**FY2023: MassSTEP ABE and ESOL - Fund Codes: 661/671/359 Questions & Answers (Q&A)**

Additional questions may be submitted for posting through Friday, July 29, 2022, to **Derek.Kalchbrenner@mass.gov** and all answers will be posted to the [Adult and Community Services Funding Opportunities webpage](https://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/rfp/).

**Questions sent to the Question and Answer email address as of July 29, 2022 (v2)**

**Q.1. Could you confirm what would be the DESE-recognized credential for paraeducators?**

**A.1.** An industry-recognized credential is not necessary to become a paraprofessional. In order to become a [paraprofessional](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/paraprofessional.html), applicants must either have obtained an associate (or higher) degree, have at least two years of post-secondary education that is equivalent to at least 48 credit hours from an accredited higher education institution, or have met the standard on either the Parapro or WorkKeys assessments. Neither the Parapro or WorkKeys assessments are industry-recognized credentials. In addition, participants in MassSTEP services must earn industry-recognized credentials upon completion of an approved workforce training program and there is not one for paraprofessionals. In order to qualify for MassSTEP funding, applicants must propose an approved workforce training program as part of the services.

**Q.2. Is the National Career Readiness Certificate considered an industry-recognized credential?**

**A.2.** No. The National Career Readiness Certificate is a work readiness credential. Work readiness credentials are not considered industry-recognized credentials because they do not document the measurable, industry-specific technical and or industry/occupational skills necessary to gain employment within an occupation. Industry-recognized credentials document technical or industry/occupational skills rather than general education skills.

**Q.3. Can you please clarify if we are to do two separate applications for Fund Code 359? I am unsure how to add two applications in EdGrants.**

**A.3.** We are unclear what is being asked but will try to answer the question based on our best understanding. Applicants may submit multiple proposal. Each proposal must contain all required documents and will be reviewed and scored separately. The proposals are not submitted in EdGrants but in the [online portal](https://webportalapp.com/appform/login/fy23masssteprfp). It may also be helpful to review the answer to Question #2 in the July 18th section.

**Questions sent to the Question and Answer email address as of July 22, 2022**

**Q.1. Is it possible to apply for a grant even if we have missed the Bidders’ Conferences?**

**A.1.** Yes. Attendance at a Bidders’ Conference is not a requirement.

**Q.2. Is this grant opportunity available for FY 2024 as well?**

**A.2.** Please see the answer to Question number 2 in the July 18 section below.

**Q.3. If an applicant had state-funded grant projects terminated in FY 2022 are they still eligible to apply for MassSTEP funding? Would they need to provide an explanation of the termination?**

**A.3.** Yes, an applicant in this situation would be eligible to apply for MassSTEP funding. No explanation of the termination would be necessary.

**Questions sent to the Question and Answer email address as of July 18, 2022**

**Q.1. Can MassSTEP students be co-enrolled in ABE or ESOL classes?**

**A.1.** MassSTEP programs are required to offer either ABE or ESOL classes which are run concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training classes. If students wish to enroll in additional ABE or ESOL classes, they may do so provided that the additional classes do not conflict with their MassSTEP classes.

**Q.2. Is this the only time providers will have to propose new MassSTEP programs for this year? Will the RFP scheduled to be released in January 2023 be for both existing and new programs? What is the duration of the January 2023 RFP?**

**A.2.** New and current providers can propose new programs for this current RFP to offer services in FY23 (this fiscal year). The same is true for the RFP scheduled for a January 2023 release. Current providers can also re-apply for funding for their existing programs with the January 2023 RFP. The January 2023 RFP is a multi-year RFP for MassSTEP services to be offered in FY2024 and conditionally renewable for up to four years after the initial year.

**Questions sent to the Question and Answer email address as of July 12, 2022**

**Q.1. Are grantees able to budget for student stipends?**

**A.1.** Grantees can pay student stipends for non-core activities such as participating in focus groups, providing translation at recruitment events, serving on an advisory council, or participating in outreach activities. However, students cannot be paid for core activities such as attending class or taking assessments. The process to pay stipends needs to be included in the program’s policies and procedures and be available to any student. It must be equitable and practiced throughout the organization. This is to ensure funds are spent properly. The program must document the scope of the stipend and keep records of the reason for the stipends and for what students do.

