

Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers Fiscal Year 2027 Notice of Funding Opportunity Frequently Asked Questions

Updates
07/10/2026 • A list of sites that are ineligible to be served by the FY 2027 NOFO has been added to the 21st CCLC Prospective Grantees webpage.
07/24/2026 • Attachments 13B and 13C on the FY 2027 21st CCLC NOFO Attachments document have been updated to allow a full page for written responses.
08/04/2026 • The FY 2027 21st CCLC NOFO - Sites Ineligible To Be Served document has been updated to correct Abingdon-Avon High School as being ineligible, not Abingdon-Avon Middle School.

- 1. Question:** Who will be contacted by ISBE about the status of our application?
Answer: ISBE will contact the Authorized Representative as identified on Attachment 1 of the NOFO.
- 2. Question:** Do we need to submit an MOU if we do not have a co-applicant?
Answer: Per Pages 3-4 of the NOFO, an application will be deemed ineligible if a signed and dated MOU is not submitted.
- 3. Question:** How do we submit our application?
Answer: All applications will be submitted via Attachment Manager. To submit an application via Attachment Manager, go to [isbe.net](#), select “System Quick Links” from the top of the page. From there you will select “Send ISBE a File.” The direct link can be found here: [Attachment Manager](#). Please refer to Pages 5-6 of the NOFO/RFP for more information about submitting an application.
- 4. Question:** Is a Letter of Intent required?
Answer: Letters of Intent are not a requirement to apply for the grant. If an applicant wishes to submit a Letter of Intent, the template can be found on Page 46 of the NOFO.
- 5. Question:** Since we are entering the last fiscal year for our 21st CCLC grant, can we apply for the new FY2027 opportunity?

Answer: Please refer to Pages 3-4 of the NOFO that states, "an application will be deemed ineligible and will NOT be read if ... the applicant proposes to serve schools that are already being served by the 21st CCLC grant." Consult the [FY 2027 21st CCLC NOFO – Sites Ineligible To Be Served](#) document for a list of specific sites that may not be proposed to be served on the FY 2027 NOFO.

6. **Question:** I own a private, for profit, childcare center. Is this grant available to us?

Answer: Page 1 of the NOFO states, "Public and private entities or a consortium of two or more such agencies, organizations, or entities are eligible to apply." Page 12 of the NOFO further states, "Each non-LEA applicant must actively collaborate with the LEAs and school(s) from which participating students attend to develop and implement the proposed program."

7. **Question:** The 12 hours of programming per week means each student should be able to participate 12 hours a week, right? If we offered two different sessions, say sports club and STEM club, from 3:30 to 4:30, would that only count as 1 hour or as 2 hours?

Answer: Page 15 of the NOFO states, "21st CCLC programs funded under this NOFO, however, must operate a minimum of 12 hours a week for a minimum of 28 weeks per year." Even though the program would be providing two clubs during the same 3:30-4:30 timeframe, this only counts as one hour of operation for the program.

8. **Question:** Do parent/caregiver hours count towards the weekly total hours?

Answer: No, family services do not count towards the weekly total of hours. Page 16 of the NOFO states, "The total hours and days of family services, however, must not exceed the hours and days of the student activities."

9. **Question:** We completed a community announcement last year about our intent to apply for upcoming CCLC opportunities. We still have documentation of the dates and announcement materials involved. We have yet to make a second announcement during the current year. Given the fact that we have announced prior to the current year and plan to make a second announcement concerning the FY27 round, are we eligible to apply under the requirement to announce intent to apply to the public 45 days in advance of submitting our application?

Answer: Each new NOFO requires the public to be notified at least 45 days prior to submission.

10. **Question:** When is the signature from the designated official with authority to act on behalf of Chicago Public Schools District 299 required? Do we simply submit the signature document at the same time as our application?

Answer: Please see the [CPS Protocols for Submitting a FY 2027 21st CCLC Application with CPS Schools](#) document on our webpage for more information.

