

**DoDEA FY11 GRANT PROGRAM: EVALUATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER (ETAC) GUIDE FOR
COMPLETING THE APPLICATIONS**

QUESTION & ANSWER SESSIONS FROM WEBINARS

Q: Why can't I access the full application on the grants.gov website?

A: We experienced a problem with the grants.gov system, which caused the full application package to be deleted. The package will be reposted to the system by Tuesday, May 17th.

Q: Can the budget narrative be in table form?

A: The Standard Form 424A is a required form, and is available as a spread sheet. It has all the categories listed for you to fill out. You will also need to include a written narrative to accompany the table in your application. The form can be found on the grants.gov website.

- I. Please note that for this grant we do not have matching requirements, but many applicants put matching funds in their applications. If you are going to write matching funds into your budget, you are obligated to stick to those amounts.

Q: What percentage of the 27 districts invited to apply does DoDEA anticipate funding?

A: The RFC phase of the application process was competitive, so when you submitted your RFCs, we asked external reviewers to review and score them, and selected applicants based on these reviews. We intend to fund all the applicants that we've invited back. However after you submit your applications and budgets, we will review them and we may ask you to make a few changes.

Q: Do we need to include letters of support from congress people?

A: You do not need to submit letters of support as this is no longer a competition.

Q: Implementation Timeline--are the budget amounts for the first year or across three years? Who is the point of Contract?

A: You are submitting a budget for all three years. We are not sure about what you mean by "point of contract"; it should be "point of contact". You should indicate the point of contact for the entire grant period.

Q: Can expenditures for benefits for FTE be outside the 25% allowed for hiring staff or is that included in the 25% portion of the grant allocation?

A: You can submit a budget with more than 25% especially if you are developing a support program or counseling program. We will look at the expenditures on a case by case basis. The benefits are also included in the budget.

Q: Do we include all three years by strategy and action in total for each strategy and action or is it for Year 1 only?

A: You will be providing an outline for the full 3 year plan. Strategies should span the three years and some of the key activities should be associated with the budget items.

Q: How many district grant managers are required, in addition to the 3rd party evaluator?

A: DoDEA does not have a personnel requirement. However, each project should have an overall project director who oversees the day to day activities of the project. It is the applicant's responsibility to determine what personnel is necessary to best manage/execute the project.

Q: Are you going to be available to help us with the development of the evaluation plan?

A: Yes! But I also hope that you have an external evaluator at this point or are in the process of getting one, and that you are working with someone who has some experience in education program evaluation. None of the things we are asking here are unusual in terms of program evaluation; your evaluators should be able to understand what they are seeing here and if they understand your project you should have something. If you have any questions please feel free to contact DoDEA. Also, please refer to this power point presentation for examples on how to develop your goals, outcomes, and strategies.

Q: Do we need to separate active duty and retired military students?

A: For this project we are not considering dependents of retired military personnel. You only need to separate active duty military dependents and civilian students.

Q: Guidelines for choosing outside evaluator?

A: Someone who has experience in education projects; in particular someone who is familiar with the strategies you intend to put in place. For example if you want to establish an after school program, an individual who has some after school evaluation experience would be helpful.

Q: Do we need baseline military performance data in our application or can we just describe what data we will collect and disaggregate and what process we will use to disaggregate the data?

A: We know that a lot of the school systems don't have a process in place to disaggregate military students. If it is possible to get some inkling of that data, that would be great. Otherwise if you don't have the data, please fully describe the plan that you will put in place to collect that data.

Q: It seems that the largest portion of the grant is the 18 page narrative, when looking at the online application there appeared to be a number of other federal forms required - is assistance available for completing these forms?

A: All federal forms have instructions attached to them; they are very detailed and go line by line. If you have any questions when filling out the forms, please free to send an email to the Grants address: Grants@hq.dodea.edu

Q: Our proposal involves equipment purchases essential to implementation. I'm concerned about the 20% per year requirement and how this will impact implementation. Is there any flexibility in this guideline?

A: The minimum for each year is 20%. For some years, if you are implementing a new program for example, setting up new equipment, you will have more than 20% and this is acceptable. Generally the minimum for each year is 20% and the maximum is 60%.

Q: If we are planning to provide PD to staff over 3 years by grade level (starting with K teachers and working through 5th grade), can our benchmark outcomes address specific grade level performance in ELA while our overall goal is "Increased proficiency in ELA for all students K-5"?

A: Goals and outcomes will stay the same throughout the grant program; your student outcomes need to remain the same throughout and you will be reporting based on your student outcomes. Make sure you align your goals and strategies with your outcomes. You can report outcome data for each grade-level but we recommend that you streamline your outcomes to allow for easier reporting.

Q: More than 50% of our students are military. Can we use our overall student data as a baseline?

A: You still have to disaggregate the military population. Grantees will have to disaggregate military populations that are less than 80% of the overall population.

Q: Would a video survey be appropriate to include as part of our survey of emotional support of our program?

A: A video survey would be appropriate as long it is reliable in capturing how you are implementing that strategy.

Q: We understand that only 25% can be used on FTE staff. Can we spend more in the first year and less in the following years as long as it averages to 25%?

A: There is a 25% cap on FTE staff and that is not an average. For all program areas, except Support Programs, up to 25 percent of Federal funds may be allocated to fulltime equivalent (FTE) positions. In any given fiscal year, the FTE cap may be exceeded.

- The term, *full-time equivalent* (FTE), usually refers to fully benefitted positions. For grant purposes, the funding category, *Personnel*, includes FTE and non-FTE positions /costs. Examples of non-FTE personnel costs include stipends for teachers, wages to afterschool tutors, and costs for substitute teachers.

We can look at that in your budget to see if it is justifiable for example, for support programs, you may need to hire more counselors. We will review each budget on a case by case basis and make a final decision.

Q: Are the grant funds awarded up front or are we reimbursed for expenditures?

A: You are allowed to request a onetime advance payment when you receive your grant award documents which will explain everything about the grant (award number, effective date). It will tell you an amount that you will receive for your onetime advanced payment which is usually 1/12 of your year one budget. After you receive that payment, the rest of your payments will be received on a reimbursement basis. You will have to go to a reimbursement system which we will talk about at a later time to request the payment and submit the necessary supporting documentation for DoDEA to approve the payments.

Q: Are administrative costs permissible?

A: Administrative and indirect costs cannot be claimed under this grant. The DoDEA grant is for direct costs only so you will not be able to claim overheads or any type of costs. Benefits are a direct cost category so they will not be affected by this rule.

Q: What is the approximate turnaround on the reimbursements?

A: Once you submit your request in the system we approve it generally in about two days or so and the money will go into your account between 20 and 30 days. You can request payments on a monthly basis. Once you get into a rhythm you will be receiving your payments on a regular basis but it takes up to 30 days from the time we process it to show up in your account.

Q: Are the benefits part of the 25% spent on FTE per year? Or can the 25% be salary only, then benefits over the cap?

A: "Personnel" is one category as you will see on the 424 and "benefits" are a separate category.

Q: Can the project leader have administrative duties? Also, when is the earliest we can start spending the funds?

A: The project director is going to have day to day responsibilities for the overall project and sometimes the project director in many cases is the only person that is being paid out of a grant. Therefore, the project director may have to take on most of the administrative duties.

A: Once you receive your official document you can request that advanced payment immediately. However it will take at least 30 days before the payment is posted on your account.