

Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) Competition

Fiscal Year 2026



Office of Well-Rounded Education | Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

U.S. Department of Education *in partnership with* U.S. Department of Labor

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Session Guidance

What Can be Discussed

- Content of the IAL Notice Inviting Applications (NIA)
- Competition timeline
- Application process

What Cannot be Discussed

- Eligibility of a specific entity
- The competitiveness of a specific entity or project design
- Substantive explanations of specific items in the IAL application beyond what is included in the *Federal Register*

A copy of this presentation will be posted on the IAL program website.
For questions, or to request a copy of today's slides, email:
InnovativeApproachestoLiteracy@ed.gov.

Agenda

- I. Purpose
- II. Program Measures
- III. Legislation
- IV. Eligibility
- V. Absolute Priorities
- VI. Competitive Priorities
- VII. Selection Criteria
- VIII. Budget
- IX. Application Process
- X. Timeline
- XI. Q&A

IAL's Purpose

- The IAL program supports high-quality programs designed to **develop and improve literacy skills** for children and students from **birth through 12th grade** in **high-need local educational agencies (LEAs)**.
- The Department intends to promote innovative literacy programs that support the development of literacy skills in low-income communities, including programs that
 - (1) **develop and enhance effective school library programs**, which may include providing professional development for school librarians, books, and up-to-date materials to high-need schools;
 - (2) **provide early literacy services**, including pediatric literacy programs through which, during well-child visits, medical providers trained in research-based methods of early language and literacy promotion provide developmentally appropriate books and recommendations to parents to encourage them to read aloud to their children starting in infancy; and
 - (3) **provide high-quality books on a regular basis** to children and adolescents from low-income communities to increase reading motivation, performance, and frequency.

IAL Performance (GPRA) Measures

Under the **Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA)**, the Department of Education has established a set of performance measures that are designed to yield information on various aspects of the effectiveness and quality of the Innovative Approaches to Literacy Program. These measures are:

GPRA Measure #1: Percentage of fourth graders participating in the project who demonstrated individual student growth (i.e., an improvement in their achievement) over the past year on State reading or language arts assessments.

GPRA Measure #2: Percentage of eighth graders participating in the project who demonstrated individual student growth (i.e., an improvement in their achievement) over the past year on State reading or language arts assessments.

GPRA Measure #3: Percentage of schools participating in the project whose book-to-student ratios increased from the previous year.

GPRA Measure #4: Percentage of participating children who receive at least one free, grade and language appropriate book of their own.

IAL Legislation

The IAL program is authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (**ESEA**), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (**ESSA**), Title II, Part B, Subpart 2, Sec. 2226. [20 U.S.C. 6646]

Eligibility

To be considered for an award under this competition, an applicant must be one of the following:

- (1) **An LEA** in which 20 percent or more of the students served by the LEA are from families with an income below the poverty line (as defined in section 8101(41) of the ESEA).
- (2) **A consortium** of such LEAs described in paragraph (1) above.
- (3) The **Bureau of Indian Education**.
- (4) An eligible **national nonprofit organization** (as defined in section 2226(b)(2) of the ESEA) that serves children and students within the attendance boundaries of one or more eligible LEAs.

Eligibility: Local Education Agencies (LEAs)

Eligible LEAs must:

- Serve a student population where **20% or more** are from families **below the poverty line**
 - poverty line determination is based on **U.S. Census Bureau SAIPE data**
- Provide **SEA certification** confirming that **20% or more of students ages 5–17** are from families below the poverty line, based on State-derived poverty data; in instances where SAIPE data is not available (e.g., non-geographic charter schools)
- Ensure poverty rate is calculated **across all LEAs served** for entities serving multiple LEAs (e.g., county office of education, an education service agency, or regional service education agency)
 - Applicants must calculate the poverty rate by aggregating students below the poverty line across those LEAs and dividing by the total student population

SAIPE data can be located on the Census Bureau's website at:

<https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/2024/demo/saipe/2024-school-districts.html>

Calculating SAIPE Data

The example below shows **how to calculate an LEA's poverty rate** using SAIPE data to determine eligibility.

