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Office of Elementary & Secondary Education
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FY 2025 Pre-Application Webinar

FY 2025 CSP Model Developer and Dissemination (MDD) Grant Competition Overview

- [Anna Hinton] Good afternoon and welcome to the pre-application webinar for the FY25 Charter School Program Model Development and Dissemination Grant Competition. My name is Anna Hinton, and I am the Director of the Charter Schools Program at the U.S. Department of Education. Since its inception in 1994, the Charter School Program has supported the launch, replication, and expansion of more than 8,000 charter schools through dissemination initiatives like the CSP MDD grant program.

Charter schools play a vital role in the Trump administration's efforts to expand education choice, ensuring that every child receives an education tailored to their unique needs, regardless of income or ZIP code. From day one, the administration has prioritized expanding education choice. A key part of achieving this goal is prioritizing the Department's Charter School Grant Programs.

On May 16th, the Secretary announced an increase of \$60 million in the Charter School Program budget. The Trump administration is committed to putting students first by expanding access to high-quality education options, and ensuring that federal resources are utilized effectively to promote achievement.

The administration's vision for high-quality charter schools and education choice is based on the belief that parents know what is best for their children's education. We have a lot to cover in today's webinar. However, please remember to refer to the full Notice Inviting Applications in the Federal Register for a complete text of all the requirements and guidance.

Note too that the CSP team is dedicated to supporting you in your application process. And so now let's get started. As you can see, we have a lengthy agenda for our pre-application webinar today. We plan to provide an overview of the MDD program, talk a little bit about how to complete your application, review the nuts and bolts of the NIA itself, and then we've also reserved some time to address questions that were submitted ahead of time, submitted by potential applicants as part of the registration process for today's webinar.

And then we will conclude with a final opportunity for you all to submit questions. Also before we get started, I would like to introduce you to the MDD team, as well as co-presenters with me today. As I mentioned, I am Anna Hinton, the Director of the Charter Schools Program, but also presenting with me today is Sareeta Schmitt, who serves as not only the supervisor for the MDD program, but also the State Entities grant program, as well as program officers Jill Gaitens, Nora Kern, and Nicoisa Jones.

Now I'd like to talk about the logistics for today's webinar. This presentation will be posted to the CSP website, and you'll be able to view this slide, along with the deck and the transcript, also

found on the CSP website. As I mentioned, and as covered at the beginning of this session, this webinar is listen-only.

All participants have been muted. However, you will still be able to submit questions. For the Q&A opportunities that you will see throughout the webinar, we ask that you type your questions using the Q&A feature. We have budgeted time for Q&A again throughout the webinar, so please only submit questions relevant, though, to the topics discussed.

Due to time constraints, we may not be able to answer all the questions received. However, if you submit a question and it is not addressed, please send it to the MDDCompetition@ed.gov website. If you have... If you experience any difficulty utilizing the Q&A feature, please click to raise your hand, and we will unmute you to ask your question.

Now I'd like to talk a little bit about what's new for the CSP under the Trump administration. As I mentioned previously, the administration has proposed a \$60 million funding increase for the program, but we are also this fiscal year hosting grant competitions across all six grant programs in the CSP portfolio, and I'll talk a little bit more about those programs in a minute.

But I also wanted to mention that the administration has also simplified and streamlined all of the CSP NIAs. The goal is to focus solely on including essential information required by law, by statute, that applicants need to know in order to submit an application. We hope that this approach will increase the number of high-quality applications across all of our CSP grant programs.

Now I'd like to talk a little bit about all of the programs in the portfolio, beginning with the State Entity grant program. This is the largest CSP component program, if you will, under the Charter School umbrella. Under the State Entities program, we provide funding to eligible state entities who in turn award subgrants within their states to eligible charter school developers and CMOs.

The next largest charter school component, program component is the CMO grant program. Under the CMO grant program, we award funds to charter school networks and CMOs to replicate or expand a charter school with a proven record of success.

We also have two Facilities grant programs. The first is the Credit Enhancement grant program, where we provide funding to financial institutions to provide support to charter school developers and CMOs in acquiring facilities and loans. And then we also have the State Charter School Facilities Incentive grant program.

This program is modeled...designed, if you will, similar to State Entities in that it is a subgranting program where eligible state entities receive grant funding directly from the Department to award subgrants within their states to charter school developers and CMOs to help with acquiring facilities. And then, we also have the Developer grant program.

The Developer grant program is our smaller implementation grant program, where we provide funding to developers to support only one charter school. And what is unique about the Developer grant program is that only developers located in a state that does not have an active State Entity grant are eligible to submit a proposal for funding directly to the Department under this particular grant program.

And then finally, what we're here to discuss today, the Model Development and Dissemination grant program is our new dissemination grant program. So these are all of the six programs in which we are running grant competitions this year. Also before we get started, I would like to just quickly review some of the basics associated with this competition in terms of funding.

So currently, we are estimating that we will make awards with approximately \$4 million. The estimated range of the awards we anticipate will be anywhere between \$350,000 to \$500,000 per year. The average or estimated size of award, again, we are estimating that it will be approximately \$425,000.

And we are currently estimating that, again, we'll make anywhere between eight to ten grant awards, and the grant period, or the project period of performance is up to five years. And we do want to note also that this program does not impose specific limits on administrative expenses. So there is not a...we do not have an admin cap, or restricted funding around admin.

