

# Comprehensive Center Program Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Grant Competition

## Pre-Application Webinar for Prospective Applicants

### Questions and Answers

*The following questions and responses were provided during a Pre-Application Webinar for Prospective Applicants held on May 23, 2024. A recording of the webinar, and other resources to support perspective applicants can be found at: [Applicant Information](#)*

The questions and answers are organized into topical categories for ease of use. Additional questions and answers received may be added, and updated versions of this document posted, on the Department's website.

### Application Submission

#### **Do applicants need to notify or submit copies of their applications to State points of contact ahead submitting to the Department?**

Applicants are not required to submit their applications to States ahead of submission.

#### **Are applicants required to adhere to the five named appendices, or are additional appendices allowable?**

Grants.gov supports the upload of up to 5 Appendices in "Other Attachments." This application package lists the following appendices to include in the "Other Attachments" form:

- Individual Resumes for Project Directors and Key Personnel
- Copy of Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
- References/Bibliography
- Executive Order 12372 Transmittal Letter, if applicable
- Letters of Support

Applicants who submit all five attachments would not be permitted to include additional attachments on this form.

#### **Does Grants.gov have a file size upload limitation?**

The other attachments section can only accommodate five documents, and five required attachments are already in the other forms. Therefore, it is not possible to include additional appendices.

#### **Must applicants have an EIN/TIN number to apply for this grant?**

Depending on the intended usage of the grant you are applying for, you may need to file a U.S. tax return which requires a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN), also referred to as an employer Identification Number (EIN). In addition, in order to submit your application via *Grants.gov*, you must (1) register as an applicant using your UEI number and (2) be designated by your organization's E-Biz Point

*The [Notice of Inviting Applications](#) (NIA) serves as the official announcement for the FY 2024 Comprehensive Centers Program grant competition published in the Federal Register on May 13, 2024. This document does not include complete information about this grant competition. Applicants should not rely solely on this document for information and guidance. Applicants should only use this document as a resource in conjunction with the NIA.*

of Contact as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Details on these steps are outlined at the following *Grants.gov* web page: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html>.

Applicants needing assistance with *Grants.gov* may contact the *Grants.gov* Support Center either by calling 1-800-518-4726 or by sending an email to [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). The *Grants.gov* Support Center is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except for Federal holidays.

## Group Applications

**The Notice Inviting Applications mention that it is possible to apply as a consortium. What does that entail?**

Applicants applying as a consortium must meet the requirements in 34 CFR 75.127-129. Under those requirements, all members of the consortium must be eligible for the grant. If a group of eligible parties applies for a grant, the members of the group shall either designate one member of the group to apply for the grant or establish a separate, eligible, and legal entity to apply for the grant. The members of the group must enter into an agreement that details the activities that each member of the group plans to perform and binds each member of the group to every statement and assurance made by the applicant in the application. The applicant must submit the agreement with its application. Please see 34 CFR 75.127-129 for the full information about applying as a consortium.

## Eligibility

**What types of organizations are eligible to apply for this grant?**

To be eligible for a Comprehensive Center grant, applicants must be research organizations, institutions, agencies, institutions of higher education (IHEs), or partnerships among such entities, or individuals, with the demonstrated ability or capacity to carry out the activities described in the notice inviting applications. Please review the [Eligibility Information](#) noted in the [Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards](#) for more information.

**Are programs serving youth in middle and high school eligible to apply? Can a nonprofit organization apply?**

Any organization or individual that meets the eligibility requirements for the program is eligible to apply for a Comprehensive Center award (See: <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2024-09876/p-200>). This includes research organizations, institutions, agencies, IHEs, or partnerships among such entities, or individuals, with the demonstrated ability or capacity to carry out the activities described in the Notice Inviting Applications.

**How is “research organization” defined?**

This term is not defined in statute.

## Location

**How can an applicant demonstrate that it meets the requirement for Regional Centers to be located in the region they serve?**

Under Program Requirement 8 for Regional Centers, a Regional Center grantee must be located in the region the Center serves and the Director(s) and key personnel must be able to provide on-site services. Based on the Department's experience administering the program, we believe it is important for each Regional Center to establish a presence in the region served, which includes having a physical presence in the region and ensuring staff are able to provide on-site services to recipients and clients. We note

that Requirement 8 does not require that all Center staff are physically based in the geographic region. Because this is a Program Requirement, it may be met post-award. Applicants should indicate in their application how they plan to meet the location requirement for Regional Centers.

### Application Formatting

#### **Can an applicant use single-spacing within charts, figures, graphs, tables, and call-out boxes?**

The Department recommends that applicants limit application narratives to 100 pages and use the advised formatting standards. These instructions are recommended standards to Department of Education grant competitions that we have found useful to support peer review of applications. Applicants are not required to adhere to these recommendations in their applications.

