

**Comprehensive Centers Program Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Grant Competition
Pre-Application Webinar for Prospective Applicants
Transcript**

Date: May 23, 2024

DISCLAIMER: The [Notice of Inviting Applications \(NIA\)](#) serves as the official announcement for the FY 2024 Comprehensive Centers Program grant competition published in the Federal Register on May 13, 2024. This presentation does not contain the full-text of the NIA for this competition.

BEGIN

Introduction

[Speaker: Michelle Daley]

Slide 1

Welcome to the Pre-Application Webinar for Prospective Applicants to the Comprehensive Center Program Fiscal Year 2024 grant competition.

Slide 2

My name is Dr. Michelle Daley. I serve as the Group Leader for the Comprehensive Centers Program in the Office of Program and Grantee Support Services.

I will be joined today by my colleagues, Danielle Smith, who serves as Director for the Office of Program and Grantee Support Services, and Dr. Esley Newton, who serves as the Competition Manager for the Fiscal Year 2024 grant competition for the Comprehensive Centers Program.

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This presentation will be posted on the Comprehensive Centers Program Applicant Information webpage by tomorrow, and the recording and transcript will be posted on the website next week. Links for accessing various competition related resources are provided throughout the presentation.

During each section of the presentation, please submit your questions using the chat function. We will reserve time at the end of today's presentation for responding to questions regarding this competition. We may not be able to respond to all questions received today.

Following today's webinar, we will review all questions received and will develop a frequently asked questions resource that we will post on the Applicant Information webpage. If you continue to have questions following today's webinar, you may submit to our competition mailbox at OESE.ComprehensiveCenters@ed.gov.

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During today's presentation, we will provide an overview of useful information for prospective applicants. We will begin with an overview of the Comprehensive Centers program and competition information.

Next, we will review details from the Notice Inviting Applications, including the priorities, program requirements, application and eligibility requirements, and definitions. Next, we will go over submission procedures and the application review process. Finally, we will close with a reminder of the competition resources available to prospective applicants.

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As a result of this webinar, participants will be able to identify the application requirements and expectations outlined in the Notice Inviting Applications, or NIA, including, for example, the priorities, application requirements, due dates, and review process for the fiscal year (FY) 2024 Comprehensive Center's program grant competition, and understand the process for submitting the grant application, including online submission platforms, submission methods, and required forms.

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Before we begin, I would like to remind participants that the NIA that was published in the *Federal Register* on May 13 serves as the official announcement for this competition. This presentation does not include complete information about this grant competition. Applicants should not rely solely on today's webinar for information and guidance.

Applicants should only use this presentation as a resource in conjunction with the NIA. Before applying for this grant, interested applicants should thoroughly read the NIA, the application package instructions available on Grants.gov, and the Applicant Information page on the Comprehensive Center Program website.

[Program Overview and Competition Information](#)

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Next, my colleague will provide an overview of the competition, including an overview of the Comprehensive Centers program and relevant information about this grant competition.

[Speaker: Danielle Smith]

Thank you, Michelle. Hello, my name is Danielle Smith, and I serve as the Director of the Office of Program and Grantee Support Services in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education.

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The Comprehensive Center Program is authorized in Section 203 of the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002, or the ETAA.

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The Comprehensive Centers program supports the establishment of Comprehensive Centers to provide capacity building services to state educational agencies, or SEAs, regional educational agencies, or REAs, local educational agencies, or LEAs, and schools that improve educational opportunities and outcomes, close achievement gaps, and improve the quality

of instruction for all students, and particularly for groups of students with the greatest need, which includes students from low-income families and students attending schools implementing comprehensive support and improvement or targeted or additional targeted support and improvement activities under Section 1111(d) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended, which we will refer to as the ESEA.

Please visit the Department's website for more information about the Comprehensive Centers program.

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What are capacity building services? *Capacity building services* are defined as assistance that strengthens an individual's or an organization's ability to engage in continuous improvement and achieve expected outcomes.

Slide 11

The Comprehensive Center Network is comprised of three types of comprehensive centers, including a National Comprehensive Center, or National Center, Regional Comprehensive Centers, or Regional Centers, and Content Centers. These centers work together to support SEAs, REAs, Tribal Education Agencies, or TEAs, LEAs, and schools to address areas of national need and advance several key focus areas. Each Regional Center acts as the primary line of support to build capacity of clients in designated states within their regions.

The National Center will provide coordination of high-quality services in areas of national need and support issues related to instruction, learning, and improvement at the national level. Finally, Content Centers provide targeted and universal capacity building support in four key areas, English Learners and Multilingualism, Early School Success, Fiscal Equity, and Strengthening and Supporting the Educator Workforce. All Centers are expected to coordinate services, and the National and Content Centers must consult with the Regional Centers in providing services to clients.

The National Center will support consistent communication and dissemination of products, information, and resources from the Comprehensive Center Network and will facilitate collaboration across Centers within the network.

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The three tiers of capacity building services are intensive capacity building services, targeted capacity building services, and universal capacity building services. *Intensive capacity building services* refers to the services typically provided by Regional Centers to their individual clients.

Intensive capacity building services are often provided on-site and require a stable ongoing relationship between the Comprehensive Center and its clients and recipients. This type of assistance is driven by adult learning principles and incorporates implementation, improvement, and systems change frameworks, as well as periodic reflection, continuous feedback, and use of evidence-based improvement strategies. Most frequently, intensive services are provided by Regional Centers to their clients through sustained multi-year partnerships.

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Targeted capacity building means assistance based on common needs among multiple clients and recipients and not extensively individualized. It involves an established relationship between the recipients, the National or Content Center, and Regional Centers as appropriate. This category of capacity building services includes one-time labor-intensive events, such as facilitating strategic planning or hosting national or regional conferences.

