**RFP #GC19-012**

**2020-2024 Smart Scholars Early College High School Partnership Program**

**Questions and Answers**

Target Population

1. We noticed that the definition of the target population has changed a little bit and now includes this phrase: "students academically at‐risk," but that phrase is not defined. What defines a student as academically at-risk?

Answer: Smart Scholars ECHS has historically targeted students who are from groups historically underrepresented in postsecondary education, academically at-risk, and/or economically disadvantaged. The definition of Academically at-risk can include students who are at-risk for not successfully completing high school and/or not enrolling in or succeeding in college; or belong to populations that have historically not had access to or success in higher education, such as students with disabilities or English Language Learners or members of other special populations (p. 40);

1. How does a student currently in a BOCES program take advantage of this program? My daughter is in 11th grade next year. Can this be taken part in but has an IEP existing currently but will be homeschooled next year?

Answer: Students can only enter this program in 9th grade and must attend a public high school where they remain enrolled for all four years.

Eligible Applicants

1. I am the principal of an Early College Charter High School with St. John's University as our partner. Is a standalone charter school eligible for this grant?

Answer: Charter schools are not eligible for this grant.

1. In reference to this grant must the lead be a public school, or can it be a community nonprofit providing these services?

Answer: A community nonprofit is not eligible to apply for this grant.

1. If a BOCES serves as lead applicant for this grant and partners with multiple districts, including a district on the “list of target districts,” would the application receive the highest-level priority, like applications led by target districts? Also, if a district from the “list of target districts” is part of an application, does that application automatically receive the highest-level priority, regardless of which organization is the applicant?

Answer: With regard to BOCES applications or where multiple districts apply as a consortium, priority will be given to proposals whose participating schools have an average cohort high school graduation rate below 82% based on the 4-year cohort graduation rate for the 2017/2018 school year (August) published annually by NYSED (see <https://data.nysed.gov/>). Should there be BOCES or consortium applicants whose participating school districts’ high school graduation rates average are 82% or above, and there is availability of resources to fund such projects, such projects will also be considered.

1. Do all schools in a consortium need priority school status or just the lead applicant?

Answer: With regard to BOCES applications or where multiple districts apply as a consortium, priority will be given to proposals whose participating schools have an average cohort high school graduation rate below 82% based on the 4-year cohort graduation rate for the 2017/2018 school year (August) published annually by NYSED (see https://data.nysed.gov/). Should there be BOCES or consortium applicants whose participating school districts’ high school graduation rates average are 82% or above, and there is availability of resources to fund such projects, such projects will also be considered.

1. I understand that priority schools are those that have a graduation rate of below 82%. What criteria was used to identify target districts, since there are some listed there that have graduation rates far higher than 82% (Niagara Wheatfield, for example).

Answer: Schools and districts earned a score for all students and for student subgroups. Such subgroups include members of racial and ethnic groups, low-income students, students with disabilities and English language learners. These levels are used to determine whether a district is a Good Standing District or a Target District and whether a school is in Good Standing or identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement or Targeted Support and Improvement.

Target Districts are determined in criteria. The first criteria is based on the identification of a Comprehensive Support & Improvement (CSI) schools or a Targeted Support & Improvement (TSI) school within that district. If any school in the district is identified for CSI or TSI, then the district is identified as well. The second criteria is based on districts that were in Focus status during the 2017-18 school year and whose All Students group met the criteria for CSI identification or had a subgroup that met the criteria for TSI identification.

1. Can there be 2 IHE partners (both local, within 45 minutes of our high schools), one to support dual-enrollment courses and one to provide on campus experiences?  Background:  We have a partnership with local college that provides a concurrent credit program, and another partnership with a college where we have a campus-based college preparation program (including college coursework)?  We have an articulation agreement with the later college so that credits earned by students through the dual-credit program automatically transfer.

Answer:  Yes, there can be two IHE partners as long as both provide students the opportunity to earn transferable college credits.

1. If it is possible to have 2 IHEs, if one is already a Smart Scholars lead in an existing partnership, can it be the lead in a new partnership with a BOCES and a second IHE?

Answer: Yes, it is possible for two IHEs to participate in the Smart Scholars ECHS model (with a BOCES or a school district). However, if the IHE is the fiscal lead then a two (2) IHE model would not be expected as the primary IHE as fiscal lead would be paying out tuition to the secondary IHE.

Note, only IHEs that currently serve as lead fiscal agent in an existing Smart Scholars ECHS partnership can serve as the applicant/fiscal agent for new projects proposed under this RFP, in which case they must be named on the cover page as the applicant. (Research Foundation may be designated as fiscal agent but is not allowed to be named the lead applicant.)

Support Structures

1. For the summer programming requirement, we see that the duration should be at least three weeks. Can this three weeks be broken up over the term of the grant—such as one week each year for three years? Or is it three weeks each year of the grant? If the requirement for summer programming is three weeks each year, do these need to be three consecutive weeks?

Answer: The project should operate a summer program that runs at least three consecutive weeks each year of the grant cycle.

1. Can the required extended learning time be devoted to providing students with the required support services (i.e., academic and counseling supports and career counseling)?

Answer: Yes. As long as the required extended learning time is devoted to ensuring that students in the program are prepared for success in their college coursework (e.g., intensive academic interventions for student participants, etc.).

Funding

1. Is the additional $100,000 in funding for the industry collaboration given each implementation year of the grant, for a possible total bonus of $400,000 over the life of the grant?

Answer: No, the additional $100,000 in funding for collaborating with an industry partner is awarded in the final year of the grant only.

1. For the requirements related to receiving a $100,000 bonus in funding for collaborating with an industry partner in a high-demand field, what is considered a middle-class salary?

