FY 2023 Open Textbooks Pilot Program Competition FAQs

Eligibility Questions

1. ***What do you mean by a consortium (as referred to on page 4)?***
    a. Please refer to the eligibility requirements in the NIA, but a consortium is comprised of:
        i. Three IHEs as defined in section 101 of the HEA (with one of the IHE's or a State Higher Education Agency listed as the lead applicant/fiscal agent)
        ii. An educational technology or electronic curriculum design expert (which may include such experts that are employed by one or more of the consortium institutions); and
        iii. An advisory group of at least three employers, workforce organizations, or sector partners

2. ***Can an institution that is the lead on a current OTP grant submit a new proposal as lead for this round as well?***
    a. A current or prior OTP grantee is not prohibited from applying to this grant opportunity.

3. ***Can an IHE be the lead applicant for more than one proposal?***
    a. No. Please note that if the Department receives more than one application from an IHE that serves as the lead applicant, then we will accept and process the application with the latest "date/time received" validation.

4. ***Can an IHE be included as a subrecipient or partnering entity of the consortium – not the lead applicant – in more than one proposal?***
    a. Yes.

5. ***Can an applicant be part of a proposal where they serve as the "lead" for one consortium while supporting/advising as a part of another?***
    a. Yes. You may be a part of two different applications, as such, if both were to be awarded. The expectation is that you have the capacity to meet the obligations as noted in the Notice Inviting Applications (NIA).

6. ***Does this program accept applications from IHE's outside the U.S.A.?***
    a. No. Eligible applicants are IHEs as defined in section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA) (20 U.S.C. 1001). This does not include foreign institutions.
    b. However, you can make a subaward to a foreign non-profit. The foreign entity would need to be able to demonstrate to the grantee that it has a non-profit status under the laws of the nation in which it is domiciled. This is necessary to establish eligibility for the subgrant.
    c. There are also no restrictions on who applicants can use as contractors as long as they have the capacity to provide services.

7. ***What is meant by a State higher education agency?***
    a. A State higher education agency means the officer or agency primarily responsible for the State supervision of higher education.
8. ***Is a state government agency for Higher Education eligible to apply for this grant?***
    a. A State higher education agency is an eligible applicant. As established in the NIA, eligible IHEs (as defined under section 101 of the HEA) and State higher education agencies may serve as the lead fiscal agent of the consortia.

9. ***Can system offices apply on behalf of their institutions? For example, could the "State Board of Community and Technical Colleges," an administrative body representing 20 community and technical colleges be eligible to lead a project?***
    a. If the system is a State higher education agency, then they could serve at the lead applicant. If the system is not a State higher education agency, then one of their eligible IHEs should be designated as the lead applicant.

10. ***Can a university or college system (and all the affiliated colleges in the system) be considered a single IHE?***
    a. No. We do not provide the definition for a system within this NIA. An IHE is defined in section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA) (20 U.S.C. 1001).

11. ***Can 3 colleges in the same university system (but with separate tax IDs) collaborate to meet the requirement for 3 IHEs in the consortium?***
    a. Yes. The eligible IHEs may be a part of the same system. Please note that if your system is not a State higher education agency, then one of your eligible IHEs should be designated as the lead applicant.

12. ***Can a state system of higher education incorporating 20 colleges and 10 universities establish a grants.gov account for submitting a proposal, and can the system office act as the fiscal agent?***
    a. No. An eligible IHE from the system should be designated as the lead applicant. The lead applicant that will serve as the fiscal agent over the grant should submit the application on behalf of the system through grants.gov.

13. ***If an IHE partners with a "College Board" that is comprised of 20 community colleges, then is it necessary to identify 2 or more members of the community college system as "IHE partners" to meet the requirement of 3 IHEs in the consortium?***
    a. Yes. All participating members of the consortium should be clearly identified, even those that make up a "College Board."

