**Ready-to-Learn Television**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**3/15/2020**

Note: This document will be periodically updated between the release of the Notice Inviting Applications and the application deadline.

# A. Eligibility

**A.1 Who is an eligible applicant?**

A public telecommunications entity that is able to demonstrate its capacity to:

(a) develop and nationally distribute instructional television programming that is accessible by a large majority of disadvantaged preschool and elementary school children;

(b) contract with producers of children’s television programming for the purpose of developing educational television programming;

(c) negotiate such contracts defined in (b); and,

(d) localize programming and materials to meet State and local needs and provide educational outreach at the local level. 20 U.S.C. 7293

As stated in the NIA, a public telecommunications entity means any enterprise that is a public broadcast station or a noncommercial telecommunications entity that disseminates public telecommunications services to the public.

**A.2 Is an entity that is not a public broadcasting station eligible to apply for a Ready-to-Learn grant?**

Any entity that meets the eligibility requirements set out in response to question A.1 is eligible to apply for a Ready-to-Learn (RTL) grant even if it is not a public broadcasting station.  Each applicant has the responsibility for providing the information needed to establish their eligibility set out in the statute and reflected in the NIA.

**A.3 Can an application be submitted as a consortium?**

Yes. Public telecommunications entities that wish to form a consortium can only apply for one grant using the procedures outlined in 34 CFR 75.127 through 75.129 of the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR).

**A.4 How can an applicant demonstrate that it meets the eligibility requirements?**

We have included an optional checklist in the application package that applicants may use to list evidence of their status and capacity.

**A.6 Can organizations that are not public telecommunications entities receive a grant?**

Only applicants that are public telecommunications entities can receive an RTL grant. Entities that are not public telecommunications entities can be partners in an RTL application. In past rounds of RTL, partners have included production companies, commercial game design companies, colleges, school districts, associations, evaluation firms, and other groups with interest in educational television, media, and outreach.

**A.7 If a public telecommunications entity is licensed to a university, can that university apply?**

In this case, the university can be the eligible applicant, but should clearly explain the legal relationship between itself and the public communications entity in its application.

**A.8 Can applicants partner with international companies?**

Yes. The Department has no limitations on the types of organizations applicants can partner with. When considering partners, note that sub-criteria iii of Selection Criteria D. Quality of the Management Plan states: “[t}he relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.”

**A.9 Should applicants demonstrate full commitment of partners at the time of application, or are letters of intents sufficient?**

There is no official requirement for how applicants document the commitment of partners. When considering partners, note that sub-criteria iii of Selection Criteria D. Quality of the Management Plan provides: “[t]he relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.”

**A.10 May an organization be a partner in multiple RTL projects?**

There is no limit on the number of projects in which a partner may participate. However, both applicants and partners should take into account the capacity of a partner to carry out its responsibilities under multiple projects.

**A.11 May an entity submit more than one application?**

Yes. An eligible public communications entity may submit more than one application, so long as these proposals are substantially different.

**A.12 Will the Department advise an applicant on whether the applicant meets the eligibility requirements?**

No. In order to ensure transparency, consistency, and a level playing field, the Department will not advise a particular applicant on whether the applicant meets the eligibility requirements for the FY 2015 RTL competition.

**B. Application Process**

**B.1 How do I submit a letter of intent to apply?**

An actual letter is not needed. You fill out the form on the RTL competition webpage at <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-discretionary-grants-support-services/innovation-early-learning/ready-to-learn-television-rtl/applicant-info-and-eligibility/> or you can email your entity’s intent to apply to [Readytolearn@ed.gov](mailto:Readytolearn@ed.gov). If you choose to e-mail, please include the name of the applicant, the invitational priority that will be addressed, and a list of key partners. Although this step is not required, it is helpful to the Department staff in planning for the competition.

**B.2 Does submitting a notice of intent bind an entity to submitting an application to the RTL competition?**

No. While the Department encourages a potential applicant to submit a notice of intent to apply in order to allow the Department to more efficiently prepare for the review process, an intent to apply does not bind an applicant to submitting an application.