Answer: This is from the Pew Research Center regarding middle class salaries in NYS:

* 2-person family middle-class income range: $44,750.64 to $133,584;
* 3-person family middle-class income range: $52,673.39 to $157,234; and
* 4-person family middle-class income range: $64,279.80 to $191,880.

1. What is the threshold that defines “middle class salary”?

Answer: This is from the Pew Research Center regarding middle class salaries in NYS:

* 2-person family middle-class income range: $44,750.64 to $133,584;
* 3-person family middle-class income range: $52,673.39 to $157,234; and
* 4-person family middle-class income range: $64,279.80 to $191,880.

1. Can you please explain the charts on page 27? Is the $100,000 bonus for partnering with a business meant to be awarded every year of the grant? The chart appears to only include the additional $100,000 in the fourth year of the program; is that correct?

Answer: See Question and answer for #12. The $100,000 is only awarded during the final year of the grant.

1. Does the partnership with a business that would be eligible for an extra $100,000 have to be with companies that employ web developers, civil engineering technicians and environmental science and protection technicians? Or can we partner with another business that offers jobs with a middle-class salary that have a “very favorable” job outlook and still get the $100,000 bonus?

Answer: Partnerships should be with those companies that offer jobs in the identified areas. The business/industry partner must agree to provide Smart Scholars ECHS participants the opportunity to be first in line for a job with the participating business/employer partner following completion of the program, graduation from high school, and satisfactorily meeting any employment evaluations. Additionally, this employment would provide a middle-class salary. The business/industry partner will also provide a variety of services for SS-ECHS participants, such as site visits, mentorship, job shadowing opportunities, project-based learning, skills development, and paid internships.

General

1. The Smart Scholars RFP looks a lot like the cancelled P-Tech grant. Do you still expect to re-compete the P-Tech grant or is this grant a substitute for it?

Answer: This grant is not a substitute for the NYS P-TECH RFP.

1. Can a BOCES as lead applicant partner with more than one Target District from the list for a total of more than 51% of participating students?

Answer:  Yes, a BOCES can serve more than one Target District from the list for a total of more than 51% of participating students as long as the students will come together for the school day at one common location beginning in ninth grade.

1. All our students are classified with IEPs.  While all students will participate in high school coursework leading to a Regents diploma with the goal of college readiness (and take college courses), must all students achieve a Regents diploma?  If a participating student achieves a local diploma and not a Regents diploma, would this result in penalties?  Would this possibility disqualify our application?

Answer:  Per the RFP, the expectation is that students in the program will earn a NYS Regents diploma and a minimum of 24 transferable college credits upon completion of the program. The application will be scored according to how this requirement is fulfilled, but it will not disqualify the application.

1. The definition for business in the RFP seems to be fairly inclusive.  Does it include private and public sector and entities such as government labs?

Answer: Yes. Business/employee/industry partners must be able to satisfy the requirements in VI. Applicant and Partnership Qualifications, including but not limited to ensuring that SS-ECHS participants will be first in line for a job with the participating business/employee/industry partner following completion of the program and the Business/employee/industry partner provides a variety of services for SS-ECHS participants, such as site visits, mentorship of students, job shadowing opportunities, project-based learning, skills development, and paid internships.

1. The definition for business includes the phrase "local presence".  Does that refer to geographical location (proximity) or activity (community-related impact)?

Answer: A business organization or industry entity with a “local presence” means one that is both geographically accessible for SS-ECHS activities (e.g., site visits, mentors, and internships) and demonstrates community-related impact.

1. The difference between "sub-granting contract funds" and "contract for services" may not be completely clear.  Is there information available from NYSED to clarify this distinction?

Answer: “Sub-granting contract funds” is prohibited and is also known as “pass-through” or “flow-through” arrangements. “Contract for services” is allowable and is described when the fiscal agent contracts with a vendor or partner to provide appropriate services that the fiscal agent cannot provide itself. Subcontracting will be limited to twenty-five percent (25%) of the annual contract budget.

1. IX: Distribution of Awards: "(1) Priority will be given to proposals from sending schools with a cohort high school graduation rate below 82% based on the 4-year cohort graduation rate for the 2017-18 school year (August) published annually by NYSED (see <https://data.nysed.gov/>)."  
   What is a "sending school"?

Answer: A sending school is the high school where the student would have likely enrolled were it not for participation in your SS-ECHS project.

1. X: Project Funding: "Ten percent (10%) of the annual award will be withheld contingent upon the graduating cohort of students earning an average of at least 24 college credits over a four-year period."  
   How many credits on average should students be earning annually? For example, in Y2, with no graduating cohort, how can the school estimate what to offer students?

Answer: See **ATTACHMENT VII – Proposed College Credit Accumulation Plan** on page 76. Each applicant proposes a pathway for its participants to earn at least 24 college credits by the end of 12th grade.

1. XXII: Application Instructions: Page Limits and Standards: "You must limit the project narrative to no more than twenty-five (25) pages and the budget narratives to no more than three (3) pages each, and use the following standards."  
   This refers to NARRATIVES (plural) yet further down it states "The budget narrative should not exceed three (3) pages." How many budget narratives are required and what are their page limits?

Answer: The 25-page limit refers to the project/application/proposal narrative. There is only one budget narrative and it has a 3-page limit.

1. What is new this round, in terms of the grant requirements?

Answer: Please read the RFP and compare with past postings on the website: <http://www.nysed.gov/postsecondary-services/smart-scholars-early-college-high-school>

1. I am not confident that we will meet the requirements of this grant application before the deadline.  Can you tell me when the next application will be open?

Answer: A Smart Scholars ECHS Cohort 6 RFP is being developed for release in the coming weeks or months.