Questions and Answers on the Competitive Request for Proposals

Community Adult Learning Centers – Fund Codes: 340/345/359

Updated: February 21, 2012

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE QUESTION AND ANSWER PROCESS FOR THE RFP IS NOW CLOSED.

Changes since the last posting are in red font.

All page references refer to the bound hard copy of the RFPs that was distributed at bidders' conferences. For applicants referring to the RFP posted to the website, section references are also included. References to the *Massachusetts Guidelines for Effective Adult Basic Education in Community Adult Learning Centers and Correctional Institutions ("the Guidelines")* are provided as page numbers only.

1. CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS TO THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS AND THE *GUIDELINES.*

- Correction to the definition of multi-site: A multi-site project is defined as one lead agency with two or more sites. A site is defined as having administrative, instructional and advising staff and services at each site's location.
- Proposal Date Due: Friday, February 24, 2012
- NOTE: Proposals must be delivered to the Department by 5:00 p.m. (changed from 3 p.m.) on the date due.
- Narrative responses may be single-spaced.
- There is an error in the Request for Proposals on page 45 (RFP Part III Required Program Information). In Section IIB, in the paragraph that begins "Previous ABE grant recipients:" there is a reference to 2001 which should read "2011". The RFP reads, "A maximum of twenty-five performance points were available in each of the five years between FY2007 and FY2001 . . ." It should read, "A maximum of twenty-five performance points were available in each of the five years between FY2007 and FY2011 . . ."
- There is an error in the Request for Proposals on page 46 (RFP Part III Required Program Information, immediately above the heading for IV English Language Civics). The text reads, "All applicants must respond to Section VII, budget." It should read: "All applicants must respond to Section VIII, budget."
- Applicants for supplemental funding need to respond to the narrative questions related to each option, and include the costs of each proposed option in the overall budget, and also send a separate budget narrative for each component. NOTE: Submitting a separate budget narrative for each component is a change to the directions within the Request for Proposals. In addition to including the funding request in the overall budget forms and budget narrative, separate budget narratives should be submitted for the following components: English Language Civics,

Volunteer Tutoring Component, Space, Childcare, Student Leadership Development, Student Transportation and Rural Staff Travel.

- There is an error on page 26 of the *Guidelines*. The range of the teaching to prep time ratio supported by the rates is 2:1, the allowable range is 1:1 to 4:1 (teaching to preparation).
- There is an error on page 53 of the *Guidelines*. In the middle of the page, the second bullet under consistent test administration, should read: "practitioners who have completed an assessment training given by ACLS or SABES may train other colleagues at their program on the same assessment only in the MAPT and Level L of TABE 9/10. (Practitioners may not train other colleagues in the BEST Plus, CLAS-E, or the Levels E through A of the TABE 9/10.)
- There is an error on page 54 of the *Guidelines*. At the top of the page, the text should read: "Programs may administer CLAS-E and BEST Plus at intake and use the score results as their placement (or part of their placement) and pre-test. (It is correct that programs may not use TABE 9/10 or MAPT as placement and may not give at intake.)

2. TABLE 1 FUNDING ALLOCATION CHART

Q. Has a percentage of funding been allocated for new bidders?

A. No.

Q. How does it work if I serve sites in different workforce regions, and students come from different workforce regions?

A. If you want to apply for funding to serve the identified need in more than one workforce area, you need to submit applications for each region. If you want to focus on one region only, you would apply to the region in which your site is located.

Q. Is funding set aside for new bidders?

A. No.

3. LETTER OF INTENT TO APPLY

Q. I missed the deadline to submit the Letter of Intent to Apply. May I still apply?

A. Yes, but it would be appreciated if you would send a Letter of Intent to Apply as soon as possible to aid ACLS in planning for proposal reviews. The information provided in the Letters of Intent is already being used, so do not delay further.

Q. The Letter of Intent does not list "English Language Civics" as an option which is included in the Program Information. Are applicants required to include their desire to apply for this option?

A. No. The responses to Section IV will identify classes that incorporate significant civics education and are therefore eligible to receive funding through Fund Code 359. Awarding of Fund Code 359 funds is at the discretion of the Department.

Q. *The Letter of Intent does not list "English Language Civics" as an option which is included in the Program Information. Are applicants required to include their desire to apply for this option?*

A. No.

Q. *Can the Letter of Intent Form be submitted electronically?*

A. No.

Q. *Is the Letter of Intent Form protected?*

A. Yes. Print it out and fill it in, and send a hard copy to the address indicated in the RFP.

Q. *When an agency applies for more than one fund code, do they need to submit more than one Letter of Intent Form?*

A. No. The Letter of Intent should include any and all fund codes for which the applicant intents to submit a proposal.

Q. *When an agency intends to apply in more than one WIB region, are separate Letters of Intent required?*

A. Yes. If applying in more than one WIB region, a separate Letter of Intent is required for each region.

Q. *Will you post the names of the organizations that submit a Letter of Intent?*

A. Yes.

Q. *My agency offers services in a city and we intend to expand our services to another city that is within the same LWIB region. Because both cities are in the same LWIB region, we assume that we will submit 1 proposal to offer services in both (2 different sites). Is that correct?*

A. Yes.

4. **NEED FOR ABE AND ESOL BY CITY AND TOWN (TABLE)** – see also Part III Required Program Information Section I: Community Need for Adult Basic Education Services, # 8 below.

Q. *What is the source of the Census data used to calculate Need Points?*

A. The needs points were based on 2005-2009 estimates which were computed based on 2000 Actual Population Counts. These estimates are a new system adopted by the US Census Bureau to provide yearly updates to the actual ten year counts. Also, part of the computations is comprised of survey information collected in cities/town on an ongoing basis. ACLS used these estimates because they were the best available information on all Massachusetts cities/towns at the time the RFP was released.

Q. *I believe clarification is still needed concerning which communities our need points are to be based on. In the Question and Answer document, Part III, Section 8, Community Need for ABE Services, the following question was answered with a "Yes": "If the majority of students whom we serve are from 2 cities but we also serve a smaller number of students from a 3rd may we include that 3rd city as a* *community which we serve"   I believe that Anne Serino answered a similar question at the bidder's conference by saying that we could only count communities in which we have a site located. The posted answer to the question seems to say that we could be located in a community which is rated just 4 needs points and count a neighboring 15 point community as one we serve just because we draw a few students from it. Is this correct?*

A. To clarify the answer provided at a bidder's conference, the applicant must submit an application in the workforce development region in which the program is located. When determining which communities to include in the calculation of need points, applicants must be able to demonstrate that they serve a significant number of students from the communities used in the calculation.

Q. The Cambridge data also does not appear to match the 2000 census.

A. Thank you for specifying the community. The Census data used has been checked and is correct; a fuller explanation will be posted in the next Q&A.

Q. I find that the 2000 population statistic listed for my city in the RFP manual does not coincide with the 2000 statistic listed on-line from the Census Bureau. Can you explain the discrepancy?

A. Please identify the community in question so that we may look into it.

Q. Section I of Required Program Information has only one question, and then bulleted notes. Is our response meant to be only a list the towns we propose to serve? Do we need to include information here about points?

A. The only required response is the identification (a list) of the primary community or communities the applicant proposes to serve. The applicant does not need to provide any information about points.

5. **REQUIRED APPENDICES BY GRANT PROGRAM (TABLE)** – see also questions about specific required attachments in the sequence in which they appear in the printed RFP, in sections below.

Q. At the bottom of page 31 of the RFP, it says "compliance with the American with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, is a pre-requisite to receipt of a grant award". Does this mean that we should add an Appendix H with a statement showing compliance?

A. No, there is no need to add an Appendix H.

Q. Should I add letters of support to my proposal?

A. No, letters of support will not be read.

Q. Are there special forms for the Appendices, or de we design them ourselves? In particular, is there a form for Appendix D which requires new applicants to provide: "FY2007-FY2011 data that verifies past performance as specified in RFP Part III, Section III.B Past Performance. "?

A. With the exception of Appendices A and F, most appendices are designed by the applicant. There is no form provided for Appendix D.

Q. *Where can new applicants find Appendices C & D?*

A. Appendices C and D are designed by the applicant.

6. **STATEMENT OF ASSURANCES**

Q. *Our school district signs a Statement of Assurance each year that covers all the grants we get from ESE. Do we still need to submit a separate Statement of Assurances for the FY2013 Adult Basic Education Instructional Grants, or is the one we filed already sufficient?*

A. The Statement of Assurances signed for other ESE grants is <u>not</u> sufficient. Some of the assurances in the statement provided with the ABE RFP are specific to the adult education funding and the fund codes listed at the top of the document.

Q. *The RFP notes on the page before p.21 that the Statement of Assurances is due December 22, 2011. Is this correct? Elsewhere in the document it says that the Statement of Assurances is due on February 24, 2012.*

A. The Statement of Assurances is a required attachment to the application, due on February 24, 2012. The section heading page that precedes page 21 in the bound, hard copy of the RFP disseminated at bidders' conferences is an error. (This page does not appear in the on-line version.) Only the Letter of Intent to Apply was due on December 22.

Q. *What is the due date for the Statement of Assurances?*

A. The Statement of Assurances is a required form, and is due February 24, 2012, with the application.

7. **STUDENT ELIGIBILITY** (see Fund Use section of the RFP for student eligibility)

Q. *If a student does not have a social security number, what is another appropriate identifier?*

A. All enrolled students are assigned a unique identifier in SMARTT.

Q. *Are the Algebra and Reading/Writing class options listed in SMARTT appropriate for accommodating post-high school diploma students who are seeking to take next steps?*

A. All students enrolled in a Community Adult Learning Center must meet the student eligibility requirements specified in the RFP.

Q. *For the purposes of this ESE proposal, are homeless youth under the age of 18 eligible for ABE services?*

A. Eligible students are individuals who have attained 16 years of age, are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under state law, and who meet the criteria outlined in the RFP under Fund Use.

Q. *If a student wants to learn English for reasons other than career & college, are we justified in serving that person?*

A. That is a determination that each applicant needs to make about their target population and who they're choosing to serve.

Q. *If a program focuses "laser-like" on a certain population, would it be open to grievances?*

A. *The applicant is asked to determine its target population and to provide a rationale. (See* Proposed Program and Services: Program Design, questions 1.) Each applicant should carefully consider the need and who it is best prepared to serve, and identify the target population that it intends to serve, why, and explain how it was selected.

Q. *Focusing on a specific population could create a problem between the provider and the community it serves. How does a program say to a potential student, "you do not fall under the category of the target population that we chose"? Further, is it possible that a student currently receiving services could be removed from eligibility? What about a student who already sees her or himself in a career and liked her/his job? What about a student who doesn't want to go to college, has no family, or is disabled? Are they ineligible for services in this model?*

A. The eligibility requirements have not changed. (Refer to the Fund Use section of the RFP.) This RFP is about high expectations for <u>all</u> students, and supporting them in their next steps, whatever that next step is, including improving their literacy & language skills.

Part III – Required Program Information

8. **COMMUNITY NEED FOR ABE SERVICES** – see also questions on the Need for ABE and ESOL by City and Town table, #4 above.

Q. *Please define "primary" and "secondary" data.*

A. Refer to *Tools, Tips and Techniques: An Easy to Use Data Toolkit to Identify Community Needs and Assets*, referenced under the Additional Information section of the RFP.

Q. *My agency offers services in a city, and we intend to expand our services to another city that is within the same LWIB region. Because both cities are in the same LWIB region, we assume that we will submit one proposal to offer services in both communities (two different sites). Is that correct?*

A. Yes; provided both communities are in the same workforce region, one application may be submitted for services at two sites.

