



Illinois State Board of Education

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Jesse H. Ruiz
Chairman

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

February 2009

TO: Eligible Applicants

FROM: Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP): Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program

General Information

Eligible Applicants: Public school districts, Regional Offices of Education, community college districts, public university laboratory schools approved by the State Board of Education, charter schools, and area vocational centers are eligible to apply.

Joint applications for funds may be submitted by any combination of eligible applicants. If a joint application is submitted, then an administrative agent must be designated and each district superintendent or, in the case of other eligible applicants, each official authorized to submit the proposal, must sign the application. An eligible applicant may participate in only one proposal.

Grant Award: The grant award for FY 2009 was \$20,078,100; 80 programs were funded.

Grant Period: The grant period will begin no sooner than July 1, 2009, and will extend from the execution date of the grant until June 30, 2010. Funding for the second or third year will be contingent upon a sufficient appropriation for the program and satisfactory progress in the preceding grant period.

Application Deadline: Mail the original and six copies to Sally Veach, Grants and Programs Division, Illinois State Board of Education, 100 North First Street (N-242), Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001, to ensure receipt **no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, April 20, 2009. Late proposals, proposals with fewer than the required number of copies, or faxed copies will not be accepted.**

Continuation applicants (those completing the first or second year of a three-year grant period) should submit the original and one copy.

Proposals also may be hand-delivered to the following locations:

Springfield Office
Information Center
1st Floor
100 North First Street

Chicago Office
Reception Area
Suite 14-300
100 West Randolph Street

Bidders' Conference: Bidders' conferences will be held on two dates. Attendance at the bidders' conference is not mandatory, but all applicants are strongly encouraged to attend. Since seating is limited at the March 6 bidders' conference, please contact Sally Veach at 217/524-4832 to confirm your attendance.

The first bidders' conference will be held at the Illinois State Board of Education's video-conferencing facilities in Springfield and Chicago (addresses below) on Friday, March 6, 2009, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. for continuation applicants and from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. for new applicants.

Springfield
Third Floor, V-TEL Room
Illinois State Board of Education
100 North First Street

Chicago
14th Floor, Conference Room B
James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street

The second bidders' conference will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Plaza F, 3000 South Dirksen Parkway, Springfield, on Wednesday, March 11, 2009, from 9:15 to 11:30 a.m.

Should the conditions of this RFP change as a result of the bidders' conference, the State Board of Education will notify all recipients of the RFP of the changes.

Contact Person: For more information on the Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program, contact Sally Veach at 217/524-4832 or sveach@isbe.net.

Background and Program Specifications

Section 2-3.66 of the School Code (105 ILCS 5/2-3.66) authorizes the State Board of Education to provide grants for the establishment of pilot Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Programs (TAOEP). These programs, which serve as part-time or full-time options to regular school attendance, offer modified instructional programs or other services designed to prevent students from dropping out of school. Programs funded under this grant can only serve students identified as one of the following:

- A. a truant, as defined in Section 26-2a of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/26-2a] as a child subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause from such attendance for a school day or portion thereof;
- B. a chronic or habitual truant, as defined in Section 26-2a of the School Code as a child subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause from such attendance for 10% or more of the previous 180 regular attendance days;

- C. a dropout, as defined in Section 26-2a of the School Code as any child enrolled in grades 1 through 12 whose name has been removed from the district enrollment roster for any reason other than death, extended illness, graduation, or completion of a program of studies and who has not transferred to another public or private school;
- D. a potential dropout, which is any student subject to compulsory attendance as defined in Article 26 of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/Art. 26] and whose school absences or pattern of school attendance impedes the student's learning or contributes to the student's failure to meet the Illinois Learning Standards and/or district learning standards. Attendance problems may include chronic truancy, truancy, selective absences, excessive absences, or a pattern of absences or tardiness. (See Section 205.20(b)(4) of rules governing Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Programs at <http://www.isbe.net/rules/archive/pdfs/205ARK.pdf>.)

