Frequently Asked Questions
FY 2007 SLC Grant Competition
Deadline: February 25, 2008

Responses to new questions posed during the December 2007 Technical Assistance Workshops appear in blue.

Changes in FY 2007 Competition

What changes have occurred between the FY 2006 (July 2007) and FY 2007 (February 2008) competition?

Two changes have occurred. First, the point values of some selection criteria have changed. Second, applicants in this current round of competition may not include schools that are included in SLC grants that extend beyond September 30, 2008.

What specific point values changed?

Criterion	FY 2006 Total Point Value	FY 2007 Total Point Value
Need for the Project	**8**	**6**
Quality of the Project Design	**25**	
(1) Teachers, school administrators, parents, and community stakeholders support the proposed project during the school year in which the award will be made		5
(2) The applicant has carried out sufficient planning and preparatory activities to enable it to implement the proposed project during the school year in which the grant award will be made		5
(3) School administrators, teachers, and other school employees will receive effective, ongoing technical assistance and support in implementing structural and instructional reforms		7
(4) The applicant will offer all students a coherent sequence of rigorous English language arts, mathematics, and science courses that will provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in postsecondary education and careers without need for remediation		7
(5) The proposed project is part of a districtwide strategy for high school redesign and strengthens the district's capacity to develop and implement smaller learning communities and improve student academic achievement as part of that strategy		1
Quality of Project Services	**45**	
(1) Creating an environment in which a core group of teachers and other adults within the school know the needs, interests, and aspirations		

of each student well, closely monitor each student's progress, and provide the academic and other support each student needs to succeed		**9**
(2) Equipping all students with the reading/English language arts, mathematics, and science knowledge and skills they need to succeed in postsecondary education and careers without need for remediation		**8**
(3) Helping students who enter high school with reading/English language arts or mathematics skills that are significantly below grade-level "catch up" quickly and attain proficiency by the end of the 10th grade		**8**
(4) Providing teachers with the professional development, coaching, regular opportunities for collaboration with peers, and other supports needed to implement a rigorous curriculum and provide high-quality instruction		**8**
(5) Increasing the participation of students, particularly low-income students, in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or dual credit courses		**8**
(6) Increasing the percentage of students who enter postsecondary education in the semester following high school graduation		**8**
Support for Implementation	**17**	
(1) The management plan is likely to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget and includes clearly defined responsibilities and detailed timelines and milestones for accomplishing project tasks		**7**
(2) The project director and other key personnel are qualified to carry out their responsibilities, and their time commitments are appropriate and adequate to implement the SLC project effectively		**4**
(3) The applicant will support the proposed project with funds provided under other Federal or State programs and local cash or in-kind resources		**2**
(4) The requested grant amount and the project costs are sufficient to attain project goals and reasonable in relation to the objectives and design of the project		**2**
Quality of the SLC Project Evaluation	**5**	
(1) The evaluation will provide timely, regular, and useful feedback to the LEA and the participating schools on the success and progress of implementation, and identify areas for needed improvement		**3**
(2) The independent evaluator is qualified to conduct the evaluation		**2**

Eligibility

Who is eligible to receive a grant?

Local educational agencies (LEAs), including schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Education (formerly the Bureau of Indian Affairs) and educational service agencies, applying on behalf of up to 8 large public high schools, are eligible to apply for a grant. An educational service agency is eligible if it can show in its application that the entity or entities with governing authority over the eligible high schools on whose behalf the educational service agency is applying supports the application.

In addition, we require that an LEA applying for a grant under this competition apply only on behalf of a high school or high schools for which it has governing authority, unless the LEA is an educational service agency that includes in its application evidence that the entity that has governing authority over the eligible high school supports the application. An LEA, however, may form a consortium with another LEA and submit a joint application for funds. The consortium must follow the procedures for group applications described in 34 CFR 75.127 through 75.129 in EDGAR. An LEA is eligible for only one grant, whether the LEA applies independently or as part of a consortium.

A "large high school" is a school that includes grades 11 and 12 and enrolls at least 1,000 students in grades 9 and above. <u>LEAs must include in their applications the name(s) of the eligible school(s) and the number of students enrolled in the school during the</u> **current (2007-08) school year.** Applicants must provide evidence in their applications that each of the high schools included in their applications has a student enrollment of not less 1,000 students in grades 9 and above during the current school year. We will deem ineligible an application from an LEA that is submitted on behalf of high schools that are being constructed or that do not have an active student enrollment.

How many high schools may be included in an application?

An individual LEA or group application may not request funding for more than 8 eligible high schools.

Our district has 10 eligible high schools. May we submit one application on behalf of 8 high schools, and a second application on behalf of the other 2 high schools?

No. An LEA may submit only one application in this competition.

Our ninth grade students are located on a separate campus from grades 10-12. Can we include this campus in our application?

