**Dissemination Program Grant**

**Information for participants**

 **Questions and Answers from Webinars held on May 2 and May 5, 2017.**

***Eligibility***

***Q: For Alternative High Schools, what is compelling evidence of overall success?***

A: Examples of what might be considered evidence of overall success for an alternative high school include unique academic or other measures in accountability plans and any other measures of performance and progress.

***Competitive Priorities***

***Q: Is there any competitive priority for working with a Level 5 school district (2)?***

A: No. As the Request for Proposals (RFP) states, “Competitive priority for this grant will be given in the form of additional points to applications that . . . . . Propose to partner or have a committed partner with Level 3 or 4 district public schools.” An applicant would get these priority points for working with a Level 3 or 4 district public school that happens to be located in a Level 5 district, but there is no discreet award of competitive priority points attributable to the district’s Level 5 status.

***Q: Can you clarify that if you’re a Level 1 school working with a committed district partner with Level 4 schools, you only get “credit” for one of those?***

A: No. Competitive priority points are awarded for each of the four competitive priority areas listed in the RFP (but only once for Priority 4, even if the applicant’s proposed project pursues more than one subpart a-c):

1. Are either Level 1 or Level 2 schools and equal to or above the 50th percentile.
2. Have an identified and committed public school(s)/district(s) partner.
3. Propose to partner or have a committed partner with Level 3 or 4 district public school(s).
4. Focus strategies on at least one of the following three areas (the applicant will not receive multiple priority points if they pursue more than one of these strategies, a-c):
	1. Support the implementation of effective literacy strategies for pre-kindergarten through third-grade students.
	2. Support the implementation of effective math strategies for fifth- through eighth-grade students.
	3. Support the creation of school environments that are safe, supportive, and conducive to teaching and learning; reduce suspensions and expulsions; and/or focus on the social and emotional needs of all students.

***Reporting Requirements***

***Q: Will the reporting requirements be similar to what the Race to the Top Grants were?***

A: Part III of the application explains reporting requirements. See Part III (E) regarding action plans and interim progress reporting and the last section of Part III entitled, “Reporting Requirements if Grant is Awarded,” which states,

If a grant is awarded, observations and/or site visits may be conducted. Further, grant recipients will be required to report to the Department as described below, in addition to the standard financial reporting required to draw down funds throughout the project duration. The reports may be submitted via e-mail to Joanna Laghetto at jlaghetto@doe.mass.edu.

* + Interim progress reports will be due every six months on the completed action plan steps and the school’s own evaluation of project objectives and outcomes.
	+ Grantees are required to work with the Department and participate in an evaluation of the grant program.
	+ At the conclusion of the project, recipients must submit a final narrative project report along with a copy/sample of any products/materials created as part of the dissemination project (unless these are available online). The Department will provide a template to help with the final report. This final report should include a report on the action plan, the school’s own evaluation of project outcomes, and must provide links to any web-based dissemination component of the project. In addition, be sure to submit the standard required Final Financial Report within 60 days of the end of the project period as required for all grants.

***Use of Funds***

***Q: As part of the funds from the grant, would we be able to purchase technology for the partnering school and provide professional development on how to use the technology?***

A: Funds may be used for technology if the applicant demonstrates that these expenses are justified, reasonable, and fulfill grant objectives.

***Q: Can charters use the money to give stipends to teachers at the partner district school?***

A: Yes, as long as the applicant demonstrates that these expenses are justified, reasonable, and fulfill grant objectives. The funds must be used to supplement not supplant.

***Q: What is Supplement not Supplant?***

A: Supplement not supplant provisions basically require that grantees use federal funds to supplement—add to, enhance, expand, increase, extend—the programs and services offered with state and local funds. Federal funds are not permitted to be used to supplant—take the place of, replace—the state and local funds used to offer those programs.

Example 1: Special Education (SPED) Director’s salary cannot be paid with these funds but the SPED Director can be paid a stipend for additional time to plan, organize and provide trainings to partner school’s SPED staff on best practices.

Example 2: Funds can only be used to purchase supplies directly needed for the project and cannot be used for ordinary supply needs.

