

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	TOPIC: GRANTS/SUBGRANTS
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	<u>REVISION #6:</u> <span style="float: right;"><u>July 1, 2023</u></span>

## GRANTS/SUBGRANTS

The Mississippi Department of Education (Department) Grants/Subgrants Policy set forth herein applies to the procurement and awarding of all grants and subgrants by the Department to ensure sound accounting practices and to provide consistency in the administration of grants.

These procedures are the primary reference resource for managing grant awards and shall be followed whenever the Department is awarding any grant to local school districts and other appropriate entities. These procedures shall apply to all expenditures of public funds irrespective of their source. Violations of these regulations shall carry such penalties as may be applicable under state and federal law. In the event of a conflict, the guidelines of the grant funds shall prevail. The awarding office shall be responsible for being aware of all applicable regulations and rules governing the procurement of services, as well as ensuring these procedures are followed in the procurement process.

The awarding of grant funds shall be governed by all applicable rules and regulations promulgated by the grantor, state and federal regulations, and policies approved by the Mississippi State Board of Education (SBE).

The Department must ensure grants are procured by obtaining adequate competition, with the exception of Federal formula and direct grants. In addition, any competitive or discretionary grant award resulting in one or more entities receiving an amount of \$50,000 or greater shall require the SBE approval.

It is the responsibility of the awarding office to meet the time frames necessary to secure the appropriate approvals by the SBE prior to a submission of a grant. Timelines for submission of grants in order to meet deadlines for the SBE Board and can be found on the Procurement website.

## TYPES OF GRANTS

**State/Local/Other Grants.** State, Local, and national foundations offer funding opportunities, as do cities and counties. These opportunities are typically narrowly focused on a specific need. Awards are usually smaller than those available from the federal government.

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**Direct Federal Grants.** Federal agencies announce, award, and supervise all aspects of grant-funded projects. Federal opportunities are typically the largest awards available.

**Formula Grants.** Federal funding opportunities that MDE use directly to award based on a formula to pass funds on to eligible subgrantees to carry out a services.

PROCUREMENT METHOD

A Request for Application and a Request for Proposal are the two (2) methods utilized for procuring the types of grants. A Request for Application shall be the method utilized for Formula and State Administered grants and a Request for Proposal shall be the method utilized for competitive and discretionary grants. The Office of Procurement and Grants Management Executive Director or designee must review and approve procurement methods for use of grant funds.

*Competitive* grants are awarded to eligible subgrantees on the basis of a competitive review and an evaluation process. Applicants must meet a certain criteria and be recommended for award by an evaluation committee. A Request for Proposal (RFP) is the method of solicitation to utilize for these type of grant awards.

*Discretionary* grants are awarded to eligible subgrantees based upon the requirements of the grantor for a particular entity or group. The Department has the flexibility of soliciting competitively to a designated entity or group to award accordingly. Applicants must meet a certain criteria and be recommended for award by an evaluation committee. A Request for Proposal (RFP) is the method of solicitation to utilize for this type of grant award.

*Educator in Residence (EIR) grants* are awarded to eligible subgrantees on the basis of a competitive evaluation and interview process. Applicants must meet a certain criterion and be recommended for award by an evaluation committee. A Request for Application (RFA) is the method of solicitation to utilize for these type of grant awards.

*Formula* grants are awarded to eligible subgrantees on a non-competitive basis based upon an application and a predetermined formula established by law. These programs are authorized by public law and awarded to the MDE based on various census data and/or poverty counts. Applicants must meet certain eligibility criteria for award. Each program office has established procedures for review and approval. The Office of Procurement is not responsible for overseeing

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this process. A Request for Applications (RFA) is the method of solicitation to utilize for these type of grant awards.

Grants may also be awarded without using a formula method. Programs may also award to eligible sub-grantees based upon an application that may include priority points. Applicants must meet certain eligibility criteria for award. No evaluation is required; however, each program office has established procedures for review and approval. The Office of Procurement is not responsible for overseeing this process. A Request for Applications (RFA) is the method of solicitation to utilize for these type of grant awards.

### METHODOLOGY

Prior to the awarding of any Formula, Competitive, or Discretionary grants, the SBE shall approve a methodology to be utilized in awarding of the grants. An approved methodology cannot exceed a five (5) year period and must be renewed and approved by the SBE.