11. **Question:** Our organization runs its Out-of-School Time (OST) Program as a nonprofit, which is separate from the after-school program run by our school. For the FY27 CCLC opportunity, the school's LEA would submit the application with the organization as the nonprofit partner, meaning funds would go directly to the school's program. Is this an eligible arrangement?

Answer: Page 2 of the NOFO states, "A consortium of two or more eligible applicants may apply as co-applicants by submitting a joint proposal. An administrative agent must be designated for each proposal. The co-applicant is equally responsible for the implementation of the grant and will sign off on all certifications and assurances. All proposals must have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between co-applicants that includes the signature of each district superintendent or official authorized to submit the proposal signifying that they agree to participate in the joint application."

12. **Question:** If an applicant applies to serve multiple sites, must every site fall under the priority area to be awarded priority points, or will the applicant receive priority points if at least one site qualifies?

Answer: Applications will receive priority points if at least one of the proposed sites to be served is eligible for those priority points. See Pages 2, 10-11, and 44 for more information about priority points.

13. **Question:** As I was reading, the deadline is this Wednesday, July 22nd. Is this the one we should be using or is there a different document?

Answer: Page 5 of the NOFO states, "Proposals should be submitted no later than 4:00 pm on August 24, 2026." Utilize the [FY 2027 21st CCLC NOFO Attachments](#) to complete the application and follow the directions on Page 6 of the NOFO for submission details.

14. **Question:** Can more than one organization get a 21st century grant that covers the same school? So, if our health department gets a 21st century grant that covers 9 schools in our district, can we apply for 21st century funding that would support kids being bussed to us from some of those schools?

Answer: While both entities are allowed to apply for the same competition, only the higher scoring applicant will be provided funding to support that school if both applicants scored high enough to be awarded funding.

15. **Question:** I have a follow-up question/confirmation for FAQ question 12: I see in the NOFO on Page 44 it says applicants will either be awarded 0 or 10 priority points for each priority area. I just want to confirm that applicants will be awarded all 10 priority points if at least one of their sites falls under the priority area.

Answer: That is correct.

16. **Question:** Can you write for this if you had it in the past?

Answer: According to Page 3 of the NOFO/RFP, "An applicant cannot propose to serve any school or other entity that will be receiving services during FY 2027 under a 21st CCLC grant."

17. **Question:** GATA Prequalification: Is this requirement satisfied by ensuring that our organization is currently in Qualified status and in good standing with all GATA prequalification requirements, or is there additional information or documentation that must be incorporated into the grant application?

Answer: Page 4 of the NOFO states, "Tentative awardees will be required to complete an FY 2027 Fiscal and Administrative Risk Assessment in the form of an Internal Controls Questionnaire (ICQ) available through the [GATA Grantee Portal](#), an FY 2027 Organizational Risk Assessment through the ISBE Web Application Security (IWAS) system, and the FY 2027 Programmatic Risk Assessment that is found within the electronic Grants Management System budget. Grant awards will not be executed until the FY 2027 ICQ, Organizational Risk Assessment, and Programmatic Risk Assessment are completed."

18. **Question:** Organizational Risk Assessment (ORA): I understand this assessment is completed through IWAS. Once it has been submitted, how can I verify that it has been successfully completed? Is there a confirmation or certificate that should be retained or submitted as part of the application?

Answer: The IWAS system should list your ORA as completed and give you a date when the current ORA expires.

19. **Question:** Third Prequalification Step: Could you clarify what the third required prequalification step is and where it is completed? If it is completed outside of IWAS or the GATA Grantee Portal, would you please provide the appropriate website or instructions?

Answer: For all pre-award requirements, visit the [GATA Pre-Award Requirements webpage](#).

20. **Question:** As we reviewed the NOFO, we noted the requirement stating that the community must be notified at least 45 days before submission of the proposal. We only recently became aware of this funding opportunity. Because the application deadline is August 24, 2026, the 45-day notification date has already passed. We want to be transparent and ensure that we fully understand this requirement before proceeding. Would our district still be eligible to submit an application if we issue the community notification immediately and provide documentation of the notice with our application? If not, is there another method of satisfying this requirement or any consideration available for applicants that learned of the opportunity after the 45-day notification date?

