IA-CLSD Frequently Asked Questions

Iowa Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant:
Second Round Opportunity for Eligible Districts

General Information

1. What is the IA-CLSD project?

The Iowa Comprehensive Literacy State Development (IA-CLSD) project is a federally funded initiative designed to enhance literacy instruction from birth through grade 12. The program focuses on literacy leadership, professional development, evidence-based instructional practices, and family and community engagement.

2. Who is eligible to apply for an IA-CLSD subgrant?

The Iowa Department of Education has released a second opportunity for eligible districts to apply. Eligible districts have been directly contacted by the Director and invited to apply.

Application Process & Requirements

3. How do LEAs apply for the IA-CLSD grant?

Each LEA will complete a full application detailing their current literacy materials, instruction, and leadership, as well as the current professional development that is provided. In addition to reporting current situational information, LEAs are asked to consider how this grant might help them advance their literacy goals and grow their capacity for leadership.

4. Can LEAs apply for different grade bands?

Yes, LEAs may apply as a complete **Birth-Grade 12** feeder system (which includes additional competitive points) or for specific grade bands such as:

- Birth-Grade 5
- Grades 6-8
- Grades 6-12
- Grades 9-12

(Note: There is not an option to apply for K-5 only. Applications who wish to focus on elementary level must include a partner with an Early Childhood entity. Please reference the application for more details.)

5. What are the scoring criteria for the application?

Applications are evaluated based on:

- General Information (4 points)
- LEA Application Structure & Participants (30 points)
- LEA Demographics (10 points)
- LEA Goals (10 points)
- LEA Literacy Strategy Self-Assessment (60 points)
- Sustainability Assurances (15 points)
- Competitive Preference Points (22 points)
- CLSD Planning Grant Budget (20 points)

Grant Fund Usage

6. How can grant funds be used?

Funds must be used for:

- Hiring Literacy and Leadership Grant Support Providers (GSPs) to facilitate grant activities and professional development, including job-embedded coaching support. GSPs will receive specific training from the Grant Coordination Team to help guide subgrantees.
- Developing a Literacy Leadership Team (LLT) to guide local literacy improvement.
- Conducting a Comprehensive Literacy Needs Assessment (CLNA) to identify areas of strength and need.
- Creating a Local Literacy Plan (LLP) to establish a literacy framework aligned to the Iowa's Comprehensive State Literacy Plan that includes short and long-term literacy goals, action plans, and progress monitoring steps.
- Supporting professional development in comprehensive literacy, which includes structured literacy, Science of Reading-based instruction, adolescent literacy, and disciplinary literacy.
- Implementing Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) for evidence-based interventions.
- Expanding family and community literacy partnerships to engage parents and caregivers.

7. Can IA-CLSD funds be used to purchase instructional materials?

Not in Year 1. The first year focuses on planning. Funds for Years 2-5 can be used to acquire High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) for literacy instruction, but LEAs must provide a 50% matching contribution.

8. Can IA-CLSD funds be used for salaries?

No, grant funds cannot be used to pay full-time or part-time staff salaries. However, **stipends** for work outside contract hours (such as planning meetings or professional learning) are allowable.

9. What travel expenses are covered?

IA-CLSD funds may cover **travel costs** related to professional learning, such as:

- Attending the summer Iowa Reading Research Center Science of Reading Summit
- Visiting schools implementing high-quality literacy programs
- Participation in LETRS® training

Implementation & Sustainability

10. What is required for LEAs in Year 1?

Year 1 focuses on planning and foundational development, including:

- Establishing a Literacy Leadership Team (LLT)
- Conducting a Comprehensive Literacy Needs Assessment (CLNA)
- Developing a Local Literacy Plan (LLP)
- Receiving foundational professional learning on evidence-based literacy instruction, structured literacy, the Science of Reading, adolescent literacy, and disciplinary literacy.

