Charter Schools Program Pre-Application Webinar: Exemplary Collaboration Awards

Part 1

STEFAN: Okay. Thank you all. We’d like to get started. It’s obviously a little bit after 2:30, so we want to be cognizant of folks’ time. This is the Charter Schools Program Pre-Application Webinar for the Charter School Exemplary Collaboration Awards, grant competition CFDA 84.282P, under our National Activities authorization. We have our competition manager here on the call, Ms. Nancy Paulu, as well as Erin Pfeltz, and the three of us will go through this brief presentation to discuss the competition. Nancy will talk about some meeting logistics before we get started.
NANCY: Yeah, we’ll go to…. If you have questions that you want to present while we’re talking, we ask you to use the chat function. There are a whole lot of people participating in the call today. We’ll get to as many questions as we can and also be sure to get back to you afterwards with any specific questions you have that relate to your particular organization or school. Rest assured that if the Charter Schools Program staff does not respond to your question during the webinar, that you can send us information if you haven’t already provided it during the webinar to me, nancy.paulu@ed.gov.

STEFAN: We also ask that if you’re on this call, please place your call on mute if you’re on conference to kind of reduce some of the background noise.

NANCY: Okay, so I’ll, first of all, spell out the agenda for you. As Stefan explained, this is the Charter School Exemplary Collaboration Awards. This is the first year in which we held this competition. We’re going to go through the purpose and the goals of the competition, along with the eligibility requirements, the funding restrictions, and budget issues you may have questions about. We’ll, again, summarize the priority in the selection [audio blank] applying for the grant, what Grants.gov is all about, and the application components.

STEFAN: Great, thank you Nancy.
NANCY:
This isn’t the first time you’re going to hear us say this. The applications are due on August 29, 2012, at 4:30 p.m., and the government is very strict about that. They don’t mean 4:31. They don’t mean one second past 4:30. They mean 4:30 p.m. Washington, D.C., time.

STEFAN:
Okay.

NANCY:
One important note we want to make before we start. Much of what we’re going to discuss today has appeared in the Register notice. It contains a lot of important information and more details than what we can cover today, and we recommend that all applicants read the entire notice in the Federal Register before beginning their application. Applicants must follow the Application Procedures as described in the Federal Register notice announcing the Charter Schools Program Exemplary Collaboration Awards competition.

STEFAN:
That’s great. Thank you, Nancy. I just want to mention, once again, if possible, please put your phone on mute if you’re on conference to reduce some of the background noise. We’ve got some background noise still coming through.
Okay, so you know, briefly, the purpose of the Charter Schools Program, as you can see, is to increase national understanding of the charter schools model, and by statute we do this in four different ways:

- Providing financial assistance for the start-up of new schools, the implementation of new schools
- Evaluating the effects of charter schools on students through academic achievement, staff, and parents
- Expanding the number of high-quality charter schools across the nation
- Encouraging states to fund charter school facilities in an amount that is more commensurate with traditional public schools

Part of our national activities under statutes include disseminating to other public schools best or promising practice of charter schools, and that is what is really driving what’s behind the idea of creating this competition and this grant opportunity. One of the purposes often cited for our schools is to be incubators of best practices and innovation to improve traditional public schools. It is through that aim that we’re running this competition, as well as to foster cooperation and collaboration across all public schools. We believe that through this competition, we will not only reward and expand successful collaboration projects, but we will also be able to identify successful collaborations which are occurring out there in the field for further dissemination.
Here is the official purpose for the notice of the Collaboration Awards competition, which has been provided the CFDA number of 84.282P. It’s to first encourage high-quality charter schools as defined in this Federal Register notice to partner with non-chartered public schools and non-chartered LEAs [local education agencies] to share and transfer best educational operational practices and to disseminate information about such practices. We’re also seeking to promote strong partnerships and supporting the dissemination of information about the activities carried out for these partnerships. We believe these Collaboration Awards will facilitate the change of best practices between public charter schools, non-chartered public schools, and non-chartered LEAs and also help us to identify and publicize these successful collaborations.

We’re also hoping this will encourage public charter schools and [non-chartered public] schools to share resources and responsibilities, to build trust and teamwork, boost academic excellence, to provide students and their parents with the range of effective educational options. Finally, it will help us increase national understanding of the charter school model.

In this notice, we have defined a collaboration as such: the activities of a partnership in which two or more organizations or entities work together to accomplish a common goal, which may involve sharing or transferring best practices or strategies.
As far as eligible applicants for this competition, and this is a very important piece that you should take away from this, eligible applicants must be high-quality charter schools as defined in the Federal Register notice, and we’re very specific as to how we define high-quality charter schools. They must apply in partnership with at least one non-chartered public school as defined in that notice or non-chartered LEA as defined in the notice and have the support of those partners to participate in this competition in accordance with the requirements as set forth in that notice.