#### **Should the logic model be submitted as part of the Application Narrative, or should it be placed in an appendix?**

An applicant has discretion regarding how it organizes its application. The Department recommends in its Application Instructions that applicants organize their project narratives to align to the selection criteria. For applicants that use this organization, the logic model could be included in the Approach to Capacity Building section of the narrative. In addition, Grants.gov supports the upload of up to 5 appendices in the "Other Attachments" form:

- Individual Resumes for Project Directors and Key Personnel
- Copy of Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
- References/Bibliography
- Executive Order 12372 Transmittal Letter, if applicable
- Letters of Support

Applicants who submit all five attachments should note they would not be permitted to include additional attachments on this form.

#### **How long should the Project Abstract be?**

The abstract should be limited to one page.

### Competitive Preference Priority

#### **This competition includes a competitive preference for new potential grantees. How can an applicant demonstrate that they meet this competitive preference?**

An applicant seeking to be awarded points under the competitive preference priority for new potential grantees should include its Unique Entity Identifier, or UEI, of the applying entity or organization and include a statement in its application that it has never received a grant under the Comprehensive Center Program.

### Region 14 (Bureau of Indian Education)

#### **What Regional Education Laboratory (REL) is responsible for the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)?**

The REL program does not have an assigned region for the BIE. We will work with the grantee for the Region 14 Center to establish partnership agreements with the appropriate REL(s).

**Will the Regional Center that serves the BIE (Region 14) also be responsible for serving all Tribal Education Agencies (TEAs)?**

All Comprehensive Centers may provide services to SEAs, REAs, TEAs, LEAs, and schools, as appropriate. The Region 14 Center, which serves the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), may serve TEAs as clients and recipients, as appropriate, in relation to a TEA's work with BIE, which functions as the SEA for this region. The Region 14 Center may collaborate with the National, other Regional, or Content centers to the extent that their work scope intersects to ensure that TEAs benefit from a wide range of resources and expertise available across the CCNetwork. Additionally, other Regional Centers besides the Region 14 Center will serve TEAs in their region, as appropriate.

**Letters of Support / Partnership Agreements****What letters of support are required?**

Letters of support are not required; however, an applicant who chooses to submit letters of support may include them using the Other Attachments form. Letters of interest, or partnership agreements, for intended partners related to the partnership Program Requirement will be required post-award.

**Are applicants for Regional Centers required to submit Letters of Support from the RELs serving the region?**

No; letters of support are not required. Successful applicants will be required post-award to establish partnership agreements with the RELs serving their regions.

**How will partnership agreements or letters of support be evaluated?**

Applicants may provide partnerships agreements or letters of support as part of their applications. Partnership agreements are a program requirement and will be required post-award. Letters of support are not required but may be submitted as part of the Other Attachments form.

**Project Period****If an application is successful, when is work expected to start?**

The project period will begin October 1, 2024.

**Subawards****If a proposal includes a subgrantee, is a separate subgrant budget required?**

A separate subgrant budget is not required, however the Department recommends that applications that include subgrants, or "subawards", include these expenses in the "Other" line on the ED Budget Information Non-Construction Programs Form (ED Form 524) to distinguish these subawards from contracts.

**Identifying Vendors to Receive Comprehensive Center Funded Procurements in Project Application.****What flexibility does the competition exception in 34 CFR 75.135 provided for applicants in Department discretionary grant awards?**

Under [34 CFR § 75.135\(b\)](#), applicants are permitted to identify in their applications those entities with which they would contract for data collection, data analysis, evaluation services, or essential services, where these activities are required by the program, and thus, use the small-purchase procurement procedures in [2 CFR § 200.320\(b\)](#) (including the definition of “simplified acquisition threshold” in [2 CFR § 200.88](#)), unless prohibited by State or local law.

This provision includes procurements, for example, for project evaluations issued in response to a competition’s selection criteria. To use this exception to the general rule that the procurement be conducted through a free and open competition, the grantee must certify in its application that: (1) any employee, officer, or agent participating in the selection, award, or administration of a contract is free of any real or apparent conflict of interest, and (2) it used small purchase procedures to obtain the product or service.

**Service Plans****What must an applicant include to meet the requirements for service plans? Should the application include both five-year plans and year 1 plans?**

Each application should include a 5-year plan for carrying out the activities described in the absolute priority for which they apply. Annual service plans are required under the Program Requirements and will be established post-award.

**What elements of the Annual Service Plan should be included in the application? In what section of the application should the service plan be provided?**

The 5-year plan for carrying out the activities described in the absolute priority should be described in the applicant’s Approach to Capacity Building. The specific elements of service plans described in Program Requirement 1 for All Centers will apply to annual service plans submitted post-award.

**Content Centers****Are the Content Centers expected or permitted to provide intensive capacity building services to SEAs and LEAs?**

Content Centers will primarily provide targeted and universal capacity-building services based on their area of technical expertise. The role of the Regional Center is to provide intensive technical assistance based on the needs identified in the SEAs and LEAs. While Content Centers will primarily provide targeted and universal capacity-building services, they may, as appropriate, and in partnership with Regional Centers, provide intensive services to these clients.