It can also include services that extend over a period of time, such as facilitating a series of conference calls, virtual or in-person meetings, or learning communities on single or multiple topics that are designed around the needs of participants. Facilitating communities of practice can also be considered targeted capacity building services. This tier of services is most often provided by the National Center and Content Centers.

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Universal capacity building services refers to assistance and information provided to independent users through their own initiative, involving minimal interaction with National or Content Center staff. This category of capacity building services includes information or products such as newsletters, guidebooks, policy briefs, or research syntheses downloaded from the center's website by independent users or may include one-time invited or offered webinar or conference presentations by a comprehensive center. Brief communications or consultations with National Center or Content Center staff with recipients, either by telephone or email, are also considered universal services.

This tier of services is most often provided by the National Center and Content Centers. Next, Dr. Newton will describe the four dimensions of capacity building provided by the Comprehensive Centers.

[Speaker: Esley Newton]

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Thank you and hello. My name is Dr. Esley Newton, and I am serving as the Competition Manager for the fiscal year 2024 Comprehensive Centers competition. The Department uses these four dimensions to describe the types of capacity that centers build with their clients and recipients.

The four dimensions of capacity building are human capacity, which means development or improvement of individual knowledge, skills, technical expertise, and ability to adapt and be resilient to policy and leadership changes. The second is organizational capacity, which means structures that support clear communication and a shared understanding of an organization's visions and goals and delineated individual roles and responsibilities in functional areas. The third is policy capacity, which means structures that support alignment, differentiation, or enactment of local, state, and federal policy and initiatives. And the last is resource capacity, which means tangible materials and assets that support alignment and use of federal, state, private, and local funds.

Slide 16

For the purposes of reporting under the Code of Federal Regulations (34 CFR 75.110), the Comprehensive Center program uses the following measures to evaluate the effectiveness

of each center as well as the Comprehensive Centers program as a whole. These measures are referred to in the NIA as performance measures.

Measure one is the extent to which Comprehensive Center clients are satisfied with the quality, usefulness, and relevance of services provided.

Measure two is the extent to which Comprehensive Centers provide services and products to a wide range of recipients.

Measure three is the fidelity of implementation measure, which is the extent to which Comprehensive Centers demonstrate that capacity building services were implemented as intended.

And the fourth measure is the extent to which Comprehensive Centers demonstrate recipient outcomes were met.

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Now that we have provided an overview of the program, we would like to provide further details specific to this funding opportunity. The Assistance Listing Number, which can be used to locate information about the program, is 84.283B. This program makes awards through cooperative agreements, which is distinguished from a grant in that it provides for substantial involvement of the federal awarding agency in carrying out the activity contemplated by the federal award. The Department expects to make 19 new awards through this competition to fund one National Center, 14 Regional Centers, and four Content Centers, each for a grant award period of up to 60 months or five years. The Funding Opportunity Number is provided and used in Grants.gov to locate information about and to apply for this funding opportunity.

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For fiscal year 2024, Congress has appropriated \$50 million to the Comprehensive Centers Program, of which approximately \$46 million will be used for new awards.

The Department estimates funding for each award ranging between \$1 to \$6 million that will support awards for the first budget period of the project, which is the first 12 months of the project period, from October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025. Funding for subsequent budget periods of years 2 through 5 is contingent on appropriation levels. Specific estimates of funding levels for each Center for fiscal year 2024 and subsequent budget periods are in the NIA, as well as the estimated range of awards.

Please note that the Department is not bound by any estimates in the NIA.

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Eligibility for this program is established in the ETAA. Applicants eligible for this grant include research organizations, institutions, agencies, institutions of higher education, or partnerships among such entities or individuals with the demonstrated ability or capacity to carry out the activities described in the NIA.

A group of eligible entities may also apply as a consortium in accordance with the requirements in 34 CFR Part 75, Subpart C.

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The overall timeline for the Comprehensive Centers Program grant competition is as follows. The Notice Inviting Applications for new awards, announcing the fiscal year 2024 competition, was published in the Federal Register on May 13, 2024.

The deadline to submit a Notice of Intent to Apply is June 7, 2024. Notification is optional and non-binding. Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to notify the Department of their intent to apply to support us in planning a more efficient review of applications.

The deadline for transmittal of applications is June 24, 2024. The review of applications will occur in July and August, and awards will be announced in September 2024. Now I'll hand over to Michelle who will provide an overview of the NIA.

[Notice Inviting Applications Overview](#)

[Speaker: Michelle Daley]

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Next, we will review key elements of the Notice Inviting Applications.

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On May 13, 2024, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) published a Notice Inviting Applications (NIA) for New Awards for the Comprehensive Center Program in the Federal Register. As a reminder, please note that this presentation does not contain the full text of the NIA for the FY 2024 Comprehensive Center Grant Competition.

Before applying for a grant, interested applicants should thoroughly read the NIA published in the Federal Register. Links to the NIA and other competition resources can be found on the Applicant Information webpage.

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The NIA contains all official information required to apply for a grant in the Fiscal Year FY 2024 Comprehensive Center Grant Competition.

The announcement is organized into sections, each containing information specific to this grant competition. Section 1, the Funding Opportunity Description, includes a description of the priorities used for this competition, the program requirements for this program, application requirements, and definitions of key terms. Additional sections include award information, eligibility information, application and submission information, application review information, award administration information, and other information.

[Priorities](#)

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We will begin by reviewing the Funding Opportunity Description section starting with the competition priorities. This competition includes three Absolute Priorities and one Competitive Preference Priority.