**B.3 Can I still apply even if I have not submitted a notice to apply?**

Yes, if you miss the deadline to submit an intent to apply, or if you simply opt not to submit an intent to apply, you may still apply to the competition.

**B.4 When should we anticipate that grant awards will be made?**

We estimate awarding grants in July 2020, with an October 1st project start date.

**B.5 Do applicants have to address the Invitational Priorities?**

Applicants may address one, both or neither of the invitational priorities.

**B.6 Will an applicant have an advantage (or disadvantage) if it applies under BOTH Invitational Priorities?**

No. Applications will be scored solely on how well they meet the RTL program’s selection criteria.

**B.7 Does the Department prioritize funding new educational media projects vs. expanding existing projects?**

No. The department does not have a preference. Applications are reviewed by a panel of independent peer reviewers on the basis of the selection criteria set out in the Notice Inviting Applications.

**B.8 What is the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number for Ready to Learn application?**

The CFDA number for the RTL competition is 84.295A.

**B.9 What are the formatting standards an applicant should follow in preparing its RTL application?**

As discussed in the NIAs, applicants should use the following formatting standards in preparing applications (including appendices):

* A “page” is 8.5” x 11”, on one side only, with 1” margins at the top, bottom, and both sides.
* Double space (no more than three lines per vertical inch) all text in the application narrative, including titles, headings, footnotes, quotations, and caption.
* Use a font that is either 12 point or larger or no smaller than 10 pitch (characters per inch).
* Use one of the following fonts: Times New Roman, Courier, Courier New, or Arial.

**B.10 Must charts in the application be double spaced?**

No. Charts do not have to be double spaced.

**B.11 Is there a page limit?**

There is no formal page limitation, however, it is recommended that all project narratives be double-spaced and not exceed 50 pages. The recommended page count applies to the project narrative only and does not apply to the cover sheet; budget section, including the narrative budget justification; the assurances and certifications; one-page abstract; resumes; bibliography, or other supporting documentation.

**B.12 Can I submit letters of support and other materials separately from the electronic submission?**

The Secretary considers only information contained in the application in ranking applications for funding consideration. Letters of support sent under separate cover from the formal, electronic application submission will not be considered by the review panel.

**B.13 May an entity submit videos or include media links to enhance the application?**

No. Peer reviewers are instructed to only review the material in the application narrative and appendices. Applicants may include descriptions of their media properties and images in the application. However, peer reviewers are instructed not to view external links or videos.

**C. SELECTION CRITERIA AND REVIEW PROCESS**

**C.1 What process will the Department follow after applications are submitted?**

The Department will screen applications that are submitted in accordance with the requirements in the NIAs, and determine eligible applications based on whether they have met all of the eligibility requirements. Peer reviewers will review and score applications against the established selection criteria. The peer reviewers will come from varied backgrounds and professions including experts in science or literacy education, early learning, media production and distribution, educational game development, educational technology, community-based outreach, or educational research and evaluation. All reviewers will be thoroughly screened for conflicts of interest to ensure a fair and competitive review process.

**C.2 How will applications be selected for funding?**

Applications will be evaluated by an external peer review panel and scored according to the program’s selection criteria announced in the Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, as published in the Federal Register on March 16, 2020.

**C.3 What selection criteria apply to applications for a RTL grant?**

An application for a RTL grant may receive up to 100 points for addressing the selection criteria designated for the full-application.

A. Significance (up to 10 points).

B. Quality of the Project Design (up to 25 points).

C. Strategy to Scale (up to 25 points).

D. Quality of the Management Plan (up to 20 points).

E. Quality of the Project Evaluation (Up to 20 points).

**C.4 In the “Evaluation” selection criterion, what does it mean for an evaluation to meet What Works Clearinghouse Standards?**

We encourage applicants to review the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook for technical assistance on evaluation: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Handbooks>. Study findings eligible for review under WWC standards can meet WWC standards without reservations, meet WWC standards with reservations, or not meet WWC standards. WWC practice guides and intervention reports include findings from systematic reviews of evidence as described in the Handbook documentation. Note: The What Works Clearinghouse Procedures and Standards Handbook (Version 3.0), as well as the more recent What Works Clearinghouse Handbooks released in October 2017 (Version 4.0) and January 2020 (Version 4.1), are all available at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Handbooks>.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 7293.

