to know about the competition. Some of that information will also be included in responses to specific questions. But again, I want to do a recap so everybody is clear on important information about the competition, and the deadline is quickly approaching.

Then we're going to go through the questions and answers, and then we'll share out some resources, and then we'll have an opportunity for you all to ask any final questions. Okay, so let's get started with the recap. Next slide, please.

I want to give a disclaimer at the start yet again. So, this slide deck does not contain the full text of what is in the Fiscal Year 2023 Developer Grants Notice Inviting Applications, also known as an NIA, that was published in the Federal Register on June 5th, 2023.

It contains quite a bit of information. This webinar just excerpts...excuse me, takes information from that NIA. So before applying for this grant, interested applicants should thoroughly review the NIA, and this slide deck also has a PDF link to that NIA. You should also review the application package instructions, and you should review the competition website.

And applicants should not rely solely on this webinar for information and guidance, you should use this webinar as a resource, and use it in conjunction with the NIA. Definitions are important. So we may define some terms when possible during today's webinar, and the terms listed here are all explained in the NIA's definitions section.

So as you're reviewing the NIA, if you wonder what something means, it is likely defined in the definitions section of the NIA. Okay, very, very, very important, we put it in red so you know it's important. The deadline, July 7th, 2023, by 11:59:59pm, applications are due. Both the date and time are critical.

There is technical support available through Grants.gov. However, please keep in mind that although it's available 24/7, it's not available on federal holidays, and July 4th occurs before this due date. So, you are strongly encouraged to submit early. You can also resubmit your application at any point until the closing date and time, but please keep in mind that submitting an application in Grants.gov is a lengthy, multi-step process, so do not wait until the end.

Again, you are strongly encouraged to submit early. The Department will review the most recent submitted application, so if you do resubmit your application at any point, we will review the final or most recent submitted version. So, let's go do a recap of what the Developer Grants program purpose is. So, through CSP Developer Grants, the U.S.

Department of Education provides financial assistance to charter school developers to enable them to open and prepare for the operation of new or replicated charter schools, or to expand high-quality charter schools in states that do not currently have a CSP State Entity Grant, which is under assistance listing number 84.282A under the ESEA.

The charter schools provide programs of elementary or secondary education, or both, and may also serve students in early childhood education programs or post-secondary students, consistent with the terms of their charter. Developer.

So, the term "developer" means an individual or group of individuals, including a public or private nonprofit organization, which may include teachers, administrators, and other school staff, parents, or other members of the local community in which a charter school project will be carried out. So, developers can apply for the CSP Developer Grant, and that developer has to meet this definition of what a developer is, and this is a statutory definition.

Applicants may only propose to support one charter school per grant application. So, the Developer Grant has two different assistance listing numbers. That is, we will fund under essentially two different categories. One is 84.282B, the second is 84.282E.

Now in the case of B, this is for opening of new charter schools. In the case of E, it's the replication or expansion of high-quality charter schools, and expand and replicate are defined, and I'll go ahead and go over this again. So expand, when used with respect to a high-quality charter school, means to significantly increase enrollment, or add one or more grades.

So it's more seats, aka students, or more grades. In the case of replicate, when used with respect to a high-quality charter school, means to open a new charter school or a new campus of a high-quality charter school based on the educational model of an existing high-quality charter school under an existing charter or an additional charter, if permitted or required by state law.

And again, these definitions are in the NIA. Eligibility requirements. So as I stated earlier, eligible applicants are developers, and those developers have, one, applied to an authorized public chartering authority to operate a charter school, and provided adequate and timely notice to that authority.

So in addition to having applied for or already received an approved charter, you also need to inform your authorizer that you are going to apply for this grant. Location requirements. So, the charter school that you are proposing to open, replicate, or expand must be located in a state with a state statute specifically authorizing the establishment of charter schools as defined in section 4310(2) of the ESEA, and in which a state entity currently does not have a state...excuse me, does not have a CSP State Entity Grant.