Other public charter schools that do not qualify as high-quality schools based on that definition may be included in the collaboration as long as the lead applicant is a high-quality charter school and as long as the lead applicant is separate and distinct from those other charter schools which are included in the collaboration. Finally, there still must be at least one non-chartered public school or non-chartered LEA as part of that collaboration.
As far as the partnership goes, partnership must comply with these specific requirements for group applications as set forth in that citation there in the slide. Please note that only an eligible applicant, that high-quality charter school, may apply for a grant or be the fiscal agent for a grant. Neither the non-chartered public school or that LEA that’s a non-chartered public school may serve as the lead applicant or as the fiscal agent for that Collaboration Award. A charter school that is not a high-quality school, even if it’s part of that collaboration, may also not be the lead applicant or fiscal agent. Also, we have an eligibility issue requirement related to compliance. There may not be any significant compliance issues outstanding as defined in the notice, and these include areas of student safety, financial management, statutory or regulatory compliance.

There are a couple of definitions that are in this notice that it’s important to understand the difference between, and they are exemplary and high-quality. This competition emphasizes quality in a couple of different ways. First of all, applicants, as I mentioned before, must be high-quality charter schools, and so not only is that an eligibility requirement, but we also have one selection criteria which allows reviewers to provide points based on the extent to which they judge the applicant to be high-quality. The second definition that’s important is that collaborations are expected to be exemplary. The seven selection criteria which you’ll find in the notice were selected to allow us to identify high-quality charter schools involved in exemplary collaboration.
How are we defining a high-quality charter school in this notice? A charter school per the Federal definition must have no significant compliance issues as we described in the notice and show evidence of strong academic results for the past three years or over the life of the school if the school has been open for fewer than three years based on the following factors. First, increased student achievement and attainment for all students including for educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter school.

Second, demonstrated success in closing historic achievement gaps or subgroups described in section—as you can see in the ESEA (I won’t read out the entire section). Or no significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in the ESEA at the schools. And significant gains in student achievement with all populations of students served by the charter school. You can see the note regarding the subgroups includes economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency.

Results (including, where applicable and available, performance on statewide tests, attendance and retention rates, type of graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates) for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter school that are above the average academic achievement results for such students in the state. Again, definition of significant compliance issues means a violation that did, or will, or could lead to revocation of a school’s charter.
Here’s some information about these awards. These are—we’re still getting some background noise in the back. If you could please put your phone on mute if you’re on speaker. These are discretionary grants under our National Activities Authority. For Federal fiscal year [FY] 2012, the appropriation for the whole charter schools program is $255,000,000, and we plan to use up to $500,000 for this competition. Contingent upon the availability of funds and the quality of applications received, we may make additional rewards in FY 13 from the list of unfunded applications from this competition. We expect the range of awards to be $50,000 to $200,000 each and to make up to three to five awards. The project period we’re expecting to receive budgets for will be 12 to 24 months. And we remind you, we’re not bound by any estimates in this notice.
Okay, so now I'll turn it over to Nancy, who will talk about some more specifics around the competition.
NANCY:
Okay, here we go. We’re going to talk a little bit now about funding restrictions. There are some ways that it’s appropriate for you to use your money and some ways that it’s not appropriate for you to use your money. Grantees under this program must use the grant funds for one or more of the following: One possibility is to continue the collaboration for which you receive the award as described in its grant application. Second, modifying the collaboration for which it receives the award as described in its grant application. Third thing, it could be, the money could be used for expanding the collaboration for which it received the award. It can do this by adding additional areas of collaboration again as your described applications.

Finally, you can expand the collaboration by adding additional partners as described in the grant application, and the partners might include non-chartered public, non-chartered LEAs, or public charter schools that are either high quality or less high quality. Also, the Collaboration Awards recipients must also use a portion of the grant funds to disseminate information about the collaboration activities to other public schools, including public charters schools, non-chartered public schools, or non-chartered LEAs as defined in the notice. All activities must fall within the scope of authorized activities set forth in Section 5205A of the ESEA.
Then we have, there are a few funding restrictions and budget items that are good to know about. Applicants must ensure that all costs included in the proposed budgets are reasonable and necessary in light of the goals and objectives for the proposed project. Any cost determined to be unreasonable or unnecessary will be removed from the school budget. The budget should include only costs that are allowable, reasonable, and necessary, and when you do your budget narrative attachment, which we’ll talk about a little bit more later, you need to provide an itemized budget narrative by project year for each budget category, and you need to justify what’s included.

This competition has one competitive priority, and I imagine many of you have applied for grants before, but for those of you who haven’t, a competitive priority is one that you’re not absolutely required to have the priority in order to apply for the grant, but you can gain up to five points for this particular competitive priority, depending on the extent to which you can show in your application that you have this. For fiscal year 2012, and any subsequent year which we make awards based on the list of unfunded applicants from this competition, this priority is going to remain as the preference priority, and, in order to receive preference under this competitive preference priority, the applicant must specify that it is responding to this competitive preference priority.
Okay, here’s a little bit more detail. The specifics of this competitive preference priority—turning around persistently lowest achieving schools. As I said, you can get up to five points for this, and, to meet this priority, projects must be designed to address one or more of the following priority areas. First of all, including student achievement, as defined in the Federal Register notice; in persistently lowest achieving schools, and, again, that’s defined in the Federal Register notice; increasing graduation rates and college enrollment rates for students in persistently lowest achieving schools; and, finally, providing services to students enrolled in persistently lowest achieving schools.