Q. *The RFP states that if an applicant is proposing to serve more than one city or town, the points assigned for need will be based on the average points assigned to those cities/towns. Does that mean that if one community has a need point of 1 and the other a need point of 5, the need points assigned to the application will be 3?*

A. Yes.

Q. *May an applicant use 2010 census data if it is accessible?*

A. The Department will assign need points as outlined in the RFP. Applicants are welcome to include additional data in their description of the need for adult basic education services in the community(ies) the applicant proposes to serve. (Section II.A, question 1.)

Q. *If the majority of students whom we serve are from 2 cities but we also serve a smaller number of students from a 3rd may we include that 3rd city as a community which we serve?*

A. Yes.

Q. *Section I of Required Program Information has only one question, and then bulleted notes. Is our response meant to be only a list the towns we propose to serve? Do we need to include information here about points?*

A. The only response required for Section I is identification of the community or communities the applicant proposes to serve. The Department will assign the need points accordingly, as described in the bulleted notes.

9. **PROPOSED PROGRAM AND SERVICES**

10. **PROGRAM DESIGN** – see also questions on Student Eligibility, #7 above, and questions on the Notice of Intent to Meet Community Adult Learning Center Program Design Requirements through Collaboration with One or More Other Applicants form, #30 below.

Q. *What assessment tool do we use for family literacy-focused program?*

A. All recipients of ESE adult basic education grants are required to use one of four standardized assessments depending on the type of class offered. Family literacy-focused programs would fall under the requirements for Community Adult Learning Centers, as stated in the Guidelines on page 54. For more information about these four assessments, please go to the MAPT, TABE Forms 9/10, BEST Plus or CLAS-E Assessment Policy Manuals at http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/assessment, under the "Policy" section.

Q. *Are we supposed to show in our class plan two different sets of dates if we want to extend school year to include a summer program? How do we enter a summer program in the SMARTT class plan?*

A. Please see similar questions below in this section (pp 11-12), and explanations provided in the responses as to how to enter a summer program in SMARTT.

Q. *Can family literacy be the focus of our adult basic education classes- running an adult basic education program using a family-literacy focused curriculum? Or does our program design have to have adult basic education/ESOL, with supplemental family literacy class/workshop?*

A. Family Literacy can be the focus of adult basic education (rate- based) classes.

Q. *We offer multiple cycles (4) and we offer 3 classes in each cycle for a total of 39 slots. Are we correct in assuming that no matter how many cycles of classes are provided, the total number of slots does not change? For example, if we offer three 13-slot classes, would our number of slots be 39 all year whether we provide 4 cycles of classes or 2 cycles of classes?*

A. The total slots are the sum of all slots entered for all classes so the total does change according to the number of classes entered in the class plan. If you offer more cycles, then the program has more slots. ACLS developed some policies regarding slots for various purposes such as linked classes so students are not double counted in the prototype and fluid slots for class enrollments.

Linked Classes:

When classes are linked, it allows users to get accurate slot counts for funding recommendations. Programs use the "link" column to indicate classes that are connected where students attend both classes.

For example, if a Bridge to College writing class is offered from 9:00 – 10:30 (with 12 slots) and a Bridge to College math class is offered from 10:30 – 12:00 (with 12 slots), the slot count in the "prototype" will then be 12 rather than 24. The same students will attend both classes, but many functions such as assessment, counseling, etc. are at the student level rather than class enrollment level.

Prototype:

The slots are calculated from the total slots in the rate based class plan. We are counting only slots for classes that start between 9/1 and 11/15 so as not to count duplicate slots for summer, semester or trimester classes.

Fluid Slots:

The total slot count is used to determine number of enrollments for all classes based on the total slots entered into the plan regardless of class start and end dates.

Q. *How do we input the 4 cycles of classes in SMARTT so it reflects 39 slots? As of now, we input 12 classes to reflect the start and end dates of the cycles (3 classes in each of 4 cycles) and the total number of slots shown in SMARTT is 156. Are we inputting correctly?*

A. You would enter classes with start and end dates of 9/1/xx – 6/30/xx to show 39 slots. The program can then determine how to break the months into cycles and has the flexibility to change cycle start and end dates whenever necessary.

Q. *In addition, if we enter the cycles separately, the fourth cycle gets split because of the mandatory summer separate accounting period. Thus the total for the number of cycles and slots appears more than it actually is. Please advice.*

A. Summer classes must always be entered separately due to state and federal funding cycles so that we can report accurately to both funding streams. The slot data is mostly used for state reporting and follows the state fiscal year --- 7/1/xx – 6/30/xx.

Q *We will submit a sequence of three classes that includes a proposed Career Pathways class: 345 to fund one ABE class and one ASE class 540/541 to fund one pre-ASE class. Since we can't include the Career Pathways on the class plan, how do we show that our design meets the requirements of three classes?*

A. The proposed use of Adult Career Pathways funding to meet the minimum requirements of a Community Adult Learning Center grant is not consistent with the purpose of releasing two separate grant programs with distinct purposes and priorities.

Q. *On p.23 of the FY2013 ABE Program Guidelines, exceptions to the requirement for a sequence of three classes include a) pre-literacy ESOL and b) Family Literacy classes. When there is an exception to the minimum sequence of 3 classes, does that still require a program to offer the whole continuum of levels in fewer classes?*

A. No.

Q *Is there a minimum number of classes that have to be offered when either pre-literacy ESOL or Family Literacy is proposed?*

A. There is a minimum for pre-literacy ESOL; there is no minimum for Family Literacy. Refer to *the Guidelines.*

Q. *On page 24, the Guidelines states, "ABE programs may increase instructional intensity by supplementing rate-based classes with non-rate based classes and services, such as distance learning..." Does this mean we can plan a one-day per week non-rate-based distance learning class to supplement a rate-based class a student is in? If we can, do we have to choose one of the approved DL programs, or can we use one we may have? Also, does that mean that if we do offer a DL non-rate based class, we would have to still go through the Instructional Hub?*

A. The non-rate-based "DL: Supplemental FTF" class option is only for programs funded for DL under options 1 or option 2. The class is intended to be a Face to Face activity to supplement their on-line instruction. Only programs funded for option 1 or option 2 will see the "DL: Supplemental FTF" drop-down option.

Q. *Under "Eligible Options for Rate-Based Classes Include" (FY13 Guidelines p. 116), ABE choices include "Core ABE/ESOL (default)," "Math/Numeracy," "Algebra," and "Reading/Writing." There is no explanation in the Guidelines or in the RFP about how the "Math/Numeracy," "Algebra," or "Reading/Writing" classes are different from the Core ABE/ESOL. That is, if we choose "Math/Numeracy" for example, does that mean that there must be a sequence of 3 in "Math/Numeracy" alone?*

A. No. The applicant should propose a design that meets the needs of the target population.

Q. *Under "Eligible Options for Rate-Based Classes Include", the only ESOL designations are "Core ABE/ESOL," "Listening/Speaking (ESOL),".and "Pre-Literacy ESOL." Is the "Listening/Speaking" considered to be a sequence of 3 separate from Core ABE/ESOL?*

A. No.

Q. *On pp. 23-24, the Guidelines states: "CALCs serving pre-literacy ESOL students may offer a minimum of a sequence of two classes. Pre-literacy ESOL adult learners must have access to ESOL classes either on-site or through community collaboration documented by an MOA with an ESE-funded ABE program." Please clarify what "must have access to..." means; does this mean that these students must* *take an ESOL class along with the NLL subject classes (whether at the CALC or through a collaborating agency), or that they simply must have access (the opportunity to take) ESOL classes? What would be the required standardized assessments?*

A. Pre-literacy ESOL students must have access, the opportunity, to take ESOL classes. Refer to the *Guidelines*, page 54, for all assessment requirements.

Q. For the Community Adult Learning Centers application, if an applicant has teaching staff that teach ESE funded classes and non-ESE funded classes from other funding sources in the same program, should the classes be included as educational services provided by the program and should the teaching staff duties of both the ESE funded classes and non-ESE funded classes be included in the Teaching Qualifications Form?

A. The response and the Teaching Qualifications form only require what ESE is requested to fund and what the applicant is proposing as match.

Q. Our program has two levels that each meet from 9-12. We would like to offer non-rates based classes on Mondays and Wednesdays from 11–12. The Level-1 class will have Employability on Mondays and Computers on Wednesday. The Level-2 class will have Computers on Mondays and Employability on Wednesdays. Regular classroom teachers will use this time for planning while supplementary staff teach the non-rates classes. My question is: In the past, when we have tried to make a schedule like this, we have been told that there is an issue of "Team Teaching" because more than one teacher is scheduled at the same time. It is hard for me to understand this logic since teachers are assigned to different classes. It seems to me that we could link the non-rates classes to specific levels and this eliminates the issue.

A. It is not clear exactly what is being proposed; however, there appear to be three issues with this scenario. First, the 9-12 rate-based class and the 11-12 non-rate-based class appear to overlap. On a closer look, it seems that the rate-based class meets from 9-11, and the non-rate-based class will meet from 11-12, in which case the rate-based class instructional time is overstated. The second issue is that if teachers are planning from 11-12, that is not class time, at least not for those teachers. It is unclear what "supplementary staff" refers to. Third, only rate-based classes can be linked, to avoid duplicating the slot count in the prototype.

Q. In the ABE Guidelines, p. 24, Intensity and Duration, paragraph 2 it says: "Massachusetts requires a minimum of 150 hours of instruction annually, and strongly encourages multiple 150-175 hour academic cycles throughout the year to extend instruction through a minimum of 32 weeks up through a maximum of 48 weeks per year." I understand this to mean that it is acceptable to offer a class for 360 total annual instructional hours, but across fewer than 32 weeks. Is my understanding correct?

A. Yes; a program may propose a class that provides 360 instructional hours in fewer than 32 weeks.

Q. *In Part III Required Program Information, questions II.A.3 and II.B.4 a and b refer to research and effective practice. What is the definition of research in this context?*

A. It is up to the applicant to identify appropriate research.

Q. *Can family literacy be a part of the program design?*

A. Refer to the *Guidelines*; specifically, Appendix E and the section on Community Planning.

Q. *Must a collaboration have a lead agency?*

A. When an applicant is proposing to receive a grant and provide services through a sub-contract with another agency that is not applying directly, the applicant is considered the lead agency and the fiscal agent for the collaboration. When two or more eligible agencies are each applying directly to ESE for funding, but proposing to meet the minimum required profile of services through a formal agreement with each other, it is not necessary to designate a lead agency, as all funded agencies will received funding directly from and be directly accountable to ESE. In the latter situation, all applicants are required to identify the other applicants and the program components that each proposes to provide by completing and submitting with the proposal the *Notice of Intent to Meet Community Adult Learning Center (CALC) Program Design Requirements through a Collaboration with One or More Other CALC Applicants* form.

Q. *My agency currently has a Fiscal Year 2012 ABE award with federal funding through August 31, 2012. We would like to submit our FY 2013 proposal for the cost of a full year, but aren't sure which fund code to apply under (340 or 345), or how to proceed with the SMARTT plan and the accompanying budget.*

A. Current recipients of ABE federal awards that end on August 31, 2012, may propose an annual schedule from September 1, 2012 through August 31, 2013. All applicants should include both fund codes ("340/345") on the budget pages, and to apply for funding without distinguishing between state and federal funding. Depending on what services are funded in the new funding cycle, ACLS will determine whether the funding will be state, federal or both state and federal. If only one source of funds is used (either state or federal) ACLS will simply delete the fund code not used.

