Blended Prekindergarten Classroom Grant - Cohort 3
Questions and Answers
Date: February 7, 2020

1. Is there an expected total for funding for this program and how many grants are expected to be awarded? Yes, the Mississippi Department of Education plans to award up to six (6) grants for the Blended PreK Classroom Cohort 3. See page 12, Section 17 Award Amounts. Funds are subject to appropriations by the federal government. This grant will be awarded in the amount of $50,000.00 for year one, $10,000.00 for year two, and $10,000.00 for year three. All grants will be awarded during the three (3) years contingent upon proper implementation of the proposed project and completion and submission of all required documentation and future appropriations. Funding to eligible school districts is subject to State Board of Education approval. The Mississippi Department of Education reserves the right to negotiate grant award amounts with all Grantees.

2. Is there an expected total for funding for this program and how many grants are expected to be awarded? Yes, the Mississippi Department of Education plans to award up to six (6) grants for the Blended PreK Classroom Cohort 3. See page 12, Section 17 Award Amounts. Funds are subject to appropriations by the federal government. This grant will be awarded in the amount of $50,000.00 for year one, $10,000.00 for year two, and $10,000.00 for year three. All grants will be awarded during the three (3) years contingent upon proper implementation of the proposed project and completion and submission of all required documentation and future appropriations. Funding to eligible school districts is subject to State Board of Education approval. The Mississippi Department of Education reserves the right to negotiate grant award amounts with all Grantees.

3. Can a current pre-kindergarten classroom covered by a collaborative grant (salaries/benefits) be also covered by a blended classroom grant for the supplies and resources to provide optimum inclusion for general education and special education pre-k students? No, page 11 of the RFP reads: “Each eligible school district receiving an award will use the funds to carry out activities that advance student achievement and support student success. These include the creation of a new blended prekindergarten classroom and/or the
expansion of an existing prekindergarten program within the district and maintain said classroom(s) during the three-year course of the grant.” According to page 4 of the RFP, “Districts who have applied for or who are currently receiving Collaborative funds or Blended funds are not precluded from applying for these grant funds.”

4. Do we include a signed Attachment B- "Acknowledgment of RFP Amendments" pg. 25 of RFP... with the application? It is not listed with required elements on pg. 24. Yes, pages 4-5 of the RFP state: “Grantees shall acknowledge receipt of any amendment to the solicitation by signing and returning Attachment B with the application. The acknowledgement must be received by the MDE by the time and at the place specified for receipt of applications.”

5. The instructions for Budget Forms states on the Budget Overview Form A (Required) section that "this overview must address all components (a-e) pg. 34 of RFP. However, there is no "e" on the Form A Budget Overview page. Do we just disregard "e"? This is a typographical error resulting from changes made to this document over time. It should read "a-d".

6. If we are applying for more than one blended classroom, do we do a separate complete application including Cover Page, Budget Forms, etc. for each classroom (all three will be requesting the same and include the same data information)? No, page 12 of the RFP states: “Districts may apply for grant funding for more than one classroom, if needed, with each classroom individually adhering to the guidelines set forth in this proposal.” Districts may combine this into one proposal, with one set of budget forms.

7. As long as we have a qualified pre-kindergarten teacher (license 153) and a qualified pre-kindergarten paraprofessional (with an associate degree in early childhood), both working in the pre-kindergarten classroom and also have a qualified special education teacher (license 221) to provide inclusion services to those students with disabilities within the blended classroom (according to their IEPs), do we meet the Staff Qualifications? Yes, page 19 of the RFP states: “The preferred method for providing services in this classroom will be co-teaching by a general education teacher and special education teacher. However, if a special education teacher is assigned to provide services to the students with disabilities in this class as stated on their IEPs, it is not required that the special education teacher remain in the classroom full-time.” In a co-teaching model, both the general education and special education teachers must be qualified to teach prek.
8. Can district funds be expended between April 17 - July 1 on the Blended PreK program and be reimbursed when funds become available on July 1? Does the award period begin the day its awarded or July 1? No, page 22 of the RFP states: “Successful offerors may use grant funds for allowable costs only during the grant award period. Any costs occurring outside the grant award period are solely the responsibility of the subgrantee and will not be reimbursed by the MDE.” The timeline of activities on page 11 of the RFP indicates July 1, 2020, as the date of “authorization to expend, pending approved revisions and signed agreements”.

9. Does the district enter the proposal on SAM.gov? If so, does this platform require more information than is required in the RFP? No, page 6 of the RFP states: “One (1) original and 5 copies of the sealed proposal must be received by 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 19, 2020 at the following address based upon the delivery method used:

Hand Deliver Proposals to: Monique Corley, Director
Office of Procurement
Mississippi Department of Education
Blended Prekindergarten Classroom Grant Cohort 3
Central High School Building, Suite 307
359 North West Street
Jackson, MS 39201
(DO NOT OPEN)

Ship Proposals to: Monique Corley, Director
(FedEx, UPS, etc.)
Office of Procurement
Mississippi Department of Education
Blended Prekindergarten Classroom Grant Cohort 3
359 North West Street
Jackson, MS 39201
(DO NOT OPEN)"

10. Are hard copies of cited evidence and documentation to be submitted with the final RFP? If so, where should these be in the order of submission? Evidence should be included within the Program Plan of the proposal.

11. Will districts be notified of recommendation to SBE for approval PRIOR to the actual SBE board meeting in April? No, pages 10-11 of the RFP include a Tentative Timeline that indicates April 17, 2020 as the date of Notification of Awards (contingent on State Board Approval).