And then finally, before we jump into an overview of the program, I do just want to flag for your attention additional technical assistance offerings beyond this particular webinar. So you can find at the MDD website a webinar specifically focused on submitting your CSP grant applications.

So we ask that you take a look, and review that particular slide deck. It is a pre-recorded webinar. And then we've also prepared another webinar on logic models and SMART performance measures. So again, these are some additional technical assistance resources available for you. So now we're going to jump into discussing the CSP MDD grant program, and providing an overview. The CSP Model Development and Dissemination grant program is awarded to eligible organizations to develop and broadly disseminate information about innovative and effective practices of high-quality charter school models.

And so you will see us refer to this framing throughout the webinar, that this is a dissemination grant program, and not a charter school implementation program. The Department is particularly interested in proposals that will produce information about strategies and practices of high-quality charter schools that use innovative and unique education models designed to meet the needs of students, and that provide parents and families with high-quality options for their children.

Unique and innovative school models include charter schools that focus on, for example, classical and civics education, career and technical education, STEM, including computer science, or school models that serve students with unique needs, such as autism, or schools that serve unique student populations, such as Native American students, military-connected students, or students living in rural areas.

And then finally, there's also an opportunity for individuals to submit proposals that speak to other innovative educational practices with evidence of success. Under the MDD grant program, projects must focus on at least one stage of the lifecycle of a charter school, and on the screen, we have a graphic depicting the charter school life cycle.

It typically involves design and planning, securing authorization, preparing to open, including obtaining a facility, enrollment and operations, achieving and sustaining student success, and potentially replication and expansion. Projects must also address key implementation challenges, and how those challenges were overcome. Potential challenges may include obtaining authorizer approval, securing support for parents and the community, enrolling and retaining students, finding suitable facilities, recruiting and retaining a high-quality educator workforce, and improving student outcomes.

So what do we mean by "innovative and unique" charter schools? We believe that an innovative school model is an educational approach that reimagines traditional schooling to better meet the needs of students, educators, and communities.

It typically incorporates new ideas, technologies, and practices to improve learning outcomes and engagement. We believe that a unique school model is one that stands out from conventional and traditional educational systems due to its distinct philosophy, approach, structure, and/or practices. While an innovative model emphasizes newness and improvement, a unique model emphasizes originality and differentiation.

It does something meaningfully different from others, even if it's not entirely new. In short, this particular grant program calls upon the charter sector to share all the ways it is reimagining traditional public school, embracing original ideas, and different ways of approaching challenges within our educational system to make meaningful strides towards improving student outcomes.

So this slide really captures the essence of the model of the MDD program, and what it looks like in practice. Awarded grantees will identify and document innovative and unique strategies and approaches linked to at least one of the stages of the charter school lifecycle that have led to improved student outcomes.

They will develop resources and tools to support others in preK through 12 education, and implementing similar approaches. And then finally, awarded grantees will broadly share and disseminate the resources and tools developed across the education sector to ensure maximum access to grant-funded resources.

So now we want to discuss eligibility. And as you can see from the screen, we have a range of organizations and entities that are eligible. Eligible organizations include not only charter schools and charter management organizations, but state educational agencies, state charter school boards, state governors, charter school support organizations, authorized public chartering agencies, or other public and private nonprofit organizations that either operate, manage, or support the charter sector and charter schools.

Entities may also apply as a partnership or consortium under this particular program. And then finally, I just want to remind applicants that the application deadline is July 14th, at 11:59. And this date and time matters.

It is very important that you submit your application as early as possible because the system will shut down from...will close from receiving applications at 11:59 p.m. We will now pause for you to submit questions. So at this time, please feel free to place your questions in the Q&A, and allow us a moment to review your questions.

Thank you. So we've received a number of questions. We will attempt to answer as many as we can. If we miss your question now, we may circle back at a future Q&A opportunity during this webinar, to circle back to try to answer as many questions as we can. If we still are not able to address your question, we will follow up in email at the conclusion of this particular webinar.

So we've received a number of questions about eligibility. If a state, for example if a state university meets the other eligibility requirements, would it be considered an eligible entity? So the eligibility requirements, and definition of an eligible entity, it is as stated, so we don't waive or can change any of those. If an eligible entity meets all of the requirements, then they are eligible.

Next question, "Does this grant program replace the National Dissemination grant? Or does the Department expect to also issue an NIA for that grant program in the near future?" This Dissemination grant program replaces the National Dissemination grant program.

"Will the presentation be shared?" Yes, this presentation will be posted on the program website.
"Are programs that support only early childhood programs K through 12 schools eligible?" No.

However, programs must support charter schools that meet the definition of a high-quality charter school, and we will talk a little bit more about that later on in the presentation. "Is it possible to apply for two CSP funding opportunities if an institution fits the scope?" Yes, it is possible to apply for more than one CSP funding opportunity as long as you are not requesting funding under the various opportunities to support the same types of activities.

"Will you consider local regional efforts versus national ones?" So there isn't a requirement that speaks to a particular geographic location, or there isn't a geographical location requirement, I should say.

As part of the application, you must submit a Dissemination grant program, and that will be reviewed by peer reviewers. There's a question about how do you apply. Again, we have, if you go to our website, we have a separate pre-recorded webinar on how to submit an application.