Answer: Page 20 of the NOFO states, "Notification to the community can be made concurrent with proposal submission."

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21. **Question:** I am waiting for admin approval to access the 21st CCLC grant application. Is there a pdf file of the application we can work from in the meantime?
Answer: The application cannot be found within IWAS/eGMS; 21st CCLC only has a paper application. The application can be found on the [21st CCLC webpage](#). Here is a direct link to the [FY 2027 21st CCLC NOFO Attachments](#) that must be completed and returned to ISBE.
22. **Question:** For the required file uploads, do I use the previous fiscal cycle documents, or do I need to get new ones?
Answer: FY 2027 NOFO requires submission of the [FY 2027 21st CCLC NOFO Attachments](#).
23. **Question:** Regarding form 6A, if we are applying to serve public schools: Is it sufficient to use the CPS school locator map to determine which private schools are in the catchment area (i.e., determining they are not in the catchment area as long as the private school is not located within the polygon border of the public school)?
Answer: Yes.
24. **Question:** Regarding form 6A, is providing screenshots of these maps sufficient documentation to support the fact that there are no private schools in the area?
Answer: Yes, a map is the preferred form of documentation.
25. **Question:** Regarding form 6A, should we leave the name/private school administrator lines blank if none of the schools fall within the catchment area?
Answer: Page 32 of the NOFO states, "If not applicable, applicant must indicate as such and sign."
26. **Question:** Regarding form 6B, since we are applying to serve public schools, should we just check that public schools are the primary entities intended to be served and leave the rest blank?
Answer: Page 32 of the NOFO states, "If not applicable, applicant must indicate as such and sign."
27. **Question:** How many years is cohort 27 going to run?
Answer: Page 5 of the NOFO states, "The grant period will begin no sooner than July 1, 2026, and will extend from the execution date of the grant until June 30, 2027. Successful applicants may reapply via continuing application for up to two additional years."
28. **Question:** Did the grant period change from the previous 3 years?
Answer: No, ISBE has regularly had three-year grant periods for the 21st CCLC grant since 2023.

29. Question: In the past we have always had to send a paper copy and never by IWAS. Are we required to submit both or just through IWAS?

Answer: All applications will be submitted via Attachment Manager. To submit an application via Attachment Manager, go to isbe.net, select "System Quick Links" from the top of the page. From there you will select "Send ISBE a File." The direct link can be found here: [Attachment Manager](#). Please refer to Pages 5-6 of the NOFO/RFP for more information about submitting an application.

30. Question: I would like to know if Catholic schools are eligible to participate as partner schools.

Answer: Page 16 of the NOFO states, "Services and benefits provided to private school students must be secular, neutral, and non-ideological. Private schools may apply for this grant and are likewise held to the standard requirements of equitable participation and timely and meaningful consultation."

31. Question: Does a charter school under CPS have to follow the requirements set for other District 299 schools for signatures?

Answer: The [CPS Protocols for Submitting a FY 2027 21st CCLC Application with CPS Schools](#) document states, "The District will sign off on an application that names Charter schools but will not provide or sign an MOU."

32. Question: I am hoping to confirm the definition of "middle school" for the purposes of the 21st CCLC NOFO and the awarding of middle school priority points. We are applying with a district that is predominantly a PK-8 system with a few standalone middle school exceptions. Our program solely serves middle school students (grades 6-8) in PK-8 schools that also house students in PK-5. Will we be awarded priority points for serving middle schools, or "eligible schools that contain grades 5-8, 6-8, or 7-8" as defined on page 10 of the NOFO?

Answer: ISBE generally uses the School Type classification as listed within the Illinois Report Card. Page 11 of the NOFO provides ISBE authority to make special considerations for extenuating circumstances.

