

Request for Grant Application Guidelines Statewide Distance Learning Project

For services offered with the following funding:

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Title II, Section 231 (Federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act)

April 2022



Pennsylvania
Department of Education

**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

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Statewide Distance Learning Project Direct Service Grant

INTRODUCTION

The Federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), Title II, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provides funds to be awarded through the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), Bureau of Postsecondary and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education (division) to provide adult basic education services throughout the state. PDE is making available up to \$300,000 of these funds to support one distance learning direct service program to provide adult basic education services at a distance to Pennsylvania residents as directed by the division.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Program Purpose

The *Technical Assistance Guide for Performance Accountability under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* defines distance education as a “formal learning activity where students and instructors are separated by geography, time, or both for the majority of the instructional period. Distance learning materials are delivered through a variety of media including, but not limited to, print, audio recording, videotape, broadcasts, computer software, web-based programs, and other online technology. Teachers support distance learners through communication via mail, telephone, e-mail or online technologies and software.”

PDE has elected to support a program dedicated to providing adult basic education at a distance to meet the needs of residents who are unable to access instruction in their areas of need.

Minimum Program Requirements

The successful applicant for the grant funding opportunity must provide all of the following services at a distance year round through a variety of media:

1. Adult basic education (ABE) Levels 1-6 and high school equivalency (HSE) test preparation instruction to individuals who are unable to attend instruction at a local program;
2. English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) instruction to individuals who are unable to attend instruction at a local program;
3. High school level math instruction (algebra, geometry) to supplement math instruction at local programs;
4. Support services to help students persist in distance education;
5. Support services to help students identify education and career goals, develop employability skills, and successfully transition to employment and postsecondary education or training, as appropriate; and
6. Integration of workforce preparation activities into instruction and support services.

PDE does not require the Statewide Distance Learning Project to serve as a partner in a local PA CareerLink® site. However, the Statewide Distance Learning Project must ensure that it is providing career services to program participants.

Full details regarding all minimum requirements for adult basic education and family literacy programs are available in the *Adult Education and Family Literacy Program Guidelines*. For the purposes of the competition, a draft version of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Program Guidelines for Program Year 2022-23 is on the [Division of Adult Education Grant Competitions](#) webpage.

Eligible Applicants

As defined in WIOA, an eligible provider is an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy activities that may include:

1. A local education agency;
2. A community-based organization or faith-based organization;
3. A volunteer literacy organization;
4. An institution of higher education;
5. A public or private non-profit agency;
6. A library;
7. A public housing authority;
8. A non-profit institution that is not described in any of the above and has the ability to provide adult education and literacy activities to eligible individuals;
9. A consortium or coalition of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above;
10. A partnership between an employer and an entity described above; and
11. Other organizations not listed above

For the purposes of the competition in Pennsylvania, a consortium or coalition of agencies will be defined as a main grantee with one or more subgrantees. The main grantee will serve as both the fiscal agent for the grant and a provider of some of the services proposed in the grant application. The main grantee is responsible for ensuring that all activities provided are completed as proposed and is responsible for monitoring and compliance of the subgrantees. Applicants cannot subcontract with another applicant for a portion of the proposed services. Agencies can only be a main grantee or a subgrantee. Answers in the Narrative and Agency Information sections of the grant application should reflect the work of the consortium/coalition rather than treat each entity separately, except where otherwise noted.

Establishing Demonstrated Effectiveness

For the purposes of establishing demonstrated effectiveness to qualify as an eligible provider for the Statewide Distance Learning Project grant, an applicant must provide performance data on its record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy, and information regarding its outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of a secondary school diploma or its equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education and training. An applicant that has been previously funded under Title

II of WIOA must submit performance data required under section 116 of WIOA. An applicant that has not been previously funded under Title II of WIOA must provide performance data to demonstrate its past effectiveness. Each individual agency in a consortium or coalition of agencies must be an eligible provider by itself (i.e., must be an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy activities) and must individually provide all of the data required to establish demonstrated effectiveness.