State Postal Code	State FIPS Code	District ID	Name	Estimated Total Population	Estimated Target Population (ages 5-17)	Target Population in Poverty, Related to the Householder
AL	01	00190	ABC School District	24,669	2,710	649

Poverty Rate Calculation

649 (children ages 5-17, in poverty, who are related to the householder)

2,710 (target population)

= **23.94 %** (poverty threshold)

Calculating SAIPE Data

The example below shows how to calculate a **poverty rate across multiple LEA's** using SAIPE data to determine eligibility.

State Postal Code	State FIPS Code	District ID	Name	Estimated Total Population	Estimated Target Population (ages 5-17)	Target Population in Poverty, Related to the Householder
CA	00	00191	"A" School District	754	111	31
CA	06	00192	"B" School District	959	163	41
CA	06	00193	"C" School District	5,894	933	360
				TOTALS	1,207	432

For entities serving multiple LEAs (e.g., county offices, ESAs, regional agencies), include all LEAs served. The Applicant will need to submit their aggregated calculation, if they call under this category. Applicants must calculate the poverty rate by aggregating students below the poverty line across those LEAs and dividing by the total student population.

Poverty Rate Calculation (Multiple LEAs)

432 (children ages 5-17, in poverty, who are related to the householder)

= **35.79 %** (poverty threshold)

1,207 (target population)

Eligibility: Consortium

Structure of the Consortium

- A consortium of eligible LEAs may apply as a group and must either:
 - Designate one member to apply on behalf of the group; or
 - Establish a separate eligible legal entity

Consortium Agreements:

- Defines each member's roles and responsibilities
- Binds all members to the application's assurances and requirements
- The consortium agreement must be submitted with the application
- The lead applicant (designated entity) is responsible for:
 - Use of all grant funds
 - Ensuring the project is implemented in accordance with Federal requirements

Consortium Member Responsibilities:

- Carrying out assigned activities
- Using funds in accordance with Federal requirements

Eligibility: National Non-Profit Organizations (NNPs)

An eligible **National Nonprofit Organization (NNP)** is an organization of national scope that demonstrates effectiveness or high-quality plans to support childhood literacy activities.

What Qualifies as a National Nonprofit (NNP)	What Does NOT Qualify
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Organization of national scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Organization operating in a single State
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Supported by staff, volunteers, or State/local affiliates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Local affiliates applying independently
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Demonstrates effectiveness or high-quality plans to support childhood literacy activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Any entity that does not meet national scope requirement

Nonprofit Status Documentation

Applicants **must** provide one of the following:

- a) **IRS 501(c)(3)** determination letter confirming tax-exempt status
- b) **State certification** from a taxing body or Attorney General confirming nonprofit status and that no earnings benefit private individuals
- c) **Certificate of incorporation** or similar document establishing nonprofit status

Absolute Priorities

To be eligible for the IAL competition, **applications must meet both Absolute Priority 1 and Absolute Priority 2 as outlined in the Notice.**

Priority	Priority Title	Description
Absolute Priority 1	Projects Carried Out in Coordination with School Libraries for Book Distribution, Childhood Literacy Activities, or Both	Projects that propose to coordinate with school libraries to carry out grant activities, such as book distributions, childhood literacy activities, or both, for the proposed project.
Absolute Priority 2	Returning Education to the States	Projects or proposals that will be carried out by entities identified, designated, or endorsed by a Governor or chief State education official for purposes of implementing the project or proposal.

Competitive Preference Priority 1

Priority	Priority Title	Priority Description
Competitive Preference Priority 1	Rural Applicants	The applicant proposes to serve a community that is served by one or more LEAs with a locale code of 32, 33, 41, 42, or 43.

SCORING

✓ Competitive Preference Priority 1: 0 or 5 points

Note: Applicants are encouraged to retrieve locale codes from the National Center for Education Statistics [School District search tool](#), where LEAs can be looked up individually to retrieve locale codes.

