FY2019 Competitive Grant FAQs
January 19, 2018

1. The FY19 Competitive Grant refers to a 5% cap on administrative costs. Can we ask for more than 5% in administrative costs?
   A: Following the law, Section 233- Local Administrative Cost Limits, prescribes the 5% cap on administrative costs. It also includes a Special Rule if 5% is too restrictive: (1) not less than 95 percent shall be expended for carrying out adult education and literacy activities; and (2) the remaining amount, not to exceed 5 percent, shall be used for planning, administration (including carrying out the requirements of section 116), professional development, and the activities described in paragraphs (3) and (5) of section 232.

   (b) Special Rule.-In cases where the cost limits described in subsection (a) are too restrictive to allow for the activities described in subsection (a)(2), the eligible provider shall negotiate with the eligible agency in order to determine an adequate level of funds to be used for non-instructional purposes.

Please refer to pp 32-33 Instructions and General Information regarding Local Administrative Cost Limits.

2. I completed the Applicant Eligibility Verification and set up an account. When I try to log in, I get the following message: “No application is connected to the credentials entered”. Please advise.
   A: This log in screen is for the FY 2019 grant only; using information that works on the current grant’s PD system will not work on this page.
   There are many possible issues that can cause this problem:
   1. The first option may be that an email address is being entered rather than the username that was entered when establishing the account.
   2. The second option is that after completing the eligibility questions and table, the “set up an account” button was not selected.
   3. It could be caused by an applicant not completing all of the fields when in the “set up an account” screen where organizational information, email address, username, and password are entered.
   4. Lastly, the username and password may not match what was entered initially. Use the reset password option to check for this error.
3. Are we to use data only on the population 18-64 or is it acceptable to cite the data for populations 18 and over (using 2011-2015 Five Year Estimates)?
   A: Ages 18-64 are considered to be working age adults. Reference to working age adults is expected within the grant proposal. See Appendix A of the Instructions and General Information document for ages 18-64 census data.

4. Does the FY19 Competitive Grant replace my current grant with Aspire?
   A: Funding for the current Aspire grant cycle ends on June 30, 2018. The FY19 Competitive Grant is open to all who wish to apply for future Aspire funding. The FY19 Competitive Grant runs from FY19 through FY21.

5. If an applicant can apply for a minimum of $75,000, is that $25,000 over three year?
   A: No. When writing the grant, the funding the applicant is requesting is for a one-year period (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019). $75,000 is the minimum a program may request per year, unless there are special circumstances – see Consideration 1.5. Following the first one-year grant, ODHE retains the right to fund the grant recipient for up to two consecutive years – FY20 and FY 21, through a continuation grant.

6. I cannot find the FY19 Competitive Grant RFP and the maximum grant amount an applicant can request.
   A: Please find the FY19 Competitive Grant RFP information, as well as the link to the grant application and Instructions and General Information document on our “Grants” page at https://www.ohiohighered.org/aspire/grants. While there is no maximum amount which an applicant can request, please refer to the minimum and cost per student amounts listed on pages 4-5 of the Instructions and General Information document.

7. Is the FY19 Competitive Grant supposed to reflect “what we are doing now” or “what we are planning to do”? If I am a currently funded Aspire program and would like to increase my enrollment and ask for additional funds, am I able to do that?
   A: Applicants will be required to establish demonstrated effectiveness based on previous performance data. In addition, applicants will also be asked how they plan to demonstrate services going forward through the General Application Questions.

   For current Aspire funded programs, the FY19 Competitive Grant brings an opportunity for an applicant to either increase, decrease, or maintain services. All applicants are expected to provide realistic and tangible information regarding services provided in the FY19 grant proposal.
8. Are two potential applicants able to merge to become one provider, therefore submitting only one application?
   A: Potential applicants are able to merge to become one provider. If this is the case, only one application is necessary. The same applies to consortia applicants. Please see further guidance on Consortia Applicants on page 7 of the Instructions and General Information document.