So for charter schools already in operation, as a general matter, the Secretary considers a charter school or charter schools that have been in operation for more than five years to be past the initial implementation phase, and therefore ineligible to receive funds under ALN 84.282B to support the opening of a new charter school, or ALN 84.282E for the replication.

However, you may be able to apply under ALN 84.282E for expansion of a high-quality charter school. So this is, again, why it's important to look at the information that is provided about the two categories, and then what the definition of replication is, and what the definition of expansion is.

Nonprofit status evidence. So, the NIA describes the various ways in which a nonprofit organization can demonstrate its nonprofit status, including the documentation that must be submitted with your application, so please review that. This table is also available on the competition website.

So, you heard me refer to states that have a CSP State Entity Grant, so eligibility under this year's competition is limited to charter school developers in states that do not currently have a CSP State Entity Grant.

If your state has a CSP State Entity Grant, you would apply for CSP money through that CSP State Entity Grant. If your state does not currently have the CSP State Entity Grant, you can apply for Developer, provided you meet all the other eligibility requirements. So, this table simplifies the list of states and territories, and whether or not the state or territory you are proposing to open, replicate, or expand a charter school in is eligible.

So, please review this. Again, it's also available on the competition website, and the states that currently have a CSP State Entity Grant are also listed in the NIA. So with that, I'm going to transition to Porscheoy Brice for the next section.

- [Porscheoy] Thanks, Stephanie, and good afternoon, everyone. So, now we're going to walk through the responses to your questions. Before doing so, just want to remind you all again that this slide deck does not contain the full NIA for the 2023 Developer competition.

Again, it is highly recommended that you review the entire NIA in the Federal Register before completing an application. And then also, there's a final link here just to the CSP Developer competition website where you'll find links to the NIA as well, as all other CSP Developer resources. All right, so question categories.

So, here are the categories for the questions that we've received, and it goes through the five sections. A will cover application submission, B will be eligibility requirements, C is opening, replicating, and expanding charter schools, D is allowable activities and use of funds, and E is miscellaneous questions.

All right, so section A will address general application questions regarding how to apply, the deadline, the submission process, and other related topics. So our first question is, "How do I apply for a FY23 CSP Developer Grant?" And again, we published an NIA in the Federal Register on June 5th of this year for the grant competition.

To apply, applicants should review the NIA thoroughly for competition purpose, eligibility requirements, and other information. Additionally, the application package instructions for this competition are available on Grants.gov, again, with the two ALN numbers, and also the competition website.

The instructions include a section entitled Grants.gov Submission Procedures and Tips for Applicants which describes the submission procedures to ensure that your application is received in a timely and acceptable manner. All applications must be submitted electronically using the government-wide Grants.gov system. That is unless you qualify for an exception to this requirement, and that's in accordance with the instructions in the NIA.

Once again, the deadline for submission of a grant application under this competition is July 7th of this year, at 11:59:59pm Eastern Standard time. Question two, "Is it possible to revise any or all parts of the application after submission?" Again, you can resubmit your application in Grants.gov at any point until the closing date and time.

We'll review the most recent submitted version of the application. Question three, "When will the grants be awarded?" So, all grant awards will be made by September 30th of this year. As stated in the award notices section of the NIA, if your application is successful, we will notify your U.S.

Representative and U.S. Senators, and send you a grant award notification, or what we refer to as a GAN, or we can send you an email containing a link to access an electronic version of your GAN. We may notify you informally also. If your application is not evaluated or not selected for funding, we will still notify you. And you can see a list of our past awardees on the CSP website, which is linked.

Question four, "How often does ED conduct the CSP Developer Grants competition? Are competitions conducted annually?" So, the extent to which ED conducts annual CSP Developer Grants competitions is driven by the program's annual Congressional appropriation.