"Are school models that have not traditionally been charter, but are proven and would like to open as a charter, be eligible for consideration?"

Again, we have specific application requirements, as well, as an absolute priority that has various components that must be met. In the next section, or in the coming sections, we will talk a little bit more about that. And all of those requirements must be met, again, in order to be considered for funding. So I will pause there, and turn it over to Jill Gaitens, who will get us started with actually walking through completing an application.

Thank you.

- [Jill Gaitens] Thank you, Anna. We will now discuss the various components of your application. The application, and all supporting materials for the CSP MDD grant can be found at this link on Grants.gov. Your grant must be submitted through Grants.gov.

The application package and support materials can also be found on the CSP website. Tip, a webinar is available on developing a federal grant application on the Department's website at the link or QR code noted in the slide. You are encouraged to review all available training offered by the Department as you consider your MDD grant application submission.

The application has three components. Component 1 includes all required forms, including the ED standard forms, Form 524, and both the assurances and certifications. Component 2 includes your Abstract, and both the Budget and Project Narratives. Component 3 includes Other Attachments.

Please keep in mind that if you provide links to outside websites in your application, those links will not be reviewed. Also, it is helpful to provide a detailed table of contents aligned with the required application components and selection criteria. Your application will not be considered complete without the standard forms listed on this slide, the application narrative lists, and the required assurances and certifications.

Additionally, please note that the General Education Provisions Act, or GEPA, Section 427 form has been updated from previous years. You can find examples of the forms on the Department's website, linked on this slide. We want to highlight a couple key forms that you will need to complete from the list included in the application package.

This is a screenshot of the application for Federal Assistance form, the SF-424. On this form, you will provide key information about your organization. One of the most critical forms is the ED 524, on which you will request the funding amount by budget category.

The ED 524 form Section A is a required form you must submit with your application. This form must be completed for all years in which funding is requested. An important reminder, the funds requested on this form must match the detailed Budget Narrative required in the application. We know that applicants often make internal revisions while developing their applications, so be sure to double-check before submitting that the requested amounts on this form match the amounts in the Budget Narrative.

A few other things to note in the ED 524. If you have an approved indirect costs rate, and plan to claim that indirect costs rate under this grant, provide the details in the Budget Narrative, as well as the bottom of this form. Make sure to include a copy of that indirect costs agreement in your application. As a reminder, this is not a construction grant.

Construction is not an allowable cost. Although you see a line item for construction on this form, you must leave it blank or at zero dollars. Section B of this form should only be completed if you are making a matching commitment, but that is not a requirement for this grant program. Section 427 of the General Education Provision Act, the GEPA, requires an applicant for federal funds to include a description of the steps they will take to ensure equitable access to and participation in the grant project.

Again, the GEPA requirements have been updated recently, so we recommend you budget time in the application process to address the new requirements. Section 427 of GEPA requires an applicant for federal funds to include a description of the steps they will take to ensure equitable access and participation in the grant project by addressing the special needs of students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries.

You must describe how your entity's existing mission policies and commitments ensure equitable access to and equitable participation in the proposed project and activity. Based on your proposed project or activity, you will identify barriers that may impede equitable access or participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries. Based on the barriers identified, you will include steps that you will take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity.

And last, you must provide a timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers. References to your GEPA statement may be included throughout your application, and referenced in your GEPA statement. A training is available from the Department, and a link to that training is provided on this slide. I will now discuss the application narrative.

There are three distinct components to the application narrative, the application ED Abstract form, the Budget Narrative, and the Project Narrative. The Project Narrative is where applicants discuss the absolute priority, the selection criteria, and the application requirements.

On the next few slides, I'll go into detail on what should be addressed in each component. First up is the Abstract Narrative. This should provide an overview of the proposed grant project. It should include basic information like the official name and address of the organization, the name, phone number, and email address of the contact person for the project, the project title, if applicable.

Additionally, the Abstract Narrative should provide information on the goals, expected outcomes, and contributions for research, policy, practice, etc. of the proposed grant. This Abstract should not exceed one page, and should use language that can be easily understood by a range of audiences.

The Budget Narrative is where applicants lay out and provide clear justification for the funds they are requesting. You should also provide an itemized breakdown of all budget items. Your Budget Narrative must be closely aligned to the ED 524 budget worksheet. It is critical that you fully justify all of the funds requested on the ED 524 form in your Budget Narrative. This narrative is the space where you will provide a full breakdown of positions, levels of effort, duties, etc. for your personnel, fringe benefits, and line items, for example.

We have included on this slide some budget resources to support applicants in developing their budgets. There is a link to 2 CFR Part 200, the uniform guidance and cost principles, key sections of the Notice Inviting Applications, or NIA, that relate to the funding restriction, and the uses of funds under the grant program are noted.

I also want to reiterate that the CSP MDD grants are for projects up to five years. Applicants may propose projects that are less than five years, but the ED 524 form and the accompanying Budget Narrative should not include proposals that exceed five years. There are some important funding restrictions to be aware of as you prepare an application.

Grant funds may only be used for activities that are related to the development and broad dissemination of information on strategies and practices of high-quality charter school models regarding the absolute priority that are included in the grantees' approved application. Grantees are expected to identify the specific costs associated with each included activity.

Grantees may not use grant funds to conduct charter school authorizing activities, or to open new charter schools. Grantees may not use grant funds to acquire or finance the acquisition of a charter school facility, including through credit enhancement, direct lending, or subgrants.