PDE will require applicants to provide quantitative data for the immediately preceding three program years. The data provided by the applicant to establish demonstrated effectiveness must include the following:

1. The number of individuals in the outcome cohort (i.e., the denominator);
2. The number of individuals who achieved the outcomes (i.e., the numerator); and
3. The resulting percentage of individuals who achieved the outcome.

The tables that applicants will use to provide data for the purposes of establishing demonstrated effectiveness to qualify as an eligible provider are on the [Division of Adult Education Grant Competitions](#) webpage. Applicants must download and complete the appropriate table and then upload the completed document into the *Demonstrated effectiveness to determine eligibility* section in the application in eGrants. In the case of a consortium or coalition of agencies, each agency must complete a table with its own data and each table must be uploaded separately.

PDE has established the following minimum threshold for an applicant to be determined to be an eligible provider for the purposes of this section:

1. A total number of enrolled individuals greater than or equal to 15 in each of the three years.

Prior to reviewing and scoring submitted applications, PDE will review the information provided by each applicant, including each agency in a consortium or coalition of agencies, to establish demonstrated effectiveness to determine if that applicant is an eligible provider. Only applications that are determined to be from eligible providers will be reviewed, scored, and considered for funding. In the case of a consortium or coalition of agencies, all agencies in the consortium or coalition must be determined to be eligible providers. Applicants that are not able to establish demonstrated effectiveness under the criteria above are not eligible providers and their applications will not be reviewed, scored, and considered for funding. Any applicants that are determined not to be eligible providers will be notified of that decision.

PDE reserves the right to require successful applicants to submit documentation in support of the information provided to establish demonstrated effectiveness.

Eligible Program Participants

An eligible individual is defined by WIOA as an individual:

1. Who has attained 16 years of age;
2. Who is not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under state law and;
3. Who is:
 - a. Basic skills deficient;

- b. Does not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and has not achieved an equivalent level of education; or
- c. Is an English language learner.

Funding Priorities

In awarding funds, PDE will prioritize funding, through the review and rating process, to grant applications from eligible providers with past effectiveness in providing high-quality services at a distance that improve the skills of eligible participants and help those participants to earn high school equivalency credentials, gain and retain employment, and transition to postsecondary education or training. PDE will prioritize funding for those applications that describe proposed services that include:

1. A thorough and detailed plan for providing the required services;
2. Evidence of the applicant's organizational capacity to meet all of the programmatic, reporting, administrative, and fiscal requirements of the grant;
3. A variety of instructional options to meet the needs of students;
4. High quality instruction that is based on best practices and the *College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education* and is of sufficient intensity to lead to student outcomes;
5. High-quality student support services that help students to persist and succeed in adult basic education services and meet their personal, educational, and career goals; and
6. Services that align with the strategies and goals of the Pennsylvania WIOA Combined State Plan.

Federal WIOA Title II Requirements

WIOA Title II establishes requirements for the grant competition process, including seven items that applicants must address in their grant applications and 13 items that PDE must take into consideration when awarding grants. In addition, section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) requires applicants to describe the steps they will take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, the grant-funded program. This RGA and the questions in the grant narrative are designed to ensure that all necessary information is included. Applicants will address the seven required items, the 13 considerations, and section 427 of GEPA by providing complete answers to the questions in the grant application. Applicants should review information in the Help Buttons for each question in eGrants to make sure they provide complete answers. The Division of Adult Education strongly encourages applicants to refer to [Programs and Activities Authorized by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act \(Title II of the WIOA\) — Final Rule §463.20 and §463.22](#) when completing the grant application.