Q. *If summer programming is involved will the expected start date be July 1, 2012 or can summer programming begin July 1, 2013?*

A. It depends on whether the applicant is already funded for the summer of 2012. Current recipients of ABE federal awards that end on August 31, 2012, may propose an annual schedule from September 1, 2012 through August 31, 2013.

Q. *Since funding codes will be assigned after submission and selection of grantees, can a program still submit an application with an intended start up date of Sept or Oct 2012, instead of July or August?*

A. Yes.

Q. *Can additional hours for intensity be provided by a non-rate-based class?*

A. Yes.

Q. *For existing providers serving homeless youth, what are you looking for in regard to "details and documentation"? (Question 2.A.1 of the RFP)*

A. It is up to the applicant to define their student population and to determine the documentation to provide to substantiate the percentage that is homeless.

Q. *If some students in a class designed for GLE 0-3.9 are GLE 0-1.9 and others are 2-3.9 what is the required class size?*

A. The required class size (student: teacher ratio) for a class that serves Beginning ABE (GLE 2-3.9) is 13:1 to 16:1.

Q. *If a program wants to offer an ABE class for non-native speakers who are at SPL 7, does this become part of an ABE or ESOL sequence? How is this class designed in SMARTT? Is it rates-based or non-rates-based? What do we select under "class focus?"*

A. The class is determined based on the curriculum and assessment the program provides. It would be a rate-based class.

Q. *The Guidelines (pp. 22, 30, and 116) and SMARTT documentation reference "Bridge to College Math and Writing Classes" as options that will be activated for grant programs to be released in the future. Should Bridge Classes should be included in the program plan for the FY 13-17 RFP, and will additional funds be available for them?*

A. No. A Bridge to College class option has been set up in SMARTT for a new grant program still in the planning stage, for which the RFP will be released at a future date. Neither the funding nor the program requirements have yet been released for this grant program.

Q. *Applicants should not propose Bridge to College/Math and College/Writing for this proposal. Is this correct?*

A. That is correct. Bridge to College Math and Writing classes and Boston Opportunity Network classes are options that will be activated for grant programs to be released in the future, and will be described when Requests for Proposals for those grant programs are released.

Q. *Part III Required Program Information, Section II, Proposed Program and Services, question 2 directs applicants to summarize the proposed educational services in terms of service type (ABE and ESOL)* ***class focus****, class level, scheduling and intensity. Is there a specific definition for "class focus"? If so, where could we find it?*

A. Refer to the *Massachusetts Guidelines for Effective Adult Basic Education for Community Adult Learning Centers and Adult Basic Education Programs in Correctional Institutions*; specifically, the Opportunity to Learn Standards section, ABE Program Design Requirements: Setting Up Rate-Based Classes and Setting Up Non-Rate-Based Classes.

Q. *Can a program change the topic of a Non-Rate Based class during the five year grant?*

A. Refer to the *ABE Guidelines*, page 20: In grant continuation years, “If the needs of the community change during the funding cycle, the grant recipient is encouraged to adjust the previous year's program design accordingly – with prior ACLS approval. The program director should discuss the community’s changing needs and the proposed changes to the program design with the assigned ACLS program specialist, to address any questions, concerns or requirements before submitting the revised plan.”

Q. *On page 83-84, the ABE Guidelines describe a process for intervention up to and including potentially defunding a chronically underperforming program. When a subcontracting program is a “chronically underperforming program,” but the lead agency is a Tier 2 or 1 program, what would the protocol be? Would the lead agency be held responsible for the performance of its subcontractors and be in jeopardy of losing funding despite its good performance?*

A. ACLS will look at performance within collaborations on a case by case basis.

Q. *We are a rural program with 5 sites. In order to have a sequence of 3 we would like to hold only Pre-GED and GED classes in one site and refer the few students in the lowest level to the next closest site for their ABE class. Do we need a formal MOA or MOU between the 2 sites?*

A. Refer to the notes under Section I of Part II, Required Program Information: “Any applicant whose program design is based on a collaboration with one or more proposed partners (e.g., one or more levels in the required instructional sequence or other required elements are provided by a partner who is also applying for Community Adult Learning Center funding) must identify the other applicants and the program components that each proposes to provide by completing and submitting the Notice of Intent to Meet Community Adult Learning Center (CALC) Program Design Requirements through a Collaboration with One or More Other CALC Applicants form. The information on this form does not contribute to proposal scores, but will be used in sorting proposals for reading teams.”

Provided both partners are in the same workforce region, the proposals of both partners will be read by the same team. The RFP further states, “Partners to such collaborations that are recommended for funding will be required to submit Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs)1 prior to receipt of the grant award. (Do not include MOAs with the application except where they are specifically requested.)”

Q. *Does an applicant for a Community Adult Learning Center grant have to offer all three levels of classes in order to qualify for funding?*

[1] See FY 2013 *Guidelines for Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) Between ABE Grant Recipients and Partnering Organizations*, published as an appendix to the FY *2013 Massachusetts Guidelines for Effective Adult Basic Education*, available on the ACLS Program Management webpage: http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/abeprogram/

A. Yes, either directly or through a collaboration. Refer to the *Opportunity to Learn Standards: ABE Program Design Requirements* section of the *ABE Guidelines*, beginning on page 21.

Q. *When an applicant for this grant wishes to collaborate with another program, does the latter need to be applying for CALC funding as well?*

A. When the collaboration is enabling one or both partners to fulfill basic minimum program requirements, such as the required sequence of three levels of classes, they must both be ESE-funded. There is no way to ensure that non-ESE funded providers currently have or will maintain over time the Opportunity to Learn Standards/ABE Program Requirements described in the *ABE Guidelines*, pp 21-71. Once all required components are in place, applicants may establish other types of collaborations with non-ESE funded entities. Any applicant whose program design is based on a collaboration with one or more proposed partners must identify the other applicants and the program components that each proposes to provide by completing and submitting with the proposal the *Notice of Intent to Meet Community Adult Learning Center (CALC) Program Design Requirements through a Collaboration with One or More Other CALC Applicants* form.

Q. *What is the definition of "collaboration"?*

A. For the purpose of this RFP, collaboration may refer to either of the following: (a) one lead agency (applicant) with a Memorandum of Agreement with one or more organizations proposing to provide services through a sub-contract, or (b) multiple lead agencies each applying directly to ESE for funding, but proposing to meet the minimum required profile of services (for example, the required sequence of three classes) through a formal agreement with each other. Lead agency applicants that are proposing to meet the program design requirements through collaboration with another lead agency applicant (b) must complete the Notice of Intent to Meet Community Adult Learning Center Program Design Requirements through Collaboration with One or More Other Applicants form in the RFP, and are subject to the single agency page limits posted in the RFP (30 pages; 38 pages if proposing both ABE and ESOL or if a multi-site project). Applicants proposing collaborations through subcontracts (a) are allowed the additional 8 pages of narrative in response to Part III Required Program Information.

Q. *What is a "multi-site" project?*

A. A multi-site project is defined as one lead agency with two or more sites. A site is defined as having administrative, instructional and advising staff and services at each site's location. Multi-site projects have a 38 page limit for their response to Part III Required Program Information. (Corrected 1/10/12)

11. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGIES

Q. *Since Family Literacy classes are not required to offer a sequence of 3 classes, do we still address benchmarks in describing how they align with the curriculum? Since it would be possible to have some multi-level classes?*

A. Yes, your curriculum should be aligned with the benchmarks.

Q. *If an agency is in the process of developing their curriculum but is not finished, will they be provided time to do so, if it is one of their goals for quality improvement?*

A. The purpose of the Q&A is to clarify the RFP and answer procedural questions. ACLS is not able to advise applicants at this time beyond the information in the RFP and *the Guidelines*.

Q. *If the program's focus is family literacy/parenting, does the curriculum still have to align with the MA ABE Framework for ESOL?*

A. Yes.

Q. *How do we make sure the lessons and goals are student-centered but still be in the realm of family literacy? Or is it even necessary?*

A. The lessons and goals should be driven by the needs and concerns of participants.

Q. *If our organization wants to have our program mainly focus on parenting/family literacy to address an issue that we believe to be most critical to Vietnamese students K-12 (the parenting methods of immigrant Vietnamese parents in America) are there any exceptions in terms of what the RFP allows or what is stated in the Guidelines?*

A. No.

Q. *Can we offer parenting courses in rate-based classes?*

A. Parenting may be incorporated as a theme into any rate-based class, through contextualized curriculum. Family Literacy addresses skills; parenting is a context within which skills may be addressed.

Q. *Can non-rate based classes be taught with bi-lingual instruction?*

A. The primary language of instruction must be English.

Q. *What Science Framework should we use? Will a new framework be available?*

A. A revised Science Framework will not available in time for the submission of proposal; when it is released, programs will be expected to align their curriculum with it.

Q. *Is there a separate framework for ABE & ESOL?*

A. No, there will not be separate frameworks.

Q. *Is science intended for both ESOL and ABE?*

A. Yes.

12. EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER ADVISING

Q. *Regarding the section on educational and career advising, does the Advisor position replace the previous counseling position? Does the new position concentrate exclusively on career and higher education issues or can it also include the resolution of personal issues that are barriers to further progress?*

A. The role of the Advisor includes assisting students with overcoming barriers to further progress.

Q. Do programs that focus on family literacy still have to address career goals and/or educational goals (e.g., community college, GED)?

A. Refer to the Guidelines for Family and Community Engagement and Family Literacy, Appendix E of the *Massachusetts Guidelines for Effective Adult Basic Education for Community Adult Learning Centers and ABE Programs in Correctional Institutions.*

Q. How do we indicate advising hours in program planning in the staff plan? Even though the Educational and Career Advisor position is listed, there is no column to designate hours for advising--only counseling, and there is no 2.5% calculation for advising--only for counseling. I assume that we should use the counseling column to note advising hours, but I want to be sure.

A. Use the Counseling column. All of the labels in SMARTT have not yet been updated.

Q. How does Educational and Career Advising compare with Counseling?

A. The Guidelines address this explicitly; applicants are advised to read the relevant sections.

Q. What are Educational and Career Plans?

A. Refer to the appropriate sections of the *Guidelines*.

Q. Does the Educational and Career Advisor replace the Counselor/learner support services facilitator?

A. Beginning in FY 2013, Community Adult Learning Center and ABE Programs in Correctional Institutions grants will support a role called "Educational and Career Advisor," and grant recipients will be required to designate a staff person whose primary role is to support each student in developing, implementing, and monitoring an individualized Career Pathways Plan which will guide the student towards her or his next steps goals. This role does replace the position formerly called "Education Counselor" in ABE grants. The hiring authority may assign a different job title to this individual, provided the required services are provided, and included in the job description. Applicants are strongly advised to refer to the RFP and *Massachusetts Guidelines for Effective Adult Basic Education in Community Adult Learning Centers and Correctional Institutions*.

Q. Is the term Education Counselor obsolete?

A. The Educational and Career Advisor does replace the position formerly called "Education Counselor" in ABE grants. The new role is intended to focus more specifically on helping students identify, plan for and achieve their next steps.

Q. What if the program does not currently have a person equipped to fulfill the education and career advising role, and would need to hire that person?