**C.5 How will the Department make final decisions to award grants under the RTL competition?**

For the RTL competition in FY 2020, a rank order of the applications will be developed based on the peer reviewers’ evaluation of their quality according to the selection criteria. In accordance with 34 CFR 75.217 (c)(3), the Secretary will make final awards after considering the rank ordering and other information, including an applicant’s performance and use of funds and compliance history under any previous awards under any Department program.

**C.6 Will an applicant receive its scores from the peer review process?**

Following the completion of the peer review process and after awards are made, each applicant will receive the comments and scores provided by the peer reviewers for its application.

# D. Evaluation (see also section on Selection Criteria above)

**D.1 Must a grantee use a specified percentage of the grant award for the design and implementation of its project evaluation?**

The Department does not prescribe a percent or amount of funding that a grantee must use to design and implement its independent evaluation. However, in order to conduct formative research to assist the ongoing development of products, and conduct thorough summative research studies that meet WWC standards, it is expected that applicants budget adequate resources towards research and evaluation. In past rounds, applicants have budgeted approximately 20% of their budget for this purpose.

Peer reviewers will use Selection Criterion E: Quality of the Project Evaluation to assess the extent to which the proposed evaluation plan can be carried out effectively.

**D.2 Which version of the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook (WWC Handbook) should an applicant reference when preparing its 2020 RTL application?**

All citations in the evidence-related definitions and Quality of Project Evaluation selection criterion in the NIAs reference the WWC Handbook’s Version 3.0. However, please note that the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) released an updated version of the [WWC Handbook, Version 4.1](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/reference_resources/wwc_procedures_v3_0_standards_handbook.pdf), in January 2020.   Although Version 4.1 provides additional guidance on key evidence- and evaluation-related issues, Version 4.1 does not amend RTL’s evidence definitions or change the citations’ reference to Version 3.0.  Rather, Version 4.1 provides additional guidance on key evidence- and evaluation-related issues.

**D.3 Must grantees make the results of evaluations broadly available?**

RTL grantees are encouraged to make broadly available through formal (e.g., peer-reviewed journals) or informal (e.g., newsletters) mechanisms, and in print or electronically, the results of any evaluations it conducts of its funded activities.

# E. Programmatic

**E.1 May an applicant schedule a meeting with Department staff to discuss the idea for a potential RTL project for an RTL application?**

While the Department welcomes the opportunity to learn about new ideas from individuals in the field, we also need to ensure transparency, consistency, and a level playing field in all our grant competitions.  For these reasons, the Department staff does not meet with prospective applicants regarding potential RTL projects.  We suggest that interested applicants review the NIAs and the RTL Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document.

Applicants may email [Readytolearn@ed.gov](mailto:Readytolearn@ed.gov) with additional questions. The RTL team can assist you with questions about eligibility, requirements, definitions formatting, etc. but cannot provide insights as to what will make a compelling application.

**E.2 If a Ready-to-Learn applicant wishes to obtain goods or services from a for-profit entity, are there procurement rules that the grantee should follow?**

Grantees obtaining goods and services that are necessary to carry out their projects must follow the applicable rules set out in 2 CFR 200.317-.326. Applicants should also review 34 CFR 75.135 for provisions that provide flexibility on procurement requirement that they may wish to consider.

**E.3 Which parts of EDGAR and the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) apply to grantees under the RTL program?**

In expending and accounting for funds awarded under the RTL program, grantees must follow the provisions of EDGAR and the 2 CFR 200, which as of December 2014, has replaced and consolidated 2 CFR 225, 2 CFR 220, and 2 CFR 230.