The methodology should provide sufficient information that will be used to accomplish the objective and plan of action for the Department. The Office of Procurement, along with the Grants Management Executive Director, the Chief of Operations and the SBE shall review and approve any methodology to be utilized for the awarding these types of grants.

The Program Office should submit the methodology and a draft copy of the Request for Applications (RFA) or Request for Proposals (RFP) simultaneously to the Office of Procurement for review and approval to solicit while the methodology is being presented to the SBE for approval. Forms required can be found on the Procurement website under Grants Checklist and Forms.

Upon approval of the methodology, the advertisement of the solicitation for awarding of a grant can be granted by the Procurement Office.

### COMPETITIVE, DISCRETIONARY & FORMULA GRANT REQUESTS

The proposed methodology and a draft Request for Proposal (RFP) or Request for Applications (RFA) shall be submitted for review and approval. Upon approval of the proposed methodology by the Director of Procurement, Grants Management Executive Director and the Chief Operations Officer (COO), the requesting office shall receive a copy of the methodology and the signed COO transmittal form to submit to the Superintendent's office for the SBE agenda placement.

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After the SBE approval is obtained for the methodology, the RFP/A shall be advertised for not less than thirty (30) days.

GRANT NOTIFICATION FOR RFA/RFP

For all grant awards, a grant notification will be announced for eligible parties to submit an application or proposal. Notification is to be made in accordance with the grantor requirements and the Department procedures. The notification process includes notifying known interested parties via direct mail and by advertisement in a newspaper with statewide circulation, Department website, Department publications, or any other appropriate means of advertisements. The notification information must include the application or proposal timelines, contact person, address, and other pertinent information. The notification shall be announced at the same time and date as the RFP or RFA is advertised in the newspaper and on the Department website.

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA) AND REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

To be eligible to receive a grant, an interested party must have made formal application or proposal for the available grant(s), regardless of the funding source. The information included in the application or proposal must conform to the requirements of the entity (grantor) providing the funds to the Department (e.g., USDE, UDOL, USDA, organizations). For formula grants or state funded grants, the issuance of an RFA and the application received must be in sufficient detail to enable the awarding office and/or Procurement Office to make a determination for the award. For discretionary and competitive grants, the awarding office shall issue an RFP to solicit proposals for evaluation and awarding of funds.

The RFP/RFA shall be reviewed and approved by the Director of Procurement and Grants Management Executive Director/designee prior to advertisement. The RFP/A grant templates and all documents required can be found on the Procurement website. At a minimum, the packet shall contain:

- Grant Submission Form
- Solicitation
- Approved Methodology

For the RFA Template:

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- Law, statute, etc. governing the grant
- Statement eligibility
- The date by which applications shall be submitted for delivery of applications
- Eligibility requirements
- Budget or no budget
- Standard terms and conditions
- Minimum information that the application shall contain:
- Assurance that the applicants shall agree and comply with standard terms and conditions.
- Cover page
- Conflict of Interest
- Reporting requirements, if applicable
- Fiscal requirements
- Application
- Program review checklist
- Etc.

For the RFP Template

- Grant introduction/information (law, legislation, goals, objectives, etc.)
- Statement of Work
- An estimate of when and how long the services will be provided
- Budget Forms and information (narrative and summary)
- The date by which proposals/applications for the performance of the services shall be submitted and the format and procedures for delivery of proposals/applications
- A statement that the proposals/applications shall be in writing
- Standard terms and conditions
- A statement of the minimum information that the proposal shall contain:
- A plan giving as much detail as is practical explaining how the services will be provided.
- Assurance that the applicants shall agree and comply with standard terms and conditions.
- Cover page

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- Conflict of Interest
- Reporting requirements
- Evaluation factors
- Fiscal requirements
- Rubric
- Tally

### ADVERTISEMENT

When the anticipated expenditure will be awarded to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and Organizations (Private & Non-Profits), public notice of RFP/A's shall be publicized in a newspaper published in the county or municipality in which the agency is located. Advertisement of RFP/A's shall be published once each week for two consecutive weeks with the second notice being published on or after the seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) calendar day after publication of the first notice. The date set for the proposal opening shall not be less than thirty (30) days after the first notice appears in the newspaper unless it is determined by the State Superintendent, due to the complex requirements of the procurement that a shorter response time is necessary. The date set for proposal opening must be included in the advertisement.