A. The applicant would need to answer accordingly.

Q. *What if the program feels they would be not need to hire the Educational and Career Advisor?*

A. The applicant would need to answer accordingly.

Q. *Could an applicant partner with another agency to provide educational and career advising?*

A. Yes.

Q. *Has the formula for funding the advising position remained the same at 2.5% of student instructional hours?*

A. Yes.

Q. *Can we create our own education and career plan?*

A. ACLS will provide a template in FY13.

Q. *Is there an alternative to the educational and career plan for students with family related goals?*

A. See p.126 in the *Massachusetts Guidelines for Effective ABE for Community Adult Learning Centers* for a description of the Family Action Plan. (*Appendix E: Guidelines for Family and Community Engagement and Family Literacy*)

Q. *Does the Family Action Plan option include parents and grandparents?*

A. The Family Action Plan option is designed for parents. In this context, parents are defined as primary caregivers who may include extended family members or other adults who either reside with the child or play a primary role in the child's life.

13. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

14. AGENCY BACKGROUND

Q. *In Part III Required Program Information, Section III, Agency Background, does the "organization" refer to the larger organization of which an agency is a part, or to the agency's capacity and experience? For example, if the program is part of a public school, do we need to provide a summary of the school department's overall budget, or of the agency's budget?*

A. In Section III, the organization refers to the entity that submits the application and signs the budget. When an ABE program is part of a larger organization, the larger organization is usually the eligible applicant and the entity responsible for the grant. The questions in Section III refer to the legal entity submitting the application.

Q. *If there is a lead agency collaborating with another agency do you need the information for both?*

A. If an applicant agency intends to subcontract for services, the applicant needs to make a decision about what information to provide about its own agency and its subcontractors.

Q. *Is the organizational chart for the entire college or just for the ABE program?*

A. Provide the organizational chart for the eligible applying agency, not just the ABE program.

15. **PAST PERFORMANCE/EFFECTIVENESS**

Q. As a new applicant, we want to show the experience of both lead agency and our educational subcontractors who are actually providing the classes. This leads us to a few questions:

a) Can we submit data related to three separate agencies that are providing different pieces of the advising and teaching and oversight? (We have MOA's with each of the two external agencies).

A. Yes.

b) One provider has been part of collaborative ESE ABE grants over the past five fiscal years. If we submit their agency name, will the data be extracted by reviewers or should we enter it separately in Appendix D, since it is a separate SMARTT account?

A. Providers who have data in SMARTT, and who have been accountable for performance standards (Community Adult Learning Center grant recipients and subcontractors, not including ABE for Homeless Adults providers), will be assigned performance points based on their data.

c) One educational provider has some SMARTT data from DTA contracts. Again, will that be accessed or shall we enter it separately in Appendix D?

A. It should be provided in Appendix D.

Q For past performance data as required under Organizational Capacity Part III B. can we use data from our subcontractors? If so can we use the data from multiple subs (we have separate subs for GED and ESOL)?

A. The data should demonstrate the past effectiveness of the applicant and any subcontractors who are proposed service providers.

Q. I am writing a proposal to support an ABE program previously funded under an ABE for Homeless Adults grant (which was a separate grant program in FY 2006), and I am trying to extract our performance from Cognos. While I can pull up reports by fiscal year for each individual area of performance, such as learning gains, I am unable to pull up a summary report that factors in all performance areas and provides the total points earned each year. Is such a report available for agencies previously funded under the ABE for Homeless Adults grant program? If not, is it fine to use individual reports to report progress, or will I be missing important data due to the fact that I cannot pull up a summary?

A. The RFP asks or performance data in specific areas; therefore, the Cognos reports available on each individual area of performance should provide the information needed. However, a summary report for ABE for Homeless Adults has been added in Cognos: under ad hoc reports, select "Performance Standard Reports"; then select "Performance Standards for Homeless"; then select "Summary Report". [These reports were set up under Performance Standards Reports in error; since there have not been standards for programs that serve the homeless, these reports will soon be moved to the Performance Reports section.]

Q. *In the Past Performance/Effectiveness section of the RFP, can you get specific as to what you expect part providers for homeless youth to include to demonstrate performance?*

A. Applicants whose primary target population is homeless adults must provide past performance data by including in Appendix D auditable data, in annual numbers and percentages, that verifies the outcomes achieved by homeless students in FY 2007 through FY 2011. Outcomes must include, at a minimum, significant learning gains achieved, GED certificates earned, and student goals attained as defined in the Massachusetts 2011 Performance Standards for Community Adult Learning Centers http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/pawg/fy11fc340_345_359.doc. Each of these areas is defined at http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/pawg/fy11fc340_345_359.doc. Outcomes reported by applicants who received ESE funding in FY 2007-FY2011 must be substantiated in SMARTT. Additionally, all applicants whose primary target population is comprised of homeless adults must include in Appendix E a narrative description of the assessment tools used to measure learning gain and an explanation of how significant learning gains are defined, and an overview of the data and accountability systems used to capture the above information.

Q. *How do we address past performance in the narrative?*

A. No narrative is required for past performance. Programs funded at any time during the multi-year funding period of FY2006 – FY2012 will be assigned points based on their past performance from FY 2007 through FY 2011. No additional narrative is required nor will be read. For new applicants and/or applicants whose primary target population is comprised of homeless adults, the only narrative required is that specifically requested in Appendix E.

Q. *If performance has declined, should we explain that in the narrative?*

A. No. Performance points will be assigned by formula before proposals are forwarded to readers; there is no mechanism for reading teams to factor in any narrative information in this section. In the evaluation of Past Performance, the only narrative that will be considered is that specifically requested of new applicants and/or applicants whose primary target population is comprised of homeless adults in Appendix E.

Q. *The RFP states that eligible entities are those with "demonstrated effectiveness." Please define and explain how this is reviewed and/or measured.*

A. Effectiveness will be assessed in a review of the information referenced in section III.B, “Past Performance/ Effectiveness”. Measures are attendance, average attended hours, pre- and post- testing percentage, learner gains, setting and meeting student goals, and completion of Educational Functioning Level as defined by the National Reporting System (NRS) for adult basic education. Note that information on NRS educational functional levels can be found on the National Reporting System website.

Q. *What kind of data/documentation should organizations give to verify "past performance in areas aligned as closely as possible with . . . Performance Standards"?*

A. A new applicant must determine what data best substantiates its effectiveness in each of the six areas outlined in the ABE Program Performance Standards. These six areas are defined, with standards and benchmarks for each area, at http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/pawg/fy11fc340_345_359.doc. The RFP states that the data must be auditable, should cover FY2007-FY2011, and provide both numbers and percentages. New applicants must also include a narrative description of the assessment tools used to measure learning gain, an explanation of how significant learning gains are defined, and an overview of the data and accountability systems used to capture the above information.

Q. *As a new applicant, we don't have performance data for FY 2007--FY 2011. How should we respond to part III, section II, subdivision B? Can we be competitive without this data?*

A. Massachusetts and all states are required by federal authorizing legislation, Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, to consider past performance in awarding ABE grants. For the purposes of this competition, past performance refers to the six areas outlined in the ABE Program Performance Standards at http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/pawg/fy11fc340_345_359.doc. A new applicant must determine what data best substantiates its effectiveness in each of these six areas.

Q. In the listing of student goals on page 58 in the Guidelines, the following student goals are listed: (8a) Enter Occupational Training of more than 12 months duration; *(8b) Retain Occupational Training longer than 12 months duration; (8c) Complete Occupational Training longer than 12 months duration; (9a) Enter Occupational Training of 6 to 12 months duration; (9b) Complete Occupational Training of 6 to 12 months duration; (10a) Enter Occupational Training of more than 6 months duration; (10b) Complete Occupational Training longer than 6 months duration. Are 10a and 10b correct, or should they say "less" than 6 months, which includes some important CDL and CNA trainings?*

A. The goals are correct as listed. Only Occupational Training of 6 months or more is counted as an outcome.

Q. *Is there a chart that would tell us how many performance points we will be assigned?*

A. ACLS is reviewing the Letters of Intent to Apply, to understand who will be applying and in what configuration, before performance points are released.

16. **QUALIFIED STAFF** - see also questions on the Adult Basic Education Teaching Qualifications Form, #28 below.

Q. *For the Community Adult Learning Centers application, if an applicant has teaching staff that teach ESE funded classes and non-ESE funded classes from other funding sources in the same program, should the classes be included as educational services* *provided by the program and should the teaching staff duties of both the ESE funded classes and non-ESE funded classes be included in the Teaching Qualifications Form?*

A. The response and the Teaching Qualifications form only require what ESE is requested to fund and what the applicant is proposing as match.

Q. What are "professional standards"?

A. Professional standards describe what an ABE teacher needs to know and be able to do. The *Guidelines* address both existing professional standards and those currently under development; applicants are advised to read the relevant sections.

Q. Are postsecondary degrees expected for teachers?

A. Each applicant determines the minimum qualifications it will require of each position.

17. English Language/Civics (EL/Civics)

Q. Our current EL/Civics grant extends through the end of August 2012 but the new grant starts in July 2012. Do we put our SMARTT plan and in our budget the classes that will be covered by FY12 EL/Civics? I expect that we would need to in order to show our full program.

A. Current recipients of ABE federal awards that end on August 31, 2012, may propose an annual schedule from September 1, 2012 through August 31, 2013. All applicants should apply for funding without distinguishing between state and federal funding. Depending on what services are funded in the new funding cycle, ACLS will determine whether the funding will be state, federal or both state and federal. If only one source of funds is used (either state or federal) ACLS will simply delete the fund code not used.

Q. Is the English Language Civics component required for all applicants proposing to offer ESOL services?

A. Only applicants proposing to offer ESOL services <u>that incorporate significant civics education</u> and are therefore eligible to receive funding through Fund Code 359 are required to section IV, English Language Civics.

Q. Will additional funds be awarded to programs that score "well" on the English Language Civics section? Would this funding replace the monies that are currently granted to programs through Fund Code 359: English Language Civics – or would it be awarded in addition to those monies?

A. No. The responses to Section IV will identify classes that incorporate significant civics education and are therefore eligible to receive funding through Fund Code 359.

Q. Is the EL/Civics money included in the regional allocations?

A. Yes.

Q. Are there any guidelines on the scope of EL/Civics?

A. No; the two questions in the RFP outline the information requested.

Q. Is the 2 page limit to respond to the EL Civics questions over and above the 30 page limit for the main CALC narrative?

A. Yes.

Q. Is the English Language Civics component required for all applicants proposing to offer ESOL services?

A. Applicants for Community Adult Learning Center grants proposing are required to respond to Section IV, EL Civics, <u>if they propose to offer ESOL services that incorporate significant civics education</u>.

18. VOLUNTEER TUTORING COMPONENT

Q. We are requesting supplemental funding for a Volunteer Tutoring component which includes a Volunteer Coordinator. We also put the Volunteer Coordinator in the staff plan. Is that correct? Is the funding being counted twice?

A. Yes, put the Volunteer Coordinator in the staff plan. If by "funding" you mean the salary of the Volunteer Coordinator, it's not being counted twice.

Q. Where is the Volunteer Screen in SMARTT?

A. There was a temporary problem with the link to the Volunteer screen; it should be corrected by the time this Q&A posts.

Q. In the Volunteer Tutoring section of the ABE proposal, question 7 states: "If the applicant's funding request supports the cost of a Volunteer Coordinator who will coordinate and implement the volunteer tutoring component across multiple ESE-funded Community Adult Learning Centers (CALCs), identify the other CALC applicants. Also, include Memoranda of Agreement in Appendix G, outlining the roles and responsibilities of each partner." Does this MOA requirement apply only to separate ESE-funded programs, or does it apply to each site within one multi-site ESE-funded program?

A. The requirement to submit an MOA applies only to separate ESE-funded programs, not to multi-site programs.

Q. The Volunteer Tutor Coordinator has a caseload of 20 students/tutors. Must the program maintain a minimum of 12 at all times?