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There are three Absolute Priorities, one for each type of center, the National Center, Regional Centers, and Content Centers.

Applications must meet one of these priorities. If an applicant wishes to apply to operate more than one center, the applicant must submit a separate application for each center it wishes to serve. You may reference the “Limitation on Applications” section of the NIA for more information.

Now I will hand it over to Dr. Newton.

[Speaker: Esley Newton]

Slide 26

Thank you. Absolute Priority 1 is for the National Comprehensive Center. As a reminder, the full text of this priority is included in the NIA.

I will highlight here several aspects of this priority. First, to meet this priority, applicants for the National Comprehensive Center must provide universal and targeted capacity building services. These services should demonstrably assist clients and recipients to achieve priority outcomes which include to implement approved ESEA Consolidated State Plans with preference given to services that directly benefit entities that have high percentages or numbers of students from low-income families.

To implement and scale up evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions that lead to the increased capacity of SEAs and LEAs to address the unique educational challenges and improve outcomes of schools implementing comprehensive support and improvement activities or targeted support and improvement or additional targeted support and improvement activities for students.

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Additionally, the National Comprehensive Center must provide universal and targeted capacity building services that demonstrably assist clients to implement state accountability and assessment systems, implement and scale up evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions that improve instruction and outcomes in core academic subjects including math and literacy instruction, and address the unique educational obstacles faced by rural and tribal students.

Slide 28

Universal and targeted capacity building services must assist clients and recipients to address other emerging education topics of national importance that are not being met by another federally funded technical assistance provider.

Slide 29

In addition to describing how it will provide universal and targeted capacity building services in the listed priority areas, an applicant under this priority must demonstrate how it will cultivate a network of national subject matter experts from a diverse set of perspectives or organizations to provide capacity building support to Regional Centers and clients regarding the ESEA topical areas referenced and other emerging education issues of national importance.

Slide 30

And finally, applicants for the National Center must demonstrate how they will coordinate the work of the CC Network to effectively use program resources to support evidence use and the implementation of evidence-based practices to close opportunity gaps and improve educational outcomes. In addition, the applicant must demonstrate how they will implement effective strategies for coordinating and collaborating with the Regional Centers and Content Centers to assess educational needs, coordinate common areas of support across centers, communicate about the work of the CC Network, including sharing and

disseminating information about CC Network services, tools, and resources to maximize the reach of the CC Network across clients and education stakeholders, coordinate with other federally funded providers regarding the work of the CC Network, and help clients navigate available support.

At this time, I will pass it to Dr. Daley.

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[Speaker: Michelle Daley]

Thank you, Dr. Newton. Absolute Priority 2 is for projects that propose to establish Regional Comprehensive Centers, Regional Centers, to provide high-quality, useful, and relevant intensive capacity-building services to states and local clients and recipients to assist them in selecting, implementing, and sustaining evidence-based program practices and interventions. Each Regional Center acts as the primary line for supporting to build capacity of the recipient being served by the Comprehensive Center.

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Under this Absolute Priority, a Regional Center must provide high-quality, useful, and relevant intensive capacity-building services that demonstrably assist clients and recipients in several key areas. They include number one, carrying out Consolidated State Plans approved under the ESEA. Number two, implementing, scaling up, and sustaining evidence programs, practices, or interventions that focus on key initiatives that lead to LEA and school improvement student outcome.

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Number three, addressing the unique educational obstacles faced by underserved population. And number four, improving implementation of ESEA programs, including collecting and reporting program data and addressing corrective actions or results from audit findings and ESEA program monitoring.

Slide 34

In addition to providing direct services to clients, Regional Centers must collaborate effectively with the National Center and Content Centers to assist clients in selecting, implementing, and sustaining evidence-based programs, policies, practices, and interventions.

Regional Centers must also propose to develop cost-effective strategies to ensure their services are available to as many SEAs, REAs, TEAs, LEAs, and schools within the region in need of support as possible.

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An applicant for a Regional Center must propose to operate a center in one of the established regions. The fiscal year 2024 competition includes 14 regions.

These regions align to the 10 regions served by the Regional Education Laboratories. The regions are numbered in order geographically, roughly from the northeast to the northwest. Each region serves between one and seven states or insular areas.

These are the states and insular areas served by regions 1 through 7.

Slide 36

These are the states and insular areas served by regions 8 through 14. Now I will turn it over to Danielle.

[Speaker: Danielle Smith]

Slide 37

Absolute Priority 3 is for projects that propose to establish Content Centers to provide high quality, useful, and relevant targeted and universal capacity building services in a designated content area of expertise. Applicants to a Content Center should describe how the Center will be designed to build the capacity of practitioners, education system leaders, and public schools serving preschool through 12th grades, LEAs, and SEAs to use evidence in the designated content area.

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Content Centers will support the work of Regional Centers and coordinate with the National Center.

Content Centers must support Regional Centers as needed with subject matter expertise to enhance the services provided by the Regional Centers. They may also support by designing universal or targeted capacity building services to meet needs identified by the Regional Centers or the National Center. Content Centers must effectively coordinate and align targeted and universal capacity building services with the National Center, Regional Centers, and other federally funded providers as appropriate to address high leverage problems and provide access to urgently needed services to build centers capacity to support SEAs and local clients.

This includes coordination to assess potential client needs, avoid duplication of services, and widely disseminate products or tools to ensure their use by as many recipients as possible.

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Applicants must propose to operate a Content Center in one of the following areas. English Learners and Multilingualism, Early School Success, Fiscal Equity, Strengthening and Supporting the Educator Workforce.