33. Question: Regarding Attachment 6A, if we are proposing to serve a public school (a CPS magnet school with a citywide attendance boundary), which box should we check for consulting, since the school doesn't have an attendance boundary/catchment area?

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Answer: ISBE expects applicants to consult schools within a reasonable distance from the proposed programming site.

34. **Question:** If we are a non-profit, providing services at our location (not at a CPS school location), do we still need to obtain the CPS School Letter protocols?

Answer: Yes.

35. **Question:** What is the difference between NCES School identity code and the NCES Locale Code? The link on attachment 3, for the NCES Locale Code, takes you to the NCES School identity code.

Answer: The NCES School ID is the national identification number for each individual school. The NCES Locale Code classifies the physical location as either city (large, midsize, or small), suburban (large, midsize, or small), town (fringe, distant, or remote), and rural (fringe, distant, or remote).

36. **Question:** Is the NCES Locale Code two digits?

Answer: Yes.

37. **Question:** On page 1 of Attachment 3, there are not enough lines for the school districts being served; we are statewide applicant. Should I add an attachment to include the ones that don't fit?

Answer: The maximum number of sites to be served may not exceed 12 sites, due to funding regulations. If multiple schools are being served at sites, then Attachment 3 may be duplicated.

38. **Question:** If there is a site being served at a Club house with a private school included, is the lack of data from Illinois Report Card a disqualifying item?

Answer: Private schools should utilize the FY 2026 results from the [ISBE Child Nutrition and Data Analytics and Mapping Tools webpage](#). See Page 3 of the NOFO for more information.

39. **Question:** Can we use Illinois Childcare Assistance Program (CCAP) dollars with 21st Century funding as long as we do not pay for the same staff/supplies, etc. with the respective funding sources?

Answer: Page 27 of the NOFO states, "LEAs are permitted to consolidate and use funds from Title I Part A; Title IV Part B (i.e., 21st CCLC); and other ESSA program funds received at the school to upgrade the entire educational program of a school that serves a school attendance area where not less than 40 percent of the children

are from low-income families or where not less than 40 percent of the children enrolled in the school are from such families. These schools are otherwise recognized under Section 1114 of ESSA as schoolwide programs and are eligible to consolidate their federal, state, and local funds accordingly." Applicants must "assure that program funds will supplement and not supplant other federal, state, local, and nonpublic funds to provide allowable programs and activities" per page 29 of the NOFO.

40. **Question:** In our school district, they are opening a new school this year that is projected to have a F/R lunch percentage well above the 40% threshold. For the purposes of our pending 21st CCLC proposal is the school eligible to be included? We are planning to run a program there and would like to ask for support in our pending proposal.

Answer: For newly opened schools, provide the projected low-income rate on Attachment 3, Section E and include a rationale for the projected low-income rate with supporting evidence as part of the narrative response in Attachment 13D. Federal regulations require that 21st CCLC awards be granted only to applicants that will primarily serve students who attend schools with a high concentration of students from low-income families (defined as not less than 40 percent of the students being eligible for free or reduced-price meals). Each applicant must propose to serve high-poverty schools or schools eligible for schoolwide programs under Section 1114 of the ESEA as amended by ESSA, Title I, Part A (i.e., schools in which not less than 40 percent of the children are from low-income families).

41. **Question:** Our community-based organization (CBO) does not have a co-applicant. However, we are working with several schools in our district and will request MOUs. Do we need to submit both an MOU and co-applicant agreement for each school site?

Answer: Page 12 of the NOFO states, "Each non-LEA applicant must actively collaborate with the LEAs and school(s) from which participating students attend to develop and implement the proposed program." Page 20 of the NOFO further states, "All applicants must document the commitment to a partnership for the implementation of the 21st CCLC program in an MOU. The MOU must be established and signed by the LEA superintendent, the principal at each school to be served by the grant, and any other organization included as a co-applicant."

42. **Question:** Who is the designated CPS official authorized to provide the District 299 signature required for a 21st CCLC application?

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Answer: Most commonly, the person who is the authorized representative from each school district is the district's superintendent.