A. Yes.

Q. How much funding can a program request for the Volunteer Tutoring Component?

A. Please refer to the Fund Use section of the RFP, and the Volunteer Tutoring Component section of the *Massachusetts Guidelines for Effective ABE for Community Adult Learning Centers*.

19. STUDENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Q. I would like to offer a Non-Rate-Based class for Student Leadership, but open it up to both ABE and ESOL students. What service type (ABE or ESOL) and levels

(GLE's or SPL's) should be indicated if I expect to recruit students from both service types and from all levels of classes?

A. Currently, the only way to set up a non-rate-based class in SMARTT is to select a service type (either ABE or ESOL). Regardless of the service type designation under which the class is set up, any ABE or ESOL student can be enrolled in the class.

Q. Please clarify fund use for student leadership funds as it relates to the non-rate-based Student Leadership class. All of the information in the guidelines and RFP relate to the Student Leadership team, and not the Student Leadership class. If Team Members are enrolled in the class, what can stipends pay them for? Class time? Project development inside of class time? Project development outside of class?

A. Students cannot be paid for time in class, including project development within class time. They can be paid for their time working on a project outside of class time.

Q. In the Non-Rates Based drop down menu, Student Leadership is one of the options for supplemental classes. If we propose a NRB "SP: Student Leadership" focus, can we also apply for the $2,000 supplemental funds for Student Leadership Development?

A. Yes.

Q. *Is the $2000 available for Student Leadership, if awarded, intended to be for activities, projects, etc., over and above the NRB class, or can we still use the optional funds to support activities, projects, etc for students within the NRB class?*

A. Refer to the Fund Use section of the Community Adult Learning Center RFP, and to the FY2013 *Guidelines*.

Q. Can we pay staff from the Community Adult Learning Center budget and use the Student Leadership funds for student stipends?

A. Staff could be paid to work on student leadership development from the Student Leadership funds, the unrestricted funds or with matching funds.

Q. Can the student leadership funds be used for stipends and workshops, and not necessarily for staff?

A. Yes.

20. SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING TO PARTIALLY OFFSET OPERATING COSTS NOT COVERED IN THE ABE RATES

Q. I am unable to locate the narrative questions for Space and Childcare.

A. All narrative questions are in Part III, Required Program Information. See the link to Part III in the RFP Required Forms section. Space and Childcare are Sections VII A and B, respectively.

21. SPACE

Q. *We are proposing using space as a match. We have listed that in SMARTT in the Supplemental Funding Space category, in the match column. Is this correct? Do we put the narrative in the Part VII Supplemental Funding to Partially Offset Operating Costs or do we put it under Match Narrative? Can we offer as a match the full cost of the space that is used for the program (prorated by time and square footage)?*

A. If the applicant is providing the full cost of space as match, there is no need to enter that match in the Supplemental Funding Space category. It should be explained in the Match Narrative and included on Schedule B.

Q. *Would any portion of the debt service payments for the space used for the proposed programs under ABE RFP for Community Adult Learning Centers be considered as eligible space cost expenditure? If so, would you please provide some guidance on how to calculate the portion eligible to be included in the proposal to this RFP?*

A. The RFP instructs applicants for supplemental funding to partially offset space costs to provide the following:
- the cost per square foot of the space and how it was determined;
- the percent of time the space is used for grant activities; and,
- an estimate of the dollar value of the space, using the following formula: multiply the number of square feet used for grant activities by the cost per square foot of the space, by the percentage of time the grant-funded program uses the space (up to 50% of this cost is eligible for support through supplemental funds for space).

Q. *I know that previously funded programs are required to maintain the same level of match. However, much of our prior match was for space costs and was calculated differently than by square foot. In calculating space cost by square foot, the amount is substantially lower. It seems that it will be extremely difficult to maintain our minimum match using this new calculation method. We are looking for input on this issue.*

A. The formula for calculating space costs in the FY 2013 RFP is exactly the same as the formula provided in the FY 2006 RFP. The allowable method for calculating space costs is as described in the RFP.

Q. *Does the match required for space & childcare have to be above & beyond the amount required for Maintenance of Effort?*

A. No, the required match for space and childcare can be included in the Maintenance of Effort amount.

Q. *For the purposes of this application, what is the definition of "space"?*

A. Space needed to operate the ABE/ESOL program.

Q. *If a program operates in a public school during evening hours (when regular public schools classes are not in session), what should the program use as available hours? The public school is normally open from 7:00 – 4:00, but the ABE program operates "after hours."*

A. If the space that is used by the ABE program is used exclusively by the ABE program, then it is designated space and 100% usage may be claimed. If the space the ABE program uses in the evening is used by the public school or any other entity at other times, then it is considered to be shared space.

The base, or 100% of building availability, is considered to be the total time the building is open for use. For example, if the building opens at 7:00 a.m. for the public school, and stays open until 9:00 p.m. five days a week for evening users, then the total number of available hours is fourteen (7:00 am to 9:00 pm), times five days times the number of weeks it is open.

The percent used by the ABE program can be determined by dividing the total hours used by the ABE program by the total hours the building is open (including day, evening, and weekend use).

Q. *Since 50% of the space costs would be eligible to be covered by the grant, can the program use matching funds to cover the other 50% of cost of space?*

A. Yes.

Q. *Could you please clarify the formula for calculating space costs when the space is used by the Community Adult Learning Center for a portion of the time it is available?*

A. Below is an example of how to calculate space costs when a space is used only a portion of the time it is available for use:

The number of square feet x cost per square foot x percent of time used by the program:

250 ft. x $18/square ft. = $4500

If the space is available Monday through Friday from 9 am to 5 pm (100% = 40 hours) and the program uses it Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9 am to noon, or 15 hours:

15 hours of the 40 available hours = 37.5% of the time.

If the lease on the 250 square feet is $4,500 for 100% usage, and the program is only using it for 37.5% of the available time, the cost would be $1,688. (All amounts must be rounded to the nearest whole dollar.)

If the cost is $1,688, the program can request 50% of $1,688, or $844.

22. CHILDCARE

Q. *What is the definition of Early Childhood Assistant or Non-Instructional Staff?*

A. Each applicant would need to develop job descriptions for its staff. Early Childhood Assistants are eligible for the support staff rate.

Q. *Does the childcare provider have to be a licensed provider?*

A. The criteria are outlined in the Request for Proposal. Note that evidence of liability insurance is required.

Q. *Does the childcare have to be on-site?*

A. The description of the services and where they are located should be provided by the applicant, with a rationale for the proposed service.

23. **STUDENT TRANSPORTATION**

Q. Is there a maximum amount that can be requested for the supplemental student transportation section of the RFP? Do you have any guidelines to the amounts that may be approved?

A. There is not minimum or maximum amount of funding and no guidelines assigned to student transportation.

Q. Can student transportation supplemental monies be used for monthly or weekly MBTA passes?

A. Yes

Q. Is purchasing bus tokens for student transportation to and from classes considered a student transportation set aside item, and where would tokens go in the budget?

A. Yes, the cost of bus tokens for student transportation to and from classes may be requested under the RFP category of optional supplementary funding to partially offset operational costs. On the budget forms, this expense would be noted in line 8, “Other,” under “Transportation of Students”.

Q. Is a match for Student Transportation required?

A. Refer to both the Fund Use section of the RFP, and the information in Part III Required Program Information, Section VII.C, Student Transportation.

Q. Do the matching resources for student transportation have to be related to student transportation?

A. Yes.

24. **RURAL STAFF TRAVEL**

Q. We operate five sites, two of which are in the most rural county in the state. We cover over 1,000 square miles, and distance between sites is no less than 30 minutes driving time one way. However, because some of our sites are located in population centers, all five sites do not meet the definition of “rural”. In order to qualify for supplemental funding for rural staff travel, are all sites within a multi-site program required to have a population density of less than 750, or can an applicant qualify if some of the sites fit the definition of rural?

A. An applicant whose staff needs to travel distances between sites is eligible to apply for supplemental funding for rural staff travel if <u>some</u> of the sites fit the definition of rural.

Q. What is the definition of rural?

A. The RFP states" A community is designated as rural if the community resides in a county with a population density of less than 750 people per square mile <u>and</u> the community has a population density of less than 750 people per square mile."

25. **BUDGET AND BUDGET NARRATIVE**

Q. *We are requesting funding for the Volunteer Tutoring Component. When we put the Volunteer Coordinator in the staff plan it raises some of the categories above the prototype hours. The Direct Funding Prototype has 3 groups: Direct Service, Administrative and Other. The Prototype has hours for "Other". Who do they get used for – can they be used for the Director, a teacher, the Advisor, the Volunteer Coordinator?*

A. The Prototype is not a prescription; it is only a guide to assist you in preparing your budget. The Prototype details how the grant award amount is constructed to cover a range of operating costs and support the Opportunity to Learn standards described in the *ABE Guidelines*. It is up to the applicant to determine how to use that guidance.

Q. *If a staff member teaches a class over and above his or her FT teaching load (as Extra Duty), do we still have to calculate additional staff development time for that teacher at 2.5% of the extra duty teaching time? Or, is the time allotted to the teacher on his/her FT position sufficient?*

A. Please see the FY 2013 *ABE Guidelines*, pp. 66-68 for requirements and explanation of policies regarding staff development.

Q. *For our non-benefited staff we have to include a 1.91% fringe (Medicare, UI, Unv Health). For example, for direct staff, does that mean that the rates support $26.65+1.91% or $26.15+1.91% (which equals $26.65)? For a large program like ours, this results in a difference of thousands of dollars.*

A. The information that follows demonstrates how to calculate the contact hourly rate for teachers:

The rates support a teacher contact hourly rate of $39.98. The Teacher Contact Hourly Rate is calculated by:

1) adding teaching and prep hours
2) divide by the teaching hours
3) multiply by the hourly rate
4) multiply by 1. <u>(Fringe Percent)</u> - if fringe = 30% then multiply by 1.3

Example 1 Hourly rate = $26.65 Fringe = 0% Teaching Hours = 200 Prep Hours = 100

Note: Teaching to Prep ratio = 2:1 in this case

(200 + 100) / 200 = 1.5 X $26.65 X 1.0 = $39.98

Example 2 Hourly rate = $20.50 Fringe = 30% Teaching Hours = 200 Prep Hours = 100

(200 + 100) / 200 = 1.5 X $20.50 X 1.3 = $39.98

Q. *I thought I read somewhere that the supplemental funding requests must be included on the excel detail budget page. There is no place for them on the current form. Where should we include the request for supplemental funding – is it only via the narrative pages for each?*

A. Requests for supplemental funding should be included on the detail budget page in the appropriate line item.

Q. *Are Indirect/REB funds available only through the Career Pathways grant or will Indirect funds be allocated as part of the total ABE grant award as in the past?*

A. All of the funds administered in collaboration with the workforce development system are targeted for Adult Career Pathways Programs (Fund Code 540).

Q. *Do child care and van drivers have to be paid the $19.83 support staff rate?*

A. Programs that choose not to pay the rate based amount will not be awarded the full amount generated by the rates.

Q. *Should programs enter an amount for "Technology Upgrade" into the Supplemental Funding category in SMARTT? If so, what formula should be used to determine the eligible amount?*

A. No

Q. *Can a CALC have more than one FTE, that is, one for teaching staff and another for admin staff who work more weeks per year that teaching staff?*

A. Yes

Q. *Do we have to submit a detailed budget, budget narrative and budget match narrative for EL Civics Fund Code 359, separate from Fund Code 345?*

A. Yes, submit a separate budget narrative and budget match narrative for Fund Code 359 and an integrated budget that incorporates Fund Code 359 and 345.