Grantees may not use grant funding for general organizational operating support beyond the costs associated with the grant project. Please note that this program does not include any program-specific limitations on administrative expenses. All administrative expenses must be reasonable and necessary to conform to the cost principles described in 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart E of the uniform guidance.

We will now discuss the Project Narrative in detail, or we will discuss the Project Narrative in detail, which is the next section on the NIA later in this presentation. The final portion of the application after the Abstract Narrative, Budget Narrative, and Project Narrative is Other Attachments.

Substantive project-related details should be included in the Project Narrative and Budget Narrative form sections. Other attachment sections are listed on this slide. These six appendices are examples of information an applicant may want to include to support their application outside of what is included in the Project and Budget Narratives.

Not all appendices may be relevant for every applicant. Please note, if awarded, your application will be publicly available on the CSP website, so please be sure to include a list of content your organization may consider prepratory...proprietary, sorry, and specific page numbers to be redacted.

The Other Attachments section is an optional section for all appendices material. Please keep in mind that all attachments must be in PDF format. Each file should be labeled with an appendix name, and then uploaded to the Other Attachments form.

Make sure to identify your attachments in your Table of Contents. The Other Attachments form can support up to 10 attachments. You can merge appendices into one document as needed. A good tip is to avoid long file names and special characters in file names because they are not properly processed by Grants.gov when the application is uploaded.

Do not use colons or backslashes when naming documents. For more information on each of these requirements, see the application package for instructions and additional guidance. We will now pause for questions. Please feel free to place your questions in the Q&A, and allow us a moment to review your questions so we may provide our responses.

Please keep in mind that CSP cannot provide feedback or guidance on any specific proposals, and that the next section of this presentation will provide guidance on the application priority and selection criteria. If we are unable to respond to your question during this webinar, you can submit it to our competition email box address provided in this slide deck and on our website.

- Jill, I know there are quite a few questions in the Q&A here. I can call out some, as I see them here. So one question says, "Will the presentation include information on allowable costs and activities?"

- Yes, the presentation will have some information on allowable costs and activities, but you really need to check the NIA and the application package as well. And I see another question here, "Are all these grants only for whole school models, or also a given subject area curriculum?"

These grants are fully described in the NIA, and I would encourage you to read the information in the NIA, and the scope of the grants. But there is a wide range of school models and subject area curriculums, etc., that you can include in your application.

- Another question I see is, "Does this grant funding allow cross-state collaboration and model dissemination?" And so, yes, collaborations are welcome. This is not state-specific. And so there is some information around folks looking to form consortia in the NIA.

- I see someone else on slide 28 mentions high-quality charter school models, "Can you define "high-quality" in this context?"

We do have definitions that you can reference in the NIA, and you can also reference our website for the definition of high-quality charter schools.

- In the interest of time, I think we should keep moving. But we will try to answer questions as we can in a written format as well, and you can keep them coming. And if we can't get to you, you're welcome to submit it to our inbox as well. But I know there's a lot of questions here, and we're going to do our best.

- Thanks so much. We'll now transition to my colleague, Nicoisa.

- [Nicoisa Jones] Thanks, Jill. So next we will get into the nuts and bolts of the CSP MDD grant NIA, and talk about the information we'll include in your Project Narrative section of your application. The Project Narrative is where applicants address the absolute priority selection criteria and application requirements to facilitate the review of the application.

Please organize your Project Narrative in the order presented in the application package and this webinar. Make sure to include an accurate table of contents. The Project Narrative should be limited to 50 pages, and this page limit does not include any attachments or supporting documents.

But please note hyperlinks to information outside of your application will not be accessed in the peer review of your application. The CSP MDD program has one absolute priority, development and dissemination of information on innovative and effective practices of high-quality charter school models.

An absolute priority is an absolute preference or focus that must be addressed by the proposed project. To meet the CSP MDD program's absolute priority, eligible applicants must include in their applications a description of the strategies and practices of a high-quality charter school model, including a description of the specific high school...specific high-quality charter school model, and evidence that the model meets the requirements for a high-quality charter school under Section 43108(8) of the ESEA, and a description of one or more specific selected strategies or practices of the model to be covered by the proposed project, including an identification of the stages of the lifecycle of a charter school.

For example, did the design and planning stage, the strategy or practices addressed, and a description of how the strategy or practice was developed and implemented, including key challenges in implementing the strategy or practice, or how these challenges were overcome. Second, applicants must include in their applications a description of how the applicant will develop and disseminate information on the selected strategies and practices of high-quality charter school model, including a description of the tools and resources the applicant will create, including how these tools and resources will facilitate replication of the strategies and practices in other charter schools, traditional public schools, or non-public schools as appropriate, and also a description of the dissemination mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly share these tools and resources, including how the dissemination mechanisms are unique and distinct from what currently exists in the field, as well as the intended reach.

Because an application cannot be funded if it does not meet the absolute priority, it is important to clearly label and address each component of the absolute priority in your application. The selection criteria are used by the applicant to shape or design their project or activities to be carried out in their proposal.

Peer reviewers will review each application, and they will be asked to evaluate and score against the selection criteria. In the Selection Criteria section, you will see that application requirements may be addressed. The selection criteria for this FY 2025 CSP MDD competition are as follows. A, significance, which is up to 30 points, B, quality of the project design, which is up to 30 points, and C, quality of the management plan, and adequacy of resources, which is up to 40 points.