***Q: Could grant funds be used to support dissemination from a district to charter schools?***

A: As the RFP states, “the purpose of the competitive Massachusetts Dissemination Program is to provide funds over two years to support the dissemination of effective practices and programs that have been developed, tested, and proven successful in Massachusetts' charter schools.” Therefore, the primary goal of each applicant’s project must be to disseminate the applicant charter school’s best practice(s).

***Budget/Partnerships***

***Q: If we have an identified partner, but anticipate interest for additional partners over the 2-year grant period, may we add partners during the implementation phase if we anticipate those extra partners in our budget?***

A: Amendments to plans and budgets will be allowed on a case-by-case basis, and must be justified, reasonable, and fulfill grant objectives.

***Q: Does the applicant have to have a partner district school(s) to be eligible, or are broader dissemination efforts considered (without a specific partner school)?***

A: A partner school is required. The RFP states, “Dissemination funds are made available to assist charter schools in disseminating their successful practices to other public schools.” And Part III of the application requires extensive detail about the partner or potential partner school.

***Q: How do you demonstrate partner commitment?***

A: The partner school could write a letter of support or the history and/or details of the partnership could be included in the grant narrative.

***Q: Can a charter operator, who manages a non-charter school, use the best practice from the non-charter school to disseminate to another school or district?***

A: No.  The RFP states that the dissemination of effective practices and programs need to have been developed, tested, and proven successful in Massachusetts' charter schools.

***Q: Can the applicant charter school partner with a district that is not located near the charter school?***

A: Yes.

***Letter of Intent***

***Q: The letter of intent email (LOI) was due on May 2, 2017. If I did not email an LOI, am I prohibited from applying for the grant?***

A: No. The submission of a nonbinding intent-to-apply email was encouraged in order to allow the Department to plan appropriate resources for the review process. However, the intent-to-apply email is not a prerequisite for applying, nor does sending it commit the sender to applying.

**Q: Are there elements that are critical in the LOI, or is it a general indication of interest?**

A: The RFP describes the requested information for the “non-binding intent to apply email” as follows:

* The name(s) of the charter school for which the applicant seeks dissemination grant funding;
* The name(s) of proposed or committed partners,
* A brief overview of the potential dissemination project, and
* Contact information (name, title, email address, and phone number) for the applicant's point person to be included on any communications regarding this grant program prior to the submission of a full application.

***General***

***Q: Where can I find the application?***

A: The RFP, required forms, and submission instructions can be found on the Department’s website at: <https://www.doemass.org/grants/2018/537/>

***Q:* *Can you send the PowerPoint presentation used for the webinar to participants?***

A: Yes, the PowerPoint presentation has been sent to all who registered for the webinars and will be sent to all eligible charter schools. If you did not receive the slides, please contact Ruth Hersh at Rhersh@doe.mass.edu or call her at 781-338-3211.

***Q: Will every applicant be interviewed?***

A: Possibly not. The Department will use a scoring rubric to evaluate submitted applications. Depending on the applications received, the Department will likely establish a cut score to determine finalists for the grant. All finalists will be interviewed in mid-June.

***Q: Can the dissemination part start in year two with year one used for data gathering and planning at the charter school?***

A: No. The charter school should be proposing to disseminate a proven best practice beginning in year one of grant funding; the data to prove that the charter school excels in the applicable area should be used as evidence to support the proposed project.

***Q: Can you use year 1 to collect data, and methods to share in an organized way with the partner school?***

A: No. the majority of the grant period should be used for action steps to accomplish the dissemination project, but a reasonable time to access the partner may be included in the grant application.

***Q: Will it be allowed to have a different focus from year 1 to year 2? For example, could year 1 focus on literacy and year 2 focus on math?***

A: Yes. A different focus each year can be part of the proposed project. Please note that student outcomes will have to be reported so this may result in separate reporting requirements.

***Q: Can a charter school submit more than one proposal?***

A: Yes, although only one grant may be awarded per applicant. For efficiency, the Department would prefer the charter school to submit one proposal with two optional plans, rather than two separate proposals.