Competitive Preference Priority 2

Priority	Priority Title	Priority Description
Competitive Preference Priority 2	Meaningful Learning Opportunities for Students	<p>Projects or proposals that are designed to do one or more of the following:</p> <p>(a) Expand high-quality interventions or accelerated learning supports for students based on strong, moderate, or promising evidence (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1) aimed at improving student outcomes through one or more of the following priority areas:</p> <p>(i) Providing remedial or accelerated learning opportunities focused on individualized, differentiated, and scaffolded supports for students to access grade-level (or above grade-level) content; or</p> <p>(ii) Implementing, expanding, or scaling high-impact tutoring programs that occur during the regular school day, are aligned with practices to accelerate student learning in literacy and mathematics, and which include innovative delivery models or approaches, that may include outcomes-based contracting, artificial intelligence (AI), technology-enabled platforms, or strategic partnerships and staffing.</p> <p>(b) Support families in providing meaningful at-home learning, which could include providing resources, educational materials, and access to learning platforms to support student learning needs.</p>

SCORING

✓ **Competitive Preference Priority 2: up to 10 points**

Note: While Competitive Preference Priority 2(a)(ii) references mathematics, the IAL program’s primary focus is to support high-quality programs designed to develop and improve literacy skills and promote innovative literacy programs that support the development of literacy skills in low-income communities.

NCES Locale Codes Example

IES NCES National Center for Education Statistics MENU Search Go


Search for Public School Districts CCD Common Core of Data

District Directory Information (2021-2022 school year) Search Results Modify Search Data Notes/Grant IDs Help

District Name: District of Columbia Public Schools schools for this district	NCES District ID: 1100030	State District ID: DC-001
Mailing Address: 1200 First St NE Washington, DC 20002	Physical Address: 1200 First St NE Washington, DC 20002	Phone: (202)727-7377
Type: Local school district	Status: Open	Total Schools: 116
Supervisory Union #: N/A	Grade Span: (grades PK - 12) PK KG 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	
Website: http://www.schoolwithinschool.org	District Demographics: School District Demographic Dashboard	

District Details (2021-2022 school year; Fiscal data from 2018-2019) Characteristics Staff Fiscal Show All

County: District Of Columbia	County ID: 11001
Locale: City: Large (11) CSA/CBSA: 47900	Total Students: 48,635 Classroom Teachers (FTE): 4,116.93 Student/Teacher Ratio: 11.81



Note: DCPS has an **NCES locale code of 11 (City)**, which **does not** meet the rural designation required for Competitive Preference Priority 1.

Resources:

- [National Center for Education Statistics \(NCES\) School District Search Tool](#) | Access to LEA locale codes
- [NCES Public School Search Tool](#) | Access to individual school locale codes

Selection Criteria:

Need for the Project (up to 10 points)

The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

- The data presented (including a comparison to local, State, regional, national, or international data) that demonstrates the **issue, challenge, or opportunity to be addressed** by the proposed project. **(5 points)**
- The extent to which the proposed project will **provide support, resources, or services; or otherwise address the needs of the target population**, including addressing the needs of underserved populations most affected by the issue, challenge, or opportunity, to be addressed by the proposed project and close gaps in educational opportunity. **(5 points)**

Each of the 2 sub-criteria is scored up to 5 points (10 points total)

How Applications Are Scored

Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Missing
9-10	7-8	5-6	3-4	1-2	0

Selection Criteria:

Quality of Project Design (up to 50 points)

The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

- The extent to which the **goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. (10 points)**
- The extent to which the **design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population** or other identified needs. **(10 points)**
- The extent to which the proposed project **proposes specific, measurable targets, connected to strategies, activities, resources, outputs, and outcomes**, and uses reliable administrative data to measure progress and inform continuous improvement. **(10 points)**
- The extent to which the proposed project is **part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning** and support rigorous academic standards and increased social, emotional, and educational development for students, including members of underserved populations. **(10 points)**
- The **quality of the logic model or other conceptual framework** underlying the proposed project, including how inputs are related to outcomes. **(10 points)**

Each of the 5 sub-criteria is scored up to 10 points (50 points total)
How Applications Are Scored

Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Missing
41-50	31-40	21-30	11-20	1-10	0

Appendix C. Sample logic model for college readiness program

Problem statement: Low-income high school students in selected communities attend college at a lower rate than their middle-class peers, leading to more limited opportunities, higher rates of unemployment, and lower earnings.