Please note that you can view the full text of each selection criteria in the NIA, and we have included a link to it on this page. So let's take a brief look at each. The first selection criteria is significance. Applicants may earn up to 30 points for this criterion.

For this criterion, the Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the extent to which the resources, tools, and implementation lessons of the proposed project will be disseminated in ways to the target population and local community that will enable them and others, including practitioners, researchers, education leaders, and partners to implement similar strategies.

The second selection criteria is the quality of the project design. Applicants may earn up to 30 points for this criterion. For this criterion, the Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project, looking at three factors, the extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified, measurable and ambitious yet achievable within the project period, and align with the purpose of the grant program, and that's five points, up to five points.

The quality of the logic model, or other conceptual framework underlying the proposed project, including how inputs are related to outcomes, that's up to 15 points. And the extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to any absolute priority, or absolute priorities in this competition, and that's up to 10 points. The third selection criteria is the quality of the management plan, and adequacy of resources.

Applicants may earn up to 40 points for this criterion. And for this criterion, the Secretary considers the quality of the management plan, and adequacy of resources for the proposed project in looking at four factors, the feasibility of the management plan to achieve project objectives and goals on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing the project, and that's up to 15 points.

The extent to which the project is adequate to support the proposed project, and the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project, and that's up to 10 points. Continuing with the selection criterion, determining the quality of the management and adequacy management plan, and the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the extent to which the project director or principal investigator, when hired, has the qualifications required for the project, including formal training or work experience in fields related to the objectives of the project, and experience in designing, managing, or implementing similar projects for the target population to be served by the project.

That's up to 10 points. The extent to which the time and commitment of the project director, and principal investigator, and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project, and that's up to five points. And so the CSP MDD program has four application requirements that applicants must address in their application.

The Department will not fund an application that does not address each application requirement. Applicants may choose to respond to the application requirements in the context of their responses to the absolute priority or selection criteria. If you address the application requirements in other sections of the application, you should note the page number where the response can be found for each application requirement.

You do not want to leave the reviewers guessing as to whether or not you have addressed an application requirement. As I noted, there are four application requirements in the FY 2025 CSP MDD NIA. The first requires applicants to provide a project plan that includes a specific timeline for implementing each component of the absolute priority identified in this notice, and all proposed grant activities, a logic model that describes the purpose of the project based on the absolute priority, clearly specified measurable project objectives that are aligned with the project purpose, and the specific strategies, behaviors, and initiatives that will be implemented to accomplish project objectives.

And you want to please see the NIA for the full context of this application requirement, which includes further detail on the project objectives. The second requirement is that applicants provide a management plan that describes clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for executing the project and achieving project outcomes.

And third, applicants must provide the dissemination plan based on the absolute priority in this notice that includes the number and description of target audiences and entities for which best practices information will be disseminated, as well as a description of the mechanisms the applicant will use to disseminate information on this proposed project.

Finally, the fourth application requirement is that applicants provide an evaluation plan that includes performance measures that are aligned to the project's purpose, project objectives, and project outcomes, as well as to the intended outcomes of the proposed project. Applicants must be...applications must be submitted for activities related to and consistent with the absolute priority.

And so now I am going to pass things off to Sareeta. Or...yes.

- [Sareeta Schmitt] Thank you, Nicoisa. Just a quick note as we transition here. We do see lots of questions coming in, and that's helpful, and we're doing our best to answer, as we've mentioned. And also, I do want to just remind folks that if you are asking questions about specific proposals, we cannot answer those. So please do keep in mind we can't answer questions about specific things that you are considering putting into an application.

But let me continue here by discussing some highlights here, and taking a look at some highlights from the NIA. Please do keep in mind that we are just highlighting some key details in the NIA. This is by no means a substitute for reading the full NIA that was published in the Federal Register. Applicants must propose project-specific performance measures and performance targets consistent with the objectives of the proposed project and the project outcomes defined in the logic model.

The project-specific performance measures should be sufficient to gauge progress through the grant period, at least on an annual basis, and to show results by the end of the grant period. Applicants must provide the following information as directed under 34 CFR 75.110(b) and (c,) performance measures, how each proposed performance measure would accurately measure the performance of the project, and how the proposed performance measure would be consistent with the performance measures established for the program funding the competition.

Baseline data, which is why each proposed baseline is valid, or if the applicant has determined that there are no valid established baseline data for a particular performance measure, an explanation of why there is no established baseline, and how and when during the project period the applicant would establish a valid baseline for the performance measure.

Performance targets, why each proposed performance target is ambitious as defined in the notice, yet achievable compared to the baseline for the performance measure, and when during the project the applicant would meet the performance target or targets. And data collection and reporting.

The data collection and reporting methods the applicant would use, and why those methods are likely to yield reliable, valid, and meaningful performance data. And second, the applicant's capacity to collect and report reliable, valid, and meaningful performance data as evidenced by high-quality data collection analysis reporting in other grant projects or research.

Your project-specific performance measures should be included using the Grant Application form for Project Objectives and Performance Measure Information in the application package. Again, we strongly encourage you to read the NIA, as there is additional information about project-specific performance measures in that NIA. I also want to share some additional notes on performance measures.

