**SOA Evidence-Based Program (EBP) Grant Fund Code 117/225B**

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

1. **What is the duration of the grant?**

This grant is designed to be a three-year grant, providing districts time to focus strategically on one targeted program area and gain more traction than with a one-year grant. The grant will run through FY23 (school year 2022-2023), FY24 (school year 2023-2024), and FY25 (school year 2024-2025). Grantees awarded funding in FY23 will be required to reapply in a non-competitive grant process in FY24 and FY25 (see below).

1. **If I receive the grant in FY23 (this academic year), do I need to apply for it again in FY24 and FY25?**

Yes. There will be a non-competitive reapplication process each year. Grantees this year will be notified each year when the reapplication is posted on our website and support will be provided in understanding and applying for the grant in subsequent years.

1. **What grant application requirements can I expect in FY24 and FY25?**

Though we have not yet developed the grant reapplication for FY24 and FY25, there will be a required commitment to those grantees entering into this three-year grant cohort. These include participation in any evaluation activities requested by DESE and submission of a dissemination project to be shared publicly for other districts to access. More information on these will be provided as they are developed.

1. **Will DESE provide support throughout the grant duration, particularly during the first year and going into year two?**

Yes. Should districts request it, DESE will provide some support specific to each evidence-based program (EBP) promoted in this grant. Information on any DESE sponsored efforts related to these EBPs is forthcoming and will be informed by district feedback and expressed need.

1. **Why does this grant focus on these EBPs in particular?**
   1. ***Co-Teaching and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities and English Learners***
   2. ***Early Literacy***
   3. ***Expanded Learning Time (ELT)***
   4. ***Strategies to Recruit and Retain Educators/Administrators in Hard-To-Staff Schools and Positions***

The team at DESE that developed this funding opportunity is the same one that reviewed the [Student Opportunity Act plans and the amendments](https://www.doe.mass.edu/soa/plans.html) submitted in the spring. Among the EBPs selected by districts in their 3-year plans, co-teaching and inclusion was selected most with early literacy close behind. In looking at recently released MCAS scores, the data reveals that the most profound gaps exist for our students with disabilities and English learners. Further analysis of MCAS also shows declining performance in early literacy and writing.

Expanded Learning Time (ELT) has had great success in Massachusetts as funded through a line item in the state budget. However, the state model became unsustainable following COVID given the fatigue of teachers as well as financial instability. For these reasons combined with compelling research documenting the benefits of ELT in accelerating learning and closing gaps, we have included ELT as one of the EBPs to implement through this grant. This grant will allow for far more flexibility in terms of time requirements and the parameters attached to ELT in the past. Districts and schools will be able to determine how much additional time they will need to redesign the day/year to provide a meaningful learning experience and better outcomes for students.

Lastly, it is difficult for schools and districts to fully implement programming with fidelity without highly effective staff. Due to the staffing challenges districts and schools are facing following COVID, this grant will provide funding to applicants needing to build a full and strong staff of educators, such as general education teachers, special education teachers, ESL teachers, interventionists, paraprofessionals, teacher assistants, etc. DESE will provide attention to building out pathways for educators seeking licenses, requiring additional higher education credits, professional development, trainings, and paraprofessional recruitment and support.

1. **Can our district apply for multiple EBPs within this application?**

We recommend that you apply for **one** of the proposed EBPs, but you may choose to include in your plan strategies from some of the other prioritized EBPs since many of the strategies are interconnected.

***For example:***

If a district’s data analysis identifies a need to focus on Co-Teaching and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities and English Learners but does not have sufficient staffing of special educators or English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, then the district could also implement a recruitment strategy from the Recruit and Retain Educators in Hard-to-Staff School and Positions EBP.

Should a district identify a different EBP contained in our [Guidance](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.doe.mass.edu%2Fsoa%2Fevidence-based-program-area.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK) as one on which they would like to focus through FY25, you may apply under the “District Determined” category.

***Please note:*** Because the four EBPs have been carefully selected for this grant, districts applying under the “District Determined” category will need to present a compelling argument for implementing the district-determined EBP to close gaps within the district context. The application will need to provide a clear and cohesive combination of [strategies](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.doe.mass.edu%2Fsoa%2Fimplementation-indicators.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK) within its self-selected EBP that directly relate to gap closing in the district.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE APPLICATION

1. **How can I get information on this grant beyond the posting?**

An informational webinar will be presented on December 19, 2022, at 3:00. See RFP for details.

1. **When is the grant application due?**

The grant is due by close of business (5:00 p.m. EST) on Friday, January 13, 2023. Due to the competitive nature of the grant, late submissions will not be accepted.

1. **If I choose one evidence-based program, would I be able to use grant funding for activities that may be aligned with one of the other evidence-based programs?**

Yes. There is some overlap within these evidence-based programs that we would fully support. For example, a district focusing on co-teaching and inclusion may employ some of the strategies under staff recruitment to hire additional experienced ESL teachers and supports. However, if you are awarded the grant, always be sure to inquire about expenditures of which you are uncertain.

1. **Should applicants complete the information on each tab on the Part III of the application?**

No. Applicants will fill out a total of **three (3) tabs**. Only the first tab (***District Information and Instructions***), the second tab (***DATA***), and the tab labeled with the ***name of the evidence-based program you have chosen*** should be completed.

1. **Are all public school districts, including charter schools, eligible to apply?**

Yes. All public school districts and charter schools are eligible to apply. Competitive priority will be awarded to those districts that serve high populations of students in the low-income student group, those in or with schools in chronically underperforming status, districts with an increase in Chapter 70 funding up to, but not above $1.5 million, and districts receiving [rural school aid](https://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/chapter70/foundation/fy2022-rural-school-aid.html) in the Commonwealth.

1. **How much funding is available and how will award amounts be calculated?**

Approximately $9 million is available over three years. Awards will be based on the scope of the plan, and the costs associated with each evidence-based program area.