As a reminder, applicants should read the NIA in its entirety for a comprehensive description of each Content Center. In responding to this Absolute Priority, applicants should describe how they will meet the priority related to the specific content area for which they will apply.

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The Center on English Learners and Multilingualism must provide universal and targeted capacity building services designed to support SEAs and LEAs to meet the needs of English Learners, beginning with early language acquisition and development.

To meet the needs of English Learners with disabilities and increase access to high quality language programs so that they, along with all students, have the opportunity to become multilingual. The center must also support the selection, implementation, and scale-up of evidence-based practices in coordination with the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, or NCELA, related to meeting the needs of English learners.

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The Center for Early School Success will provide universal and targeted capacity building services designed to support SEAs and LEAs to implement comprehensive and aligned preschool to third grade early learning systems in order to increase the number of children who experience success in early learning and achievement, including by increasing the number of children who meet challenging state academic standards, supporting effective transitions to kindergarten, partnerships with parents and families on everyday school attendance, and developmentally informed and evidence-based instructional practices in social and emotional development, early literacy, and math. The Center must support the selection, implementation, and scale-up of programs, policies, and practices informed by the research on child development that can strengthen the quality of pre-k through three learning experiences and support social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development.

Slide 42

The Center on Fiscal Equity must provide universal, targeted, and as appropriate and in partnership with Regional Centers, intensive capacity building services designed to support SEAs and LEAs in strengthening equitable and adequate resource allocation strategies, including the allocation of state and local resources, improving the quality and transparency of fiscal data at the school level, and prioritizing supports for students and communities with the greatest need, including schools implementing comprehensive support and improvement or targeted or additional targeted support and improvement activities under Section 1111 (d) of the ESEA in collaboration with the National Center. The Center must support the selection, implementation, and scale-up of evidence-based programs, policies, and practices that promote responsible fiscal planning and management and effective and permissible uses of ESEA formula funds, including through combining those funds with other available and allowable federal, state, and local funds, otherwise referred to as blending and braiding, and considering how ESEA funds may interact with and complement other federal programs such as IDEA, Medicaid, and Head Start to improve student opportunities and outcomes.

Slide 43

Finally, the Center on Strengthening and Supporting the Educator Workforce must provide universal and targeted capacity building services to support SEAs in helping their LEAs, schools, and their partners in designing and scaling practices that establish and enhance high-quality, comprehensive, evidence-based, and affordable educator pathways, including educator residency and grow your own programs and emerging pathways into the profession, such as registered apprenticeship programs for teachers, as well as improving educator diversity, recruitment, and retention.

Slide 44

The Center must support the selection and implementation and scale-up of evidence-based programs, policies, and practices that will support states, LEAs, and their partners in addressing educator shortages and providing all students with highly qualified educators across the preschool through grade 12 continuum, including through increased compensation and improved working conditions, high-quality, comprehensive, evidence-based, and affordable educator preparation, including educator residency and grow your own programs, as well as emerging pathways into the profession, such as registered

apprenticeship programs for teachers, providing opportunities for teacher leadership and career advancement, ongoing professional learning throughout educators careers, including implementing high evidence-based strategies for effective teaching and learning, strengthening novice teacher induction, and supporting and diversifying the educator workforce, as well as other actions to improve learning conditions and educator well-being. As a reminder, we only consider applications that meet one of these Absolute Priorities.

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There is one Competitive Preference Priority for this competition.

Under a competitive preference priority, we give competitive preference to an application by awarding additional points depending on the extent to which the application meets the priority or selecting an application that meets the priority over an application of comparable merit that does not meet the priority. The competitive preference priority is from the Administrative Priorities for Discretionary Grant Programs published in the Federal Register on March 9, 2020. To meet this priority and receive the three competitive preference points, an applicant must demonstrate that it has never received a grant, including through membership in a group application, under the Comprehensive Center Program.

Program Requirements

[Speaker: Michelle Daley]

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The program requirements are established in the Notice of Final Priorities, Requirements, Definitions, and Selection Criteria published in the Federal Register on May 13, 2024. For the fiscal year 2024 and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applications from this competition, the following program requirements apply. Please note, we will not be going into detail on all of these requirements today.

For the comprehensive definition of each requirement, please see the Notice Inviting Applications.

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The following nine program requirements apply to all centers, including the National Center and the Regional and Content Centers. This slide provides an abbreviated overview of these nine program requirements for all centers.

Please review the NIA for a complete description of each program requirements. Note these are requirements that must be met by eventual grantees of this program. The program requirements provide a foundation for the application requirements which are required of applicants for new awards and detailed later.

Under these program requirements, National, Regional, and Content Center grantees under this program must, for example, develop service plans annually for carrying out the technical assistance and capacity building activities to be delivered by the center in response to educational challenges facing students, practitioners, and education system leaders. Number two, develop and implement capacity building services in partnership with state and local clients. Number three, develop and implement an effective performance

management and evaluation system that integrates continuous improvement to promote effective achievement of client outcomes.

And number four, develop and implement a stakeholder engagement system and a high-quality personnel management system. Please review the NIA for a complete description of each program requirements.

[Speaker: Esley Newton]

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In addition to the requirements for all centers, there are 10 program requirements for the National Center. The following slides provide an abbreviated overview of each program requirement for the National Center. Please refer to the NIA for the comprehensive description of each program requirement for the National Center.

Requirements one through four describe National Center responsibilities for providing capacity building services, including to: one, design and implement robust need sensing activities and processes to consult with and integrate feedback from the Department, Regional and Content Centers, and advisory boards that surface high leverage problems that could be effectively addressed in developing the National Annual Service Plan. Collaborate with Regional and Content Centers to implement universal and targeted services.