Throughout the grant project, CSP MDD grantees must report on their performance measures in an Annual Performance Report, commonly referred to as the APR. If you would be...if you will be unable to report on a measure annually, it should not be identified as a project-specific performance measure.

For additional support in developing effective performance measures, applicants are encouraged to review information provided by the Department's Regional Educational Laboratories, and the pre-application webinar slide deck Anna mentioned at the beginning of this webinar on logic models and SMART performance measures that will be posted to our FY 25 CSP MDD Competition website. Applicants approved for funding under this competition will be required to participate in all CSP MDD technical assistance offerings, including Project Directors' Meetings and other onsite gatherings sponsored by the Department, and its contracted technical assistance providers and partners throughout the life of the grant.

Applicants are encouraged to include the cost of attending these meetings in their proposed budgets. Attendance at TA meetings is an administrative cost, and should be clearly identified in your budget. Open licensing is often, I think in a dissemination program, one that we definitely want to highlight for folks, and you'll see more in the NIA, as noted.

So under an open license, the public is given permission to access, reproduce, publicly perform, publicly display, and distribute the copyrightable work. To prepare derivative works, as defined in the Copyright Act, and to reproduce, publicly perform, publicly display, and distribute those derivative works, and to otherwise use the copyrightable work created in whole or in part with the competitive grant funds provided by the Department, provided that in all such instances attribution is given to the copyright holder.

Note that grantees may use open licenses that comply with the rule, see additional conditions in the actual rule, see additional conditions in the actual rule, including a license that limits use to non-commercial purposes. Copyrightable grant deliverables are final versions of a work developed to carry out the purpose of the grant as specified in the grant announcement, or NIA, or the application package.

The open licensing requirement will apply both to the deliverables themselves, and to any final version of program support materials necessary to the use of the deliverables. The rule does not apply to pre-existing works.

When pre-existing works are modified under grant funding, the rule only applies to the modifications. A grantee that is awarded competitive grant funds must have a plan to disseminate the openly licensed, copyrightable works. In some limited cases, exceptions to the rule may be granted by the Department.

However, such exceptions will not be considered until after grant awards are made, and applicants must not assume that an exception would be granted. And I'm going to close this section on some additional highlights from the NIA with some applicable regulations and statutes that provide the authority for these actions.

You will see these citations throughout the NIA, and they're compiled here for easy reference. All right. We'll pause another moment for questions. Please do feel free to place them into the Q&A, and allow us a moment to review. And I know there are quite a few questions.

We're doing our best here. We'll take a moment to review, and do please keep in mind that we cannot provide specific feedback or guidance on specific...or we can't provide feedback on

specific proposals. Let me take a look... I see a question about, "Are TA meetings online or in-person, for budgeting purposes?"

So they may be either, or, but typically, we do have a Project Directors' Meeting annually, so you definitely would want...and that would be in-person in Washington. So you should definitely budget for that, and perhaps another TA meeting, but there may be virtual meetings as well. One person is asking about "What is the NIA?" So that is the Notice Inviting Applications.

That is the document that the Department puts out indicating that we are having a grant competition, and that...and all of the requirements of that grant competition are listed in that NIA. So the NIA is the guiding principle document for this grant competition that anyone who is funded would be held to, and that has all of the regulations and rules and requirements for this grant competition.

I see a question, "Does the project director have to be an employee of the organization, or can a contractor hold that role?"

So typically, the project director does need to be an employee of the organization because they are running and in control of the grant project and funding, and so that has to be in the hands of the entity by which the Department has entered...has awarded and issued a grant award notification to. But if you have specific details, you can ask that question via email.

And I think that I will move forward at this point, and transition it to Anna. There are some FAQs that I think some of the questions will be highlighted in that space as well, and there will be another opportunity for questions there.

- Great. Thanks, Sareeta. As Sareeta mentioned, I am now going to review some of the questions that were submitted by potential applicants as part of the registration process for this webinar. Also, as Sareeta just mentioned, and going through some of these questions, I think we will answer some of the remaining questions that we have not had a chance to get to, that were submitted via our Q&A chat.

So the first question, "How does this grant program differ from other CSP grants?" And we have received a number of questions on today's webinar asking the same question, as well as trying to make some distinctions between this program and our State Entity grant program, for example, or our Developer grant program, where location matters.

So the first thing, again, to keep in mind is that this particular program is a Dissemination grant program and not an Implementation program. So location does not matter in terms of the lead entity because this program at its core is about creating tools and resources, and then disseminating those tools and resources.

The absolute priority itself provides a little bit more guidance in terms of the types of tools and resources that we are looking for. So again, how does this grant program differ from other CSP grant programs? The MDD grant program does not fund the creation of new charter schools, nor the expansion or replication of high-quality charter schools.

Rather, it creates a platform for innovative and unique charter school models to document and disseminate approaches and strategies that have led to improve student outcomes. I even want to clarify that not only is this grant program for innovative and unique charter school models...charter schools to document and disseminate, document their experiences, and disseminate information about their experiences, but other eligible entities can also create tools and resources to document the experiences of a particular charter school.

So you do not have to be a charter school in order to be eligible for funding. I do also want to talk a little bit about charter school support organizations as eligible entities, because we have also received a question about "How are you defining a charter school support organization?" And I do want to point and draw your attention to the NIA itself, and in the NIA we do have a definition of a charter school support organization, and it means a nonprofit, non-governmental entity that is not an authorized public chartering agency, and provides, on a statewide basis, one, assistance to developers during the planning, program design, and initial implementation of charter schools, or two, technical assistance to operating charter schools.