14. ***We have three community colleges in under our District, with the district being our legal entity. Would an application for our district that includes all three campuses meet the consortium requirements? Or would we need to include two other IHE's outside of our district since our three campuses are part of one larger legal entity?***
    a. All 3 campuses can be included as part of the consortium to meet the requirements, but one of the IHE's must be designated as the lead applicant and fiscal agent in the application. Unfortunately, the district cannot be the lead entity/fiscal agent.

15. ***We are not an established consortia but are almost all members of one (Public and Academic Libraries together). Is that OK? We are all in the same area of our State. Is there a minimum number of libraries required? Do we need a formal agreement between interested libraries before applying? Can we add academic members after the grant deadline?***
    a. There is not a minimum number of libraries to be involved in the project, but your consortium must at least include 3 IHE's, an educational technology or electronic curriculum design expert (which may include such experts that are employed by one or more of the consortium institutions); and an advisory group of at least three employers, workforce organizations, or sector partners. The lead applicant must be one of those IHE's or a State Higher Education Agency.

b. You cannot add members after the July 25th deadline, but if awarded, you can add other academic members and partners to your grant. You need to consult with your Program Specialist when adding additional partners.
c. It is not required to have letters of commitment, but it is recommended. You must clearly identify and document the member's role, responsibilities, and willingness to participate on the grant, as well as their qualifications/experience.
d. Please note, this is a selection criterion that you are required to respond to in Adequacy of Resources and Quality of Project Personnel. Please refer to the NIA for a complete breakdown of the Selection Criteria.

Application Questions

16. ***Is it possible for the Project Director role to be split among two different individuals? (Each at 0.5 FTE)***
    a. Yes, but please remember to clearly outline their qualifications/experience, and their roles and responsibilities to the project.

17. **Will this be an annual program? Will the timeline be the same next year?**
    a. Unfortunately, competitions for this grant program are dependent on congressional funding each fiscal year. It is therefore not guaranteed that a competition will be held annually for this program. Furthermore, the timeline for each competition depends on when we are able to get the NIA approved and published in the Federal Register, so the timeline may be different the next time this competition is announced.

18. ***Is a third-party or external evaluator required for the project?***
    a. No.

19. ***What is meant by an "educational technology or electronic curriculum design expert?"***
    a. The individual(s) fulfilling this role in the consortium should be able to provide expertise in the design, development and delivery of the open textbooks and instructional resources. Ideally, the individual(s) possess the skills needed to create content for learning and have qualifications that facilitate designing, developing, implementing, and assessing instruction and learning.

20. ***Can the educational technologist or electronic curriculum design expert involved in the project be provided from a system level if the IHEs do not employ such a role?***
    a. Yes.

21. ***Is a separate letter of commitment needed for the educational technology or electronic curriculum design expert that's part of the eligibility requirements if that person(s) is within one of the institutions of higher education consortium partners?***
    a. No. However, in your application this individual should be clearly identified and information regarding their qualifications and responsibilities on the grant should be provided.

22. ***If applying on behalf of a system that represents a very large number of IHEs, then is it a requirement to get letters of commitment and support from every single member of the system?***
    a. No. For the purpose of this grant, the consortium does not have to include all of the institutions in the system in its application. As reflected in the NIA, there must be at least three IHEs in the consortium along with the other required participants. It is also

acceptable to provide documentation that supports your large system arrangement and describes the system/consortium member's willingness to participate on the grant. For example, a signed letter of commitment from an Advisory board that represents the system arrangement would be appropriate documentation.

23. ***Is a separate letter of commitment needed for each member of the advisory group?***
    a. No. However, in your application the members that make up the advisory group should be clearly identified and documentation that describes the member's role, responsibilities and willingness to participate on the grant should be provided. Please note this relates to the criteria you are required to respond to in Adequacy of Resources and Quality of Project Personnel.

24. ***For the "Technical Standards for Interoperability," where in the application should an applicant identify the industry standard they will use?***
    a. Applicants should identify the industry standard they will use for "Technical Standards for Interoperability" in the narrative section "Quality of the Project Design" within the Project Narrative Attachment Form. The Project Narrative Attachment Form includes the narrative sections addressing the program selection criteria that will be used to evaluate applications submitted for this competition.