Develop and implement a strategy to recruit and retain a comprehensive cadre of national subject matter experts and reserve not less than one half of the annual budget to provide capacity building services to address topics one through five enumerated in Priority 1 for the National Center.

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Next, four program requirements describe the National Center's responsibilities for supporting CC Network coordination. These requirements include, for example, implement processes for outreach activities, regular engagement and coordination, design and implement communications and dissemination vehicles for the CC Network, including maintaining the CC Network website, and develop peer learning opportunities for CC Network staff.

Requirement 10 requires that the National Center reserve not less than one third of the budget to address the program requirements for CC Network coordination, which are requirements five through eight.

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Finally, we note program requirement 9 for the National Center, which requires that a National Center grantee must ensure that the project director is capable of managing all aspects of the center and is either staffed at one full-time equivalency or there are two co-project directors, each at a minimum of .75 FTE. Again, please refer to the NIA for the comprehensive description of each program requirement for the National Center.

[Speaker: Michelle Daley]

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There are eight program requirements for the Regional Centers. The next slides provide an abbreviated overview of each program requirement for the Regional Centers. Please refer to the NIA for the comprehensive description of each program requirement for the Regional Centers.

In addition to the Requirements for All Centers, Regional Center grantees under this program must, 1) actively coordinate and collaborate with the REL serving their region; 2) consult with a broad range of stakeholders and integrate their feedback in developing the annual service plan; 3) developing the annual service plan to ensure services are provided to support students and communities with the highest needs; and 4) explore and provide opportunities to connect clients with peers within and across regions.

Please refer to the NIA for the full description of each program requirement for the Regional Centers.

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Regional Center grantees under this program must, 5) collaborate with the National and Content Centers to support client and recipient participation in targeted capacity building services and obtain and retain services of nationally recognized content experts; 6) support the participation of Regional Center staff in the CC peer learning opportunities, and 7) provide copies of partnership agreement with the REL in the region that the center serves and, as appropriate, other Department-funded technical assistance providers.

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Finally, requirement 8 for the Regional Center has two parts. Regional Center grantees under this program must be located in the region the center serves and the project director must be capable of managing all aspects of the center and be either at a minimum of 0.75 FTE or there must be two whole project directors each at a minimum of 0.5 FTE.

[Speaker: Danielle Smith]

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There are seven program requirements for Content Centers. In addition to the requirements for all centers, Content Center grantees under this program must meet these requirements. Again, this is an abbreviated list, and you should refer to the NIA for the full language of the requirements.

Content Center grantees must, 1) consult and integrate feedback from the Department and National and Regional Centers in developing the annual service plan; 2) collaborate with Regional Centers; 3) produce high quality universal capacity building services; 4) collaborate with the National Center and Regional Centers to convene states and LEAs, researchers, and other experts; and 5) support the participation of Content Center staff in Comprehensive Center Network peer learning opportunities,

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6) Within 90 days of receiving funding for an award, provide copies to the Department of partnership agreements with certain Department-funded technical assistance centers; and 7) the project director must be capable of managing all aspects of the center and be either at a minimum of 0.75 FTE or there must be two co-project directors each at a minimum of 0.5 FTE.

Application Requirements

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Next, we will review the application requirements. Applicants to this program must meet the following application requirements.

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There are eight Application Requirements for All Centers which include the National Center, the Regional Centers, and Content Centers. Please refer to the NIA for the comprehensive description of each application requirement. The first five application requirements for all centers are, 1) present an approach to the proposed project for operating the Comprehensive Center that clearly establishes the critical educational challenges proposed to be addressed by the center, the impact the center plans to achieve including the proposed scope of services to address the goals of the Comprehensive Center program;

Two, present applicable regional, state, and local educational needs including relevant data demonstrating the identified needs and the perspectives of underrepresented groups that could be addressed through the proposed capacity building approach;

3) demonstrate how key personnel possess subject matter expert knowledge of statutory requirements, regulations, and policies related to ESEA programs, current education issues, and policy initiatives for supporting the implementation and scaling up of evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions;

4) demonstrate expertise in providing highly relevant and highly effective technical assistance.

For example, assistance that is co-designed with clients demonstrably addresses authentic needs based on need sensing activities, is timely, relevant, useful, clear, and measurable, and results in demonstrable improvements or outcomes. Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate expertise in the current research on adult learning principles, coaching, and implementation science that will inform their approach.

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The next three application requirements are to, 5) present a logic model informed by research or evaluation findings that demonstrates a rationale explaining how the project is likely to improve or achieve relevant and expected outcomes.

The logic model must communicate how the proposed project would achieve its expected outcomes. Six, present a management plan that describes the applicant's proposed approach to managing the project to meet all program requirements. And seven, present a performance management and evaluation plan.

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Finally, all must, eight, include in the budget a line item for an annual set-aside of 5% of the grant to support emerging needs.

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There are three application requirements for the National Center. In addition to meeting the application requirements for all centers, a National Center applicant must meet these three requirements.

They are, 1) describe the proposed approach to leading coordination and collaboration of the Comprehensive Center Network and demonstrate expertise and experience in leading communication and digital engagement strategies; 2) describe the proposed approach to providing targeted capacity building services; 3) describe the proposed approach to universal capacity building services, including how many and which recipients it plans to reach.

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There are two application requirements for the Regional Centers. In addition to meeting the application requirements for all centers, a Regional Center applicant must meet these requirements. They are, 1) describe the proposed approach to intensive capacity building services; and 2) demonstrate that proposed key personnel have the appropriate subject matter and technical assistance expertise to deliver high-quality intensive services that meet client and recipient needs.