So do want to just provide a little bit more context for what it means to be an eligible entity in this grant program. Next slide. "What must be included in my grant application?" So in addition to addressing the absolute priority and the application requirements, applicants must again demonstrate how a charter school model that they are lifting up through their grant proposal has led to student outcomes.

And again, it does not need to be the charter school itself, but it could be one of the other eligible entities that have worked, and have experience working with charter school developers, and/or CMOs in implementing a particular charter school model of interest under this grant program. Second, the applicant must develop resources that document and translate their success into actionable tools for others.

And then finally, again, create dissemination strategies to share those tools with the broader education field. And on this slide, we've identified some examples of the resources that we would expect would be produced under this grant, toolkits, case studies, videos, curriculum guides, coaching models. In the past, conferences have also been proposed, workshops.

Again, this is not an exhaustive list, but just some examples of the types of resources that we would expect to be produced under the grant program. Next slide. "What does the grant aim to achieve?" Again, this grant is designed to elevate unique and innovative charter school models by creating tools and resources, and disseminating that information through this grant program.

This grant is also designed to enable schools to document and share what works. And again, not just enabling schools to document and share what works, but also other non-profit organizations, and/or eligible entities that we have called out on today's webinar. This grant program is also designed to help others replicate successful school models.

So through the dissemination efforts of grantees, we hope that this information, tools, and resources will be used to help others looking to implement similar models. This grant program is also designed to strengthen the entire charter school sector with field-tested resources centered on at least one stage of the lifecycle of a charter school.

And so we also received a question about if a new charter school, that just received charter approval, if they would be eligible for this grant program? Well, it really depends on the extent to which they have outcomes that they can describe and discuss in the grant application, as well as meeting other requirements of the program, and that have been outlined in both the absolute priority as well as the application requirements.

And then ultimately, this grant program is designed to improve student outcomes. Next slide. "Can authorizing entities apply for this grant?" Yes, authorizing entities have been listed as one of several eligible entities. And this grant program is grounded in developing and broadly disseminating information about innovative and effective practices of high-quality charter school models throughout the charter school lifecycle, which includes the authorizing process.

So that's the entry point, potentially, for authorizing entities. And we also received a separate question about that as well. Next slide. "Can a current CSP grantee apply for this grant?" Absolutely.

All eligible organizations from the previous slide may apply, regardless of current CSP funding status. Again, keep in mind that existing grantees may apply. Your status as a current grantee does not matter in this program, as long as your proposed project meets the requirements of this particular program, and as outlined in the NIA, which are very different from all of the other programs, because all of the other programs, in terms of the State Entity or Developer and CMO, are implementation programs, and the Facilities programs are also structured very differently,, and focused on providing support to obtain facilities.

So yes, current grantees can apply, because the assumption is that the proposals pulled together under this program will be very different from the grants that they are currently implementing under the other programs. "Can a recently opened charter school apply for this grant?" Yes, and I believe I addressed this before.

Again, as long as the charter school can address all the application requirements and components of the absolute priority. Keeping in mind, too, that proposed projects under this program must focus on at least one stage of the lifecycle of the charter school, which typically involves design and planning, securing authorization, preparing to open, enrollment and operations, and achieving and sustaining student outcomes.

And then, we also have received several questions about a high-quality charter school, and what do we mean by a "high-quality charter school?" And again, I would encourage you to refer to the NIA for the full definition of a "high-quality charter school" referenced in Section 4310.

And so we've listed on this slide, though, some key components of that definition, but would strongly encourage you to look at the full and complete definition, as outlined in the program statute. And as I mentioned, we've received a number of additional questions. Given some of the time that we have, I'm happy to take some time to try to answer some basic questions that I think I could quickly get through.

One question, "Are there any limits on the states that an applicant's schools are located in? Another webinar said California was not eligible for another grant in this package." So again, as I mentioned, no geographical limits or requirements established in this program, given the nature of the program.

Not sure which webinar the potential applicant is referring to here. But under the Developer grant program, if a state currently has an existing SE grant, then developers are not eligible to apply from that particular state. So that may be why there's a reference to California there.

"Could you say more about what you mean by 'support organizations,' 'charter school support organizations'?" Again, I would refer you to the NIA to look at the, and consider the definition of a "charter school support organization." Another question, "Could applicants structure their project design for fewer years, but higher budgeted amounts per year?"

Yes. The estimates stated in the NIA, as well as this slide deck, around funding are all estimates. We have not established a maximum per year amount. And so applicants are free to propose whatever reasonably makes sense, and is needed in order for them to...in order for the proposed project to be implemented.

And the one note that I would add there is to keep in mind that there is a selection criterion around the budget where applicants will consider the reasonableness of a particular budget based on goals and objectives, and the project design. So with that, I will now turn it over to Nora to close us out.

- [Nora Kern] Thank you, Anna. We'll wrap up by highlighting resources, and if there's time, allowing for one final Q&A. As we close out today's webinar, I would like to highlight that in addition to this webinar, we have a pre-recorded webinar on how to submit your application.