**Q.2. Does DESE have a required program start date?**

**A.2.** No.

**Questions from the July 12, 2022 Bidders’ Conference**

**Q.1. Can you explain how consortiums are eligible?**

**A.1.** Eligible consortiums include a coalition of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described in (A) through (K) of the [eligibility requirements](https://www.doe.mass.edu/grants/2023/661-671-359/) and partnerships between for-profit entities and an entity described in (B) through (K) of the eligibility requirements. In addition, one agency could subcontract with another for services.

**Q.2. If there are multiple reader teams, will they be reviewing complete proposals or will the documents be divided among teams?**

**A.2.** Reader Teams read complete proposals.

**Q.3. Does the proposed curriculum need to be finished by August 5, 2022, the date proposals are due?**

**A.3.** No. However, the curriculum would need to be completed by the proposed start date.

**Q.4. Is this a multi-year grant opportunity?**

**A.4.** No, this is a one-year grant opportunity.

**Q.5. If an applicant wanted to propose a culinary arts program and an automotive technology proposal would two sets of documents need to be submitted?**

**A.5.** Yes, in this example, the culinary arts and automotive technology proposals would need to be submitted separately and each would need to include a complete set of required forms.

**Q.6. What if the proposed industry is not one listed in the local WIOA plan?**

**A.6.** The applicant would need to provide evidence in the proposal that the proposed industry is a growing one in need of workers.

**Questions from the July 7, 2022 Bidders’ Conference**

**Q.1. If an agency submits multiple proposals, is there a cap on the funds that can be awarded to one agency?**

**A.1.** No. Agencies can submit multiple proposals for up to $150,000 per proposal.

**Q.2.The RFP Pagination Directions says all narrative responses must be in Arial 10-point font. But the directions in Part III – Required Program Information says Arial 12-point font. Which is correct?**

**A.2.** Please use Arial 12-point font. Applicants will not be penalized if they use Arial 10 point font.

**Q.3. Is there a maximum class size?**

**A.3.** No.

**Q.4. Can applicants use Arial 10-point font for tables and images?**

**A.4.** Yes.

**Q.5. Can you explain Indirect Costs and Administrative Costs?**

**A.5.** Applicants have the option to apply for Indirect Costs. Indirect cost rates must be [applied for annually to DESE](https://www.doe.mass.edu/grants/essential.html). For budgets, the indirect cost rate is calculated using costs specified in the grantee's indirect cost plan. Those specified costs may not be charged as direct costs to the grant or to any other grant under any circumstances. Grantees are required to use a restricted indirect cost rate of 8%, unless its approved calculated indirect cost rate is less than 8%, than the lower rate must be used. Indirect costs are administrative costs.

As for administrative costs, not less than 95 percent of a grant’s funds must be spent on adult education direct services and literacy activities; not more than 5 percent may be spent on administrative costs (related to planning, administration, (including carrying out performance accountability requirements), professional development, providing adult education and literacy services in alignment with local workforce plans, carrying out one-stop partner responsibilities, and state approved indirect costs charged to the grant. Programs may negotiate a higher administrative cost percentage by submitting a written request and rationale with application. DESE will not approve administrative costs above 25%.

**Q.6. The RFP Pagination Directions say narrative responses may not exceed 12 pages. But the directions in Part III – Required Program Information says narrative responses may not exceed 10 pages. Which is correct?**

**A.6.** The narrative response may not exceed 12 pages.

**Q.7. Why would any agency choose to apply for an Indirect Cost Rate?**

**A.7.** DESE cannot advise on this question.

**Q.8. Can a course outline or scope and sequence suffice for the curriculum samples?**

**A.8.** A detailed excerpt from either a course outline or scope and sequence could suffice as a curriculum sample. Applicants would need to ensure that the sample included sufficient detail in order for DESE to get a sense of the curriculum.

**Q.9. Is there a spacing requirement for the narrative response?**

**A.9.** No.

**Q.10. Is there any flexibility with the maximum 16-week program length?**

**A.10.** DESE would need to see evidence for why a program needed to be longer than 16 weeks. Applicants could provide this evidence in the response to the questions in the Program Design section of the narrative response.

**Q.11. Is this RFP for the current MassSTEP programs?**

**A.11.** No. Currently funded MassSTEP programs applied through the continuation RFP for FY23. The FY24 Open and Competitive RFP for both currently funded and new MassSTEP programs will be released in [January 2023](https://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/rfp/default.html). This RFP is for new MassSTEP programs.