13. Can revisions be made to the original RFP prior to July 1, for example, the specification of staff that will serve students? No, page 16 of the RFP states: “An Evaluation Committee authorized by the MDE will evaluate and score each proposal based on the quality of the proposed activities and the evidence provided to demonstrate the capacity of the grantee to implement the proposed program.” Proposals will be evaluated on February 24-25, 2020 (tentatively) and will be scored based on the proposal that is submitted.

14. Will teachers with current valid license (120 & 221) assigned to the PreK classroom in August have the opportunity to complete the MDE intensive specialized training to earn the 122 PreK add on endorsement? Will they be able to begin instruction in August if the 122 PreK endorsement requirement is not completed yet? No, page 19 of the RFP states: “Instructional staff, including teachers and paraprofessionals, must hold specific qualifications to participate in a blended prekindergarten classroom. These qualifications are:

- General Education Teachers – Hold a valid state license to teach prekindergarten
- Special Education Teachers – Hold a valid state license to teach prekindergarten special education OR be dually certified in prekindergarten general education and prekindergarten special education
- Paraprofessionals – Hold an Associate’s degree in early childhood education, child development, or a related field”

15. Is the EC Education Bootcamp the same as the MDE Intensive specialized training in the Early Learning Guidelines document? Yes, the MDE Specialized Early Childhood Training is the same as the “Early Childhood Boot Camp”.

16. When and where will the next MDE intensive specialized training be offered to earn the 122 PreK endorsement? The Specialized Early Childhood Training is scheduled to be offered on June 15-26, 2020 at six (tentative) locations: Jackson, Hattiesburg, Brookhaven, Oxford, Columbia, and Indianola.

17. What restrictions will be in place for the equipment and materials purchased with the grant funds after the grant ends? Will there be
inventory and usage restrictions? Sustainability of the Blended PreK class is a priority and is expected to continue once the grant program has ended, therefore, equipment and materials should continue to be used in the Blended PreK classroom.

18. Do award recipients have to complete a new application for 10K year 2 & 10K year 3? No, page 12 of the RFP states: “A subgrant award is made available for an approved project period up to 3 years contingent upon the availability of continued funding, and evidence of progress as documented in the annual evaluation report.”

19. How does MDE define blended classrooms? Page 19 of the RFP states: “The composition of the class should include approximately 40% of students with disabilities and 60% of students without disabilities. (Each class must contain less than 50% of students with disabilities to be considered a general education program.)

20. If requesting to use another curriculum, does it need to be on the MDE approved list? No, page 19 of the RFP states: “Blended prekindergarten classes that are funded through this grant program must use an evidence-based curriculum that is designed to prepare students to be ready for Kindergarten. The curriculum must place an emphasis on early literacy and be aligned with MDE’s Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Three- and Four-Year-Old Children. The curriculum shall contain thematic units of activities and ideas designed to provide children the opportunities and experiences needed to master the performance standards in the Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Three- and Four-Year-Old Children. MDE has identified one curriculum that meets these requirements – Opening up the World of Learning (OWL).”

21. If requesting to use another curriculum, does it need to be submitted to MDE in advance, or only evidence-based justification need to be included in the grant? What is the submission deadline if the curriculum must be submitted to MDE? Evidence must be provided when the grant is submitted. Page 21 of the RFP states: “If you would like to submit a curriculum other than OWL for consideration, you must provide evidence from an independent review that the curriculum is evidence-based. Curricula chosen for blended prekindergarten classes will have to meet the MS Code 27-103-159 definition of an “evidence-based program,” which means “a program or practice that has had multiple site random controlled trials across heterogeneous populations demonstrating that the program is effective for the population.” According to the Pew Charitable Trust’s Results First Initiative, “Evidence-based programs and practices have been evaluated multiple times and found to be effective using rigorous methods such as randomized controlled trials, statistically controlled
evaluations, or a single large multisite randomized or statistically controlled evaluation. Typically, these programs have specified a set of procedures that allow for successful replication.” Please be aware that all “research” does not rise to the level of quality required for an “evidence-based” designation. Internal research done by a curriculum’s writers and used in marketing materials likely does not qualify.”

22. The requirements state that the paraprofessional must hold an Associate’s degree in early childhood education or child development. Is it acceptable to hire someone for the position of paraprofessional in the blended pre-K class under an emergency certificate while they attend classes and training for the job? No, page 19 of the RFP States: “Instructional staff, including teachers and paraprofessionals, must hold specific qualifications to participate in a blended prekindergarten classroom. These qualifications are:

Paraprofessionals – Hold an Associate’s degree in early childhood education, child development, or a related field”

23. Is it acceptable to send in a screenshot of the DUNS/SAMS registration info with expiration date or do you need actual correspondence such as an email or letter? Please include a copy of the actual verification with the grant. Page 11 of the RFP states: “Verification of the registration of the active DUNS must be submitted with the proposal (e.g., www.sam.gov correspondence indicating the status and expiration date, DUNS and Bradstreet letter, etc.)”

24. Within the RFP, it was stated in one place that the narrative portion should not exceed 15 pages but in another place, it indicated 50 pages was the amount acceptable. Which is correct? The correct number is on page 5 of the RFP, which states: “The narrative portions of the proposal should not exceed 50 pages.”

25. Is the narrative portion the program plan only, or does that include the budget pages with budget narrative? Page 5 of the RFP states: “The narrative portions of the proposal should not exceed 50 pages.” The Required Elements (also listed on page 5 of the RFP), list the Program Plan and Budget Forms as separate items, so the Budget Forms do not have to be included as part of the 50 pages of narrative.