

## Native American Language Program (NAL@ED) FAQs from the FY2024 Pre-application Webinars

### **(1) Must all students who participate in a program funded by a NAL@ED grant be Native American/Alaska Native or may any student participate?**

Per the Notice Inviting Applications, projects will be awarded and must be operated in a manner consistent with the nondiscrimination requirements contained in the Federal civil rights laws. A public elementary school applying to offer an immersion program with instruction in a Native American language, for example, may have a student population of both Native and non-Native students. They should carefully consider how they will address all application requirements, including the Tribal certification requirement, and cannot exclude non-Native students from participating if the project is funded.

### **(2) Can an applicant offer multiple Native American or Alaska Native languages under one application?**

Applicants may submit more than one application and list one Native American or Alaska Native language per application or submit a single application for a project offering instruction in more than one language.

Applicants interested in proposing a single project to offer instruction in more than one Native American or Alaska Native language should carefully review the general requirements listed in the NIA to ensure they can adequately address each requirement in each proposed language, including but not limited to assessments, professional development, qualification of instruction and leadership staff, and ensuring the implementation of rigorous academic content and student progress toward meeting high-level fluency goals.

Applicants should also review the selection criteria listed in the NIA to consider how their proposed project addresses each criterion in each language and keep in mind that the Department must consider the geographic and linguistic diversity of all proposed projects as described in the NIA.

### **(3) Can a NAL applicant offer a program within their application that uses a language nest model, which is an immersion-based approach to language revitalization in early childhood education?**

Among other requirements, applicants must propose a project that serves the purposes of the program and meet the requirements of either Absolute Priority 1 or Absolute Priority 2, per the NIA. Proposed projects may use a variety of models but must address the purposes of NAL@ED and meet the requirements of one of the Absolute Priorities.

The purposes of this program are to (1) support schools that use Native American and Alaska Native languages as the primary language of instruction; (2) maintain, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans and Alaska Natives to use, practice, maintain, and revitalize their languages, as envisioned in the Native American Languages Act of 1990 ([25 U.S.C. 2901](#), *et seq.*); and (3) support the Nation's First Peoples' efforts to maintain and revitalize their languages and cultures, and to improve educational opportunities and student outcomes within Native American and Alaska Native communities. (emphasis added)

For reference, the two absolute priorities are:

**Absolute Priority 1:** Develop and Maintain New Native American Language Programs: To meet this priority, an applicant must propose to develop and maintain a Native American language instructional program that— (a) Will support Native American language education and development for Native American students, as well as provide professional development for teachers and, as appropriate, staff and administrators, to strengthen the overall language and academic goals of the school or schools that will be served by the project; (b) Will take place in a school; and (c) Does not augment or replace a program of identical scope that was active within the last three years at the school(s) to be served.

**Absolute Priority 2:** Expand and Improve Existing Native American Language Programs: To meet this priority, an applicant must propose to improve and expand a Native American language instructional program that— (a) Will improve and expand Native American language education and development for Native American students, as well as provide professional development for teachers and, as appropriate, staff and administrators, to strengthen the overall language and academic goals of the school or schools that will be served by the project; (b) Will continue to take place in a school; and (c) Within the past three years has been offered at the school(s) to be served.

**(4) Does this proposed project have to be administered in a public school or can it be administered in a private preschool, private school, or another entity that is not a public school?**

Proposed projects do not have to be administered in a public school, but they must be administered in at least one elementary or secondary school. The NIA for this competition lists the eligible entities allowed by statute: “The following entities, either alone or in a consortium, that have a plan to develop and maintain, or to improve and expand, programs that support the entity's use of a Native American or Alaska Native language as the primary language of instruction in one or more elementary or secondary schools (or both) are eligible under this program....” (emphasis added)

Elementary school is defined in ESEA Section 8101 (19) as “a nonprofit institutional day or residential school, including a public elementary charter school, that provides elementary education, as determined under State law.”

Secondary school is defined in ESEA Section 8101 (45) as “a nonprofit institutional day or residential school, including a public secondary charter school, that provides secondary education, as determined under State law, except that the term does not include any education beyond grade 12.”

These definitions do not limit elementary and secondary schools to public schools, but an applicant should review the definitions of elementary and secondary school and the list of eligible entities in the NIA to confirm whether their specific proposed project meets the requirements laid out in the NIA

**(5) Can a Head Start program apply for a NAL@ED grant?**

See question (4) for information about the eligible entities for this competition and the definitions of “elementary school” and “secondary school.” An applicant with a Head Start program, who is otherwise listed as an eligible entity, must state in the application that either such a program qualifies as providing elementary education under State law (e.g., if elementary includes a four-year- old program, as it does

in some states), OR the project includes an elementary school in its plan – e.g., the Head Start program will expand into an elementary school program such as kindergarten or higher.

**(6) Must all proposed program activities be offered in a school setting?**

While projects must be administered in a school (see, for example, Application Requirements (1)(a) and (b)), applicants have flexibility in how to implement this requirement. For example, a Tribe could partner with a school and propose a project that includes in-school classes for participating students along with additional activities such as immersive language experiences at cultural sites and visits with Tribal elders fluent in the Native language in the students' community or classroom. Please note that there are several requirements that apply to applicants depending on their unique program design and proposed partners. Applicants should carefully review all applicable requirements from the NIA to determine whether their application needs a memorandum of agreement between partners (see Application Requirement 2), certification (see Application Requirement 4), and/or consortium agreement (see information about eligible entities and Competitive Preference Priority 2).