**E.4 Is it permissible for grantees to charge a fee for the purchase or use of the products created under grant funding?**

There are no legal restrictions preventing a grantee from charging a commercial fee for the purchase or use of products produced under the grant. However, the purpose of RTL is to reach low-income or disadvantaged children, and it is expected that products will be made available at no cost whenever possible. If it cannot be avoided, then applicants are urged to set pricing as low as possible, or to solicit external contributions that can offset the costs. RTL does not expect to approve the use of grant funds to pay directly for the manufacture or distribution of the media produced under the grant.

**E.5 Who owns the intellectual property for those products created under grant funding?**

2 CFR 200.315(c) provides that grantees:

may copyright any work that is subject to copyright and was developed, or for which ownership was acquired, under a Federal award. The Federal awarding agency reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the work for Federal purposes, and to authorize others to do so.

Grantees will need to secure the intellectual property rights necessary in order to carry out their projects.

E.6 Must Ready to Learn grantees comply with the Open Licensing Requirement under 2 CFR 3474.20?

No, the open licensing requirement in 2 CFR 3474.20 does not apply to the Ready to Learn program. However, grantees are encouraged whenever possible to widely distribute all media products and educational materials at no cost to users.

**E.7 Must projects serve pre-school and elementary school age children?**

Yes, but projects are not required to create one media property that appeals to all children within that range. Entities may choose to target subsets of preschool and elementary school age group or produce multiple media properties that cover different age groups.

**E.8 Are planning activities allowable in year 1?**

There is no prohibition on using grant funds for planning activities. As with all proposals, applicants should explain how the activities align with their proposed outcomes. Additionally, applicants may want to consider how they balance planning time with actual implementation since these grants are five-year projects and the significance of the project is one of the selection criteria by which the proposals will be reviewed.

# F. Budget

**F.1 How much money should applicants request?**

The Ready to Learn program estimates that applicants will request between $6,000,000 and $12,000,000 per year, for up to five years of funding. However, there is no upper or lower limit to the amount of money an applicant can request. All costs must be reasonable to the scope of work proposed in the application.

**F.2 Must applicants describe their proposed multiyear project activities and provide a multiyear budget?**

Yes. Section 75.112(b) of the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) requires that applications include “a narrative that describes how and when, in each budget period of the project, the applicant plans to meet each objective of the project. For funded projects, the Department will use this information both for purposes of monitoring and providing assistance, and for determining, if on the basis of its annual performance report and other information, a grantee has made substantial progress toward meeting the approved application goals and objectives and thereby, under section 75.253 of EDGAR, may receive a continuation award.

Applicants for new awards also must provide a proposed budget using form ED 524 and a detailed budget justification or narrative for all budget years of the proposed project, not just the first year. Before awarding a grant for the initial budget year, the Department will determine the size of award a grant recipient will receive for each year of the project (assuming availability of appropriations and that the grantee’s receipt of a continuation award for future years is warranted). See sections 75.117, 75.232, and 75.253 of EDGAR.

In their proposed budgets, applicants should include costs for two people to attend a required program review in Washington, DC in both the third year and the fifth year of the project. This review is conducted to collect data to meet RTL’s GPRA performance measures.

**F.3 Are the estimated RTL grant awards for the entire project period or for each year of the project?**

The estimated sizes of grant awards provided in NIA are estimates for year one. However, applicants should prepare full five year budgets. Funding for the second, third, fourth, and fifth years is subject to availability of funds and the approval of continuation awards (see 34 CFR 75.253).

**F.4 Is it possible for the Department to award the maximum number of grants at the maximum funding ranges?**

No. The estimated total amount of funds available for RTL awards is $28,750,000. If the Department were to fund the estimated maximum number of awards at the estimated maximum award sizes, the total funds awarded would exceed the total amount of funds available. The actual number of awards, and the amount of those awards, will not exceed the total amount of funds available for Ready-to-Learn awards.