9. There are currently Aspire program students being served at my location. I would like to apply for the FY19 Competitive Grant. Being a first time applicant, can these students serve as performance data for demonstrated effectiveness in my grant application?
   A: Students being served through an Aspire program, regardless of the location, can only be used as data for that particular Aspire program. First time applicants would need to provide their own performance data, using non Aspire students, to demonstrate effectiveness.

10. Page 17 of the Instructions and General Information document says, “ODHE expects grantees to contribute at least 25% local match, monetary and/or in-kind”. However, on page 55 of the same document it says, “Local Match: Does not apply to Aspire”. Is there a required local match and if so what is the amount?
    A: Applicants are expected, not required, to contribute at least 25% local match, per the grant guidelines on page 17 of the Instructions and General Information. Applicants will be asked to provide details about local match within the Grant Application Questions. However, match funds, which may be non-state or non-federal dollars or in-kind contributions, are not reported in the financial management system, CCIP. Page 55 of the Instructions and General Information, Object and Purpose Codes used in budgeting, is referring to the budgets in CCIP.

Updates for 1-26-2018

11. Is there a Word version of the thirteen considerations and the IELCE/IET parts of the grant? Will the printing function of the application prior to submission be available?
    A: There is not a word version of the thirteen consideration, but each one is listed in the grant guidance PDF. That file could be used to cut and paste the questions into a Word document if your intention is to be able to work offline on the grant. The IELCE/IET questions are also contained in the PDF and needed checklist is available as Word document on our website here. The printing function of the application is available at the bottom of the grant. It can be used to print each section, regardless of completion. There is not an option that will allow for a “one click” print of the entire application until it has been submitted.
12. Can you give clarification on what programs will be responsible for with regard to Distance Education? Will the current platforms remain available to programs at no cost?
A: Programs will be responsible for enrolling students in the DE option of their choice as long as it is part of the approved list on our DE Policy. (If the program feels they have selected a program or platform that is valuable to their students, but not on our current list, the program can apply to have the platform evaluated for approval by using this document.) The program will also be responsible for entering student attendance into ABLELink for all provided DE as well as monitoring student needs, assigning lessons, and conducting follow ups with inactive students. There is more information on the FAQ released by our office following the fall regional meetings. Pages 2 and 3 go further into this, but it is the intent of our office to support local programs’ DE needs as best we can, but no decisions on this can be made until our federal and state budgets are determined. There are free resources that can be utilized as well to provide distance education for your students.

13. Can you clarify what types of cost would fall under administrative vs. support services?
A: Yes. There is further clarification about the admin cost on pages 33 and 55-57 of the grant guidance document.

14. On the Performance Table, when it asks for the percentage of students that obtained a HSE or entered into Post-Secondary Education and Training, how can programs use their desk review data to get a consistent percentage from year to year? FY15 and FY16 used a cohort for calculating similar percentages; FY17 does not contain cohorts.
A: The percentages for all three years should be calculated in a consistent manner. These percentages are meant to be derived from the raw program data rather than from assigned segments of the program. In order to calculate HSE percentage, the total number of students that received a HSE should be divided by the total number of students that were enrolled in the program year. Example, 18 students earned a HSE in FY2015 out of a total enrollment of 150 students. 18/150 = 12% The PSET calculation should be done the same way for each of the program years listed on chart.
Updates for 1-30-2018

15. The 5% cap on administrative expenses is a decrease compared to previous years. How can we achieve all that is counted as admin cost with such a low figure? What rationale was used to arrive at this figure?
   A: We are required to follow the law which states, “Not less than 95 percent shall be expended for carrying out adult education and literacy activities, and, the remaining amount, not to exceed 5 percent, shall be used for planning, administration, professional development, .... In cases where the cost limits described are too restrictive to allow for the activities, the eligible provider shall negotiate with the eligible agency in order to determine an adequate level of funds to be used for noninstructional purposes.” (WIOA Title II Section 233: Local Administrative Cost Limits). When you determine the amount of administrative costs needed, submit your negotiation request, with rationale, to aspiregrants@highered.ohio.gov. The Aspire state office will review all requests for reasonableness and respond with a tentative approval when an agreed upon administrative costs is reached. These negotiations are to be completed PRIOR to submitting the grant. More information about Local Administrative Costs are found on pages 32 and 33 of the Instructions and General Information document.