Slide 62

Finally, there are three application requirements for Content Centers. In addition to meeting the application requirements for all centers, a Content Center applicant must 1) describe the proposed approach to providing targeted capacity building services that increase the use of evidence-based products or tools focused on the designated content area amongst practitioners, education system leaders, elementary schools and secondary schools, LEAs, REAs, and TEAs, and SCAs; 2) describe the proposed approach to providing universal capacity building services, including how the center will develop evidence-based products or tools regarding the designated content area, how they will widely disseminate such products or tools to practitioners, education system leaders, and policy makers in formats that are high-quality, easily accessible, understandable, and actionable, how they will identify intended recipients of services, how they will align and propose capacity building services to client needs; and 3) demonstrate that key personnel have appropriate subject matter and technical assistance expertise to translate evidence into high-quality technical assistance services and products for state and local clients, including expertise applying adult learning principles and implementation science to the delivery of technical assistance services and products.

Definitions

[Speaker: Michelle Daley]

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Finally, the funding opportunity description contains the definition of key terms included in the competition notice.

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Definitions for the following terms are presented in the Notice Inviting Applications. These terms are defined for the Comprehensive Center Program and specifically for this competition.

For the complete definition of all terms, see the *Definition* section in the NIA.

Application Instructions and Submission Procedures

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In this section, we will review the application instruction and submission procedures.

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The application instructions linked here provide information about the application submission procedures and walk through each part of the application package and the required forms that applicants will use to submit information.

[Speaker: Esley Newton]

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The complete application package consists of several primary components. The first is required forms, which include ED Standard Forms such as the Application for Federal Assistance, or the SF-424, the Ed General Education Provisions Act, GEPA-427, as well as Assurance and Certification Forms. A second component is the Application Narrative, which includes the ED Abstract Form, Project Narrative, and Budget Narrative Forms.

The final component is Other Attachments, which consists of five appendices listed in the application package instructions linked on this slide. For this program, Other Attachments include individual resumes for project directors and key personnel, copies of Indirect Cost Rate agreements, references, bibliographies, Executive Order 12372 Transmittal Letter, if applicable, and letters of support. Please refer to the application package instructions for the complete list of all required forms.

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This section should be attached as a single document to the Project Narrative Attachment Form in accordance with the instructions found on Grants.gov. The Project Narrative responds to the priorities in the selection criteria found in the NIA and should follow the order of the selection criteria, which we will review in the next section of this presentation. The table of contents shows where and how the important sections of your proposal are organized.

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Budget Narrative.

This section should be attached as a single document to the Budget Narrative Attachment Form in accordance with the instructions found on Grants.gov. The Budget Narrative provides an opportunity for the applicant to identify the nature and amount of the proposed expenditures. The applicant should provide sufficient detail to enable reviewers and project staff to understand how requested funds will be used, how much will be expended, and the relationship between the requested funds and their project activities and outcomes. This section requires an itemized budget breakdown for each project year and the basis for estimating the cost of personnel salaries, benefits, project staff travel, materials and supplies, consultants and subcontracts, indirect costs, and any other projected expenditures.

Be sure to complete an itemized budget breakdown and narrative for each year of the proposed project.

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All applicants must use the ED Budget Information Non-Construction Programs ED Form 524 and provide all requested budget information for each year of the project. Please note in Line 10 of the ED 524 Budget Form, applicants should indicate the applicant's approved indirect cost rate per 34 CFR Section 75.560 through 75.564. If an applicant does not have an approved indirect cost rate agreement with a cognizant federal agency, the applicant may use the de minimis rate of up to 15 percent. The de minimis rate will go from 10 to 15 percent on October 1, 2024, due to changes to 2 CFR Part 200. For more information, you can visit the Department's Office of Finance and Operations Indirect Cost Division linked at the bottom of the slide.

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To apply for this competition, applicants must submit the application electronically through Grants.gov and follow the Common Instructions for Applicants to the Department of Education Discretionary Grant Programs, which contain requirements and information on how to submit an application.

Workspace is an external application system used for federal grants that allows organizations or individuals to simultaneously access and edit forms within an application. Forms can be completed online or offline. In Workspace, you will be able to view your grant application, access forms, attachments, form status, activity, and actions, among others.

For additional support, the Workspace website offers a variety of resources. Here are a few. Get started on your Workspace application.

There are resources to help you set up your Workspace and also a video on how to create a Workspace account. The link to these resources is provided on this slide.

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To be able to submit application in Grants.gov, you or your organization must register with the System for Awards Management, SAM. Noting this may take anywhere from one to

several weeks to process. Next, you will need to create an applicant user account with Grants.gov. Once your SAM registration is active, the UEI data will transfer to Grants.gov. This usually takes 24 to 48 hours. Then, you will need to use the UEI number to set up an Authorized Organization Representative AOR profile.

Once you are authorized as an AOR by your organization e-business point of contact, you will be able to perform certain administrative functions related to the grant application.

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To submit your application successfully, you must include the Unique Entity Identifier, or UEI, number on your application. This number should match the one that is used by you or someone in your organization when registering as an Authorized Organization Representative on Grants.gov. This UEI number is typically the same number used when your organization registered with the System for Award Management, or SAM. If you do not enter the same UEI number on your application as the UEI you registered with, Grants.gov will reject your application. Please see the related instructions in the application package.

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Here are a few Grants.gov submission resources and submission tips that you may find helpful. Be sure to review the Grants.gov Submission Procedures and Tips for Applicants section in your application instructions, as well as the Grants.gov Applicant FAQs. Links to both of these documents are provided on the slide. Also, in order to read Grants.gov application packages, be sure you have the correct version of Adobe Acrobat downloaded and be sure to save frequently.