Q. *On the contract page, do we have to split the budget request amounts in the categories for which we are applying? (We are applying for both 345 and 359)*

A. Yes

Q. *We want to add Distance Learning to several of our classroom locations over the course of the grant cycle. We are currently doing DL only in one. Are the funds we apply for on a per location level or agency level? So if we apply to do DL in 3 sites, do we apply for $5,000 per site or $5,000 total?*

A. $5,000 total.

Q. *On the Budget forms (Part II-B, Project Expenditures: Detail Information), there is a provision for conference registration, hotel and meals. Previously, conference registration & hotel costs have been allowable, but meals have not. Is this a change that ESE allows for meals now?*

A. The Department's grants management procedural manual (*Grants for Schools: Getting Them and Using Them, A Procedural Manual, at* http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/Grants/procedure/manual.html#II-b), provides the following guidance: "Part II - Line 7 Travel - Reimbursable travel related to the purposes of the grant such as mileage, airfare, lodging, meals, and conference registration fees should be included here." This is not a change in ESE policy.

Q. *If we apply for more funding than we currently receive, would that put our current funding level in jeopardy?*

A. On June 30, the Community Adult Learning Centers as we know them today will cease to exist. July 1, 2012 is a new day. Each applicant, new or currently funded, should determine the services to propose and the amount to request.

Q. My agency currently has a Fiscal Year 2012 ABE award with federal funding through August 31, 2012. We would like to submit our FY 2013 proposal for the cost of a full year, but aren't sure which fund code to apply under (340 or 345), or how to proceed with the SMARTT plan and the accompanying budget.

A. Current recipients of ABE federal awards that end on August 31, 2012, may propose an annual schedule from September 1, 2012 through August 31, 2013. All applicants should include both fund codes ("340/345") on the budget pages, and to apply for funding without distinguishing between state and federal funding. Depending on what services are funded in the new funding cycle, ACLS will determine whether the funding will be state, federal or both state and federal. If only one source of funds is used (either state or federal) ACLS will simply delete the fund code not used.

Q. If summer programming is involved will the expected start date be July 1, 2012 or can summer programming begin July 1, 2013?

A. It depends on whether the applicant is already funded for the summer of 2012. Current recipients of ABE federal awards that end on August 31, 2012, may propose an annual schedule from September 1, 2012 through August 31, 2013.

Q. Since funding codes will be assigned after submission and selection of grantees, can a program still submit an application with an intended start up date of Sept or Oct 2012, instead of July or August?

A. Yes.

Q. In the ABE Guidelines, p. 26, if I understand it correctly, ESE will support two hours of prep time for every hour of teaching – yet we are only required to provide between 1:1 – 1:4 of prep time. Is this correct?

A. There is an error on page 26 of the Guidelines. The range of the teaching to prep time ratio supported by the rates is 2:1, not 1:2. This means that every Community Adult Learning Center grant includes funding for one paid hour of classroom preparation for every two hours of teaching. The allowable range is 1:1 to 4:1. This means that teachers must be paid for class preparation at a ratio of at least one hour of prep for every four hours of teaching. Paid preparation time is not required when the hourly rate paid by programs meets or exceeds the ABE Rates System's Contact Hourly Rate ($39.98 in FY 2013). Refer to the FY 2013 *ABE Guidelines,* specifically the Staff Compensation section and Appendix C.

Q. When we will be informed if we need to submit any part of the proposal, or the proposal in its entirety in another format? If that will be required, when and where will training take place? Reference from the RFP: "Due to pending changes in the ESE Grants Management system, applicants may be required to resubmit these and other pages in a new online format. In that case, ESE will provide training to *successful applicants on the resubmission process." (Part III, Required Program Information, Budget section)*

A. Since ACLS has no new information about this planned change, it is highly unlikely that this new requirement will go into effect during the current RFP application timeline. Applicants should follow the submission instructions in the RFP.

Q. Our grant pays 2.12% payroll costs to the Superintendent's office (our fiscal agent), for each staff member, through the fringe benefit line. For program teachers that are already enrolled the County Retirement system through their other jobs, the Superintendent's office charges the grant an additional 16%. Does this constitute "fringe benefits" as defined in the RFP, and should these teachers (for whom the grant is paying 18 +% fringe) be paid at the lower ESE professional rate of $20.50, the higher rate of $26.65, or something in between?

A. If the 2.12 % payroll costs paid to the Superintendent's office is for the cost of preparing the payroll, it is considered an administrative cost, rather than a fringe benefit, and should not be paid from the fringe benefit line. The appropriate salary level supported by the grant can best be determined by calculating the Contact Hourly Rate. This is influenced not only by fringe, but also by paid class preparation time, and therefore must be determined by the applicant. See the *Massachusetts Guidelines for Effective ABE for Community Adult Learning Centers and ABE Programs in Correctional Institutions* and the FY 2013 *SMARTT Technical Manual for Program Planning* for guidance in calculating the Contact Hourly Rate.

Q. If we are already outstationing, should we include that amount in the budget?

A. No. FY 2013 is a new day. Only the form expressing interest in outstationing is required.

Q. On page 107, the Guidelines say that an organization that wishes to charge indirect costs must apply to ESE annually for an approved rate. Should currently funded programs (that have a federally approved indirect cost rate and have already applied for FY2012) apply again for this proposal?

A. Yes. All grant recipients are required to apply annually.

Q. Should we include funding for outstationing in the budget?

A. No. Outstationing funding will be determined during the grant negotiation.

26. MATCH AND MATCH NARRATIVE

Q. Do CSBG funds count as match? We are a federally funded CAP agency and much of our resources are federal in origin and have always been acceptable as match. Does this represent a policy change? If so, please explain what constitutes legal match?

A. Federal grants may not be used to match federal or state ABE funding. See the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 80.24. State policy applies the same restrictions to state funding (federal funds may not be applied to matching requirements). This is not a policy change.

Q. *If a program is funded through #345, CALC (state) is it still prohibited from using federal money as match?*

A. Yes; state grants are held to the same conditions as federal ones.

Q. *In the latest update (2/14/12) on p.32, it indicates that "If an applicant were to receive a grant amount above its previous grant awards, the grantee would need to provide a minimum of 20% match to the new grant award above the maintenance of effort amount."*

a) *If our Direct funding request is higher than our current funding, do we need to indicate the 20% additional match at the time of the RFP submission, or only when we know our final award amount?*

A. The match proposed in the application must equal either 20% of the requested amount or the FY2011 approved match, whichever is higher.

b) *If we were to be awarded a higher grant amount, and our match is still higher than the 20%, would the current match be sufficient, or does it still need to be increased by 20% of any additional grant funds?*

A. The match provided by the applicant must equal either 20% of the requested amount or the FY2011 approved match, whichever is higher.

Q. *Our organization currently matches 45.67% ($75,000) of its current ABE grant ($ 164,228) and we understand that we will have to maintain this effort should we be awarded the same amount of funding for our new grant. We are applying for additional monies, both in the main ABE grant and in the Pathways grant. Our question is do we have to match any new money we get at 45.67% or at least a minimum of 20% as required by ESE?*

A. If an applicant were to receive a grant amount above its previous grant awards, the grantee would need to provide a minimum of 20% match to the new grant award above the maintenance of effort amount.

Q. *If a program is funded through #345, C&ALC (state) is it still prohibited from using federal money as match?*

A. Yes, programs are prohibited from using federal funds as match.

Q. *Do we include the matching contributions that will be contributed to supplemental funding requests within the "Match Narrative" in addition to including it in the Supplemental Funding justification and description pages?*

A. Yes, include the matching funds for supplemental budget requests in the match narrative.

Q. *On the Direct Summary sheet the match amount is listed after the totals, for both fund code 340/345 and fund code 540/541. I believe the proposed match (either 20% or maintenance of effort) is calculated as a percent of the total for both 340 and 540 requests. Both grant requests (340 and 540) require a budget narrative. Fund Code 340/345 requires 20% of request or whichever is greatest. Code 540 requires a 20% match of the requested grant amount. How should programs indicate maintenance of effort amount of match on their match narratives, as these amounts* *(on the direct summary sheet) reflect the total match for both grant requests? Should programs reduce the match referenced on their budget narrative for Code 340 by the amount that would equal to 20% of the fund code 540 request? Should they, on the match narrative for fund code 540, reference the total match amount as indicated on the direct summary sheet and indicate that the 20% for code 540 is included in that amount? Or, are programs required to increase their maintenance of effort match by the 20% of their fund 540 request.*

A. The combined match amount proposed for Fund Codes 345 and 540 should equal the maintenance of effort amount. An additional 20% match is not required. However, it is important to note, that if an applicant is awarded Fund Code 345 funds and not Fund Code 540 funds, the applicant remains responsible for the maintenance of effort amount. Indicate in your budget narratives how you will meet your maintenance of effort requirement.

Q. Does the match required for space & childcare have to be above and beyond the amount required for Maintenance of Effort (MOE)?

A. No.; it may be included in the MOE.

Q. ESE's definition of a multi-site program requires each site to have administration, instruction, and advising staff at each location. Can some of these staff be provided through matching funds (as long as the configuration meets SMARTT requirements)?

A. Yes.

Q. If a subcontract is used to provide a sequence of 3 classes can the required administration, assessment, and advising be provided by the primary recipient of the grant, or as a match to the grant?

A. Yes.

Q. Can state funds be used to match state funds?

A. We are aware of no regulation that prohibits such use.

Q. On the match budget, can we list services provided by a different grant?

A. There are two general restrictions on use of match funds. First, federal funds may not be used to meet matching requirements on a federal grant; i.e. one federal program cannot be used to match another federal program. Second, the same funds may not be used to meet matching requirements on more than one grant; i.e. one "dollar" of money cannot be used as match funds for two or more other programs. Beyond those requirements, ESE requires that the match cited support the Community Adult Learning Center by adding value to program operations, instructional and support services. Matching resources must be fully documented, auditable and comprised of directly allocable costs, and must correspond to the line item match budget for the grant. Grant applications and budget forms must identify the source or sources of matching funds. See the RFP Part III, Required Program Information, Section III, Budget, Match Narrative. Applicants are advised to refer to the FY 2013 *Massachusetts Guidelines for Effective Adult Basic Education for*

Community Adult Learning Centers and ABE Programs in Correctional Institutions, pp. 104-106 for guidance about match requirements and restrictions.

Q. *Our organization uses work study students and co-up students as teacher's aides or assistants to the career advisor. If we pay these people at a lower rate than the non-professional rate, are we allowed to use their salaries as match?*

A. An applicant may apply to the matching requirement program salaries in any category allowable under the grant, provided salaries are consistent with the ABE Rates. Salaries below the Rates may not be applied to match. See the FY 2013 *SMARTT Technical Manual for Program Planning* for guidance on salary rates supported by the grant.

Q. *The Guidelines, p. 107, say that "An agency with a federally-approved or ESE-approved indirect rate may apply to the matching requirement the difference between the approved rate and the amount charged to the grant. For example, an organization with a federally approved rate of 15% may charge to the adult education grant a maximum of 8% for indirect costs. The 7% difference between the federally approved rate and the ESE maximum could be applied to match." In this case, would I show the matching amount in the indirect cost line?*

A. Yes.

Q. *Does the total 20% match have to come exclusively from the fiscal agent, overseer of the grant or can it come from multiple parts, collaboration of partners?*

A. The match must support the program as described in the *Massachusetts Guidelines for Effective Adult Basic Education in Community Adult Learning Centers and Correctional Institutions ("the Guidelines").* Recipients of state and federal adult basic education grants are responsible for ensuring that all state and federal requirements are met. Refer to the *Guidelines* pages 99-101 for referral to guidance documents. Matching resources must be fully documented, auditable and comprised of directly allocable costs. Grant applications and budget forms must identify the source or sources of matching funds.