In assessing whether marginal school attendance problems would place a student within the definition of "potential dropout," applicants should consider the student's personal involvement in the education process, apparent motivation to receive an education, or any continued and obvious apathy or disaffection for education, particularly when indications of uninvolvement, lack of motivation or disaffection are coupled with currently known individual or family circumstances that, if they remain unresolved, would be reasonably expected to result in escalating attendance problems.

Required Program Components

Each program funded must include the following components.

- A. A comprehensive community-based program planning process that includes, but is not limited to, the participation of business, community organizations, social service providers, government agencies, parents, school administrators, other staff members, and teachers and students, and that leads to the development and implementation of a strategic plan.
 - 1. The plan must contain program goals and objectives developed by analyzing social and academic challenges faced by students in the community to be served by the TAOEP.
 - 2. The plan must identify available community resources and services and describe how these will be coordinated to meet the needs of students identified as eligible for program services.

Community planning must include collaboration with other Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program grantees and potential grantees in the area to ensure that limited funds are being used to serve the greatest number of students (see www.taoep.net/Directory.htm for a list of programs funded in FY 2009).

Eligible entities applying for TAOEP funds must work together to make certain that a continuum of services are offered with no overlap of services to students.

Applicants should not propose to serve students in grade levels already served in a TAOEP program nor propose to offer the same service (i.e., optional education or intervention and supplemental services) to the same category of students (i.e., truant, chronic truant, retrieved dropout or potential dropout) in grade levels already served in a TAOEP program.

An applicant that proposes to serve multiple school districts (i.e., community college, regional office of education, vocational school) must secure the signature of the superintendent of each school district whose students or residents will be served by the proposed program (see Attachment 1B). A school district proposing to offer its own TAOEP program where a regional program offered by a community college or regional office of education already exists must expand on the type of service (truancy intervention or optional education) currently provided or the categories of students targeted.

B. An Individualized Optional Education Plan (IOEP), which is a written document that outlines an individual's academic, vocational and/or life skill needs, as well as goals and objectives and various educational and social experiences needed to reach those goals and objectives. The development of this plan must involve school officials, the student, and the student's parents or legal guardians, if the student is less than 18 years old. The IOEP for each student must include:

1. learning objectives or individual outcomes, such as increased school attendance, course credit, graduation, gains in achievement level, or employment;
2. the basis upon which the student is referred to the program;
3. the educational, social and/or career development services that will be provided to achieve the learning objectives or individual outcomes identified for that student;
4. assessment procedures to determine the degree to which the student is achieving his or her learning objectives or individual outcomes;
5. a time period sufficient to allow the student to achieve those objectives or outcomes; and
6. a statement that the student, parent, or guardian has the ultimate choice of whether to accept the IOEP that is offered or to return to or remain in the regular education program of the school district attended.

C. Educational services that may include either:

1. an Optional Education Program that provides a modified instructional program that incorporates the Illinois Learning Standards and, as appropriate to the student's needs, work-based learning and career development, and is **established by school board policy to serve as a part-time or full-time option in lieu of regular school attendance**; or
2. supplemental services that provide students enrolled in the regular school program with supports (e.g., tutoring, mentoring, health services, home visits, counseling) that are needed to increase their attendance rates or prevent them from dropping out of school.

Fiscal Information

The grant award for FY 2009 was \$20,078,100. Continuation applicants (those completing the first or second year of a three-year grant period) should not anticipate the availability of additional funding to expand their programs into areas not currently being served.

Limitation of Administrative Costs: General administrative costs, which are any cost associated with Function 2300, General Administration, and Function 2520, Fiscal Services, are limited to 5 percent of the total approved budget.

Allowable Expenditures: State funds made available to Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program (TAOEP) awardees may be used for such expenditures as are reasonable and necessary for providing an appropriate program and meeting the requirements of the law.

Approved expenditures may relate to the following expenditures.