Resources	Strategies and activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes	Long term outcomes	Impacts
<p>What resources are or could reasonably be available?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership with three public high schools. Community mentors. Local university space for parent meetings. Volunteer college admissions directors for application workshop. Student volunteers for childcare at parent meetings. 	<p>What will the activities, events, and such be?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish local college mentorship program. Recruit and prepare peer mentors. Develop and deliver student readiness program (workshops). Develop and deliver parent education (workshops). 	<p>What are the initial products of these activities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruited adequate number of mentors for student cohort. Developed and delivered 12 workshops on college application process, SAT/ACT, FAFSA, and college life. Developed and delivered six workshops for parents. High interest and attendance demonstrated at all workshops for parents and students. 	<p>What changes are expected in the short term?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating students apply to at least one college on time. Parents report increased understanding of the college application process. Students report increased readiness for college. Participating students complete FAFSA forms on time. 	<p>What changes do you want to occur after the initial outcomes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating students are accepted to and attend college, remaining enrolled into the third semester of college. Participating students' GPAs are above 3.0 at college, into the third semester. Increased parental engagement in participating high schools' student education. 	<p>What are the anticipated changes over the long haul?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low-income students in participating communities attend college at the same rate as middle-class peers. Low-income students in participating communities graduate from college at the same rate as middle-class peers. Participating high schools see increase in parent and student engagement. Participating high schools state test scores increase by x percent.

Assumptions: College attendance is desired goal for participating communities; high school leaders will remain consistent and support program; parents will show interest and participate in program.

Logic Models

What is a Logic Model?

A logic model is a visual roadmap that shows how a program moves from resources and activities to desired outcomes and impact.

It helps answer:

- Where are we going?
- How will we get there?
- How will we know we've succeeded?

At a glance, a logic model connects:

Inputs → Activities → Outputs → Outcomes → Impact

Selection Criteria:

Quality of the Management Plan (up to 40 points)

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

- The adequacy of the management plan to **achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget**, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. **(15 points)**
- The adequacy of mechanisms for **ensuring high-quality and accessible products and services** from the proposed project for the target population. **(15 points)**
- The extent to which the **time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate** to meet the objectives of the proposed project. **(10 points)**

Each of the 3 sub-criteria are weighted differently, for a total score of up to 40 points

How Applications Are Scored

Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Missing
34-40	26-33	18-25	9-17	1-8	0

Budget Requirements

- IAL is a discretionary grant with a **60-month (5-year) project period**
- Budgets must reflect the full project period (**5 years**)
- Funds must be used to **supplement, not supplant** existing non-Federal funds
- IAL funds **cannot be used for activities that would otherwise be funded without the grant**
- The supplement-not-supplant requirement also impacts indirect cost rates
 - Applicants must use a **restricted indirect cost rate, if applicable**

Note:
The Federal (\$) field must reflect the total **5-year requested award amount**



14. FUNDING PERIOD:	
a. Start Date: <input type="text"/>	b. End Date: <input type="text"/>
15. ESTIMATED FUNDING:	
a. Federal (\$): <input type="text"/>	b. Match (\$): <input type="text"/>

Budget: Components & Application

Application Requirements

- The application must include a **5-year budget summary and detailed budget tables**
- The Federal funding amount should reflect the total request **across the full 5-year project period**
- Applicants must submit a **budget chart and a detailed budget narrative** that clearly justifies all costs

SECTION B - BUDGET CATEGORIES					
6. Object Class Categories	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Total (5)
a. Personnel	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
b. Fringe Benefits					
c. Travel					
d. Equipment					
e. Supplies					
f. Contractual					
g. Construction					
h. Other					
i. Total Direct Charges (sum of 6a-6h)					\$
j. Indirect Charges					\$
k. TOTALS (sum of 6i and 6j)	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
7. Program Income	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

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Standard Form 424A (Rev. 7-97)
Prescribed by GMB (Circular A-110) Page 1A

Budget Narrative Categories Include:

Budget narratives should detail and justify costs for each category across all Years 1-5 of the IAL grant period.