If this campus is considered a separate school by the State (e.g., the State issues a separate report card for this campus), it does not meet the definition of a "large public high school" because it does not include grades 11 and 12. Consequently, it may not be included in your application. If, on the other hand, the this campus is considered by the State to be part of the school that serves grades 10-12, rather than a separate school, it may be included in your application.

One of our high schools includes grades 10-12 and does not have a ninth grade. We do have 1,000 students enrolled in grades 10-12, however. Can we include this school in our application?

Yes. We define a "large high school" as "a public school that includes grades 11 and 12 and has an enrollment of 1,000 or more students in grades 9 and above." A high school that only serves grades 10-12 and has 1,000 or more students meets this definition and may be included in an application.

We opened a new high school several years ago to serve students enrolled in grades 9 through 12. The school opened with 350 students enrolled in grade 9, and we have added a grade level each year as this initial group of students advanced. During the current school year, there were more than 1,000 students enrolled in grades 9 through 11, but there were no students enrolled in grade 12. Does this school meet the definition of a "large high school?"

Yes. We define a "large high school" as "a public school that includes grades 11 and 12 and has an enrollment of 1,000 or more students in grades 9 and above." Provided a school has 1,000 or more students enrolled in grades 9 and above and it is authorized under State law to serve students in grades 11 and 12, it would meet the definition of "large high school" even if there were no students enrolled in grades 11 or 12 during the current school year.

We want to apply on behalf of a high school that has 1,050 students enrolled in grades 9 and above during the current school year. We cannot be certain, however, that student enrollment in grades 9 and above will remain at or above 1,000 students in future school years. Will you terminate our grant if student enrollment in grades 9 and above falls below 1,000 in future school years?

No. We would not terminate an SLC grant because a school's enrollment in grades 9 and above later fell below 1,000 students during the 60-month project period. An LEA may apply on behalf of a school that meets the definition of a "large high school" at the time of its application, using enrollment figures from the current school year. We do not require that the school continue to meet the definition of a "large high school" after the grant has been awarded.

During the current school year, there are 900 students enrolled in grades 9 and above at one of the high schools in our district.   It is possible that the school's enrollment could reach 1,000 next year or the following year. Can we apply on behalf of this school?

No. We define a "large high school" as "a public school that includes grades 11 and 12 and has an enrollment of 1,000 or more students in grades 9 and above." Enrollment figures must be based upon data from the current school year. Enrollment projections cannot be used.

Our junior high school serves students in grades 7 through 9, and our high school serves students in grades 10 through 12. Since high schools in many other districts include a grade 9, can we consider the grade 9 students in our junior high school as if they were part of the high school in our application and provide these students and their teachers and other personnel with the same kinds of services and activities we will be providing the students, teachers, and personnel in the high school?

No. Grant funds may be used only to serve the large high school included in the application. While many high schools do include a ninth grade, if the large high school included in the application does not have a ninth grade, the applicant may not consider the students enrolled in the ninth grade at other schools as if they were enrolled in the school included in the application.

May a consortium of LEAs apply as a group?

Yes. Department of Education regulations permit eligible entities to apply as a group. LEAs that participate in the consortium may not submit additional applications on their own.

The relevant regulations from 34 CFR Part 75, Subsection C appear below:

Sec. 75.127 Eligible parties may apply as a group.

   (a) Eligible parties may apply as a group for a grant.
   (b) Depending on the program under which a group of eligible parties seeks assistance, the term used to refer to the group may vary. The list that follows contains some of the terms used to identify a group of eligible parties:
   (1) Combination of institutions of higher education.
   (2) Consortium.
   (3) Joint applicants.
   (4) Cooperative arrangements.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1221e-3 and 3474)

Sec. 75.128 Who acts as applicant; the group agreement.

    (a) If a group of eligible parties applies for a grant, the members of the group shall either:
    (1) Designate one member of the group to apply for the grant; or
    (2) Establish a separate, eligible legal entity to apply for the grant.
    (b) The members of the group shall enter into an agreement that:
    (1) Details the activities that each member of the group plans to perform; and
    (2) Binds each member of the group to every statement and assurance made by the applicant in the application.
    (c) The applicant shall submit the agreement with its application.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1221e-3 and 3474)

Sec. 75.129 Legal responsibilities of each member of the group.

    (a) If the Secretary makes a grant to a group of eligible applicants, the applicant for the group is the grantee and is legally responsible for:
    (1) The use of all grant funds;
    (2) Ensuring that the project is carried out by the group in accordance with Federal requirements; and
    (3) Ensuring that indirect cost funds are determined as required under Sec. 75.564(e).
    (b) Each member of the group is legally responsible to:
    (1) Carry out the activities it agrees to perform; and
    (2) Use the funds that it receives under the agreement in accordance with Federal requirements that apply to the grant.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1221e-3 and 3474)

May an LEA apply on behalf of high schools that previously received SLC funds?