Q. *Are programs required to maintain the same level of matching funds in FY13 as in FY12? In another words, does the maintenance of effort apply in a new funding cycle?*

A. Yes

27. AUDIT

Q. *My lead agency is a town public school system, which is already required to submit an annual audit. How do I handle this with regards to the RFP?*

A. As the RFP states, local public educational authorities and other state and local entities are **excepted** from the requirement to submit an audit, because the Department accesses the audits of state and local entities directly.

Q. *Can nonprofits with a budget under $250,000 submit the Form 990 in lieu of audited financial statements?*

A. An applicant whose annual revenues and expenditures are each under $250,000 may submit the Form 990. The Department reserves the right to determine whether the applicant falls into a category that would require an audit; in which case, the Department would require a follow-up conversation with the applicant prior to awarding a grant.

Q. If we are reviewed rather than audited, can we submit a review?

A. Applicants that are reviewed rather than audited may submit the review. The Department reserves the right to determine whether the applicant falls into a category that would require an audit; in which case, the Department would require a follow-up conversation with the applicant prior to awarding a grant.

Q. May we submit a Form 990 if we are a small agency and not required to do an audit?

A. Yes, you may submit a Form 990 with a letter explaining why you're not required to do an audit. The Department reserves the right to determine whether the applicant falls into a category that would require an audit; in which case, the Department would require a follow-up conversation with the applicant prior to awarding a grant.

Q. Do partners submit an audit?

A. No, only the lead agency submits the audit.

Q. Is it a full audit or a formal review?

A. Submit the latest completed audit report

28. **ADULT BASIC EDUCATION TEACHING QUALIFICATIONS FORM** - see also questions on the Qualified Staff section of the RFP, section III.C. #16 above.

Q. For the Community Adult Learning Centers application, if an applicant has teaching staff that teach ESE funded classes and non-ESE funded classes from other funding sources in the same program, should the classes be included as educational services provided by the program and should the teaching staff duties of both the ESE funded classes and non-ESE funded classes be included in the Teaching Qualifications Form?

A. The response and the Teaching Qualifications form only require what ESE is requested to fund and what the applicant is proposing as match.

Q. On the Teaching Qualifications form, how do we list Educational/Career Advising?

A. The Teaching Qualifications for is only to be completed for <u>teaching</u> staff.

Q. What are examples of "other qualifications"?

A. Some examples might include a Masters in ESOL; a certificate in Wilson, etc.

Q. On the Teaching Qualifications Form, the third column from the left asks what subject each teacher teaches, at what level. Is ESOL considered a subject?

A. The applicant should be as specific as possible on the form. Refer to the options listed in the *Guidelines* for rate-based classes on page 22, and for non-rate-based classes on pages 29-30. There are now class choices for listening/speaking (ESOL), reading/writing, and other subjects, as well as relevant non-rate-based choices. The applicant should choose whichever is the best match.

Q *Is it acceptable to just indicate their class code in the "Subject(s) taught/at what level" column?*

A. Be more specific.

Q. *Should we provide information about what the teacher has taught or what the teacher will teach?*

A. The applicant should provide information about what the teacher will teach in FY13.

Q. *How do we indicate staff pursuing higher degrees?*

A. Use the last column on the chart.

Q. *If positions are vacant, how do we fill out the form?*

A. List required qualifications.

29. **APPLICANT PREFERENCE FORMS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE ABE DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM AND FOR PARTICIPATION IN STAR, AND ONE STOP CAREER CENTER OUTSTATIONING APPLICATION**

Q. *At the bidders' conference, I asked about the STAR Project form if we're proposing to offer Pre-Literacy ESOL classes and was told NOT to complete it--that it doesn't apply. I just want to confirm that.*

A. Correct; STAR is designed specifically for Pre-ASE classes.

Q. *On the STAR, DL and Outstation appendices, we are asked to write the program name as it is under Section B of the Standard Contract Form Program Unit Signature. Does that mean that we write in ACLS under program name or the fund code, or exactly what information goes here?*

A. Write the name of the applicant as it appears on the Standard Contract Form.

Q. *It appears that the only reference to Distance Learning and STAR in the RFP is a check-off. Should we describe what we will be doing in these areas?*

A. The forms are for ACLS planning purposes only. All grant recipients will be participating in Distance Learning and STAR at some point in the multi-year cycle. The forms give applicants an opportunity to express a preference as to which year that participation will begin. No narrative is required.

Q. *Should an ESOL program apply for STAR?*

A. No. STAR is designed for Pre-ASE reading only.

Q. *If we already have a Distance Learning component, do we have to complete the form?*

A. Yes. FY 2013 is a new day. All applicants must complete the form.

Q. *If we are already doing STAR, do we have to complete the form?*

A. No; if the applicant has already completed the STAR training it is assumed that implementation of STAR will continue into the next funding cycle. The purpose of the STAR form is to plan for training needs.

Q. Is Distance Learning required of everyone submitting a CALC proposal?

A. All recipients of CALC grants will be required to begin participating in Distance Learning through one of the two options before the end of the multi-year grant period.

Q. We currently do Distance Learning and STAR. What do we do with those forms?

A. This is an application for a new grant. Even though an applicant may be currently participating in Distance Learning or STAR in FY 2012, FY 2013 is a "new day". When an applicant has already developed capacity in DL and STAR through prior participation, it can use the form to let the Department know, "yes, I'm ready to go in FY 2013". These documents are for ACLS planning purposes, and do not pertain to evaluation of the application. If an applicant is <u>not</u> currently participating in either DL or STAR, it needs to tell the Department which year it would like to participate. It is important to understand that this is a cycle coming to close, and a new cycle is beginning. We can't assume that anything continues automatically, including outstationing.

Q. Is it possible to use Distance Learning to increase instructional intensity?

A. At this point, no applicant should assume that it automatically will have Distance Learning funding in the next cycle. Applicants that had it in FY 2012 may again receive it. All applicants need to indicate their interest and preferences on the form. Many of these decisions are contingent on funding.

30. **NOTICE OF INTENT TO MEET COMMUNITY ADULT LEARNING CENTER PROGRAM DESIGN REQUIREMENTS THROUGH COLLABORATION WITH ONE OR MORE OTHER APPLICANTS** – see also questions on Program Design, #10 above.

31. **THE PROPOSAL REVIEW PROCESS**

Q. If we apply for the Community Adult Learning Center grant would we are in direct competition with other programs in town that are not new bidders for the same grant?

A. ABE grants are competitive, not entitlement grants. All applicants, regardless of their funding history with the Department, are in competition with all other applicants from the same workforce region.

Q. For how long will the Department accept questions on the RFP?

A. Questions will be accepted up to February 10, two weeks before the due date. (extended to 2/16/12; 5pm)

Q. Detailed in the Massachusetts Strategic Framework for Adult Basic Education, are three goals, Access, Quality/Effectiveness, and Next Steps. There are also three other goals, the Commonwealth's Educational Goals (prevent the achievement gap from starting; close the achievement gap where it exists; and challenge all students *to proficiency and beyond). Do the Commonwealth's Educational Goals take precedence over the other three goals, since we are focusing on family literacy? Or do we have to take both set of goals (and possibly others) into consideration when applying for the grant?*

A. The Commonwealth's educational goals do not take precedence. The educational goals speak to why adult education matters; the strategic goals for ABE provide direction to guide the work of the ABE system over the next several years.

Q. *When will applicants be notified of the outcome of this process?*

A. By the end of May.

Q. *Can you tell us a little about who reads the proposals?*

A. Each workforce region has a regional proposal review team comprised of four people, usually two ACLS staff and two representatives of the workforce development system. Boston will have multiple reading teams.

Q. *Who will be reading, will they be people from my region or from another region?*

A. For ACLS staff, it will vary. ACLS staff often covers more than one region. On any given team, it may or may not be the ACLS staff person who covers that region. As for workforce development staff, the workforce partners will read in their own regions.

32. COMMUNITY PLANNING

Q. *We are a multi-site agency that serves 3 communities in Boston. Two of the sites are the sole ESE-funded ABE programs in their community. We currently receive $8190 in Foundation funds for Community Planning. How much should we budget in the FY2013 proposal?*

A. Boston based programs should allocate $6,000 for community planning.

Q. *At what point in the FY13 funding process should a community planning partnership submit the action plan to ACLS. Should it be included with the FY13 RFP proposal or submitted after approval of the proposal? Where in the narrative can it be referenced and where should the request for the additional $2000 appear in the budget?*

A. The action plan does not need to be submitted with the proposal. The applicant should address its intention to focus on Family and Community Engagement in response to the relevant question in the RFP and should reflect the additional $2000 in the budget narrative and detailed budget pages.

Q. *On page 126-127 of the FY 13 Guidelines it says: "A community planning partnership that chooses Family and Community Engagement as its primary focus must develop and submit to ACLS an action plan that includes specific goals and outcomes related to supporting the success of children and schools. Upon approval of the action plan, the partnership will receive an additional $2,000 to support this work." At what point in the FY 13 funding process should a community planning* *partnership submit the action plan to ACLS. Should it be included with the FY 13 RFP proposal, or submitted after approval of the proposal?*

A. Family and Community Engagement Plans should not be included with the proposal. Applicants who intend to focus their community planning efforts on Family and Community Engagement (FCE), and who wish to request the $2,000, may include this amount in their budget request and state this intent. Applicants approved for CALC grant awards who proposed to focus on FCE will be asked for a plan during or after grant negotiations, prior to awarding the additional $2,000.

Q. On page 37, the FY 2013 Guidelines say that a Community Planning partnership with a primary focus on Family and Community Engagement will receive an additional $2,000 to support this work. Does this mean that an applicant may receive an additional $2,000 to support family and community engagement if the relevant community partnership chooses a focus on family and community engagement?

A. Yes, upon ACLS approval of an action plan that includes specific goals and outcomes.

33. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Q. Is the "Institutional Demographic Form" a requirement? If yes, how do I access the form?

A. The form is not required of Community Adult Learning Center applicants; it is for applicants for ABE Programs in Correctional Institutions only.

Q. In reference to the hard copies of SMARTT, aren't **c** *and* **g** *the same screen? Do we include it twice?*

A. That is correct; this form was inadvertently repeated in the list of required documents, and should not be submitted twice. It is only necessary to provide one copy with each proposal set. The form referred to in c and g is the Summary Sheet, which lists out all the costs (rates and non-rates based classes, and foundation and supplemental funding) included in the total award request. The only data entered by the applicant on this form is the match amount; SMARTT generates the rest.

Q. The RFP lists the required elements of the proposal and how they should be sequenced in the grant package. The SMARTT Plan, also referenced as Appendix A, should be submitted following # 3 - the Part III: Required Program Information, and before #5 (the Statement of Assurances) and # 6, (Required Appendices). Is the requested order to be: Appendix A, then Statement of Assurances, then Required Appendices B-F?

A. Yes, the SMARTT Plan should be submitted as item #4, although it is referred to as Appendix A. Appendices B through F should follow the Statement of Assurances.

Q. Should the required elements of the SMARTT Plan be included as #4 as noted in Proposal Due: sequence list, or with #6 Required Appendices? (It is listed as Required Appendices: Appendix A: Required elements of SMARTT Plan.)