So every year after receiving an approved budget from the U.S. Congress, ED updates its grants forecast. And you can check the ED grants forecast in Federal Register and CSP website periodically for information on ED, and all other CSP grant competitions. Question five, "Are we required to stay within the page limit?" No.

As stated in the section five recommended page limit and English language requirements section of the NIA, the 50-page limit is recommended, and applies only to the project narrative. So, other standards as far as spacing or font type are also [inaudible 00:16:32.557] All right, so now we're moving on to section B, and section B will address eligibility questions regarding the definition of a developer, whether receipt of an approved charter is required to apply, and other related topics.

So question one, "Are charter schools in my state eligible to apply?" So, eligibility under this year's CSP Developer competition is limited to charter school developers in states that do not currently have a CSP State Entity Grant. A list of states that have an active CSP Grant entity is included in the NIA, and it was also included earlier in the presentation, and also, an eligibility table is available on the competition website.

So, please review the NIA for the complete eligibility information. If your state is ineligible, please consider applying through your state... All right, question two, "Do we have to have an approved charter by the application deadline to be eligible to apply for the competition?"

So no, as long as the applicant qualifies as a developer. And you can see here the full requirements, and you can also see it in the NIA. So, that's detailed here. Again, we do recommend that you look through the NIA in full detail, but some of what's required is the name and address of the authorized public chartering agency that issued the applicant's approved charter, or, this is important, in the case of an applicant that has not yet received an approved charter, the authorized public chartering agency to which the applicant has applied, a copy of the approved charter.

Or in the case of an applicant who has not yet received an approved charter, then a copy of the charter application that was submitted to the authorized public chartering agency, including other details, required documentation that the applicant has provided notice to the authorized public chartering agency that it has applied for a CSP grant, and a proposed budget that should include a detailed description of any post-award planning costs.

And for an applicant that does not yet have an approved charter, any planning costs expected to be incurred prior to the date the authorized public chartering agency issues a decision on the charter application. Question three, "Are charter schools that are in their first or second year of operation eligible to apply for a grant to open a new charter school?"

And the answer is possibly. As a general matter, the Secretary considers charter schools that have been in operation for more than five years to be past the initial implementation phase, and therefore ineligible to receive CSP funds under ALN 84.282B to support the opening of

a new charter school, or under ALN 84.282E, which is for the replication of a high-quality charter school.

However, such schools may receive CSP funds under ALN 84.282E for the expansion of a high-quality charter school. An applicant may apply for a grant under 84.282B for the remaining number of years of the five-year initial implementation phase. Additionally, the applicant must meet the other eligibility requirements.

That includes qualifying as a developer, and grant funds can only be used to carry out allowable activities. Once again, please review the NIA for eligibility, allowable activities, and other competition information. At this point, I'm going to hand it over to Leslie.

- [Leslie] Thank you, Porscheoy. And now we're going to talk about section C, and section C will address questions about the parameters of opening, replicating, and expanding charter schools. So, our first question is, "To expand, does a charter school have to add grades? For example, if a charter school currently enrolls 400 students in K through 6, can we propose to expand to 700 to 800 students in K through 6? Or do we have to expand our grades served as well?"

The answer is an existing high-quality charter school does not have to add grades to expand. Expand, when used with respect to a high-quality charter school, means to significantly increase enrollment, or add one or more grades to the high-quality charter school.

And this is addressed in section 4310(7) of the ESEA. Next slide. Question two, "Is there a particular number of students you are targeting for the increase in the number of seats in an expansion grant? If so, what is that number? We focus on highly successful small charter schools, and have an opportunity to expand one of those charter schools by 225 seats. Is that an adequate number, or are you looking to fund proposals seeking to expand in the 1,000s?"

And the answer is the NIA does not prescribe any specific number of seats or grades for a proposed project. An applicant should determine what is appropriate to achieve the project goals and objectives. Next slide. Topic D.