- A. Salaries and other fixed costs for approved full- and part-time personnel necessary for grant activities. Salaries must not to exceed the standard amounts normally paid by the applicant agency.
- B. Equipment, material and supplies necessary for grant activities. (All materials, supplies and equipment must be itemized. Equipment will be considered only in Function 1000, Instruction.)
- C. Audits of the grants.
- D. Local/state share of the retirement contribution for personnel.
- E. Subcontracts for services that cannot be provided by the staff (see item 7, "Budget Narrative", under Proposal Format for further information about the information that must be provided).
- F. Consultants on a daily basis, as approved, to supplement the grant activities. Consultants must be paid a fee not to exceed the standard amount normally paid by the applicant agency. Rates must be reasonable and be based on to consultant fees paid with the use of local funds. Documentation of consultant services and their effectiveness must be included in the grantee's fiscal and programmatic reports, as required by ISBE.
- G. Travel expenses for personnel to carry out grant functions. Expenses must be paid in accordance with local policies.
- H. Maintenance and repair of equipment purchased with grant funds.
- I. In-service education related to the grant objectives as identified in the approved grant proposal.
- J. Other items properly chargeable to the operation of the grant.

Non-allowable Uses of Funds: Program funds **must not be used** for any of the following without prior written approval of the State Board of Education.

- A. Proposal preparation costs.
- B. Overnight or out-of-state travel for students.
- C. Daily snack/meals for students.

- D. Incentive of cash, clothing or other incentives provided to students.
- E. Field trips that are purely recreational in nature. (Field trips without academic support will be considered entertainment and cannot be funded.)
- F. Membership and dues to organizations, federations or societies.
- G. Capital improvement, such as facility construction, remodeling or renovation.
- H. Out-of-state travel for staff.
- I. Payment of cell phones or cell phone usage.
- J. Rent for facility owned by the grantee.
- K. Indirect costs.
- L. Instructional software for students.
- M. Any expenditure that occurred in a prior grant year.
- N. Any expenditures that are not clearly identifiable as directly related to grant activities or functions.

Proposal Format

All proposals must be submitted in the format and the order outlined below. Please use the following as a checklist in assembling your completed proposal. **All pages must be numbered. Incomplete proposals will not be considered. Do not staple proposals.**

- ___ **1. Cover Page (Attachments 1, 1A, and 1B):** Each applicant is required to complete the “Truants’ Alternative and Optional Education Program Demographic Information” form and to use it as the cover page. This form must be signed by the official authorized to submit the proposal. Participants in a joint application must also complete and sign the appropriate section of Attachment 1.

Each applicant is required to complete Attachment 1A.

All applicants should submit Attachment 1B with the demographic information. Each community college and regional office of education applicant must submit Attachment 1B, indicating the school districts whose students or residents will be served by the program and the type of services and category of students to be involved. The superintendent from each of the school districts served must sign Attachment 1B. Other eligible applicants proposing to serve students and residents outside of their geographic boundaries also must complete and submit Attachment 1B.

- ___ **2. Program Resources (Attachment 2):** Each applicant is also required to complete the “Truants’ Alternative and Optional Education Program Resource Information.” The resource form requests information on anticipated financial and human resources needed to implement the program. All income sources paying for direct program costs should be included. The dollar amount for staff positions should be the total amount of the employees’ wages and benefits.
- ___ **3. Proposal Abstract (Attachment 3):** Provide a concise summary of the proposal, with the narrative portion not to exceed 200 words. In the narrative

portion, include general purpose, activities, and major outcomes of the proposal.

- ___ 4. **Proposal Narrative: *New applicants only*** (i.e., first-time applicants or those that are completing, or have completed, the third year in a three-year grant period) should follow the narrative requirements beginning on page 7. Proposal narratives should not exceed 20 pages using 12-point font or larger. Readers will not evaluate more than 20 pages of proposal narrative.
- ___ 5. **Objectives and Accompanying Services and/or Activities (Attachment 4):** Use copies of **Attachment 4** to display the specific program objectives to be accomplished (one objective per page). Each objective should relate to the needs identified in the Proposal Narrative (*for new applicants*) or to the results to date, as described in the mid-year report (*for continuation applicants*). Each objective must be written in measurable terms, with a stated standard of measurement.