- Personnel
- Fringe Benefits
- Travel
- Supplies
- Contractual
- Other
- Indirect Costs (restricted rate applies, if applicable)

Note:

Equipment costs are not allowable under the IAL program.

Application Process: Submission Steps

Follow these steps to successfully prepare and submit your application through Grants.gov.

Review NIA and Application Package Requirements

Register/Confirm Registration in Grants.gov

Application Deadline: June 9, 2026
Confirm submission and track application in Grants.gov

Notice of Intent to Apply (Optional):

Helps the Department plan for application review by estimating the number of expected applicants.

Potential applicants are encouraged to email:

InnovativeApproachestoLiteracy@ed.gov

Subject: "Intent to Apply"

Include: Applicant name and a contact person's name & email address

Submission is not required & not binding

Application Process: Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)

- All applicants must have an active **Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)** to apply for and receive Federal funding
- The UEI is a unique identifier assigned through **SAM.gov** and is required to complete the application process
 - A UEI is required to register in **Grants.gov**
 - A UEI is required to submit an application for the IAL grant competition
- If you do not already have a UEI, you can obtain one by registering your organization at **SAM.gov**

Note:

Ensure your SAM.gov registration is active and up to date prior to submitting your application.

Application Process: Grants.gov

- Applications must be submitted electronically through **Grants.gov**
- Locate the application package in Grants.gov by searching the **CFDA number** (e.g., search 84.215 - do not include the alpha suffix)
- Submit early: Applications must be **fully uploaded and time-stamped by 11:59:59 p.m. ET on the deadline date**
- Upload all required documents in accepted formats (e.g., **PDF or Microsoft Word**)
- Paper submissions are only permitted under limited exceptions and require **advance written approval (at least 2 weeks prior to the deadline)**
- Extensions are granted **only for technical issues with Grants.gov**, not for incomplete registration (e.g., SAM.gov/UEI)

Note:

For **technical assistance**, contact Grants.gov Support
1-800-518-4726 | support@grants.gov

Application Process: Package Checklist

Application Package Overview & Components

- The application package in **Grants.gov** provides detailed instructions and required forms
- Applicants should review the package carefully to ensure all components are completed
- An **Electronic Application Submission Checklist** is included to guide completion

Part	Details / What to Include
Part 1: Standard Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)• ED Supplemental Information for SF-424• ED Grant Application Form for Project Objectives and Performance Measures Information
Part 2: Budget Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ED Budget Information Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
Part 3: ED Abstract Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project Abstract
Part 4: Project Narrative Attachment Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Application Narrative
Part 5: Budget Narrative Attachment Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Budget Narrative
Part 6: Other Attachments Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resumes for Project Director & Key Personnel• Certification of LEA Eligibility• Documentation of Nonprofit Status (if applicable)
Part 7: Assurances and Certifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grants.gov Lobbying Form• Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL)

Notification of Application Status

- After funding determinations have been made, applicants will receive notification of application status (successful, unsuccessful) accompanied by application scores and peer reviewer comments.

Application Timeline & Notification

- The Notice Inviting Applications (NIA) was **published in the *Federal Register* on April 10, 2026**
- **Application Deadline:** June 9, 2026, at **11:59:59 p.m. ET (Washington, D.C. time)**
- Applicants will receive notification of application status after funding decisions are finalized
 - Successful and unsuccessful applicants will receive scores and peer reviewer comments
- The NIA, application package, and additional resources are available on the **IAL website:**
 - <https://www.ed.gov/grants-and-programs/grants-birth-grade-12/well-rounded-education-grants/innovative-approaches-literacy>

Post-Presentation Assistance

A copy of the pre-application slides will be posted on the IAL program website. You can also email InnovativeApproachestoLiteracy@ed.gov with any questions or to request a copy of the slides presented today.

Questions & Answers





Thank You!