

**Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care
ELCG Project 5.2 Regional Readiness Center Activities– Fund Code 801**

General Questions:

1. What is EEC seeking to accomplish with this grant?
 - A. As stated in the Massachusetts Early Learning Plan, “Educator Provider Support (EPS) grantees and the Readiness Centers serve as hubs for professional development and are the main access points through which early learning educators receive information about the whole education system and specifically the standards.” EEC is using this opportunity to strengthen collaboration between Regional Readiness Centers and EPS grantees and to align and expand the services and supports available to the early education and out of school time workforce.
2. Why such a formal process if each Readiness Center already signed a letter of support for the RTTT Early Learning Challenge grant application?
 - A. The support letters submitted with the RTTT-ELCG application were general statements of the signer’s intent to help EEC achieve the application’s goals should Massachusetts get the award. EEC is working with all those who signed letters to define the specific activities they will undertake to help implement the MA Early Learning Plan. This grant application defines those activities for the Readiness Centers.
3. Is there a way to waive some of the pieces of the grant application process?
 - A. No. The grant application process is based on EEC’s procurement rules and is necessary to comply with federal requirements for disbursing this funding.
4. How much of this grant is bringing something new to the region?
 - A. The MA Early Learning Plan expands upon initiatives that are already in existence by adding depth and breadth. For example, Readiness Centers and EPS grantees already work together in several ways. The grant application is intended to expand and formalize this collaboration towards a more intentional system of workforce development.
5. What is Brain Building in Progress?
 - A. Brain Building in Progress is explained on page 2 of the grant application.
6. How much of the Readiness Center grant application is simply giving funds to the EPS grantee?
 - A. Collaboration between Readiness Centers and regional EPS grantees will require payment of some grant funds to the EPS partners (Just as the continuation grant for the EPS grantees may fund the Readiness Centers for specific activities.). The amount of funds that will be spent in this way will be defined by the activities involved and regional needs. However, Readiness Centers and EPS grantees must be vigilant to assure that spending is not duplicative or used to supplant other funds.
7. How does this grant application interface with the EPS Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)?
 - A. The grant application aligns with the MOUs that Regional Readiness Centers have executed with the Educator and Provider Support (EPS) partner(s) in their region.
8. A MOU relative to the work of the Readiness Center and the goals of EEC was signed in late winter. In the development of this document a great deal of attention was given to what specifically the Readiness Center would be able to do based on (1) its role to facilitate meetings and provide professional

**Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care
ELCG Project 5.2 Regional Readiness Center Activities– Fund Code 801**

development opportunities and(2) its limited capacity. Would a grant application based on the commitments made in the MOU with additional detail, as appropriate, meet the filing requirements?

- A. The Readiness Center’s application and the MOU developed with the regional EPS grantee should align. It is likely that the grant application will expand the services agreed to in the MOU and provide additional resources beyond those that can be funded through the EPS grants to the regions.
9. What is the flexibility of the grant timeline?
- A. EEC will extend the due date for responses to the Grant Application. Responses will now be due by **4:00 p.m. on May 25, 2012** rather than on May 18, 2012.
10. Although 4/20/12 is the last day to submit further written questions, further technical assistance may be needed as we work through the grant. Will questions be accepted in any other form after 4/20?
- A. EEC will attempt to provide the needed technical assistance should the need arise.
11. Is it possible to convene the Directors of the Readiness Center prior to the deadline for the Grant Proposal to identify which required services can be provided statewide without forcing each director to research each topic and develop a regional solution when a statewide solution is possible?
- A. EEC is not planning to convene the Readiness Center Directors prior to the due date for the grant applications. Directors can meet among themselves to share their individual expertise and to identify statewide approaches to the required services in the grant. However, as noted in the response to Question 13 below, regional needs will result in emphasis being put on the required services that best respond to those needs in each region and this should be reflected in the grant application from that Readiness Center.