**How many recipients should Content Centers plan to disseminate their products and information to?**

Content Centers must work with partners to disseminate products through networks in which the targeted or universal audiences are most likely to seek or receive information, with the goal of expanding the reach of Centers to the largest number of recipients possible. Applicants for Content Centers should describe in their applications potential audiences and reach for disseminating products and information produced by the Content Center.

**How is the Center for English Learners and Multilingualism expected to coordinate with the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) to support the selection, implementation, and scale-up of evidence-based practices, as it relates to meeting the needs of English learners (ELs)?**

The NCELA collects, coordinates, and conveys a broad range of research and resources in support of an inclusive approach to high quality education for ELs. The Center for English Learners and Multilingualism is expected to coordinate with NCELA to minimize duplication of services and to enhance the ability of the Department to provide direct capacity-building support to State and local clients and recipients. The work scopes of both the Center and NCELA should be complimentary, but not duplicative. An applicant may describe how it would structure this coordination in its application narrative.

## Budget

**What percentage of a Content Center budget should be reserved for intensive capacity-building services?**

Applicants should develop a budget that reflects the needs of potential recipients and their proposed approach to capacity-building services. The Department does not require a specific amount of Content Center funds be set aside for intensive capacity-building services.

**How should applicants represent the 5% set aside for emerging needs represented in the budget?**

Applicants may choose how they set aside funds for responding to emerging needs. Applicants should describe how they have met this requirement in their budget narrative.

**Can grant funds be used to provide training stipends for teachers, university students?**

Funds used to provide training stipends for teachers and university students potentially fall under the definition of *participant support costs* (2 CFR 200.1) such as stipends or subsistence allowances, travel allowances, and registration fees paid to or on behalf of participants or trainees (but not employees) in connection with conferences, or training projects. Grantees of the program must reference and follow the Uniform Guidance and consult with their federal program officers on allowable use of funds. See: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200>.

## Program Requirements

**How will National Center be expected to offer “editorial support to Regional and Content Centers” as referenced in Application Requirement #1 for the National Center?**

As referenced in Program Requirements for National Comprehensive Center, the Center must “design and implement communications and dissemination vehicles for the CCNetwork, including maintaining the CCNetwork website that meets government and industry recognized accessibility standards, maintaining a consistent media presence in collaboration with Regional and Content Centers, that promotes increased engagement”. An example of editorial support may include collaborating with the Regional and Content Centers to ensure materials following standard CCNetwork branding and formatting and are published in accessible formats for posting on the CCNetwork website.

### Communication and Dissemination Plan

**Are there specific requirements for the communication and dissemination plan? Should the plan be included in the application narrative or in an appendix?**

An applicant has discretion regarding how it organizes its application. The Department recommends in its Application Instructions that applicants organize their project narratives to align to the selection criteria. For applicants that use this organization, the communication and dissemination plan could be included in the Quality of Project Design section of its narrative in response to Application Requirement for All Centers. Applicants should note that the full Communication and Dissemination Plan described in the Program Requirements may be established post-award.

### Performance Management and Evaluation Plan

**Are grantees required to have an external evaluator to meet the performance management and evaluation requirements?**

No, grantees under this program are not required to have external evaluators. Applicants may propose to use external evaluators as part of their proposed Performance Management and Evaluation Plan.

### Websites

**Are all Comprehensive Centers required to have websites? What are Centers responsibilities for contributing to the CCNetwork website?**

Only the National Comprehensive Center is required to maintain a website for the CCNetwork. Applicants for the Regional Centers and Content Centers may propose to establish individual websites as part of their grant applications. All grantees will be required to contribute to the ongoing update and maintenance of a Comprehensive Center Network website managed by the National Center including to share resources and other products produced under their approved grant.

### Advisory Boards

**Should applicants propose members for their Advisory Board (as required in Section 203(g) of the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002) as part of their proposal or should they wait until after awards are made?**

Section 203(g) of the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 (ETAA) requires that all Comprehensive Centers shall have an advisory board that shall support the priorities of such Center. The duties and composition of the advisory board are detailed in this section of the ETAA (See: [20 USC 9602](#)). Applicants who are funded will be required to have advisory boards that comply with the requirements in Section 203(g) as part of their cooperative agreement with the Department. Applicants may propose members for their advisory boards as part of their applications; however, they are not required to establish these boards until after awards have been made. Applicants may propose members for their advisory boards as part of their applications; however, they are not required to establish these boards until after awards have been made.

### National Evaluation

**What is the relationship between the national evaluation of the Comprehensive Centers Program and the evaluation expectations of individual Comprehensive Centers?**

Sec. 204 of the ETAA requires ongoing independent evaluation of the Comprehensive Center program. Grantees of this program are required to submit information, including information about services provided, to support this national evaluation. This evaluation is independently conducted by the

National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance and is separate from the program requirements related to performance management and evaluation for individual grantees.

#### Miscellaneous

**Can applicants connect with a program officer to share/get feedback on our ideas?**

The Department is unable to provide feedback on proposals for this competition.