In topic D, we'll address questions regarding the award amount...the award limit, renovation and construction costs, and other related topics. The first question is, "How much funding can be awarded per year?" The answer is the NIA does not prescribe a maximum award amount per project year, nor for the total project period, which can be for up to five years.

The NIA has established a maximum award amount per charter school of \$2 million. Additionally, in accordance with 2 CFR 200.404, applicants must ensure that all costs included in the proposed budget are reasonable and necessary in light of the goals and objectives of the proposed project.

Any costs determined by the Secretary to be unreasonable or unnecessary will be removed from the final budget. Next slide. Second question, "If we are awarded a grant, when will the funds be disbursed?" The funds will be awarded by September 30th, 2023.

However, a new grantee must comply with various specific conditions in its first budget year before it is allowed to begin drawing down funds from G5. For example, every new grantee must complete a post-award performance conference call with their new CSP Program Officer.

That includes reviewing the proposed budget, and addressing any necessary changes and requests for additional information or clarification. Question three, "Can I use this grant for capital projects and construction for my existing charter school?"

The answer is no, this is a non-construction program. As stated in the NIA, grant funds can be used for carrying out necessary renovations to ensure that a new school building complies with applicable statutes and regulations, and minor facility repairs excluding construction. Funds may not be used for construction, to add to the permanent value of a property, or to appreciably prolong its life.

As stated in the New Flexibilities under the Every Student Succeeds Act, Frequently Asked Questions, and this was released in the FAQs from December 2017, ED interprets new school building to include an existing building that is a new or first-time site for a charter school that is opening or expanding. The CSP authorizing statute does not define the term "construction."

As also stated in the December 2017 FAQs, it encourages grantees and subgrantees to refer to the definition of "construction" in section 7013(3) of the ESEA for guidance. Number A states the preparation of drawings and specifications for school facilities, B, erecting, building, acquiring, altering, remodeling, repairing, or extending school facilities, C, inspecting and supervising the construction of school facilities, and D, debt service for such activities under 20 U.S.C.

7713(3.) Question four, "What are examples of minor facility repairs that can be allowable?" Under section 4303(h)(3) of the ESEA, funds may be used for minor facility repairs excluding construction.

Examples of minor facility repairs include repairing a leak in the roof, replacing a broken window, and repairing a furnace or air conditioning unit. In essence, minor facility repairs neither add to the permanent value of the property, nor appreciably prolong its intended life, but rather keep it in efficient operating condition.

Emphasis added for...and this is in 2 CFR 200.452. Section E. Section E is the final section of questions and answers, and will address miscellaneous questions.

So the first question is, "What if I do not meet the invitational priority, collaborations between charter schools and traditional public schools, or districts that benefit students and families across schools?" The answer is, an applicant does not have to meet the invitational priority in this year's competition.

It is optional, and no additional points are given to applicants that address this priority. Specifically under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(1,) ED does not give an application that meets the invitational priority a competitive or absolute preference over other applications.

As stated in the NIA, using an invitational priority allows ED to encourage beneficial collaborations without giving applications that meet this priority preference over other applications. Question two, "Must the designated Project Director attend the Project Directors' meeting each year, or could someone else from the organization stand in their place?"

As stated in number seven, Project Directors' meeting section of the NIA, applicants approved for funding under this competition must attend a meeting for project directors either virtually, or at a location to be determined in the continental United States during each year of the project.

Applicants may include, if applicable, the cost of attending this meeting in their proposed budgets as allowable administrative costs. If a Project Director is unable to attend, the Project Director must inform ED, their program officer, and request permission to send an alternate. Also, applicants may budget for personnel to attend in addition to the Project Director.

Next... Next, I am going to transition to Stephanie Jones.

- Thanks, Leslie. So that takes us through the questions that we received, so finally, we're going to go through some competition resources. For some of you, you may have heard this information, but it's important to talk about it once more. So the NIA, the Notice Inviting Applicant...excuse me, Applications, Here we have the PDF version, and the Federal Register website version.