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A few additional tips. All application documents must be submitted as PDF files. When attaching files, applicants should limit the size of their file names.

We recommend your file names be less than 50 characters and not use any special characters. Once an application is submitted, it cannot be undone. However, applicants may resubmit an application until the closing date and time.

Applicants are encouraged to download and save a copy of your submitted application.

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Here are a few helpful reminders. First, all substantive project-related information must be contained in the Project Narrative Form and Budget Narrative Form sections.

These are the forms that peers will review and score. Be sure to label each file with the appendix name, for example, Appendix B Resumes, and attach it to Other Attachments Form. The Other Attachments Form can support up to five attachments.

The list of required attachments can be found in the application package. All documents should be submitted in PDF file. Grants.gov does not properly process special characters. Therefore, do not use colons and backslashes when naming your files.

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Also, be sure to verify the submission of your application by using the Track My Application feature in Grants.gov. Do not rely solely on email to confirm that your application has been received and validated. You will need to enter your Grants.gov tracking number in the field to see the status. The application status should state validated. A reminder that the date and time received should be earlier than 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time on June 24, 2024, which is the closing date.

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Here are a few tips for successful submissions of your application.

If you encounter error messages, the link provided on this slide provides steps explaining common error messages that applicants may encounter while completing or submitting an application package.

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We recognize that technical problems may occur. If you experience technical problems, you may contact the Grants.gov support desk. If your application is successful, we notify your U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators and send you a Grant Award Notification or "GAN". We may also send you an email containing a link to access an electronic version of your GAN or notify you informally.

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If your application is not evaluated or not selected for funding, we will also notify you.

We include the regulations outlining the terms and conditions of an award and include these and other specific conditions in the GAN. The GAN also incorporates your approved application as part of your binding commitments under the grant.

[Application Review Process](#)

[Speaker: Danielle Smith]

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In this section, we will discuss the process that the Department uses to evaluate applications for FY 2024 Comprehensive Centers Grant Competition.

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Applications are due June 24, 2024. The application review process includes the following steps.

First, the eligibility review is a process to carefully screen applications to ensure they meet all the eligibility requirements outlined in the Notice Inviting Applications. If an application is deemed ineligible, it will not be scored. All applications that meet the eligibility for the program will proceed to peer review.

The peer review is an objective process where applications are reviewed and scored by a three-person, non-federal panel to select recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives and the Notice Inviting Applications. A minimum of

three peer reviewers will evaluate each application. Each reviewer takes the time to individually read, evaluate, and score their assigned applications based on the selection criteria and Absolute Priorities listed in the NIA.

The panel then engages in a comprehensive discussion about the application and their respective scores and comments. The three reviewer scores are then finalized and averaged to create an overall application score ensuring a fair and balanced evaluation. Not responding to a specific criterion could negatively impact the applicant's overall score.

Based on the peer review, we prepare a rank order list from the overall application scores after applying any competitive preference ratings. Finally, prior to making final awards, the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, in consultation with the Office of General Counsel and other offices as appropriate, will develop funding recommendations and identify any special terms and conditions that may be needed. Following the vetting of the highest-rated applications, the Competition Manager will prepare and submit a funding slate to the Secretary for review and approval.

The Department intends to create 19 separate funding slates, one for the National Center, one for each Regional Center, and one for each Content Center award. The Department anticipates funding a single award on each funding slate. Funded and unfunded applicants will be notified in September 2024.

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The Selection Criteria for this competition are described in the Notice Inviting Applications. There are three overall selection criteria, and within each, sub-criteria that are scored individually. The three selection criteria are Approach to Capacity Building, Quality of Project Design, and Subject Matter and Technical Assistance Expertise.

As a reminder, the application narrative responds to the priorities and the selection criteria found in the NIA and should follow the order of the selection criteria.

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The maximum possible score for addressing all selection criteria is 100 points for Regional and Content Centers and 125 points for the National Center. The maximum score for each criterion is included in parentheses following the title of the specific selection criterion.

Each criterion also includes the factors that reviewers will consider in determining the extent to which an applicant meets the criterion. The criteria are defined individually for each center. We will provide an abbreviated overview of the criteria here, but for the complete definitions of each criterion, please reference the Notice Inviting Applications.

First, for the Approach to Capacity Building for the National Center. In the case of an applicant for the National Center, in determining the overall quality of the Approach to Capacity Building of the proposed project, the Secretary considers two factors. The first is the extent to which the applicant presents an exceptional approach to developing and delivering high-quality, useful, and relevant capacity-building services that are likely to achieve desired recipient outcomes, including targeted and universal capacity-building services, to address the activities described in Priority 1.

The maximum score for this subcriterion is 20 points.

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The second subcriterion is the extent to which the applicant’s proposed Approach to Capacity Building provides strategies that address the technical assistance needs of state and local educational systems in key areas of identified need, as evidenced by in-depth knowledge and understanding of implementation challenges faced by states, evidence-based practices related to teaching, learning, and development, needs of schools designated for improvement, needs to improve core instruction, and emerging education topics of national importance. The maximum score for this subcriterion is 15 points.

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The Approach to Capacity Building for Regional Centers.

In the case of an application for a Regional Center, in determining the overall quality of the Approach to Capacity Building of the proposed project, the Secretary considers two factors. The first is the extent to which the applicant presents an exceptional approach to developing and delivering high-quality capacity building to achieve the desired outcomes, which includes intensive capacity-building services that would be expected to assist clients and recipients to address the activities described in the Priority 2. The maximum score for this subcriterion is 20 points.