*Note: There must be thirty (30) full calendar days between the date the solicitation was released to the public and the date that proposals or applications are opened. The due date cannot fall on a Saturday, Sunday, legal holiday, or day following a state (or legal) holiday.*

The advertisement template can be found at the Procurement website. The following is a suggested guide for the legal Advertisement.

The {name of the office}, {due date}, {day of the week}, {month}, {date}, {year} for the purpose of awarding: {name of service to be procured}, detailed specifications may be obtained by contacting {name of contact person}, at {telephone number} or at {physical mailing address}.

The Procurement Office will post the RFP/RFA to the Department website under the Public Notice section. The Procurement office will also have the RFP/RFA removed subsequent to the submission deadline.

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### PRE-PROPOSAL CONFERENCE

Pre-proposal conferences may be conducted to explain the grant requirements for an RFP. The conference shall be announced in the RFP. The conference should be held long enough after the RFP has been issued to allow interested parties to become familiar with it but sufficiently before the proposal opening to allow consideration of the conference results in preparing or modifying proposals. Nothing stated at the pre-proposal conference shall change the RFP unless a change is made by a written amendment to the RFP. A summary of the conference shall be supplied to all prospective applicants known to have received an RFP. A transcript shall be made during the pre-proposal conference to include recorded information with the Questions and Answers document to post on the Department website. The pre-proposal must:

- be at least 3 business days after last published notice (count 15 days from the release date and 3 more business days);
- provide for a program office facilitator to serve as the Chair;
- maintain attendance sheet;
- record conference discussions and questions
- post answers to questions during the Q&A time period on the Department’s website.

### RECEIPT OF PROPOSALS/APPLICATIONS

Any proposal/application received in the Office of Procurement after the time and date designated for receipt of proposal/application is late. Any withdrawal or modification of a proposal/application received in the Office of Procurement after the due date and time designated for receipt of proposals/applications is late. A late proposal/application, late modification, or late withdrawal will be considered unless the delivery and/or receipt of delivery supports the inaction of the Department.

### OPENING AND RECORDING

The assigned procurement and program office staff will open the RFP/A at the time coordinated with the Office of Procurement. Proposals, applications or modifications shall be time and date recorded by mailroom staff upon receipt and held in a secure place until the established due date to open.

A Register of Proposals/Applications shall be prepared which shall include the number of copies received, a listing of each school from district submissions, entities applied, delivery date and the initial of procurement staff and program office staff designated to pick-up packets.

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Proposals/Applications shall be unconditionally accepted without alteration or correction, except as authorized by the Director of Procurement.

Correction or withdrawal of inadvertently erroneous information before or after award, or cancellation of awards or agreements based on such mistake shall be permitted in accordance with the state and federal regulations.

### EVALUATION

Each proposal/application shall be pre-screened to ensure the proposal /application meets the minimum specifications for the solicitation prior to the evaluation process. A proposal or application may be rejected if the proposal/application did not meet all elements of the RFP/A. If a proposal/application is rejected, the Proposals/Applications Not Evaluated form must be completed. The form should be signed by the Bureau Director or Chief of the awarding office and submitted to the Director of Procurement two (2) days prior to the evaluation. The Director of Procurement and Legal, if necessary, will review the form, RFP/A and supporting documentation to confirm the application should not be considered or the proposal should not be evaluated.

### EVALUATION COMMITTEE

For formula and state administered funded grants utilizing a RFA, a review committee comprised of a minimum of three (3) individuals from the program office should be formed to review and/or discuss applications to make sure all elements required have been submitted to meet eligibility of the grant. It is recommended that the awarding office make certain alternates are available if needed. It is the responsibility of the awarding office to ensure funds are disseminated according to the highest ranking and/or to the grant requirements. The program office is responsible for the review and selection of applications to award.

For discretionary or competitive grants utilizing a RFP, an evaluation committee(s) comprised of a minimum of five (5) individuals for each committee must be formed. The committee should be majority external members comprised of a minimum of five (5) individuals. Director's supervising more than one program is considered a program office. It is recommended that the awarding office make certain alternates are available if needed. The awarding office is responsible for the selection of the evaluation committee using qualified internal and external evaluators who have



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knowledge or expertise of the grant requirements. This committee will evaluate the grant proposals/applications to make the recommendations for funding awards.