For each service/activity that will be provided, indicate:

- a. the number of students who will be receiving the service/activity, including the basis for which they were referred (optional alternative education programs should use student full-time equivalent (FTE), and truancy intervention supplemental services programs should use an unduplicated count);
 - b. how often this service/activity will be provided; and
 - c. who has primary responsibility for delivering such service/activity.
- ___ 6. **Budget Summary and Payment Schedule (Attachment 5):** Each proposal must include a budget submitted on the Budget Summary and Payment Schedule (Attachment 5). This must be signed by the district superintendent or official authorized to submit the proposal. The payment schedule should be based on the projected date of expenditures. Salaries and fringe benefits should be requested in equal intervals on the schedule. Supplies, equipment, contracted services and professional development should be requested in the month for which the expenditure is anticipated. A Sample Budget Worksheet is provided as Attachment 5A.
 - ___ 7. **Budget Breakdown (Attachment 6):** The Budget Breakdown describes the anticipated expenditures for each line item of the Budget Summary. This must include subcontract information, if applicable (see item 7 of the document titled "Certifications and Assurances, and Standard Terms of the Grant").
 - ___ 8. **Certifications and Assurances (Attachments 7 and 8):** Each applicant, *including each entity that is participating in a joint application*, is required to submit the certification forms listed below and attached to this RFP. These must be signed by school district superintendent or, in the case of eligible applicants other than school districts, the official legally authorized to submit the proposal and to bind the applicant to its contents. "Program-Specific Terms of the Grant" is Attachment 8 and "Certifications and Assurances, and Standard Terms of the Grant" is Attachment 7. Both must be signed by the official legally authorized to submit the proposal and to bind the applicant to its contents.

- ___ 9. **Mid-year Interim Report (Attachment 9):** *Continuation applicants and programs completing year three of the grant cycle that are submitting a proposal under item (4) above* (i.e., those who received funding in FY 2009 and are applying for FY 2010 funding) should submit a mid-year report of the current year's program, documenting the services provided and describing the degree to which the grantee is achieving its stated objectives.

Proposal Narrative Requirements (New Applicants only)

New applicants (i.e., first-time applicants or those that are completing, or have completed the third year in a three-year grant period) should respond to each section in the order presented below. **Proposal narratives should not exceed 20 pages, using 12-point font or larger. Additional pages will not be considered in the review process.**

A. Comprehensive/Community-Based Program Planning

1. Briefly describe the program planning to be conducted and how this process results in the development of program goals, objectives, and a strategic plan that includes identification of strategies designed to help students meet the Illinois Learning Standards and to prepare them for the workforce (if applicable).
2. Indicate how the planning work group is organized and the extent of the members' involvement in program planning and implementation. Include a list of your planning work group members, indicating the organization, agency or group that each member represents.
3. Describe the process used to assess the need for the program and the resources available to meet that need, to include each of the following elements.
 - a. Data and source(s) of data used in conducting the needs analysis. When describing the need of an area, the applicant must use the chronic truancy and dropout rates each school district reports to the State Board of Education on the FY 2008 School Report Card. Include percentages as well as actual numbers of students. Cite source(s) of additional statistical information that relates to the needs of the students to be served.
 - b. Community and local resources. Enumerate the resources available to the program to meet the needs of the students, to include the nature and extent of existing truancy and dropout prevention services, including diagnostic, intervention, and remediative services, and educational options that are available in the area.

Identify other TAOEP providers in the Regional Office of Education geographic area to be served by the proposed program and the type of services offered (see www.taoep.net/Directory.htm). If a TAOEP currently operates in the area proposed to be served, then indicate why further TAOEP services are needed in the area and how the proposed

program will collaborate with the existing TAOEP in the provision of services. If there are no other TAOEP grantees in the geographic region, then state this fact.

- c. Describe the process to be used to access and solicit these resources in support of your program services.
 - d. Describe how you will determine which of the eligible students (i.e., truants, chronic truants, dropouts, or potential dropouts) will receive priority for the services within your program. Describe the indicators that will be used to determine whether students qualify as "potential dropouts" (see definition on page 3). Include how students will be identified for participation in the program and how their individual needs will be assessed.
4. Describe the educational services that will be offered (i.e., Optional Alternative Education Program as defined on page 4, truancy intervention supplemental services) and how these services will be coordinated with other programs and services currently operating in the area to be served to avoid duplication of effort.
- a. Identify the services listed below offered by the program. Describe in detail who, what, when, where and how the services will be provided. If the plan includes services not listed, then describe the services and include the details of the other services provided.