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The second is the extent to which the proposed Approach to Capacity Building provides strategies that address the technical assistance needs of state and local educational systems in key areas of identified need, as evidenced by in-depth knowledge and understanding of the specific educational goals and priorities of the states or entities served by the applicant, and their relevance to improving educational opportunities and outcomes, closing achievement gaps, and improving instruction.

The maximum score for this subcriterion is 15 points.

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The Approach to Capacity Building for Content Centers.

In the case of an applicant for a Content Center, in determining the overall quality of the Approach to Capacity Building of the proposed project, the Secretary considers two factors.

The first is the extent to which the applicant demonstrates an exceptional approach to developing and delivering high-quality, useful, and relevant capacity-building services that are likely to achieve desired recipient outcomes, including targeted and universal capacity-building services that would be expected to assist clients and recipients to address activities described in Priority 3 related to the designated content area. The maximum score for this subcriterion is 20 points.

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The second is the extent to which the proposed Approach to Capacity Building provides strategies that address the technical assistance needs of state and local educational systems in key areas of identified need, as evidenced by in-depth knowledge, and understanding of state technical assistance needs and evidence-based practices related to the Content Center priority for which the applicant is applying.

[Speaker: Michelle Daley]

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The next selection criterion is the Quality of Project Design. In determining the quality of the project design of the proposed center for which the applicant is applying, the Secretary considers four factors. The first is the extent to which the proposed performance management and evaluation system and processes demonstrate an exceptional approach to integrating continuous improvement processes and evaluation that will result in regular and ongoing improvement in the quality of the services provided and increase the likelihood that recipient outcomes are achieved.

The maximum score for this subcriterion is 10 points.

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The second is the extent to which the proposed stakeholder engagement system is likely to result in a high level of engagement with multiple potential participants involved in or impacted by the proposed capacity building activities to ensure that the proposed services reflect their needs are relevant and useful and reach the largest number of recipients possible. The maximum score for the subcriterion is 10.

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The third is the extent to which the proposed personnel management system includes effective processes to enable hiring, developing, supervising, and retaining a team of subject matter and technical assistance experts, consultants, and professional staff, and ensure availability of appropriate expertise and staffing at a level sufficient to effectively execute the responsibilities of key personnel to achieve the goal of the project.

The maximum score for the subcriterion is 10.

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The fourth is the extent to which the proposed partnerships represent an intentional approach to collaboration that is likely to reduce client burden and to ensure that federal resources are being used most efficiently and effectively to meet a variety of needs across federally funded providers. The maximum score for this subcriterion is 5.

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In the case of an applicant for the National Center, there is one additional subcriterion for the Quality of Project Design. It is the extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional management approach to coordination, collaboration, and communication of the complex work of the CC Network. The maximum score for this subcriterion is 15.

[Speaker: Esley Newton]

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The third and final selection criterion is subject matter and technical assistance expertise. In determining the subject matter and technical assistance expertise of key project personnel, the Secretary considers the extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have historically been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. The maximum score for this is 5 points.

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In addition, the Secretary considers the following three factors. One, the extent to which key project personnel demonstrates the required subject matter expertise and relevant knowledge, understanding, and experience in operating and administering state and local education systems to effectively support recipients. The maximum score for this subcriterion is 10 points.

The second factor is the extent to which the applicant has demonstrated exceptional technical assistance expertise in providing high quality, timely, relevant, and useful technical assistance, and capacity building services to state and local educational systems. The maximum score for this subcriterion is 10 points.

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Finally, the Secretary considers the extent to which the applicant has demonstrated the ability to develop new and ongoing partnerships with leading experts and organizations nationwide or regionally as appropriate that enhance its ability to provide high-quality technical assistance and subject matter expertise.

The maximum score for this subcriterion is 10 points.

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In the case of an applicant for the National Center, there is one additional subcriterion for subject matter and technical assistance expertise. It is the extent to which the applicant has demonstrated ability in operating a project of such scope.

The maximum score for this subcriterion is 5 points.

[Resources](#)

[Speaker: Michelle Daley]

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This concludes our review of the Notice Inviting Application for New Awards for the Comprehensive Center Program. We will conclude with a reminder of several key resources to assist applicants in this grant process.

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Please note these important websites for competition resources.

The NIA published in the Federal Register is the official Notice-Inviting Applications for the FY 2024 grant competition. The NIA includes the requirements, priorities, and other relevant details for this grant competition. The Application Package Instruction is a useful resource summarizing information for applicants, including the application submission procedures, application details, and what to do if you are having submission challenges.

The Comprehensive Center Applicant Information website has additional resources such as eligibility information and competition timeline. Note, we will publish the slides and recording from this presentation on the Applicant Information website. We will also post responses to questions received during this webinar.

In addition, the Department has published two brochures that provide an overview of the Comprehensive Center FY 2024 competition and the Content Centers.

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For individuals with disabilities, upon request, the Department will provide individuals with the NIA and a copy of the Application Package in an accessible format. The various formats are listed here and in the NIA.

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Here are a few key reminders to help you prepare to submit your application, including the deadlines for submitting applications.

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If you have follow-up questions, please email OESE.ComprehensiveCenters@ed.gov. For more information about the Comprehensive Centers program or this competition, visit the Comprehensive Centers website, which is linked here on this slide.

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On behalf of the U.S. Department of Education, thank you for your participation in today's Pre- Application Webinar for Prospective Applicants for the FY 2024 Comprehensive Center Program grant competition.

END

To find the resources mentioned in this presentation, visit:

<https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/program-and-grantee-support-services/comprehensive-centers-program/applicant-information/>