Grant Terms and Conditions

Multi-Year Contracts

The successful applicant will be approved for a two-year grant cycle. Grant funds will be awarded through annual one-year notifications of funding contingent on the availability of funds. Each year, the grantee will submit a budget and program year-specific information via the

eGrants system in order to receive funding. Each year's renewal option and grant amount will be based on the following criteria:

1. Contract compliance, including success in meeting contracted enrollment and providing the contracted services;
2. Evidence of sufficient progress in meeting the state-imposed performance standards;
3. Evidence of continuous program improvement;
4. Compliance with fiscal and programmatic policies and guidelines; and
5. The amount of the state and federal appropriation.

If the grantee fails to sufficiently address the above criteria, the grant may be terminated prior to the end of the grant cycle.

Program Funding Requests

Applicants may apply for up to \$300,000.00. Applicants should apply for those funds necessary to meet the grant requirements, provide the proposed services to the number of students they can serve based on need and interest, and meet the state-imposed performance targets. PDE reserves the right to adjust the actual grant award amount and contracted enrollment of the successful applicant during the grant contract approval process.

Applicants may apply for funding up to a maximum of \$2,000.00 per contracted student, with the total requested not to exceed \$300,000.00. PDE strongly encourages applicants requesting the maximum allowable cost per student to prioritize the use of funds for full-time direct service staff positions with benefits.

Grant Application Components

The Statewide Distance Learning Project grant application consists of three sections: Narrative, Agency Information, and Budget. A document explaining how to create the grant application in eGrants will be posted on the Division of Adult Education Grant Competitions webpage.

Narrative

The narrative addresses the seven required items, the 13 considerations, PDE requirements, section 427 of GEPA, and how the applicant will use the grant funds to support the proposed activities. It is the basis for analysis of the applicant's ability to provide the required services. Online contextual help is available by clicking on the Help icons in eGrants.

Agency information

The Agency Information section provides detailed information regarding staff qualifications, provision of instruction, proposed contracted enrollment and participation, program contact information, and assurances. The information provided in this section will be rated for its alignment with and support of the information provided in the narrative. Online contextual help is available by clicking on the Help icons in eGrants.

Budget

The budget demonstrates fiscally sound allocation of funds to successfully provide education services. Online contextual help is available by clicking on the Help icons in eGrants.

When completing the budget, refer to the *Adult Education and Family Literacy Guidelines* Section 600 for fiscal guidance and information on grant limitations and cost functions and object codes. Applicants should also refer to the *Adult Education and Family Literacy Guidelines* Appendix E for guidance on administrative costs and the process to negotiate administrative costs greater than 5 percent, as allowed by WIOA. PDE, Division of Adult Education will conduct negotiations regarding administrative costs with successful applicants during the grant contract approval process.

Application Review

All applications will be reviewed except those disqualified for one or more of the following reasons:

1. Entity submitting the application does not meet the definition of Eligible Applicant.
2. Applicant does not answer one or more of the required questions in the narrative.
3. Application is not completed by the application deadline. Completion will be determined by the time the eGrants system records that the program completed the application by marking all sections complete and clicking the “Complete” button.

Grant applications will be reviewed and scored by teams of no fewer than three individuals comprised of staff from PDE, other commonwealth agencies, and/or peer reviewers. Peer reviewers will be non-applicants who have experience in adult basic education or related activities. Reviewers will be screened for conflict of interest and will not benefit financially from grant awards. In addition, after receiving the grant applications through eGrants, PDE will submit all Statewide Distance Learning Project applications to the Pennsylvania Workforce Board for review for consistency with the Pennsylvania WIOA Combined State Plan. PDE will take the results of the review and any recommendations to promote alignment into consideration when making grant awards. This process ensures compliance with WIOA statute 107(d)(11)(B)(i) and WIOA regulations [§463.21](#).

Depending on the number of applications either a weighted method or a Z-scoring method will be used. In the weighted scoring method, a single team reviews and rates all applications. In the Z-scoring method, applicants are distributed to several teams for review and rating. Scores are then calculated using a standard deviation formula which evens out high and low raters.