Updates for 2-5-2018

16. Could you please provide with explanation of why the denominator for both of the outcomes in the Performance Chart uses total enrollment for FY2017 data? This is different from previous methods used in FY2016 and FY 2016 of determining these outcomes.
   A: The reason that total enrollment is being used as the denominator for all of the years in the performance chart is to ensure that the measure is impartial regardless of the organization’s current funding status. Total enrollment should be the denominator used to determine the percentage of students that earned a high school equivalence and percentage of students that transitioned to postsecondary education and training for all three years listed on the performance chart. This chart is not asking for applicants to report cohort percentages from previous desk reviews as not all applicants will be currently funded programs and may not have the necessary guidance to determine how the cohort figures were established.

17. I am writing the grant for three organizations that are joining together for the first time to apply for the grant in our county. Since this is a new partnership with one existing Aspire program, a community college (designated as the new fiscal agent) and an
adult career center, is it okay to use the data from the Aspire program? Also, should we apply as a consortia or a single program with one fiscal agent and MOUs?

A. Since an existing Aspire program is a portion of the new partnership, it is appropriate to use the existing program’s Aspire data in the performance sections of the application. However, the organizations in the partnership will need to determine the “type of applicant” (i.e. consortia) that best fits the partnership.

18. On #10 of the Financial Management Survey it asks about the Single Audit status. Does this refer to when we had a state visit by our Aspire State Manager?

A. No. The Single Audit is usually completed by either the Auditor of the State’s office or an independent auditor. This is often referred to as an A-133 Single Audit. The applicant’s fiscal representative/treasurer/financial officer should have information on the most recent Single Audit status.

19. Under consideration 13.2, why is Workforce Training optional?

A. Workforce training is not a required component of Integrated English Language and Civics Education (IELCE). You MAY include workforce training as part of the IELCE class using Aspire Instructional funds, however, you are REQUIRED to offer workforce training as part of an IELCE/IET class (243 funds). As stated in the Instructions and General Information document that says “WIOA [§134(C)(3)(D)] defines integrated education and training as a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities simultaneously and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupational cluster.” Only those applicants applying for funds under IELCE/IET (optional funding) are required to offer workforce training in concert with IELCE.

20. I have filled out the eligibility screening and chart, filled out the organizational info, and have been approved to access the Aspire application. However, when I login, I get this message “No application is connected to the credentials entered”. I have done this twice, with the same results. Please advise what my next steps should be.

A. See FAQ #2.

21. Why was the Buy American Act Assurance added?

A. On January 19, 2018, the ODHE Aspire office was notified by the U.S. Department of Education that the Buy American Act Assurance was inadvertently left off of the Title II assurances to the states, although this assurance is a requirement under WIOA Section 502. We are adding this Assurance into the Instructions and General Information document as Legal Consideration #8 (p38).
**Updates for 2-9-2018**

22. **In question 5.8, are we being asked to complete the Sites and Classes sections of the application AND write a narrative answering the question in the space provided?**
   
   A: Complete the Sites and Classes sections of the grant. Question 5.8 in the online application has been updated to exclude the narrative response.

23. **If two Aspire programs join and submit one application as a consortium, should the data from both programs be entered into a single Past Performance Data table, or just the data from the Aspire program that would be the fiscal agent?**
   
   A: The data from the two Aspire programs should be combined and reported as such in the Past Performance Data table.

24. **Do we need to have open sites for the community or is it okay to have a closed site at our location for our participants only?**
   
   A: With limited exception (i.e. correctional facilities), Aspire instructional sites should be open to the community.