43. **Question:** Is the CPS District 299 authorized official's signature separate from the signature of the principal at each proposed school?

Answer: Yes.

44. **Question:** For Attachment 14A, should we obtain an MOU signed by the principal of one school and a separate MOU signed by the principal of another, in addition to the required CPS District 299 authorization?

Answer: All signatures may occur within one MOU.

45. **Question:** If my organization applies as the primary applicant, what CPS office or official must participate for the application to qualify as a joint application between an LEA receiving Title I, Part A funds and a community/private organization?

Answer: Please see the [CPS Protocols for Submitting a FY 2027 21st CCLC Application with CPS Schools](#) document for specific information.

46. **Question:** Are there any additional CPS approvals, forms, internal reviews, or signatures that must be obtained before our organization submits an application proposing to serve a school?

Answer: Please see the [CPS Protocols for Submitting a FY 2027 21st CCLC Application with CPS Schools](#) document for specific information.

47. **Question:** What is the appropriate process for confirming that a school is not currently receiving, and will not receive during FY 2027, services through another 21st CCLC grant? Should applicants rely exclusively on the FY 2027 ineligible-sites information provided by ISBE, or is additional confirmation required from CPS or the individual school principals?

Answer: The [FY 2027 21st CCLC NOFO – Sites Ineligible To Be Served](#) document is an exhaustive list of sites currently being served. However, CBOs should also consult with the district and individual schools they wish to partner with.

48. **Question:** If a school principal has agreed to partner with us, is the principal responsible for initiating the CPS District 299 approval process, or should our organization contact the designated CPS office directly?

Answer: Please see the [CPS Protocols for Submitting a FY 2027 21st CCLC Application with CPS Schools](#) document for specific information.

49. Question: When I attempt to print FY27-NOFO-21st-Century-Afterschool-Learning-Centers-Att.pdf to a PDF, it does not work. I have tried using the "Print" button on the last page of the document. I also can't extract particular pages from the document, since the document is locked and cannot be edited. Any output from the print actions cannot be opened as a PDF, but can be opened in Notepad, showing a lot of code, rather than a formatted document. Please tell me if this can be printed electronically or if it can only be printed to paper, which we would then need to scan and assemble.

Answer: For any attachments that require signatures, applicants should print that attachment, sign in the appropriate location, and upload the completed document into a PDF file. Be sure to clearly label this new file with the applicant's name and the attachment number.

50. Question: I am seeking clarification regarding the 28-week/12-hour-per-week requirement for the FY27 Nita M. Lowey 21st CCLC grant application. With anticipated award notifications in late November 2026 and our school year ending May 28, 2027, a December start leaves only ~22 calendar weeks before the end of the school year. Will ISBE pro-rate the 28-week requirement for new grantees in Year 1?

Answer: ISBE recognizes that awarded applicants will not have a full year of programming available to students.

51. Question: Do 12+ hour service weeks provided during school breaks (e.g., winter/spring break) count toward the 28 weeks?

Answer: Yes.

52. Question: Can the sites be combined for breaks? E.g., a community partner provides programming for winter/spring break at a different location than is currently offered during the school year?

Answer: Any changes to approved programming must be preapproved by ISBE.

53. Question: If the district at-risk funds the program starting in August, can those pre-execution weeks count toward the total?

Answer: Awardees may backdate their funding to July 1, 2026, provided the costs are allowable within the terms of the grant.

54. Question: Does summer school programming count toward the 28 weeks?

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Answer: Page 15 of the NOFO states, "Any proposed summer programming will be considered in addition to the 12-hour, 28-week requirement and will have a 12-hour per week, three-week minimum requirement."

55. **Question:** In previous years, wet signatures were required on all MOUs with partner LEAs. Is that still the case or are electronic signatures now acceptable?

Answer: Attachment 14A states, "All MOUs must include, at a minimum, the following information: ... Wet ink signatures (and date), printed name, and title of individuals authorized to commit the partners' staff and/or resources to the grant."