FY 2020 Open Textbooks Pilot FAQs

1. **Does this program accept applications from Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) outside of the USA?**

   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.

2. **What is meant by a State higher education agency?**

   A State higher education agency means the officer or agency primarily responsible for the State supervision of higher education.

3. **Is a state government agency for Higher Education eligible to apply for this grant?**

   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..

4. **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?**

   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.

5. **Can a university or college system (and all the affiliated colleges in the system) be considered a single IHE?**

   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).

6. **Can 3 colleges in the same university system (but with separate tax IDs) collaborate to meet the requirement for 3 IHEs in the consortium?**

   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.

7. **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?**

   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.

8. **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?**

   Yes. All participating members of the consortium should be clearly identified, even those that make up a "College Board."

9. **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?**

   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.

10. **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?**

    No. However, in your application this individual should be clearly identified and information regarding their qualifications and responsibilities on the grant should be provided.

11. **Is a separate letter of commitment needed for each member of the advisory group?**

    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.

12. **Can an IHE be the lead applicant for more than one proposal?**

    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.

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

    Yes.

14. **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?**

    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).

15. May a grantee include non-US/foreign nonprofit organizations as subgrantees?

Yes. A grantee may make a subgrant 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.

May a grantee contract with non-US/foreign nonprofit organizations for services under the grant?

There aren't any restrictions on who applicants/grantees can use as contractors as long as the contractor appears to have the capacity and ability to provide the services.

16. Can for-profit organizations be a part of the consortium or be a subgrantee?

Yes.

17. Is a third-party evaluator required for this grant project?

An external evaluator is not required.

18. What is meant by an "educational technology or electronic curriculum design expert?"

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.

19. 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?

Yes.

20. For the "Technical Standards for Interoperability," where in the application should an applicant identify the industry standard they will use?

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.

21. Are certificate and Career/technical education programs included in the program's target or is the grant targeted to true degree programs only?

As noted in the explanatory statement accompanying the FY 2020 appropriation for the Open Textbooks program, 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.

22. What is the indirect cost rate for this grant program?

The indirect cost rate for this grant program is eight (8) percent.

23. Are subgrants subject to the grant program's eight (8) percent indirect cost rate?

Yes. When a grantee subawards to an entity, the federal indirect cost rate and regulations applies to the subaward. Pass-through entities are required to abide by the regulations imposed to the prime entity. The requirements for pass-through entities are found at 2 C.F.R. §200.331.

24. If SAM is delayed in processing our paperwork, may we either:

a. Submit a hard copy application per the instructions in Common Instructions for Applicants to Department of Education Discretionary Grant Programs, or;

b. Provide an emailed or dropbox submission of our application?

No. In addition, we will not grant you an extension if you failed to fully register in order to submit your application to Grants.gov (including with the required DUNS number and TIN currently registered in SAM) before the application deadline date and time or if you experience technical problems unrelated to the Grants.gov system.