Priorities and Required Services:

12. Is there an opportunity to choose certain requirements?
- A. No, with the exception of training the first cohort of KEA school districts in formative assessment tools.
13. Can we limit the parts of the required services?
- A. All Readiness Centers must provide the required services. It is understood that the services required by the grant will be adapted to meet regional needs. It is likely that the differing needs of the regions will place different degrees of emphasis on the required services.
14. Can year 1 be a planning year?
- A. No. The timelines established for the deliverables in the grant must be adhered to.
15. Will it be the responsibility of the Readiness Centers to, as noted in **number 3**, create “...the Massachusetts Early Learning and Development Assessment System (MELD), from birth to grade three, building off the tiered QRIS requirement for programmatic environmental assessments, etc...” or will the Readiness Center facilitate conversations between organizations already conducting this work?
- A. The priorities on page 3 are the overarching priorities of the MA Early Education Plan and not the specific activities the Readiness Centers are required to perform. The Readiness Center is required to provide training related to the QRIS that, in turn, would support the larger goal of the MELD.

Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care
ELCG Project 5.2 Regional Readiness Center Activities– Fund Code 801

16. Is there a plan to engage leadership from communities, EEC and ESE to create a common vision, as noted in **number 6**, to promote healthy child development and sustain program effects through a strategy for communities, educators and families?
- A. EEC funds 104 Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) programs across the state. These locally based programs work to increase knowledge of and accessibility to early education and care services for families, promote parent education and family engagement, facilitate collaboration and community planning among community stakeholders, and help early education and care programs deliver high quality services.
17. Academic Advising and Career Counseling Required Services:
- Does the statement in **1b** of this section expect the Readiness Center to “Advise and assist educators to identify and access resources to advance their professional growth” or is the expectation for the Readiness Centers to work with existing providers to identify/expand an existing network?

A. It is expected that the Readiness Centers will work with their member institutions to provide access to these resources for educators. This includes working with existing providers to identify and expand the available resources.
 - Does the statement in **1c** of this section expect the Readiness Center to” Develop and utilize Individual Professional Development Plans (IPDPs) to guide educators in their professional growth or to work with local directors to facilitate this process?

A. The expectation is that the Readiness Centers through their member institutions and in partnership with the regional EPS grantee(s) develop IPDPS to guide educators in their professional growth.
18. The Readiness Center is not designed to “...provide academic advising and career counseling...” In our MOU, we committed to “...facilitate and/or participate in meeting(s) with county organizations that currently provide coaching and mentoring support services for early education and out of school time educators with the goal of identifying gaps and potentially expanding services in underserved areas and target groups. “ Is our commitment in the MOU consistent with what is expected in this statement?
- A. Yes, but only in part. The required service in the grant application requires the Readiness Center to facilitate access to academic advising and career counseling for educators through its member institutions of higher education. It is not EEC’s expectation that the Readiness Center itself provide these services itself but that its member institutions would. EEC expects that the Readiness Centers and EPS grantees in each region will design and implement a consistent procedure to enable access to these services by educators in the field.
19. The grant application states that the Readiness Centers must provide career counseling and/or academic advising to 350 educators come each year of the grant. How was this number determined? Is this a statewide or regional number?
- A. This is a regional number, based on monthly data submitted by the EPS grantees. At mid-year, EPS grantees had provided academic advising and/or career counseling to 1209 educators indicating that about 2400 could be served in a year or about 400 in each of the 6 regions. This is a cumulative number that counts educators twice if served in more than 1 month.
20. Is this (grant application) only for college level/ college ready students?

**Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care
ELCG Project 5.2 Regional Readiness Center Activities– Fund Code 801**

- A. No. This grant application is intended to support the entire early education and out of school time workforce. For example, educators need to know about the Preschool Core Frameworks and the QRIS standards whether or not they have a degree or are seeking one.
21. What is the range of the conversation with the individual institutions and EEC regarding online courses?
- A. EEC has had preliminary conversations with individual institutions of higher education and the MA Department of Higher Education (DHE) about the development and dissemination of online courses developed by EEC. This grant application is intended to further these conversations and to bring these EEC courses to IHEs across the state for college credit.
22. Is CDA achievement appropriate to include with this application?
- A. Yes. A CDA that is based on credit-bearing courses can be an important milestone towards a college degree for working educators because they typically take many more years to get a college degree. This national credential recognizes their progress and encourages them to continue their education.
23. Are the target numbers of training participants negotiable for less populated regions such as the Berkshires?
- A. Yes. EEC has the ability to grant variances depending on individual circumstances. For example, EEC has varied the minimum number of educators participating in an EPS course based on the intended audience for the course and the extent of the outreach the EPS grantee has done (See Question 13).
24. What conversations have happened between EEC and ESE regarding KEA? Have the districts been notified and how?
- A. This is a joint initiative between EEC and ESE. EEC and ESE worked together on several aspects of this initiative including identify the districts in each of the four cohorts that will be trained in formative assessment over the life of the grant. The districts in the first cohort have volunteered to participate in the KEA initiative.

Funding and Fund Use:

25. Is this grant based on reimbursement for services provided or will grantees receive a part of their funding up front?
- A. EEC, as the Recipient of RTTT-ELC grant funds has the authority to determine the method which it will use to make payments to vendors/sub-recipients/grantees. There are two usual methods for distributing funds to these types of entities: advances and reimbursement. Advances are allowed, provided a vendor/sub-recipient/grantee maintains or demonstrates a willingness and ability to maintain procedures to minimize the time elapsing between the transfer of the funds and their disbursement. The preferred method is reimbursement whereby required work or services are completed as part of a deliverable and then payment is made. EEC has constructed most of its Scopes of Work based upon the reimbursement method of payment.
26. Given that our Readiness Center Advisory Board includes representatives from the regions' colleges, how do we handle decisions on awarding funds to the colleges as they become vendors?

**Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care
ELCG Project 5.2 Regional Readiness Center Activities– Fund Code 801**

- A. All funding decisions must be based on procuring the best value for the Commonwealth. It may be necessary for some board members to recuse themselves from decisions that affect them.
27. Can salaries for administrators be paid from the grant or is that limited to the 8% overhead?
- A. Salaries for administrators can be paid from the grant subject to EEC's review that the assignment of time and associated cost are reasonable.
28. The budget narrative template lists Project Coordinator and Project Analyst (2), as well as space for other positions. Are these recommended positions or just examples?
- A. A coordinator who is responsible for the implementation of this project must be identified. The other positions are recommended.
29. Language in this section indicates that a total of \$400,000 will be available over a four year period with a plan to distribute \$100,000 annually "...based on the number and extent of the specified activities each Readiness Center proposes to fulfill." In addition, "EEC reserves the right to make additional awards based on the responses received..." Am I correct in assuming that this indicates flexibility in allocation of funds based on the depth of work identified in annual proposals and would further recognize the need to investigate existing situations or conduct planning meetings in year one with the intent of creating and implementing a plan in year two through four of the grant?
- A. Please see Question 14 regarding a planning year. EEC understands that all Readiness Centers may not be able to provide the required services to the same extent and therefore reserves the ability to adjust funding awards accordingly.
30. The Application indicates that "EEC has sole discretion to determine whether each deliverable was successfully completed by the Contractor thereby triggering a payment." If the proposal includes measurable outcomes indicating the completion of a task and the proposal is accepted by EEC would that indicate that the "deliverable was successfully completed..." when the outcome was met. This is of great importance to clarify because the Readiness Center has no funds to back its work and without this agreement we would be in the impossible situation of not having funds to do the work and would have no clear understanding of what would trigger the reimbursement of funds.
- A. Yes. In general, if EEC accepts the measurable outcomes in the grantee's proposal and those outcomes are delivered when due, EEC would release payment.