25. ***Are certificate and Career/technical education programs included in the program's target or is the grant targeted to true degree programs only?***
    a. Funding is intended to target "the use of open textbooks in courses that are part of a degree granting program." As such, this program's support of high-enrollment courses or programs may include certificate and Career/technical education programs so long as they are part of a postsecondary degree-granting program.

26. ***Does 'degree granting program' mean that it must be a major, or if a course was a requirement of another degree (international business degree, for example), would that be acceptable?***
    a. As noted in the purpose of the program, funding is intended to target "the use of open textbooks in courses that are part of a degree granting program." As such, you can develop open textbooks for a course as long as it is part of a degree granting program, particularly if it is a course with a high-enrollment and/or a program that prepares individuals for in-demand fields.

27. ***If our courses do not meet the definition of high enrollment, can we rely on in-demand industry sector element of our program/courses for eligibility?***
    a. Sub-bullet 2 under Absolute Priority 2 speaks this question: Focus on the creation and expansion of education and training materials that can be scaled, within and beyond the participating consortium members, to reach a broad range of students participating in high-enrollment courses or preparing for in-demand industry sectors or in-demand occupations. <u>However, you must ensure your courses meet all the requirements/sub-bullets of the 3 Absolute Priorities outlined in the NIA.</u>

28. ***Is it allowed to have multiple academic departments around the same field of work creating OERs for their specific departments or is it best to stick with one academic department (i.e., psychology)?***
    a. Yes, as long as they can be identified as high-enrollment courses in degree granting programs and meet the requirements of the Absolute Priority.

29. ***If there are OERs available for some topics within a given discipline, but maybe they require expansion or modification to make them more inclusive, can that be a part of our project as well or should our project focus strictly on creating new material only?***
    a. Yes, the purpose of the program, as listed in Absolute Priority 2, is to create new OER materials and expand current OER textbooks and materials. However, you must ensure that the components of your project meet all the requirements/sub-bullets of the 3 Absolute Priorities outlined in the NIA.

30. ***What is the difference between a competitive preference priority and an invitational priority?***
    a. If you address a Competitive Preference Priority you may receive additional points. If you address the Invitational Priority, we do not award additional points. Both of these priorities are optional, i.e., you do not have to address them, but you must address absolute priorities.

31. ***What are some of the common traits of the most successful grant proposals in terms of scale?***
    a. A large component of this program is that, with the rising costs of attending college and the increasing cost of purchasing textbooks, it is important to consider how your application will scale upwards to generate the highest level of savings for your students each year. Furthermore, you may want to consider the benefits of OER materials outlined in the NIA background section, including how open educational resources increase equity because institutions are able to freely distribute these resources and provide students access to high-quality, up-to-date, and relevant content and materials; and access to open resources can empower faculty to customize learning materials to better meet the needs of their students.

32. ***We would like to confirm if we are restricted to credit-bearing degree programs or would certificate programs and non-credit opportunities also be embraced.***
    a. Yes, the OER materials that you intend to develop must be part of a degree-granting program, particularly those courses that are high-enrollment and will prepare students in in-demand fields. This means they must be credit-bearing courses and degree programs. Unfortunately, non-credit courses are not an allowable activity.

33. ***Are the three employers for the advisory group allowed to come from participating IHEs or outside partners?***
    a. They can be from either internal to the participating IHE or an outside partner, as long as you clearly outline their roles, responsibilities, and willingness to participate on the grant.

34. ***Is posting the OER books created with the grant on a public library consortium considered enough?***
    a. We do not make requirements for how you share and disseminate the open educational resources, as long as they are open, freely available to the public, and align to the open licensing, accessibility, and interoperability requirements. Keep in mind, that you want to provide the greatest reach to students and help them to achieve the highest level of savings, so it is important to consider whether posting the OER materials on one public library consortium will provide the greatest outreach.

Open Licensing Requirements

- For questions about open licensing requirements, please check out our 2 other FAQ documents on this page, or visit our website.

- You may also email me Kurrinn.Abrams2@ed.gov and please cc tech@ed.gov