An LEA may apply only on behalf of a school that is not included in an SLC implementation grant that has a performance period that extends beyond the current fiscal year (September 30, 2008).

High schools that are included in an active SLC implementation grant are not eligible to receive funds under this competition. This includes not only high schools included in grants awarded in 2005, 2006, and 2007, but also high schools that are included in grants awarded in 2004 if the grant recipient obtains a no-cost extension that extends the project period of the grant beyond September 30, 2008 under Part 74.25 of the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR).

Grant Award Amounts and Duration

What is the duration and maximum amount of the grant awards?

For a 60-month grant, an LEA may receive, on behalf of a single school, $1,250,000 to $1,750,000, depending upon the size of the school. An LEA applying on behalf of a group of eligible schools may request up to $14,000,000 per grant depending on the size and number of schools. LEAs must stay within the maximum school allocations when determining their group award request. In order to ensure sufficient grant funds at the local level, an LEA may not request funds for more than 8 schools under a single application.

The following chart provides the ranges of awards per high school size for the entire 60-month grant period:

SLC Grant Award Ranges	
Student Enrollment	Award Ranges Per School
1,000 - 2,000 Students	*$1,000,000 - $1,250,000*
2,001 - 3,000 Students	*$1,000,000 - $1,500,000*
3,001 and Up Students	*$1,000,000 - $1,750,000*

The actual size of awards would be based on a number of factors, including the scope, quality, and comprehensiveness of the proposed project, and the range of awards indicated in the application.

Applications that request more funds than the maximum amounts specified for any school or for the total grant would not be read as part of the regular application process. However, if, after the Secretary selects applications to be funded, it appears that additional funds remain available, the Secretary may choose to read those additional applications that requested funds exceeding the maximum amounts specified. If the Secretary chooses to fund any of those additional applications, applicants will be required to work with the Department to revise their proposed budgets to fit within the appropriate funding range.

Are the maximum award amounts per year or for the entire 60-month project period?

The maximum award amounts per school are for the entire 60-month project period.

We want to apply on behalf of a high school that is eligible for a maximum award of $1.25 million over 60 months. Are we required to apply for the full $1.25 million, or can we request a lesser amount?

You are not required to apply for the entire maximum award amount. We have not established a minimum grant award amount for which you must apply.

Must we divide the maximum award amount equally across all five years of the project, or can we spend more in some years and less in others?

Applicants are not required to spend the same amount in each year of the project.

Do the maximum award amounts include indirect costs, or can we charge indirect costs in addition to the maximum award amount?

The maximum award amount includes indirect costs.

Deadlines

What is the deadline for the notice of intent to apply?

We ask prospective applicants to inform us by email if they intend to apply by **January 10, 2008**. Submitting a notice of intent to apply is optional. We ask for this information only so that we can determine how many peer reviewers we will need to evaluate applications. Applicants who do not provide this notification may still submit an application for funds.

Where do I send my notice of intent to apply?

Please email your notice of intent to apply to smallerlearningcommunities@ed.gov. Please put "Notice of Intent to Apply" in the subject header of your message.

Am I required to submit a notice of intent to apply? Can I still submit an application if I did not submit a notice of intent to apply?

Applicants are not required to submit a notice of intent to apply. If you do not submit a notice of intent to apply, you may still submit an application for funding.

By when must applications be submitted?

Your application must be fully uploaded and submitted, and must be date/time stamped by the Grants.gov system no later than 4:30 p.m., Washington, DC time, on **February 25, 2008**.

When do we need to contact our State's single point of contact (SPOC)?

Each State establishes its own process for implementing Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. Applicants must contact the appropriate State SPOC to find out about, and to comply with, the State's process under Executive Order 12372. Applicants proposing to perform activities in more than one State should immediately contact the SPOC for each of those States and follow the procedures established in each State under the Executive order. Contact information for the State SPOCs is provided on page 84 of the application instructions.

What do I do if the list of State SPOCs does not include a point of contact for my State?

If your State is not listed, it does not participate in the Intergovernment Review of Federal Program process. . If you are located within a State that does not have a SPOC, you may send application materials directly to the Department as described in the *Federal Register* notice announcing the grant competition.

Who is the "authorized representative" who should be identified in item 21 of the SF-424 application form?

The authorized representative must be an individual who has been authorized by the governing body for your LEA to sign the application. Often this is the superintendent of schools. You must maintain in your files a copy of the governing body's authorization for this individual to sign the application as the LEA's official representative.

Priorities

What priorities apply to this program?

There are three priorities for this program: an absolute priority from the notice of final priority, requirements, and selection criteria for fiscal year (FY) 2006 and subsequent years' funds published in the <u>Federal Register</u> on May 18, 2007; a competitive priority from the notice of final priorities for discretionary grant programs published in the <u>Federal Register</u> on October 11, 2006 (71 FR 60045); and an invitational priority.