Grant Award Selection and Notification Process

Award Selection

Reviewers will use an application review guide to review and score applications. The grant will be awarded to the highest scoring applicant based on:

1. A minimum score of 131/175, and
2. Availability of funds.

The selected application under consideration for acceptance may require revisions or submission of additional information prior to approval.

Notification Process

The Division of Adult Education will notify each applicant of the outcome of the review process and whether its application will be funded.

Appeal Process

If an eligible provider disputes the funding decision, it has a right to appeal the decision to the Pennsylvania Secretary of Education. The appeal will be considered in accordance with the procedural rules set forth under 34 C.F.R. § 76.401(d) and 1 Pa. Code § 35.1 et seq., the General Rules of Administrative Practice and Procedure. A final decision of the Pennsylvania Secretary of Education may be appealed to the U.S. Secretary of Education under 34 C.F.R. § 76.401. The appeal of this decision must be received by the Pennsylvania Secretary of Education within 30 days of the mailing date of this decision at the following address:

Dr. Noe Ortega
Secretary of Education
Pennsylvania Department of Education
333 Market Street, 10th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

GRANT REQUIREMENTS

1. Grant applications will be submitted through the [eGrants](#) system.
2. For access to the eGrants system and the related grant opportunities, prospective applicants should send an email to ra-able@pa.gov with the subject line "Division of Adult Education grant competition." In the body of the email, prospective applicants should state the agency name and identify which Division of Adult Education grant the agency plans to apply for. Prior to sending the email, the applicant should search for the agency record in the PDE Education Names and Addresses ([EdNA](#)) database.
 - a. Agencies found in EdNA should include in their email their Administrative Unit Number (AUN) and contact information for the individual at the agency who will create and complete the grant application.
 - b. Agencies not listed in EdNA should indicate in the email that they are not in the state database and provide contact information for the agency administrator who will work with division staff to establish a listing and be assigned an AUN.
 - c. Under extraordinary circumstances affecting an agency's access to the eGrants system, the requirement to submit the grant application via eGrants may be waived. Eligible applicants who believe they have such circumstances should contact the Division of Adult Education at ra-able@pa.gov prior to the application due date to discuss an alternative submission process. Please note that the application deadline in bullet 5 below applies to any alternative submission process.

3. For the purpose of planning, writing, and submitting applications, this document should be used in conjunction with information available on the Division of Adult Education Grant Competitions webpage. Applicants should also review this information in conjunction with the division guidelines and policies and the eGrants application to develop a complete understanding of the intent and requirements of the application process.
4. Applicants must submit questions regarding the Statewide Distance Learning Project grant application process to ra-able@pa.gov. Division of Adult Education staff will periodically post responses to submitted questions on the Division of Adult Education Grant Competitions webpage for all applicants to review.
5. Application Deadline: Eligible applicants must submit their proposal to PDE by May 17, 2022, 2:00 PM. To submit the proposal, applicants must mark all sections complete (evidenced by a check mark next to each section) and then click the complete button.

GRANT TIMELINE

Dates	Activity
April 18, 2022	Grant Application Guidelines and Related Information Available
April 18, 2022	Statewide Distance Learning Project Application Available (open)
May 17, 2022, 2:00 PM	Statewide Distance Learning Project Completion Deadline (close)

AWARD WINNERS

To complete the grant award process, applicants under consideration for acceptance are required to provide proper signatures to the grant agreement and complete the Funding Accountability and Transparency form located in the grant in eGrants.

All contract components are produced by eGrants. Each will be accessed at the [eGrants website](#) and will consist of the following:

1. Grant Agreement Signature Page.
2. Appendix A – Special Program Terms.
3. Appendix B – Grantee’s Program Narrative(s) and Budget(s).
4. Appendix C – Payment Terms, Responsibilities and Contact Information.