A. The required elements of the SMARTT Plan in hard copy should be submitted as item #4, although it is referred to as Appendix A. Appendices B through F should follow the Statement of Assurances.

Q. *Our agency is not listed with a district code at the site given in the Q&A. Our town (Great Barrington/Housatonic) is not listed. We have not been assigned a district code as yet. Is it required? If we use the code for Southern Berkshire, we would be using the code for that particular regional school district?*

A. The district code is not required at time of submission. If the proposal is funded, a district code may be acquired prior to budget approval.

Q. *As a new applicant for the 2013-2017 ACLS Grant, are we required to enter a district code on the Part I and Part IIB forms? If so, how do we obtain a 4-digit district code?*

A. Applicants can find the district codes at: http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/SchFin/grants/federal11.aspx

Q. *We are a new program so will be submitting Appendix D and E. Please confirm that they should be attached or embedded into the RFP package in alphabetical order with the other Appendices (item 6 in the proposal submission instructions).*

A. Appendix D and E should be included in the RFP package in alphabetical order with the other Appendices

Q. *If in the narrative, we want to include an image of a report that has been captured like a JPG, is it okay that the font size and style of that image appear smaller and different than Ariel 10?*

A. Such an image is allowable, provided that it is legible to the readers, and that it does not compress an excessive amount of text into a smaller space than would be the case if were typed in by hand in the required font.

Q. *Does the 30-page limit include Part III Required Program Information?*

A. The 30-page limit is specifically for Part III.

Q. *I am unable to locate the narrative questions for the RFP.*

A. All narrative questions are in Part III, Required Program Information. See the link to Part III in the RFP Required Forms section.

Q. *When we will be informed if we need to submit any part of the proposal, or the proposal in its entirety in another format? If that will be required, when and where will training take place? Reference from the RFP: "Due to pending changes in the ESE Grants Management system, applicants may be required to resubmit these and other pages in a new online format. In that case, ESE will provide training to successful applicants on the resubmission process." (Part III, Required Program Information, Budget section)*

A. Since ACLS has no new information about this planned change, it is highly unlikely that this new requirement will go into effect during the current RFP application timeline. Applicants should follow the submission instructions in the RFP.

Q. The RFP lists the required elements of the proposal and how they should be sequenced in the grant package. The SMARTT Plan, also referenced as Appendix A, should be submitted following # 3 - the Part III: Required Program Information, and before #5 (the Statement of Assurances) and # 6, (Required Appendices). Is the requested order to be: Appendix A, then Statement of Assurances, then Required Appendices B-F?

A. Yes, the SMARTT Plan should be submitted as item #4, although it is referred to as Appendix A. Appendices B through F should follow the Statement of Assurances.

34. **SMARTT**

Q. Are we supposed to show in our class plan two different sets of dates if we want to extend school year to include a summer program? How do we enter a summer program in the SMARTT class plan?

A. Please see similar questions on pp 11-12 in the Program Design section, and explanations provided in the responses as to how to enter a summer program in SMARTT.

Q. Is 9g "ESE Direct Summary Sheet", under Required Forms of FY2013 Grant, actually the ESE "Combined Summary Report" in SMARTT?

A. No. "direct" refers to the grant award; "combined" refers to the combination of grant and matching funds.

Q. In reference to the hard copies of SMARTT, aren't **c** *and* **g** *the same screen? Do we include it twice?*

A. That is correct; this form was inadvertently repeated in the list of required documents, and should not be submitted twice. It is only necessary to provide one copy with each proposal set. The form referred to in c and g is the Summary Sheet, which lists out all the costs (rates and non-rates based classes, and foundation and supplemental funding) included in the total award request. The only data entered by the applicant on this form is the match amount; SMARTT generates the rest.

Q. The RFP lists the required elements of the proposal and how they should be sequenced in the grant package. The SMARTT Plan, also referenced as Appendix A, should be submitted following # 3 - the Part III: Required Program Information, and before #5 (the Statement of Assurances) and # 6, (Required Appendices). Is the requested order to be: Appendix A, then Statement of Assurances, then Required Appendices B-F?

A. Yes, the SMARTT Plan should be submitted as item #4, although it is referred to as Appendix A. Appendices B through F should follow the Statement of Assurances.

Q. Should the required elements of the SMARTT Plan be included as #4 as noted in Proposal Due: sequence list, or with #6 Required Appendices? (It is listed as Required Appendices: Appendix A: Required elements of SMARTT Plan.)

A. The required elements of the SMARTT Plan in hard copy should be submitted as item #4, although it is referred to as Appendix A. Appendices B through F should follow the Statement of Assurances.

Q. Our agency is not listed with a district code at the site given in the Q&A. Our town (Great Barrington/Housatonic) is not listed. We have not been assigned a district code as yet. Is it required? If we use the code for Southern Berkshire, we would be using the code for that particular regional school district?

A. The district code is not required at time of submission. If the proposal is funded, a district code may be acquired prior to budget approval.

Q. Once all of the planning has been done in SMARTT and printed out to be included in the paper RFP response, does it need to be submitted through the "Request For Funding" button?

A. Yes, submit the plan through the "Request for Funding" button.

Q. When editing the Match Funding Staff Plan – Title/Name – the only options available are in scroll down boxes which do not contain job titles I need. (For example, superintendent, custodian, human resource manager, etc.) There does not seem to be an option to manually type in the job titles. How do I put in the correct information?

A. The dropdown list shows the functions that are supported in the rates. Please select a title that is most appropriate.

Q. We are confused by the Combined Summary Report where the match items are included in the requested funds. We are proposing the salary of a teacher in a non-rate based class as a match, yet on the Combined Summary Report it appears as requested funds. Are we expected to separate it?

A. You must enter a cost in the "match" column in the class plan for the non rate based class cost so that the combined summary sheet reflects the requested funds in the appropriate category.

Q. The prototype is showing $2,050 for foundation funding for technology coordination and $1,025 for ADA, but the FY13 Guidelines for Effective ABE shows only $2,000 for tech and $1,000 for ADA respectively. Which is correct? And should we assume that all the other figures in the prototype are accurate?

A. The labels will be corrected in the Prototype and all the other figures and calculations are correct.

8	ADA Coord (+$1025 Foundation) **should be $1,000**
9	Tech Coord (+$2050 Foundation) **should be $2,000**
21	P/S Dev Coord (+ $1025 Foundation) **should be $1,000**

Q. *Should the GED /Adult Career Pathways Classes be included in the SMARTT plan or should these be shown as just GED directly funded by DESE? In the past all the GED classes were funded from CDBG?*

A. Adult Career Pathways classes should not be included in SMARTT. Applicants who are proposing services in Boston should submit a proposal and budget without concern for the source of funding (e.g., CDBG) in the previous funding cycle.

Q. *Where is the Volunteer Screen in SMARTT?*

A. There was a temporary problem with the link to the Volunteer screen; it should be corrected by the time this Q&A posts.

Q. *I am working on my staff plan and notice that the salary analysis has not been fixed yet. Do you have any idea when we can expect to see it fixed?*

A. This is scheduled to be fixed, tested, and released by 2/3/12.

Q. *After the Staff Salary Analysis Sheet is fixed to correctly reflect the +/- 3%, will the Summary Sheet for Eligible Cost for Rates Based Classes also be adjusted higher to allow for the salary increases from FY12 to FY13?*

A. The Summary Sheet does not calculate staff salaries, only class costs, which include the new costs for classes and class sizes. When the staff salary analysis screen has been corrected to show the new salaries, the range of +/- 3% will be accurate.

Q. *The "Match Benefits" section is not calculating as it states it should in the program planning manual. I enter the benefit rate, hit save and nothing calculates in the last column.*

A. Thank you for flagging the problem. It has been passed on to the SMARTT developers team.

Q. *On the STAR, DL and Outstation appendices, we are asked to write the program name as it is under Section B of the Standard Contract Form Program Unit Signature .Does that mean that we write in ACLS under program name or the fund code, or exactly what information goes here?*

A. The program name refers to the name of the applicant agency. The information to provide is the name of the legal entity submitting the application, as opposed to a less formal "program" name. For example, the legal name of the agency that operates the (fictional) Weymouth Adult Learning Center is the (also fictional) Weymouth Community Center.

Q. *The Required Forms Section states that certain elements of the SMARTT Program Plan are to be completed by the applicant and submitted in hard copy with the application. If an applicant is currently funded and is an active user of SMARTT, does a hard copy of the current Class Plan satisfy this requirement?*

A. No. The information requested relates to the services proposed in FY 2013, whether these are the same as those provided in FY 2012 or different. Each applicant, whether currently funded or first time applying for ESE ACLS funding, must complete all required forms as described in the Request for Proposals.

Q. *Can the SMARTT data system be accessed with a Macintosh running OS 10.5 or later?*

A. A Macintosh operating system should be fine, as long as the user accesses SMARTT through Internet Explorer 7 or above. SMARTT is a web application that is browser specific, but it does not require a specific operating system.

Q. *On the staff analysis page in SMARTT, there is a column called "direct salary" and a column called "program salary". Despite entering required salary rates and required class preparation time, these columns show a large discrepancy which cannot be accounted for. We have double checked the class plan figures and the staffing chart figures and see no errors in the information which we have input (the information that is used to calculate "program salary"). We have verified that the program is paying for the staff members listed entirely through ESE (no matching funds), is paying the supported rates, and 2:1 teaching-to-preparation time; shouldn't these two amounts be the same? Why would the figures in the two columns be different (and why would they indicate an overpayment)?*

A. The discrepancy you are seeing is caused by the FY 2013 increase in the salary rates. The formula in SMARTT has not yet been adjusted for this increase, and will show salaries at 4% over the rates (instead of 0%) until it is changed. SMARTT developers are working on this and it should be corrected shortly.

Q. *From the response to my question at the Boston Bidder's Conference, it is my understanding that if an applicant located in Boston wants to run a program in Quincy (in addition to our Boston site) we would have to file a separate application and set up a new site in the SMARTT system. Is this correct? If so, what do I need to do, since technically we are not a new bidder, but an established program that is seeking to expand to a new site? Any information on how to proceed would be most appreciated.*

A. Yes. Any applicant proposing to offer services in two different workforce regions (for example, Boston and Quincy, which is in the South Coastal region) would need to submit a separate application for each region, and set up sites for both in SMARTT in order to complete the required program plan. Any applicant, new or previously funded, that needs to set up a new site in SMARTT is advised to e-mail Donna Cornellier at dcornellier@doe.mass.edu to receive the form that needs to be completed so that a new project and site can be created.

Q. *In the SMARTT staff plan should the benefit rate be what the agency actually pays even though 30% is calculated in the rates?*

A. Yes. Throughout the application (e.g., narrative, budget, SMARTT plan, appendices, etc.), all information should accurately portray actual practice (practice intended in FY 2013) at the agency.

Q. *I noticed that SMARTT has designated multiple classes with the same class code (for example a match class is 501 and a summer class is 501). This seems confusing. Is this correct?*

A. Yes, this is correct for federally funded programs that offer summer classes. The federal grants run from 9/1/2012 – 8/31/2013. Therefore, since the classes follow the state fiscal year (7/1/2012 – 6/30/2013), classes may have the same class code in a program plans that span two different fiscal years. The *SMARTT Technical Manual for Program Planning*, posted on the ACLS RFP webpage under the "Guidance" section, states on page 4 that all classes are to be entered under the state reporting year. Therefore, no duplicate class codes should appear. “For the FY13 open and competitive year, all classes will be entered for the timeframe between 7/1/2012 and 6/30/2013. Once programs are selected for funding, the plans will be amended according to the funding source (state or federal).”