- ***Absolute Priority***. For new awards made using FY 2007 funds and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applicants from this competition, this priority is an absolute priority. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3) we consider only applications that meet this priority. This priority is:

  Preparing All Students to Succeed in Postsecondary Education and Careers. This priority supports projects that create or expand SLCs that are part of a comprehensive effort to prepare all students to succeed in postsecondary education and careers without need for remediation. In order to meet this priority an applicant must demonstrate that, using SLC grant funds or other resources, it will:
  (1) Provide intensive interventions to assist students who enter high school with reading/language arts or mathematics skills that are significantly below grade level to "catch up" quickly and attain proficiency by the end of 10th grade;
  (2) Enroll students in a coherent sequence of rigorous English language arts, mathematics, and science courses that will equip them with the skills and content knowledge needed to succeed in postsecondary education and careers without need for remediation;
  (3) Provide tutoring and other academic supports to help students succeed in rigorous academic courses;
  (4) Deliver comprehensive guidance and academic advising to students and their parents that includes assistance in selecting courses and planning a program of study that will provide the academic preparation needed to succeed in postsecondary education, early and ongoing college awareness and planning activities, and help in identifying and applying for financial aid for postsecondary education; and
  (5) Increase opportunities for students to earn postsecondary credit through Advanced Placement courses, International Baccalaureate courses, or dual credit programs.

- *Competitive Preference Priority.* Within this absolute priority, we give competitive preference to applications that address the following priority. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i) we award an additional 4 points to an application that meets this priority. This priority is:

  School Districts with Schools in Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring. Projects that help school districts implement academic and structural interventions in schools that have been identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

    NOTE: To meet this priority, a school must receive funds under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (ESEA), and have been identified by a State educational agency as in need of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring at the time the application is submitted.

- *Invitational Priority.* We are interested in applications that address the following invitational priority. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(1), we *do not* give an application that meets this invitational priority a competitive or absolute preference over other applications. Applicants are not required to address this priority, and no points are awarded for addressing it. This priority is:

  Applications that propose to engage faith-based and community organizations in the delivery of services under this program.

What evidence should we provide to demonstrate that the Title I school or schools included in the application have been identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring?

Applicants should provide a copy of a letter or other communication from a State Education Agency, or a copy of a list published by the State Education Agency.

In order to receive the 4 competitive preference points, must all of the schools included in the application be Title I schools that have been identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring?

No. We will award 4 competitive preference points to an application that includes at least one Title I school that has been identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Will we receive 4 competitive preference points for *each* Title I school that we include that has been identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring?

No. We will award a total of 4 competitive preference points to an application that includes <u>at least one</u> school that has been identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. Applications will not receive additional competitive preference points if they include more than one Title I school that has been identified for improvement, corrective, or restructuring under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Our district has been identified for improvement, but our high schools have not. Will you award our application the competitive preference points?

No. We will award the competitive preference points only to applications that include schools that receive Title I funds and that have been identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

A high school in our district does not receive Title I funds, but it has been identified for improvement by our State Education Agency. Will you award our application the competitive preference points if we include this high school?

No. We will award the competitive preference points only to applications that include schools that receive Title I funds and that have been identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

How does the U.S. Department of Education verify eligibility for competitive priority points?

In addition to reviewing the evidence an applicant provides in its application, we seek to verify its claim by reviewing data submitted by State education agencies (SEAs) in the Consolidated State Performance Reports (CSPR) they submit to the Department annually. The CSPR data include lists of Title I schools that have been identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. We also review data posted on the website of the SEA for the state in which the

Will the Department consider adding information on each notice of award or in each set of reviewer comments whether the applicant qualified for and received the competitive priority points?

We will notify unsuccessful applicants that sought the competitive preference points whether or not these points were awarded.

Additional Required Information

What additional information must an applicant include with the application?

- *Student Placement*
  Applicants must include a description of how students will be selected or placed in an SLC and an assurance that students will not be placed according to ability or any other measure, but will be placed at random or by student/parent choice and not pursuant to testing or other judgments.

- *Performance Indicators*
  Applicants must identify in their application specific performance indicators and annual performance objectives for each of these indicators. At a minimum, applicants must use the following performance indicators to measure the progress of each school:

  1. The percentage of students who score at the proficient and advanced levels on the reading/language arts and mathematics assessments used by the State to determine whether a school has made adequate yearly progress under part A of title I of the ESEA, as well as these percentages disaggregated by subject matter and the following subgroups:

     A. Major racial and ethnic groups.
     B. Students with disabilities.
     C. Students with limited English proficiency.
     D. Economically disadvantaged students.

  2. The school's graduation rate, as defined in the State's approved accountability plan for part A of title I of the ESEA.

3. The percentage of graduates who enroll in postsecondary education, advanced training, or a registered apprenticeship program in the semester following high school graduation.