11. What happens in Years 2-5?

- Implementation of literacy strategies and purchase HQIM
- Scaling professional learning for educators and administrators
- Expanding Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) interventions
- Increasing family and community literacy engagement
- Ensuring long-term sustainability and funding alignment

12. What are the sustainability expectations for IA-CLSD subgrantees?

LEAs must:

- Develop long-term literacy leadership structures
- Maintain data-driven assessment systems
- Sustain professional learning efforts post-grant
- Ensure HQIM adoption and usage remains consistent beyond grant funding

13. What are competitive preference points, and how can LEAs earn them?

LEAs can receive up to 25 bonus points for:

- Having implemented or currently implementing state-endorsed literacy programs (e.g., Reading Assistant/Amira, LETRS)
- Being a first-time applicant to a state literacy grant
- Representing a small, rural district

Accountability & Reporting

14. What data and reporting requirements must subgrantees meet?

LEAs must submit:

- Annual progress reports on student literacy outcomes
- Implementation walkthrough data for literacy instruction
- Assessment data from universal screeners and standardized tests
- Professional development participation records
- Family & community engagement activities

15. What assessments are required for tracking literacy progress?

Subgrantees must use:

- Early literacy screeners for kindergarten students
- Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) for grades 3-10
- Oral language assessments for four-year-old students

16. What happens if an LEA does not meet grant requirements?

LEAs that fail to comply with program expectations, reporting deadlines, or implementation benchmarks may lose eligibility for continued funding in Years 2-5.

Additional Support & Assistance

17. What technical assistance is available for applicants?

The Iowa Department of Education will offer:

- Informational webinars (recordings provided)
- Technical assistance sessions for applicants
- Individualized support from Grant Coordination Team and Grant Support Team members

18. What type of professional learning support is provided to districts as part of the grant?

Each LEA may select the Grant Support Provider from the Department's list of approved providers. The LEA will then contract with the provider using CLSD funds. Together, they will determine the support services based on their Local Needs Assessment as well as using guidance from the Iowa Department of Education.

19. Are districts required to only contract with people who are listed on the Department's list of Grant Support Providers? Can districts contract a literacy consultant from another organization?

Grant awardees must contract with a consultant or organization that is listed on the Department's list of Grant Support Providers. Districts may not use CLSD funds to contract with anyone outside of the approved list.

Helpful Hints

20. What else do I need to know?

- **Thoroughly Review the Grant Criteria:** Carefully review all application criteria and respond to each section thoroughly. Demonstrating a clear understanding of the grant's goals and expectations will strengthen the application and show that the organization is well-prepared to meet them.

- **Provide Sufficient Detail:** This is a competitive grant opportunity, so it is essential to provide detailed, specific responses to help reviewers understand your current context, identified needs, and the steps already taken to align with the Science of Reading and comprehensive literacy practices across the grade levels for which you are applying. Take every opportunity to describe how you anticipate using Iowa CLSD funds to advance literacy within the target age span, even if the prompt does not explicitly ask for this information. Pay close attention to the character count limits for each response. Longer character counts indicate that a more detailed and comprehensive response is expected. When the prompt says "describe", please use details and examples.

- **Clarify Partnerships:** Clearly identify all partners involved in the proposed project and describe their roles. If partnerships are not yet formalized, explain your plan for involving partners as part of your implementation strategy. Strong, well-defined partnerships will help ensure the success of your application and proposed plan.

- **Develop a comprehensive Budget Narrative:** The budget narrative is a critical component of the application. Use it to demonstrate how funds will be allocated to support your project goals. Be specific about the costs associated with each element of the plan. Avoid vague or general descriptions–focus on how each budget item directly contributes to literacy improvement. Include specific activities, expected outcomes, and the rationale behind each budget decision. A well-articulated budget narrative strengthens the case for funding and helps reviewers clearly understand the plan.

- **Avoid One-Size-Fits-All Approaches to Professional Learning:** The Iowa CLSD grant is intended to support comprehensive, sustained literacy initiatives, not just one-time professional development events. Plan for multiple touchpoints and varied learning experiences. Review the criteria for the planning year and ensure the budget addresses all required components, including strategic use of the Grant Support Providers to advance all deliverables outlined within the grant expectations. Please note: LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) is currently provided free of charge by the state. You may reference LETRS in your application, but it should not be the sole focus of your budget. Include other essential components that enhance the quality and effectiveness of Year 1 Planning Grant activities. Understandably, applicants may not have estimations for Grant Support Provider costs at this time. As a reference, it would be reasonable to estimate $3,000 – $5,000 per day, depending on the Grant Support Provider. If you are working with your local AEA, please contact them directly to confirm fees.

- **Start Early and Review Often:** Start your application early to allow time for multiple reviews. Seek feedback from colleagues before submission. Proofreading and ensuring clarity in your responses can significantly improve the quality of your application.

21. Who can I contact for more information?

For IA-CLSD grant inquiries, reach out to:

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