

Questions and Answers on the Competitive Request for Proposals

ABE Distance Learning Instructional Hubs – Fund Code 669

Updated: **January 24, 2012**

This document will be updated with additional questions and answers as they come in. Applicants are advised to check for new material each time the ACLS Hot Topics section indicates that an updated version has been posted. **Each time the document is updated, changes since the last posting will be noted 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 Distance Learning in Adult Basic Education* ("the DL Guidelines") are provided as page numbers only.

1. GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ABE DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM

Q. How many CALCS will be funded for DL in 2013?

A. ACLS will announce the number of CALCs funded for DL after all funding recommendations have been approved by the Commissioner and the Board.

Q. How many students will the DL Hub be expected to work with?

A. The number of students enrolled in each Hub is expected to be approximately 135 (monthly caseload of active students) as specified in the DL Guidelines.

Q. Is the Hub expected to recruit any of the 135 students?

A. No, the CALCs are responsible to place students at the Hub.

Q. Is there a maximum number of CALCs that will be referred to each Hub?

A. No. The number of CALCs added each year to work with the Hub will be gradually expanded. Over the next five years, all Community Adult Learning Centers will be working with either the ABE Hub or the ESOL Hub under either Option 1 or 2.

Q. When a participating CALC chooses Option 2, could all students be instructed at the CALC?

A. No. A minimum of 10 students must be placed at the Hub.

2. RFP PURPOSE AND PRIORITIES

3. ELIGIBILITY

4. FUNDING

Q. Will \$75,000 remain the funding level for DL Hubs in subsequent years?

A. Subject to state and federal appropriations, \$75,000 is expected to be the funding for FY13 and subsequent years. Any decisions regarding increases would be subject to appropriations.

5. FUND USE

Q. Does the grant money for the DL Hub only support teachers?

A. Refer to the Fund Use section of the RFP, which specifies that personnel and non-personnel costs are allowable.

6. PROJECT DURATION

7. BIDDERS CONFERENCES

Q. Is there a separate bidders' conference for the Community Adult Learning Centers (CALCs)?

A. Five bidders' conferences for CALC applicants were held, one in each region, but not for distance learning specifically. In this RFP, applicants will not bid for Integrated Distance Learning. Subject to funding appropriations, all CALCs will be expected to integrate distance learning, either Option 1 or Option 2, at some point in the multi-year funding cycle that begins in FY 2013. The DL Instructional Hubs bidders' conference and this Q&A document are for applicants applying to be a Distance Learning Instructional Hub under Fund Code 669.

8. DATE DUE

9. REQUIRED FORMS AND APPENDICES

Q. Is the data to document significant gains required to be submitted in Appendix I to be pulled from Cognos?

A. The applicant is asked to submit auditable, reliable and valid data, which may be Cognos reports and any other available data. Refer to Part III Required Program Information, Section II.A for complete information on the data required in Appendix I.

Q. Are applicants required to complete a program planning design in SMARTT?

A. No.

Part III Required Program Information

10. PROPOSED PROGRAM AND SERVICES

11. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Q. What is the Hub's role in orientation and screening?

A. The Hub is required to collaborate and contribute to the orientation (Introduction to Distance Learning) that is offered by the CALCs.

Q. Do all the curricula listed in the DL Guidelines have to be used?

A. Providers select the appropriate curricula from those approved by the Department. Refer to the DL Guidelines for guidance.

Q. Is there a process to get curricula approved?

A. Yes; a provider may send a request for approval to the ACLS and forms and questions will be provided. See the DL Guidelines.

12. PROGRAM DESIGN AND EVALUATION

Q. Can you elaborate on question 4 in part IB of Proposed Program and Services?

A. The question asks “how the Community Adult Learning Center administration will provide the educational leadership (...)”. The response is up to the applicant.

13. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Q. Are currently funded programs required to submit data pulled from SMARTT/Cognos or should they submit nothing? (reference: Part III Required Program Information, Organizational Capacity section, question 2 regarding Appendix I with auditable data)

A. All applicants are required to provide in Appendix I auditable data detailing the applicant’s past performance as specified in the RFP. Not all applicants may have data in SMARTT; those who do should use it.

Q. Does the Hub applicant have to demonstrate the capacity to serve additional increases in population over the additional grant years?

A. Whether to address that issue is up to the applicant; the RFP doesn’t specifically ask about it. The increase will be gradual, and training will be provided.

14. AGENCY BACKGROUND

15. QUALIFIED STAFF

16. BUDGET

17. MATCHING REQUIREMENT

Q. Is the 20% matching requirement for the DL Hub above the 20% match required for the CALC ABE grant?

A. Yes. The Adult Basic Education Distance Learning Instructional Hub program is a separate grant program with its own match requirements (20% of the amount requested or awarded under fund code 669).

18. THE PROPOSAL REVIEW PROCESS

Q. Are grant applications reviewed only by ACLS?

A. Review teams generally consist of both internal and external readers; this determination may be related to the number of applications received.

Q. Will the notification of the DL Instructional Hub grant award come at the same time as notification of CALC funding?

A. Yes.

19. QUESTIONS ON THE GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE DISTANCE LEARNING IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (THE “DL GUIDELINES”)

Q. Does the language on page 5 of the DL Guidelines regarding semesters and thematic units apply to ESOL?

- A. Yes; similar language is included in the current version of the DL Guidelines. The DL Hubs are encouraged to offer additional groupings, in addition to individualized online instruction. It is up to the applicant to describe how the online instruction will be designed and structured.
- Q. In the DL Guidelines, page 6, one of the duties of the Hub states “Schedule post testing for all students at participating adult learning centers in accordance with ACLS assessment policies.” Please clarify.*
- A. The Hub is responsible to collaborate with the Community Adult Learning Center in scheduling the post test for students enrolled at the Hub, in order to ensure that students are post-tested by the CALC when they are ready.
- Q. In the DL Guidelines, page 6, the recommended staffing of 3 to 4 part time teachers and a monthly student load does not allow for a coordinator. Will the CALC director monitor DL?*
- A. It is up to the applicant how it proposes to design and manage the DL Instructional Hub.
- Q. Have the requirements for minimum student participation per week been changed? They do not appear in the DL Guidelines.*
- A. No, they have not changed from FY 2011; this information was inadvertently omitted from the FY 2013 DL Guidelines. As in FY11 and FY12, distance learning only students must engage in a minimum of 5 hours (proxy hours) per week; dually enrolled students are required to engage in a minimum of 2.5 hours (proxy hours) per week.
- Q. Could a CALC have only dually enrolled students?*
- A. Yes, it is up to the CALC and their needs to determine how many students will be dually (both classroom and DL) or directly (only DL) enrolled. The CALCs are responsible for a minimum number of Distance Learning students to be sent to the Hub, but there are no longer minimum requirements related to whether students sent to the Hub are dually or directly enrolled.