25. **On page 15, can we have some clarity between the differences of Supplement, Not Supplant funds?**
   
   A: The term "supplement, not supplant" refers to a provision common to many federal statutes authorizing education grant programs. Although the precise definition may change from statute to statute, supplement, not supplant provisions basically require that funds made available for adult education and literacy activities shall supplement and not supplant other State or local public funds expended for adult education and literacy activities. In other words, federal funds may not be used to pay for services, staff, programs, or materials that would otherwise be paid with state or local funds.

26. **Are there any caps when it comes to hiring part time versus full time staff and salaries?**
   
   A: No. “Program administration employs Aspire staff and recruits volunteers qualified for the positions they hold, as evidenced by current job descriptions, applications, resumes and certifications on file, including the completed Program Personnel page from the grant application that identifies the credentials of each staff member” (Accountability - Indicators of Program Quality - [www.ohiohighered.ohio.gov/aspire/reference](http://www.ohiohighered.ohio.gov/aspire/reference)).
27. **Maintenance of Effort (MOE)** – is that just another way of saying the amount that the school is putting into the program? IE – the school is covering/providing an equivalent of 25% of expenses so the grant doesn’t have to?
   A. It’s important to understand the purpose of the MOE and why this is a significant commitment from the Aspire programs. From the Schedule A (the report used at the end of each fiscal year to report cash and in-kind contributions) memo: *For Ohio Aspire programs to achieve and maintain the necessary non-federal expenditure of funds on an equitable and annual basis, the state must document all local programs’ non-federal expenditures and in-kind contributions that support the delivery of Aspire services. The state must maintain its highest level of non-federal expenditures reported or at least 90% of that amount to receive full federal funding. If it does not, federal funding levels are reduced proportionately in subsequent years.* Many states require a MOE contribution but Ohio has asked for assistance with this from each local program without making it a grant requirement. The contributions often come from the fiscal agent through cash expenditures (i.e. staff time, equipment, materials) and in-kind services (i.e. class space, utilities, custodial services) that directly support Aspire programming. Although the contributions often come from the fiscal agency, they don’t have to. Non-federal contributions may come from other sources (i.e. local jail pays for the teacher’s salary, ProLiteracy grant, Dollar General grant, One-stop pays for instructional materials).

28. **Can the cost for corrections education exceed 20% of the total instructional grant funds?**
   A. No.

29. **Will the grant readers receive the Definitions in Appendix B?**
   A. Grant readers will have access to all of the information available on the Aspire Grants web site at [https://www.ohiohighered.org/aspire/grants](https://www.ohiohighered.org/aspire/grants).

**Updates for 2/16/18**

30. **If my program was an ABLE/Aspire funded program years ago, and I do not have performance data for FY 15, 16, and 17, am I still able to apply?**
   A. The agency may apply if it has provided ANY adult education and literacy services and has academic skill level performance data for at least 10 enrolled students in FY16 and FY17. For example, if the agency provided adult workforce education and administered WorkKeys tests to eligible individuals, it may apply using WorkKeys data to complete the performance chart.
31. Could a community-based correctional facility apply for its own grant? If so, is there a cap on the allocation since there is a 20% cap when corrections is a partner with an Aspire program?
   A. A community-based correctional facility could apply for its own grant. The 20% cap would not apply to the agency. This agency’s allocation would be included in the state’s 20% correctional cap.

32. What do the yellow highlights in the staff vs. budget error report mean?
   A. Yellow highlighting in the “Difference” column indicates that there is a discrepancy between the funds designated in the budget narrative and the amount allocated in the staffing pages. In the screenshot below, the applicant has designated $90,500 toward instructional salaries but only $26,550 has been allocated to individual staff members in the staffing pages. In this scenario, the program would need to adjust the allocations in the staffing pages to match the designated amount in the budget narrative. Non-staff purchased services are displayed beneath the “Purchases Services” row. Yellow highlighting in this area is not likely an error but programs should verify that it is not before completing this section of the application.