**F.5 The program statute contains a 5% limitation on administrative expenses. How do we apply this limit to our RTL grant?**

The statute imposes a five percent (5%) limit on the amount of administrative costs that can be charged to the entire grant.  This limit applies to the total of indirect costs (excluding indirect costs specifically designated by the grantee’s indirect cost agreement as facilities costs) and direct administrative costs claimed by the grantee. Direct Administrative Costs would include those costs that can be charged directly to the grant, unlike indirect costs, but are administrative indirect, generally costs not related to carrying out activities related to the programmatic purpose of the grant, specifically the creation, development, and dissemination of accessible instructional programming for preschool and elementary school children and their families. Your budget narrative should explain how you identified your administrative costs.

**F.6 May an applicant include indirect costs in its budget request?**

Yes.  The amount of indirect costs, if an applicant chooses to request them, should be noted on line 10 of Section A of ED Standard Form 524 included the Ready-to-Learn application package, and, along with other information, in the “Budget Narrative Form” of the application.    But, as noted in question F.5, the cap on administrative costs applies to the total indirect costs and direct administrative costs claimed by a grantee.

**F.7 What must a grantee do in order to claim indirect costs under its RTL grant?**

Under 34 CFR 75.560(b), a grantee, if it has not already done so, must obtain a current indirect cost rate from its cognizant Federal agency in order to charge those costs to its grant. The cognizant Federal agency is generally the Federal department or agency providing the grantee with the most Federal funding subject to indirect cost support (or an agency otherwise designated by OMB).

For additional information about obtaining an approved indirect cost rate or applying for an indirect cost rate, you may contact a cost negotiator using the information provided at the following link: https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocfo/fipao/icgindex.html. But, as noted in question F.5, the cap on administrative costs applies to the total indirect costs and direct administrative costs claimed by a grantee.

**F.8 May a grantee that does not yet have an approved indirect cost rate charge indirect costs to its grant?**

A grantee that does not have a federally recognized indirect cost rate agreement may charge its grant for indirect costs at a temporary rate of 10 percent of budgeted direct salaries and wages. See 34 CFR 75.560(c). However, a grantee that does not submit an indirect cost proposal to its cognizant Federal agency within 90 days of receiving its RTL grant award notification, will not be allowed—absent exceptional circumstances as determined by the Department—to charge indirect costs to its RTL grant until it obtains a federally recognized indirect cost agreement. See 34 CFR 75.560(c). In addition, under 2 CFR 200.414, certain grantees that have never received a negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. LEAs, however, are not eligible for this de minimis rate. We will be providing additional guidance on the de minimis rate at a later time. But, as noted in question F.5, the cap on administrative costs applies to the total indirect costs and direct administrative costs claimed by a grantee.

**F.9 May an applicant incur pre-award costs**?

Yes.  Under 34 CFR 75.263 and 2 CFR 200.308, applicants may incur pre-award costs for up to 90 days prior to the beginning of the award period.  However, the applicant incurs these costs at its own risk.  If the applicant does not receive an award, the Department will not reimburse the applicant for the pre-award costs.

**F.10 Are matching funds required?**

There is no minimum match requirement that applicants must meet to be eligible to receive a grant. However, RTL aims to use federal funds to leverage additional contributions from other sources, and it is expected that grantees will expend a mix of federal grant funds and non-federal funds. One of the Ready-to-Learn program performance measures will track the ratio of contributions from non-federal sources relative to the federal grant funds expended on the development of media programming.

**F.11 If an applicant promises matching funds or in-kind donations and is awarded a grant, are they then bound by those contributions and will they be required to have the funds in hand or may they produce them over the course of the grant period?**

Yes, if an application promises matching or in-kind donations and is awarded a grant, the grantee will be expected to provide the matching and/or in-kind donations commensurate with the level of commitment included in the application by the end of the grant period if that contribution is necessary to allow the project to be carried out consistent with its proposed scope and objectives. These funds and in-kind contributions need not be in hand at the time of the application submission.

**F.12 Can an applicant under the Ready-to-Learn program make subgrants?**

The authorizing statute for this program does not include subgrants, and subgrants have not been authorized for this program through a Federal Register Notice. Thus, according to 34 CFR 75.708, subgranting is not allowed under the program.