Academic Services

- Academic Instruction
- Academic Counseling
- GED Instruction
- Enrolled in Community College Courses
- Enrolled in Evening School Classes
- Enrolled in Summer School Classes
- Tutoring
- Participation in Credit Recovery Program
- Online Curriculum

Non-Academic Services

- Court-Related Services
- Day Care Services
- Health-Related Service
- Home Visits
- Life Skills Training
- Mentoring
- Parenting Classes for Students
- Personal Counseling
- Referral for Social/Academic Services
- Monitoring
- Support Services for Parents/Families
- Transportation

Career Related

- Career Service

Work Experience

- b. If applicable, describe how other funds generated by students participating in TAOEP (e.g., General State Aid, Title I, bilingual education) will be used to assist in the provision of services to these students.
5. Briefly describe the qualifications of professional staff, including certification status, and the duties of each. Include a description of the staff development activities for administrators and staff that may be needed in order to carry out the program's activities.

B. Individualized Optional Education Plan or Service Plan

Describe the procedures to be used to develop a written individualized optional education plan (IOEP) or service plan for **each** student, including procedures to involve others in the formulation of that plan (see page 4 for description).

ATTACH A COPY OF YOUR PROPOSED IOEP FORM.

C. Evaluation Design

This evaluation plan must describe:

1. the evaluation process to determine whether program objectives were achieved, which must document the following:
 - the services provided to students;
 - descriptive data, such as number of students served by race, sex, grade level, and truancy status; and
 - student outcomes, such as attendance rates, the degree to which truancy or chronic truancy was reduced, number of academic credits earned, number of students who graduated or successfully completed the GED, number of students who are gainfully employed, and the student's progress in achieving other outcomes in the IOEP; and
2. the processes that will be used to collect information and how that will be used to improve program effectiveness and efficiency.

Criteria for Review and Approval of Proposals

Proposals from new applicants will be evaluated in accordance with the following criteria and points.

1. There is sufficient need for the program/services, as evidenced by the number or proportion of students who are identified as eligible for program services. (20 points)

2. Criteria and indicators for identifying students who are eligible for the program are clearly established and likely to target those students most in need of services. (20 points)
3. Program objectives and activities are well-defined, linked to identified needs, and likely to lead to improved outcomes for the students served in the program. (20 points)
4. The program is cost-effective as evidenced by the cost of proposed services in relation to the numbers to be served and the services to be provided. (20 points)
5. The evaluation strategies will effectively gauge the success of the program and yield sufficient data that can be used to improve the program. (10 points)
6. The proposal demonstrates strategies, other than those routinely offered by the regular school program, that will be effective in decreasing the dropout rate and increasing school attendance. (10 points)

Proposals from continuation applicants shall be evaluated in accordance with the following criteria.

- A. The mid-year evaluation of the current year's project indicates that its stated objectives are currently being met, that the project has been conducted in conformance with the proposal approved by the State Superintendent of Education, and that a sufficient need continues to exist for the truants' alternative and optional education program; or
- B. In instances where certain objectives of the project are currently not being met, the grantee has described the relative status of each such objective, the reason(s) for incomplete achievement, and either:
 1. the steps to be taken to ensure that the objective will be met during the renewal period, if the objective remains a valid part of the proposal for renewal; or
 2. if the grantee has determined that the objective should be deleted from its plan or altered in light of the previous year's experience, then the grantee has provided its rationale for such deletion or change and has described how the program's goals for the renewal period will be met in light of the change.

Approval of Grant Awards

The State Superintendent of Education will determine the amount of individual grant awards on the basis of:

- A. the program needs, resources, and amounts requested in the top-ranked proposals as determined by the criteria set forth above;

- B. the total amount of funds appropriated for this program; and
- C. the need to ensure delivery of truancy and dropout prevention services and truants' alternative and optional education programs on a statewide basis and in a manner that will have the greatest impact in preventing truancy and students from dropping out of school.