

NC QUEST Cycle XV

Frequently Asked Questions

Background

- Q. How does Title IIA “Improving Teacher Quality State Grants differ from the Eisenhower Program?”*
- A. Title II-A, “Improving Teacher Quality State Grants,” is aimed at increasing the academic achievement of all students by helping schools and school districts improve teacher and principal quality and ensure that all teachers are highly qualified. This new program replaces the previous requirement to focus on professional development for mathematics and science (i.e., the Eisenhower Program) in favor of support for high quality professional development across all core academic subjects. The importance of math and science remains a high priority, but many other activities are now allowed as well.

Scope of the Grants to be Made by NC QUEST

- Q. Is it permissible for an IHE or LEA to participate in more than one proposal?*
- A. An IHE may only be the awardee institution on one new proposal at a time **not including continuation grants**. Faculty serving as Project Director or Co-Director from the lead IHE or any partnering agency may not serve in a directorial capacity on another proposal **not including continuation grants**. However, IHE faculty may participate in other proposals and high-need LEAs or other agencies are not limited to the number of proposals in which they may participate.
- Q. What is the role of the project director for IHE’s and other agencies involved in the partnerships?*
- A. See Part II, Section 2.5 (Limits on Institutional Applications and Awards) of the NC QUEST RFP. Each project must have, at minimum, one Project Director and two Project Co-Directors. The Project Director must be employed by a college/school/department of education at the lead IHE or by a department from its college of arts and sciences. The lead IHE must list a Co-Director from whichever of those divisions is not the department/division of the Project Director. In addition, each partnering agency must select one person to serve as its Project Co-Director, who will serve as the lead representative for that agency in the partnership.

Q. Can applicants choose to voluntarily waive some or all of their Facilities and Administrative (F&A) costs?

A. Yes, however, reviewers will be instructed not to consider the F&A rate in assessing the merit of proposals. F&A charges (a.k.a. indirect costs) are allowable in accordance with the institution's federally negotiated rate agreement.

Q. Is cost sharing or matching required?

A. No, cost sharing is not required. Applicants are discouraged from committing and itemizing any specific matching funds. Reviewers will be instructed not to consider committed funds in assessing the merit of proposals.

Q. If a continuation grant is received in Cycle XV for a Cycle XIV project, may the funds from Cycles XIV and XV be combined to determine the required 50% split?

A. No, the funding is from two different funding years for two different proposals.

Q. What are the reporting requirements for awardees?

A. An interim progress report will be required in December 2017 and a final report by August 31, 2018. Awardees are subject to requirements to keep records to show their compliance with program requirements. Record keeping should permit an "audit trail" beginning with preparation of the application and should include records to support the application (Sections 76.730 and 76.731 of EDGAR). NC QUEST may monitor project progress and compliance through on-site visits, periodic reports, and awardee conferences. Generally speaking subgrantees must keep records that fully show: 1) The amount of funds under the grant or subgrant; 2) How the grantee or subgrantee uses the funds; 3) The total cost of project activities; and 4) Other records to facilitate an effective audit.

Determining Eligibility and Forming Partnerships

Q. Is an IHE that prepares teachers, but not administrators, permitted to become the lead agent in a partnership proposal?

A. Yes, provided that the IHE has an accredited teacher education program, the IHE is eligible to become a lead agent on a proposal.

Q. Is it permissible for a proposal to include work with a non-high-need school within a designated high-need LEA?

A. Yes, however, the proposal should focus on the high-need schools within the high-need LEA.

Q. May a proposal with a minimal number of high need LEAs (or only one), include a high-need school from a non-high-need LEA?

A. Yes, as long as high-need LEA schools are the primary focus of the project.

Guidelines for Preparing and Submitting Proposals

Q. Must the paper copy and the electronic copy be submitted at the same time?

A. All copies of the proposal – paper and electronic – must be received, or postmarked in the case of paper copies, no later than 5:00 p.m., November 15, 2016.

Q. Given that the review panel will be comprised of out-of-state reviewers, how will you ensure that these reviewers have a solid understanding of North Carolina’s educational and social context?

A. The review panel will be comprised of professional educators who are experts in one or both of the priority areas. Prior to the proposal review process the reviewers will be provided with sufficient background on education-related issues in North Carolina -- specifically information on the state’s adoption and implementation of the Common Core State Standards in English/Language Arts and Mathematics -- so they are able to evaluate the proposals within the appropriate contextual framework.

Q. Does each partner in the grant need to complete Form C?

A. Yes. However, only the lead IHE must complete #4 “Project Director” and the bottom section “Certification by Institution’s Chief Academic Officer.”

Q. Please clarify who must complete the budget summary Form D.

A. Each partner in the grant must complete a budget summary. The lead IHE must submit two partner budget summaries that include expenditures for the education unit and the arts and sciences unit on separate budget summaries. There must be one budget sheet completed by the lead IHE for the entire project. Section F should be completed only on this form.

Review Process and Announcement of Awards

Q. Will the review panel be receptive to proposals from smaller IHEs?

A. Yes. However, neither large nor small IHEs will receive special consideration during the review process.

Q. When will the awards be announced?

A. Awards will be made in February 2017.