In addition, applicants may identify other appropriate indicators it wishes to use to evaluate the progress of the project.

- *School Report Cards*
  Applicants must provide, for each school included in the application, the most recent "report card" produced by the State or the LEA to inform the public about the characteristics of the school and its students, including information about student academic achievement and other student outcomes. These "report cards" must include, at a minimum, the following information that LEAs are required to report for each school under section 1111(h)(2)(B)(ii) of the ESEA:

  1. Whether the school has been identified for school improvement; and
  2. Information that shows how the academic assessments and other indicators of adequate yearly progress compare to those indicators for students in the LEA as a whole and also shows the performance of the school's students on statewide assessments.

- *Evaluation*
  Applicants must provide an assurance that it will support an evaluation of the project that provides information to the project director and school personnel, and that will be useful in gauging the project's progress and in identifying areas for improvement. Each evaluation must include an annual report for each of the first four years of the project period and a final report that would be completed at the end of the fifth year of implementation and that will include information on implementation during the fifth year as well as information on the implementation of the project across the entire project period. In addition, we require that an independent third party whose role in the project is limited to conducting the evaluation conduct the evaluation.

- *Individual Resumes for Project Directors and Key Personnel*
  Applicants must provide brief resumes or job descriptions for the project director and key personnel that describe their qualifications for the responsibilities they will carry out under the project.

- *Indirect Cost Agreement*
  Applicants who propose to use SLC grant funds for indirect costs must include, as part of their applications, a copy of their approved indirect cost agreement. We will not approve your use of SLC grant funds for indirect costs if you do not provide a copy of your agreement in your application.

Creating New Small Schools

One of the large public high schools in our district is in corrective action and we want to reconstitute it as a set of new, autonomous small schools. Can SLC grant funds be used for this purpose?

Yes. Grant funds may be used to support the creation or expansion of an SLC or SLCs within a large public high school. This includes projects that propose to reconstitute a large public high school as a set of new, autonomous small schools. At the time of application and award, however, all schools included in the application must meet the definition of "large high school." The reconstitution of the large school must take place after the award has been made.

We want to close a large public high school in our district and replace it with several new small schools. Can SLC grant funds be used for this purpose?

Yes. SLC grant funds may be used for projects that propose to close a large public high school and replace it with several new small schools. At the time of application and award, however, all schools included in the application must meet the definition of "large high school."

Must the new small schools that we create be located in the same facility as the large public school that we reconstituted or closed?

No. The new small schools may be located on the same site as the large high school or in other locations.

Including All Students

You require projects to include all students by the fifth year of the grant. Does this mean that we must assign all students to academies, "houses," or other smaller organizational units by the end of the grant period?

No. We have defined an SLC as an environment in which a group of teachers and other adults within the school knows the needs, interests, and aspirations of each student well, closely monitors each student's progress, and provides the academic and other support each student needs to succeed.   We do not prescribe how an applicant creates the environment of strong academic and personal support described by the SLC definition, or how it provides this environment for all students.

While we expect that SLC projects will include a structural component, such as an academy, we do not require projects to assign all students to academies, "houses," or other smaller organizational units. Depending upon the circumstances and needs of a particular school and its students, there may be a variety of ways to create an environment in which all students receive strong personal and academic support. Thus, for example, an applicant could propose a project that places all entering ninth graders in a freshman academy to support their transition to high school, and establish teacher advisories or mentoring programs to create an environment of academic and personal support for all students in the upper grades.

Would our application be more competitive if we assigned all students to academies?

Applications are not evaluated on the basis of how many students are assigned to academies or other smaller organizational units. One of the selection criteria under "Quality of Project Services" evaluates the extent to which an applicant's proposed project is "likely to be effective" in creating the environment of personal and academic support described by the definition of "smaller learning community." In responding to this criterion, applicants will describe their approach to providing personal and academic support to students and why they believe it is likely to be effective in creating the environment described by the "smaller learning community" definition.

Student placement

According to the <u>Federal Register</u> notice, applicants must describe how they will select or place students in an SLC and provide an assurance that "students will not be placed according to ability or any other measure, but will be placed at random or by student/parent choice and not pursuant to testing or other judgments." Our high school is the site of a magnet program that selects students on the basis of their grades and test scores. Does the magnet program disqualify us from receiving SLC funds? Can we receive a grant if we do not use of any of the funds to support the magnet school?

An LEA may apply on behalf of an eligible high school that has a magnet school program or academy that selects students on the basis of their grades and test scores. However, no SLC grant funds may be used directly or indirectly in ways that support or benefit this selective admission program or academy. This would mean, for example, that SLC funds could not be used to provide professional development for teachers who provide instruction for students enrolled in the selective admission program/academy.