Each evaluator must sign the following forms: Conflict of Interest, End of Review, Evaluator Guidelines, and a Statement of Confidentiality. The awarding office is responsible for assuring a conflict of interest does not exist with each evaluator.

The awarding office will assign a program office contact to the evaluation committee to review the evaluation criteria with the evaluation committee prior to the committee's review of proposals/applications. The program office shall provide a facilitator to be accessible to the evaluation committee during the entire evaluation process to answer questions regarding the grant requirements. Procurement will designate one staff member to monitor the evaluation process to ensure that procurement policies and procedures are followed.

Proposals shall be reviewed and scored by the evaluators. If interviews are required and conducted, the respondents must be interviewed and evaluated based on predetermined criteria by the same committee who reviewed the proposals or applications.

The awarding office is responsible for submitting the following to the Procurement Office:

1. Evaluator rubrics
2. Tally Score Sheet with evaluator scores,
3. A list detailing how many proposals/applications were received, rejected, evaluated and awarded.

### GRANT AWARD

The Procurement Office and Grants Manager Executive Director will review grants below \$50,000 and for grants \$50,000 and over, the Chief of Operations will review and determine compliance for the SBE agenda placement prior to the awarding of any grant. All forms necessary for the completion of the grant package can be found on the Procurement website. Please review the timeline submission for grants for cumulative lead times.

Grant Agreement must include the following information for review:

1. Grant Signature Sheet
2. Statement of Work

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3. Grant Budget Narrative
4. Grant Budget Summary
5. Grant Budget Forms
6. Standard Terms and Conditions
7. Program Reporting, Compensation and Financial Reports

### AWARD PACKET

The following items should be submitted as part of the grant package for award:

1. Grant Award Justification
2. Methodology
3. Awarded proposals/applications, proposal budget
4. List detailing amount awarded to all subgrantee
5. Unsigned Grant Agreement (in order of award list)
6. Board item, if required

Once the grant packet is approved by Procurement, Grants Management and Chief of Operations, Procurement will notify the program office contact by email to obtain final signatures on one original Grant Agreement. The awarding office shall obtain all required forms for formula and state funded grant awards and obtain final signatures on the grant agreement for the grantee, Chief Officer, and the Director of Procurement. The grant award is not valid until it is signed by all parties. Once the Grant Agreement is signed, Procurement staff will send the original signed Grant Agreement to the awarding office. The awarding office is responsible for distributing the required signed copy to the Office of Accounting and to the grantee.

A Grant Agreement is required for all awards for grant funds allocated to local school districts and other appropriate entities. An approved grant award cannot exceed a five (5) year period without prior statutory authority and awards must be renewed and approved by the SBE accordingly. Payment shall not be processed without a grant agreement.

### MODIFICATIONS

Any necessary changes to the original Grant Agreement must be accomplished through a formal modification. The awarding office is responsible for completing a Grant Award Modification Justification and submitting the form with all required documents in a grant package to Procurement for review and approval. These forms can be found on the Procurement website.

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The following items should be submitted as part of the grant package:

1. Grant Award documentation to support a modification
2. Grant Award Modification Justification
3. Grant Modification Signature Sheet and Grant Budget Summary Form
4. Board item, if required

The required standard terms and conditions are included in the grant templates which can be found on the Procurement website. Clauses should not be added, deleted, or altered without the approval of Procurement and/or Legal.

If federal funds are utilized, complete the Department Grant Number, CFDA Number, Title of Federal Program, and Federal Award Number section of the template.

#### AWARD

The State Board of Education must approve all awards \$50,000 and over for any grant. After the SBE approves, Subgrantee shall receive notification (in writing) of the award or non-award prior to an execution of a grant agreement.

#### AWARD APPEALS PROCESS

In accordance with C.F.R. § 76.401, 34 C.F.R. § 76.783, if an applicant for a subgrant alleges that any of the following actions of the Department violated a State or Federal statute or regulation relative to disapproval of an application, the Department shall provide the applicant an opportunity for an appeal.

#### CLOSEOUT PROCEDURES

After the final payment, each grant will be formally closed out. This closeout will require an accounting, by budget line item, of the expenditures made under provisions of the grant to liquidate funds.

This closeout package is to be maintained by the program office administering the grant.