So, please review the NIA thoroughly. Then there's the application package instructions. Here we have provided a direct link to the B and the E versions within the Grants.gov website, as well as the resource version that's available on the Developer competition website. Registrations.

You'll recall during the last week's live webinar that we said you need to register through SAM.gov and Grants.gov to apply for a grant. So please, here are the links. Make sure to immediately register so that you have enough time to submit an application by the closing date. And as a refresher, for technical assistance, you can access the recording, slide deck, and transcript for last week's pre-application competition webinar that was held on June 14th.

You can access that on the competition website. You can also access two pre-recorded webinars that we have on the website. One focuses on budgets, and has additional budget information that was not shared in today's nor last week's presentation. And then there's also a logic models and smart performance measures webinar that likewise provides information that we were unable to get into here, or in last week's presentation due to length.

So, we strongly recommend that you review those. And finally, you'll be able to access today's webinar materials on the competition website. As a reminder, the slide deck will be posted by tomorrow, and the transcript and recording will be posted by next week. Next slide, please.

If you have questions that you would like to submit to us in writing or if we're unable to...I'll be asking in a minute for any final questions, but if we're unable to address your question, please do submit it to developercompetition2023@ed.gov, and we will respond directly to you. And also, for Grants.gov, this is the email address for support, and also the phone number.

Okay, so this is a last call for any questions that you may have. As a reminder, we will try to answer all the questions, but it is possible you will ask something that we're unable to answer now because we don't have enough information, or because we need to consult with the Office of General Counsel.

But we will do our best to answer questions now. So, just give us a moment while we go through the questions. And please use the Zoom Q&A feature. And again, give us a few minutes to look at the questions. Okay, so one question is, "If our school serves fourth graders, but our grant is only for middle school through high school expansion, do we have to report on fourth grade?"

So if you're applying for an expansion grant, that is under assistance listing number 84.282E, and one of the appendices that you have to submit is information on school performance. And so you will have to provide information data on the performance of the school, so that would include fourth graders.

But again, please look at the details of that requirement in the NIA. Another question is, "So based on my understanding, grant funds cannot be used to remodel office space to create classrooms."

Likely no. Remodeling of that scale would likely constitute construction. And give me one minute while I scroll through the questions. Okay, so this is a great question.

"I have a question on the budget summary. Do we need to be very specific, or can we put items under general categories? So, an example would be science supplies. Do we need to list each item separately, or can we just put the funds under 'science supplies?'" So, more detail is always better.

If you look at the application instructions in the budget section, it does say that you need to provide a breakdown, and you need to provide justification. So yes, please provide those details. There are clearly categories of funding in the budget form and then also for your budget narrative, but you do need to provide details, and you do need to provide justification.

So, please do provide details of what those science supplies are, and what the need for them is, as part of your justification. There is one question here about 501(c)(3.) I'm going to ask that you please submit that to the email inbox. So again, that's...

Actually, Courtney, could you please go back to the contact information slide? Because we're going to need some additional information from you to answer that question, so if you could please submit it to developercompetition2023@ed.gov. Okay, I'm going to scroll down. So there's a question here about if you were awarded a planning grant, could you apply for...and I assume by planning grant you mean for year one, could you apply for years two through four?

We're going to need some more information on this as well, so if you could please submit that question, if you haven't already, to developercompetition2023@ed.gov. And again, we ask for your patience whenever you do submit these questions. We do oftentimes have to consult with other offices within the Department of Education to provide an answer.

But you can always ask again for an update, and we will eventually provide you with an answer. Okay, last call, any other questions? Okay. Next slide, please.

So with that, we are going to post a link to a survey. We would like to know how we did. Obviously this webinar was a lot shorter than last week's, but we want to respond to all the questions that we received. And again, if you feel your question wasn't addressed, or if we asked you to, if you could please submit any outstanding questions to developercompetition2023@ed.gov. And with that, thank you very much for attending today.