Grant Agreement

1. The Grant Agreement is a binding agreement between PDE and the eligible grant award recipient. The beginning and ending date of the project, total amount of funds, and project number will appear on the grant agreement.
2. There must be an electronic signature or a manual signature in blue ink on the original copy of the Grant Agreement. Stamped signatures are not acceptable on the original copy.
3. Agencies approved for eSignature can electronically sign the Grant Agreement. The authorized signatory must be in the eGrants system in order to electronically sign contracts.
4. Agencies not approved for electronic signatures must print the first page of the grant agreement from eGrants, have it signed in blue ink by the authorized representative(s) and

mail it to the division. The signature page should arrive no later than ten business days after the grant is submitted. All manually signed grant agreement signature pages should be mailed to:

Pennsylvania Department of Education
Bureau of Postsecondary and Adult Education
Division of Adult Education
333 Market Street, 12th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

5. The authorized signer(s) must be (an) authorized representative(s) of the agency as described below:

Agency	One Authorized Representative	Two Authorized Representatives
School District	Superintendent	
Intermediate Unit	Executive Director	
Career & Technical School	Director	
Charter School	Chief Executive Officer	
University, College, or Community College	President	
Public Library	Director	
Community-Based Organizations and Corporations		President or Vice-President AND Secretary or Treasurer

6. Changes to the grant agreement language will require review and approval by PDE, Office of Chief Counsel, the Office of General Counsel, and the Attorney General's office and will cause delays in approving the agreement.
7. Per Management Directive 215.9, amended October 15, 2015, staff of the division will determine whether the applicant has delinquent tax debt or other conditions as specified in the State Contractor Responsibility Program. Any related issues must be resolved before the grant agreement will be reviewed and approved.
8. Applications recommended by division staff for approval are then reviewed by the Deputy Secretary, the Office of Chief Counsel, and the Comptroller's Office. Upon approval from the Comptroller's Office, the contract is considered fully executed. The fully executed contract with supporting documentation is uploaded to the Treasury website and to the final reporting section of the grant in eGrants. The status of an application can be verified in the eGrants system. The status will change to "Completed" once the grant is fully executed.
9. After complete review and approval by PDE and the Comptroller's Office, an approved and fully executed grant agreement will be available in eGrants.

Funding Accountability and Transparency

Grantees must complete the Funding Accountability and Transparency form located in eGrants.

1. Grantee must maintain current registration in the [System for Award Management](#) (SAM) at all times during which they have active federal awards funded pursuant to this agreement. A Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number is required for registration in SAM.
2. The applicant must complete the FAAT form that is located in eGrants.
3. The following information is required on the FAAT form: (1) UEI number; (2) city, state, and zip code +4 digit extension of the primary location, and (3) compensation of officers is necessary if grantee received more than 80 percent of federal funds in the preceding fiscal year.
4. The commonwealth will not process a grant until the grantee provides this information.

Program Planning Documents

Successful applicants will be required to upload a technology/equipment inventory. No grant will be approved until the applicant has submitted documentation that meets division approval.

General Program and Fiscal Requirements

Award winners are subject to all applicable state and federal administrative requirements, cost principles, and audit requirements, which are incorporated into each grant award by reference.

Such requirements include, but are not limited to:

1. *Adult Education and Family Literacy Guidelines*
2. [All Bureau of Postsecondary and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education policies](#)
3. [PDE Master Standard Terms and Conditions](#)
4. [Education Department General Administrative Regulations \(EDGAR\) 34 Code of Federal Regulation \(CFR\) Parts 75, 76, 77, 79, 81, 82, 84, 86, 97, 98, and 99 as amended on December 19, 2014](#)
5. [Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#)

APPENDIX

Scoring Summary

Section	Maximum Score
Description of Need	10
Agency Structure and Capacity	30
Program Improvement and Data	16
Instruction	30
Student Identification and Support	19
Technology	20
Alignment with Workforce	8
Past Effectiveness	22
Budget Narrative	12
Agency Information	8
Total	175

Minimum acceptable score = 131/175