An applicant that has a selective admission program/academy should identify the program/academy in its application and describe clearly how it will use SLC grant funds in ways that will not support or benefit the selective admission program/academy, both directly and indirectly. The applicant should expect that, if awarded a grant, its expenditures would be monitored closely by the Department of Education.

Placement in all of our academies is based on student/parent choice. However, some of our academies have standards that students must meet in order to remain enrolled in them. These standards include, for example, attending school and class regularly, submitting homework assignments regularly and on time, and maintaining a 2.0 grade point average. Students who do not meet these standards are asked to leave the academy and select another academy. Is it permissible for us to establish standards that students must meet in order to remain enrolled in an academy?

Yes, establishing standards that students must meet in order to remain enrolled in an academy is permissible.

We assign our ninth grade students to freshman academies at random. However, our high school has a supplemental reading program for ninth grade students whose reading skills are one to three years below grade level. We enroll these students in a special class three periods a week. Is this prohibited?

This is permissible. You may not assign students to a freshman academy or other structure on the basis of ability or any other measure, but you may provide differentiated services and instructions to students within the academy or other structure on the basis of their academic needs.

Our school offers single-sex courses. Are activities conducted within these courses an allowable use of funds?

The law that authorizes the SLC program does not prohibit enrolling students in single-sex classes or extracurricular activities. It prohibits placing students in smaller learning communities according to ability or any other measure, requiring they be placed in smaller learning communities at random or by student/parent choice and not pursuant to testing or other judgments. However, recipients of Federal financial assistance must comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in all education programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance. On October 26, 2006, the Department of Education amended the regulations that

implement Title IX to provide recipients more flexibility to offer nonvocational elementary and secondary classes, extracurricular activities, and schools on a single-sex basis. Applicants should review these regulations carefully to be sure that the single-sex classes they provide or wish to provide meet the requirements established in these new regulations. Information about the new regulations can be found in a January 31, 2007 "Dear Colleague" letter issued by Stephanie Monroe Jones, the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. The letter is available on the Department's website at the link below:
http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/single-sex-20070131.html

Uses of Funds

Can portions of the SLC funds cover pre-award costs?

Yes. Department of Education regulations (34 CFR §75.263) authorize a grantee to use grant funds for pre-award costs and expenditures that are consistent with its approved application and were incurred for a period of up to 90 days before the date the grant award was made. We expect to award grants in June 2008. vities

Am I required to submit school-specific budgets if I am including more than one school in my LEA's application?

School-specific budgets are not required, but some school-specific level of detail is helpful in understanding how the applicant proposes to use grant funds. Applicants that do submit school-level budgets should check to be sure that they add up to the total amounts they request on the ED Budget Information Non-Construction Programs form (ED Form 524) and their budget narrative.

Can our district use a portion of the grant for district-level activities, or must all of the funds be distributed to the high schools included in the application?

There is no limitation on the use of SLC grant funds for activities carried out at the district level, provided that these activities support the implementation of the project by the schools included in the application. While we use student enrollment in each high school included in an application to determine maximum grant award amounts, an LEA is not required to provide each school in an application with all of the funds that its enrollment generates.

Districts can play an important role in supporting the work of teachers and school administrators, and there are some activities that may be more appropriately or

economically carried out at the district level. These activities could include, for example, implementing data and assessment systems and analytic tools that can be used by the staff of the schools included in the application to monitor student progress and improve instruction or providing curriculum pacing guides, sample lessons and other instructional supports. We leave to each applicant to decide how best to address the program requirements, priority, and selection criteria, including the amount of funds it proposes to use for district-level activities that support the implementation of the project serving schools included in the application.

Funds may not be used, however, for district-level activities that serve schools that are not included in the application or for general, district-wide high school reform initiatives.

Can we use grant funds to serve the feeder middle schools of the large high school on behalf of which we are submitting an application?

No. Grant funds may be used only to serve the large high school included in the application. Funds may not be used to provide services to other schools, including feeder middle schools. However, funds may be used to carry out activities that support and promote the successful transition of students who are entering the large high school that is included in the application. These activities could include, for example: "summer bridge" programs that orient and provide academic support and enrichment activities for students who are entering the high school from junior high or middle school; improving the quality, utility, timeliness of the data the high school's administrators and teachers receive about entering students; and efforts to provide junior high or middle school administrators, faculty, and counselors with the information they need to prepare their students for a successful transition to the high school included in the application.

Can we use grant funds to hire personnel? We want to hire a math coach to work with our teachers, and a project director to guide the implementation of the grant.

Yes, grant funds may be used to hire personnel.

Our high schools do not have good data on whether our graduates enroll in college, and how well they do if they do enroll. Can we use grant funds to develop a better system for tracking the postsecondary outcomes of our students?

Yes, this would be an allowable use of funds.

As we plan our budget, I'd like some clarification regarding the two-day technical assistance meetings that will be held in each year of the project period. What time of year will this be held? Where will it be held?