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<th>Instructional budget</th>
<th>Staffing chart</th>
<th>Budget narrative</th>
<th>Difference</th>
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Updates for 2/23/18

33. Will grant readers also be looking at budget requests and see the discrepancy in the admin costs requests? If so, will they also see reasons provided for a higher admin cap?
   A. Grant readers will be looking at the total application, including the budget grid and narrative. State Aspire staff will verify with the reading teams which applicants negotiated and received an approved administrative cap in excess of 5%. Applicants’ proposals for increased administrative caps will not be attached to the grant, nor will applicants be scored based on the quality of their administrative cap proposals.
Updates for 3/2/18

34. Consideration 13.1 asks for ACS data to site the local area ELL population. May I also use data from local school districts to demonstrate local need for IELCE programming?
   A. No.

35. Please clarify where I add a substitute teacher in the budget. Could you clarify if they go under instructional, support, or PD budget?
   A. Substitute teachers are paid from the instructional budget. No additional funds need be allocated to substitutes in the budget narrative by nature of their role. Substitutes can be added to the staffing pages with $0 funds assigned.

36. We requested 15% as the administrative cost percentage based on the amount of funding we requested - so if we receive a grant but at a lower amount than what we requested can we renegotiate the 15%?
   A. Yes. Likewise, the state reserves the right to renegotiate the administrative cost percentage based on the following factors: 1 – the level of FY 2019 federal and state awards to Ohio; 2 – the level of funding to an individual, approved program; and 3 – how the funds are distributed in the submitted application.

37. Could you please provide additional information on the single audit status question on the Financial Management survey page?
   A. See FAQ #18.

38. Regarding consideration 1.1: I have contacted the members of the Local Workforce Board and have received no reply. Where are the specific Local Workforce Plans housed? I have minutes from the initial meeting of the Board, outlining its structure and purpose. I have not accessed the plan itself.
   A. From page 6 in the Instructions and General Information document, Local Workforce Development Area Plans can be found at http://jfs.ohio.gov/owd/Whats-New.stm.

39. Under instructional sites what “type” should be used to designate an Ohio Technical Center, a Career Center?
   A. The “type” should be designated as “elementary/secondary school”. If you feel this is not an accurate enough description on the site, then select “other”.
**Updates for 3/12/2018**

40. How should a staff member be entered into the staffing page if they perform several roles. Particularly if one role is administrative, like ABLElink Tech, and another instructional? How should a staff member be entered into the staffing page if they work 40 hours per week for the grant program, and 70% is paid by the grant and 30% paid by the agency?
   A. The protocol has not changed from previous years.

41. How should an in class “instructional assistant/aide” be classified; Instructional or Support?
   A. Support. There is further clarification about the budget guidelines within the Object and Purpose Codes on page 55 of the grant guidance document.

42. There is an 8 hour per week minimum for classes. What about locations that have access restrictions/scheduling conflicts at certain times of the year that are not able to allocate more than 6 hours of class time per week, like a corrections facility, or library. Are classes for those not able to be provided?
   A. The goal is that 8 hours of instruction is offered at each site, not necessarily each class. With that being said, there are certainly exceptions to that based on availability of the space, access to students (corrections is a prime example), and attendance data trends (ex. if students consistently leave after 2.5 hours vs. 3, it is not worth running a class 3 nights for 3 hours, but rather 3 nights for 2.5 hours). It is strongly encouraged to offer 8 hours at each site, though it may not always be possible. Consider using Distance Education to support class hours. In the current grant and on the FY19 grant, it will show the site in yellow to draw attention to it being under 8 hours, but it will not prevent the information from being saved and submitted.

43. For classes that run for a period (6 – 12 weeks) in the fall and then again in the spring, is the start date the first date in the fall and the end date the last date in the spring? .... With the understanding that there is a break inbetween?
   A. When you complete the Sites and Classes sections of the grant be sure to list the class twice as separate classes, unless the break is short-term.