Please continue to check our CSP MDD Competition webpage that's linked on this slide for resources, including the slides and a recording of today's webinar, which should be posted within about the next 48 hours following today's presentation. The application package instructions also contain detailed submission instructions, and that is linked as well on the CSP MDD Competition webpage.

Finally, we cannot overstate the importance of thoroughly reviewing the FY 25 CSP MDD Notice Inviting Applications, NIA, to get all of the information you need to apply for this grant. An important reminder, please keep in mind that the registration process for Grants.gov that has been discussed can take up to four weeks to complete, so start the process of registering now.

You must be registered on Grants.gov in order to submit an application. However, you can search grant opportunities, or download the application package instruction without a registration. As a final reminder, just to emphasize it again, we will state that the deadline to submit an application is July 14th, 2025.

We encourage you to submit earlier than the deadline. You may resubmit your application if needed prior to the deadline, if you make any updates or revisions to your application. If you submit multiple versions of an application, the Department will review the most recent submission in that case.

Allow us to take a minute to see if there are any final questions that we can answer at this time. And just as a reminder, if you have a question that has not been answered yet, or you think of something after the webinar concludes, please feel free to contact us at our competition inbox.

Again, that address is MDDCompetition@ed.gov. We have a question about reporting requirements for these grants. We would encourage you to review the Notice Inviting Applications for more details about any reporting requirements with the MDD grants.

- Nora, this is Anna. I'm happy to jump in to try to answer some questions that are coming in.

- Oh, that would be great.

- So one question is about, "Can you define students with unique needs beyond 'like autism,' the autism example provided on an earlier slide," and I believe we received another question about this. So we have not established a formal definition of students with unique needs beyond the information and the context provided in this webinar, as well as in the NIA.

This offers, though, applicants some flexibility in demonstrating how their proposal will meet the needs of the absolute priority requirements and components. There was another question... "Is there a recommended number of letters of support?"

No, there aren't any. There isn't a recommended number of letters of support. "Are research projects allowed under this grant?" What's required under the grant is that all of the

components of the absolute priority, as well as the application requirements are met, at a minimum.

Beyond that, you know, peer reviewers will consider the extent to which the proposal is reasonable...I mean the proposal meets all of the requirements of the NIA to include a review of the budget, to ensure that all of the proposed activities are reasonable and necessary, given the nature of the grant program itself.

A question about the maximum award amount. Again, we do not have a maximum award amount per year. So there's a question, "Is this an up to per year?" Again, no maximum award amount on an annual basis. "Does the evaluation component require contracting with an outside evaluator?"

There are no specific requirements associated with the evaluation component. A question about funding again, "Is this expected to be an annual fund? My question is for a grant proposal request that has a five-year scope. Is it realistic to apply for \$425,000 per year, or more likely to break up the \$425,000 across four years?"

It is realistic and expected that you can request \$425,000 per year. And so again, you will... Funded... Applications that are awarded will receive an initial award, and then what's considered to be a continuation award. And so as part of your initial application, you will lay out a budget that indicates the amount of money that you want to request each year.

And again, you can request \$425,000, for example, per year, for each of the five years. There's a question about "Does this only fund existing proven programs, or could this fund the creation of promising new programs where the dissemination of learnings would be valuable to the broader sector?"

Again, we strongly encourage you to look at the NIA, and pay close attention to the requirements associated with the absolute priority, as well as the application requirements. There are some requirements around speaking to demonstrated outcomes and experiences. So again, please, we would refer you to the NIA, as well as, you know, consideration of your existing context and your experiences to inform if this is a good fit.

There's a question about performance measures, "Does the Department have a set of expected outcomes you hope to track across grantees? For example, in other CSP programs, grantees track the number of new seats, academic achievement among subgroups, etc. If yes, can you share that information?"

We do not. All of this information, if it... if we had a set of common metrics that we would expect to track across grantees, would have been included in the NIA. And so we have not identified any, or established any for this particular program. "Where can you find a list of the technical assistance offerings that we are required to attend, and associated costs?"

So the NIA contains a list of all of the general technical assistance offerings, which at the moment is only the Project Directors' Meeting. And typically, applicants estimate, propose an estimate as part of their budget to cover travel to and from Washington, D.C. for that meeting on an annual basis. Someone has asked about the call for peer reviewers.

The call for peer reviewers is on our website. It has gone out, so we are definitely open to, and would love to receive interest from the field to serve as a peer reviewer for other programs, if you are interested in applying to this program.

Submitting an application for this program, that is. Sorry. All right. I will turn it over to Sareeta to close us out, and identify any additional pressing questions that you think we should answer, or can quickly address.

I'm trying to scroll through, I think...I've identified...

- I see one question about when awards will be announced. So they will be announced by the end of September. But we don't have a specific date, but definitely by the end of September. Again, some of the questions that folks have submitted are specific proposals.

And so I would just encourage you, you know, you are going to put forth the best application that you can, if you are deciding to apply. And so please do, you know, put that together. But we can't comment ahead of time on specific proposals. So I do see a question about the Project Narrative page numbers.

I mean, it's 50 pages is the suggested max number of pages for the Project Narrative. It's 50 pages. All right. Well, with that, if you have further questions that we were unable to get to today, please do use our competition inbox, the MDDCompetition@ed.gov.

And thank you so much for your attendance today, and your interest in the new Dissemination program here in the Charter School Program. Have a great afternoon.