As we indicate in the <u>Federal Register</u> notice inviting applications, applicants should set aside adequate funds to send their project director and at least two individuals from each school included in the application to a two-day technical assistance meeting in Washington, DC, in each year of the project period. The dates for these meetings have not been determined, but we expect that they will occur during the fourth quarter of each calendar year. For planning purposes, applicants should assume that lodging expenses will be at or near the Federal per diem rate established by the General Services Administration. Current per diem rates are available at the link below:

<u>http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?contentId=17943&contentType=GSA_BASIC</u>

Which indirect cost rate should we use? Should we use the restricted or the unrestricted rate?

You may use either the unrestricted or restricted rate. Though use of the unrestricted rate is permitted, some applicants choose to use the restricted rate or decline to include any indirect costs because they prefer to use all grant funds for direct services. It is up to each applicant to decide whether it will charge indirect costs, and, if it does, whether it uses the unrestricted or restricted rate. If an applicant seeks to charge indirect costs, however, it must include a copy of its approved indirect cost agreement with its application.

Can we include cost-of-living increases for the personnel who are being paid with grant funds?

Yes. You may budget for cost-of-living increases. However, you should indicate in your budget narrative the basis for your estimate of the percentage increase for which you have budgeted.

Evaluation

What percentage of grant funds should we set aside for evaluation?

We do not require or recommend that a specific percentage of funds be set aside for evaluation. How much you budget for evaluation will depend upon the scope and complexity of the evaluation that you decide is appropriate for your project.

You require the evaluation to be conducted by "an independent third party, selected by the applicant, whose role in the project is limited to conducting the evaluation." Our school district has a separate evaluation unit that conducts many of our evaluations. Can this unit conduct the required evaluation, or must we contract with an external organization for this?

Your district's evaluation unit can participate in and contribute to the evaluation, but the evaluation cannot be carried out exclusively by district employees. An external, third party must be involved in the evaluation.

Page Limits and Document Formats

How long should our application be? Is there a page limit?

We have not established a mandatory page limit. However, we do recommend strongly that you limit your application narrative (which is the part of the application in which you address the selection criteria that reviewers use to evaluate your application) to the equivalent of **no more than 40 pages**, using the following standards:

- A "page" is 8.5" x 11", on one side only, with 1" margins at the top, bottom, and both sides.

- Double space (no more than three lines per vertical inch) all text in the application narrative. Titles, headings, footnotes, quotations, references, and captions, as well as text in charts, tables, figures, and graphs, can be single spaced.

- Use a font that is either 12 point or larger or no smaller than 10 pitch (characters per inch).

- Use one of the following fonts: Times New Roman, Courier, Courier New, or Arial.

- Number all pages consecutively using the style 1 of 40, 2 of 40, and so forth.

- Include a Table of Contents with page references.

The suggested page limit **does not** apply to the Table of Contents; forms; the budget section, including the narrative budget justification; the assurances and certifications; the one-page abstract; the resumes; school report cards; the indirect cost agreement; or letters of support.

What about attachments and appendices? Is there a limit on the number of attachments or appendices we can include with our application? Is there a limit on the number of pages?

We have not established a mandatory limit on the number of attachments or appendices you may submit, or on the number of pages. However, we recommend strongly that you limit to **no more than 20 pages** any attachments or appendices that are not resumes; school report cards; the indirect cost agreement; or letters of support.

Are there limits on the types of file formats we can use for our application narrative and the attachments we submit?

Yes. All files you submit must be in one of the following formats: **.DOC** (document), **.RTF** (rich text), or .**PDF** (Portable Document) format. If you submit a file that is in another format, such as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet (.XLS) or a Tagged Image File (.TIF) format, we will not review this material.

Continuation Awards

You award funds for the first 36 months of the project at the time of the initial grant award. Will you award funding for the remaining 24 months automatically at the end of the first 36 months?

No. Provided that Congress has appropriated sufficient funds for the program, we will make continuation awards to grant recipients that have submitted all of their required performance reports and made substantial progress toward meeting the objectives in their approved applications.

Grant Award Date and Notification

When will the grant awards be made?

We expect to make the awards prior to the end of the 2007-08 school year. The awards will be made no later than June 30, 2008.

How will we be notified if we have received a grant award?

You may first hear of your award from one of your Senators or House Representative. As a courtesy, the Department notifies your members of

Congress about the pending award so that they can make the announcement if they wish. We will contact the project director listed in the application by telephone or email and mail two copies of the Grant Award Notification, one to the project director, and the second to the individual identified as the certifying representative in the application.

Selection Criteria

What selection criteria apply to this competition?

The maximum score for all selection criteria is 100 points. The points or weights assigned to each criterion and/or subcriterion are indicated in parentheses.

Need for the Project (6)
In determining the need for the proposed project, we will consider the magnitude of the need for the services that will be provided and the activities that will be carried out by the proposed project.