44. I have a question concerning Correction Education. I have 2 separate Corrections sites in my program that contains 4 (or more) classes. These sites produce close to 50% of my students. Is there any way I can budget more than 20% of my monies for these sites? Thank you for your consideration.
A. The 20% is a State threshold. Eligible providers may offer up to 20% of the total Instructional Grant funds for Corrections Education. Once all of the grants have been received and reviewed you may renegotiate. Likewise, the state reserves the right to renegotiate the administrative cost percentage based on the following factors: 1 – the level of FY 2019 federal and state awards to Ohio; 2 – the level of funding to an individual, approved program; and 3 – how the funds are distributed in the submitted application.

45. If I have a teacher that instructs multiple classes, should I enter them 2 times on the staffing chart. EX: Teacher A works 47 weeks a year for 9 hours a week, but Teacher A also does short term classes for 20 weeks a year at 12 hours a week. In addition, the 20 weeks a year are taught in the jails and 47 weeks a year are not in the jails. So should I also keep them separate because I track corrections separately?
   A. For the purpose of the grant application, you would only list the teacher on the Staffing page once and total salary. The exception would be if the teacher’s salary and/or funding source is different at different classes. The corrections ed budget is a separate budget and certainly, like all staff time, the teacher’s time would be tracked at the local level with time and effort documentation, but not required in the grant application.

46. Grant question 4.3 asks to describe MOUs or MOAs with other core providers of WIOA services. Does this refer only to the WIOA 4 core providers or can other organizations that provide these services be included?
   A. As long as the organization provides WIOA services you can include them.

47. On the part for instructional sites, should we add locations where we meet with students to complete registrations or just places we physically teach classes? At the local OMJ facilities, we meet with students to describe our program and complete registrations, but they attend classes at other sites. We have agreements with our OMJ facilities that we could offer onsite classes if it would meet the needs of the students.
   A. This is up to the individual program administrator’s discretion as to how these locations are entered into ABELink.

48. Since there will no longer be Distance Education provided through the Hub and all programs are required to be a provider, do we create a separate class for it in the grant application? And if so, how do we set dates or start time/end times? Or, it is not a separate class and we just write about/explain our DE in the narrative?
   A. Yes, there needs to be a separate class for DE in the grant application. See FAQ #12 for DE information.
49. Based on what has happened in years past, can you tell me what might be expected if we are granted an Aspire award for FY2019, and we continue to grow our enrollment numbers over the next year and the following year...will we be held to the same dollar amount that is allocated in the original FY2019 grant each of the subsequent years? Or will there possibly be additional dollars allocated in subsequent years based on our increasing enrollment and a good performance?
   A. Certainly availability of funds depends on State and Federal allocations. That is why it is crucial that programs use this grant opportunity to project a reasonable, accurate enrollment based on current and past enrollment data. Anticipating a higher than attainable enrollment puts the program at risk of a high cost/student which may result in funds being returned. The Aspire office hopes to be able to incentivize high-performing programs that are increasing enrollment throughout the year with additional funds to sustain growth, but it’s much too early to tell.

50. Our district uses QuickBase and with our attempt to better align our Aspire data with our district data, we now have our Adult Education and Aspire utilizing QuickBase as well. QuickBase is a nationally recognized program and houses all of our district data and interfaces with other state data, and is closely monitored. Could we present cause for consideration to allow our QuickBase data to be imported into ABLElink if we meet all importing specifications? This could save quite a bit of data entry time and duplication.
   A. No.

51. Will grant readers receive a list of commonly used acronyms so that I can use acronyms throughout my grant application to meet the character requirements?
   A. Grant readers will have access to all of the information available on the Aspire Grants web site at https://www.ohiohighered.org/aspire/grants. Grant readers will also be provided with a list of commonly used acronyms.

Two reminders:
** Administrator cost negotiations must take place prior to grant submission. We encourage you to submit your negotiations ASAP.
** This is the last FAQ.