Quality of the Project Design
In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, we will consider the extent to which--
        (1) Teachers, school administrators, parents and community stakeholders support the proposed project and have been and will continue to be involved in its development and implementation (5);
        (2) The applicant has carried out sufficient planning and preparatory activities to enable it to implement the proposed project during the school year in which the grant award will be made (5);
        (3) School administrators, teachers, and other school employees will receive effective, ongoing technical assistance and support in implementing structural and instructional reforms (7);
        (4) The applicant will offer all students a coherent sequence of rigorous English language arts, mathematics, and science courses that will provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in postsecondary education and careers without need for remediation (7); and
        (5) The proposed project is part of a districtwide strategy for high school redesign and strengthens the district's capacity to develop and implement smaller learning communities and improve student academic achievement as part of that strategy (1).

Quality of Project Services
In determining the quality of the services to be provided by the proposed project, we will consider the extent to which the proposed project is likely to be effective in–-

(1) Creating an environment in which a core group of teachers and other adults within the school know the needs, interests, and aspirations of each student well, closely monitor each student's progress, and provide the academic and other support each student needs to succeed (9);

(2) Equipping all students with the reading/English language arts, mathematics, and science knowledge and skills they need to succeed in postsecondary education and careers without need for remediation (8);

(3) Helping students who enter high school with reading/English language arts or mathematics skills that are significantly below grade-level "catch up" quickly and attain proficiency by the end of the 10th grade (8);

(4) Providing teachers with the professional development, coaching, regular opportunities for collaboration with peers, and other supports needed to implement a rigorous curriculum and provide high-quality instruction (8);

(5) Increasing the participation of students, particularly low-income students, in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or dual credit courses (8); and

(6) Increasing the percentage of students who enter postsecondary education in the semester following high school graduation (8).

Support for Implementation

In determining the adequacy of the support the applicant will provide for implementation of the proposed project, we will consider the extent to which--

(1) The management plan is likely to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget and includes clearly defined responsibilities and detailed timelines and milestones for accomplishing project tasks (7);

(2) The project director and other key personnel are qualified to carry out their responsibilities, and their time commitments are appropriate and adequate to implement the SLC project effectively (4);

(3) The applicant will support the proposed project with funds provided under other Federal or State programs and local cash or in-kind resources (2); and

(4) The requested grant amount and the project costs are sufficient to attain project goals and reasonable in relation to the objectives and design of the project (2).

Quality of the SLC Project Evaluation

In determining the quality of the proposed project evaluation to be conducted by an independent, third-party evaluator, we consider the extent to which--

(1) The evaluation will provide timely, regular, and useful feedback to the LEA and the participating schools on the success and progress of implementation, and identify areas for needed improvement (3); and

(2) The independent evaluator is qualified to conduct the evaluation (2).

Regulations

What regulations apply to this program?

The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 75, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85, 97, 98, and 99; the NFP published in the Federal Register on April 28, 2005 (70 FR 22233); the notice of final priorities published in the Federal Register on October 11, 2006 (71 FR 60046); and the notice of final priority, requirements, and selection criteria published in the May 18, 2007 issue of the Federal Register.

What are the exceptions to submitting an application through Grants.gov?

You qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, and may submit your application in paper format, if you are unable to submit an application through the Grants.gov system because you do not have access to the Internet or you do not have the capacity to upload large documents to the Grants.gov system, and within 14 calendar days before the application deadline you mail or fax a written statement to the Department, explaining which of the two grounds for an exception prevent you from using the Internet to submit your application.

   If you mail your written statement to the Department, it must be postmarked no later than two weeks before the application deadline date. If you fax your written statement to the Department, we must receive the faxed statement no later than two weeks before the
application deadline date.

   Address and mail or fax your statement to: Angela Hernandez-Marshall, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 3W236, Washington, DC 20202-6200. Fax: (202) 205-4921. Your paper application must be submitted in accordance with the mail or hand delivery instructions described in the FY 2007 Notice Inviting Applications.

Questions regarding FY 2006 SLC grant competition (July 2007 round of competition)

How many applications were received in the FY 2006 competition?

We received a total of 235 eligible applications.

How many successful FY 2006 applications were consortium grants?

Consortia of local educational agencies submitted 2 of the applications that were selected for funding.

How many successful FY 2006 applicants included more than one school in their grant application?

Twenty-four (24) of the 38 applications that were selected for funding included more than one school.

How many successful FY 2006 applicants qualified for and received competitive priority points?

Forty-six (46) applications were eligible for and received competitive preference points. Of the 38 applications that were selected for funding, 19 were eligible for and received competitive preference points.

More Information

Who should I contact for more information or if I have questions about technical review comments from the last competition?

Please contact Angela Hernandez-Marshall at (202) 205-1909 or by e-mail at smallerlearningcommunities@ed.gov