Then, also, for the purposes of this priority, the Department considers schools that are identified as Tier I or Tier II schools under the School Improvement Grants program as part of the state approved FY 2009 or FY 2010 application to persistently lowest achieving schools. A list of these Tier I and Tier II schools can be found on the Department’s website at the address listed in the PowerPoint presentation.

Okay. Now, we’re going to go on to the selection criteria, and the selection criteria [for this competition are from the notice of final definitions, requirements, and selection criteria] for this program, published in the Federal Register notice, as well as from EDGAR, and there’s the citation provided here in the PowerPoint presentation. The maximum possible score for all of the selection criteria is 95 points, and then, as I mentioned, you can have up to an additional five points for the competitive priority, so the total possible score would be 100 points. In evaluating an application for Collaboration Awards, the Secretary is going to consider seven criteria, and here they are.
First of all, record of and potential for success of the collaboration. You can get up to 15 points for that, and here’s what that’s all about. The extent to which the applicant’s past or existing collaboration improved educational outcomes and operational practices and, two, the extent to which the applicant’s proposed collaboration and dissemination plan will achieve one or more of the following demonstrable results:

- First of all, improved operational practices and productivity among all partners in such areas as financial performance and sustainability, governing board performance and stewardship, and parent and community engagement
- Second, improved student achievement, and, again, we have a Federal Register definition for that
- Improved student attendance and retention and improved graduation rate
- Fourth, improved rates of college matriculation and college graduation
- Improved rates of attendance and graduation from other post-secondary (non-college) institutions or programs.
Okay, now on to the second instruction criteria, which is quality of the lead applicant, and, again, for this you can get up to 15 points. This is the degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student achievement as defined in the Federal Register notice and attainment for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools. You might notice this is a lot in here. This selection criterion parallels how we define a high-quality charter school. Then, either the degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in closing historic achievement gaps for the subgroups of students described in Section 1111b of the ESEA at the charter school or the degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in Section 1111b of the ESEA at the charter school and to which significant gains in student academic achievement have been made with all portions of students served by the charter school.

Finally, under the quality of the lead applicant, the degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has achieved results (including, where applicable and available, performance on statewide tests, student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates) for students from low-income families and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter school that are above the average academic achievement results for such students attending other public schools in the state.
Here is what we mean by student achievement. That means for tested grades and subjects, a student’s score on the State’s assessment under the ESEA, and, two, as appropriate, other measures of student learning, such as those described in paragraph (b) of this definition provided they are rigorous and comparable across schools. The (b) paragraph is for non-tested grades and subjects: alternative measures of student learning and performance, such as student scores on pre-tests and end-of-course tests; student performance on English proficiency assessments; and other measures of student achievement that are rigorous and comparable across schools.

On to criteria number three, quality of the project design. Once again, up to 15 points, and this means the extent to which the applicant proposes a high-quality plan to use its Collaboration Awards funds to improve educational outcomes and operational practices in public schools, including charter schools.

Fourth, the potential for scalability and, again, up to 15 points. This means the extent to which the applicant’s proposed collaboration can be replicated or adapted beyond participating partners by other public schools or LEAs, including public charter schools and charter school LEAs, and sustained over the long term.
Next we have innovation, 15 points. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that its proposed collaboration as well as its dissemination plan are either substantially different from other efforts in its area of focus or substantially more effective than similar efforts in this area of focus.

Two to go. Number six is quality of the project personnel. This would be up to 10 points. The Secretary of Education considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of the project personnel, the Secretary considers the extent to which the applicant encourages applications from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. In addition, the Secretary considers the following factors: first of all, the qualifications, including relevant training and experience of the project director or principal investigator; and, second, the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the key project personnel.

Last but not least, quality of the management plan, up to 10 points. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. Determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within the budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing the project tasks.

Now we are going to have Erin Pfeltz go through the next section.
ERIN:
Hi, everybody. I’m Erin Pfeltz, also with the Charter Schools Program, and I’m going to be talking about Grants.gov. This is a system that the Department uses for the submission of applications. Some of you may have already used Grants.gov. You may be familiar with the process, but for those of you who are new to it, I highly recommend you listen closely. It’s really important for the process of getting your application in successfully.

First of all, what is Grants.gov? It’s an external application system that is used throughout the Federal government. You can download the application package at Grants.gov, and then you also submit through that system. Just so you know, Grants.gov is a clearinghouse for all Federal agencies. The grant competitions throughout the Federal government are posted there, and most agencies use it for applications as well.

Where can you find this information? Nancy already talked about this earlier, but the Federal Register notice includes all of the information you need to submit an application successfully. It includes:

- Due date and time.
- Program contact information.
- Page limits and formatting, which we’ll talk about in a little bit.
- Allowable file types, which is critical. We only accept PDF files, and the notice is where we inform you of that.
- Mandatory or optional electronic submission. This is a mandatory electronic submission competition. Unless you request and are approved for an exemption, you do have to submit your application through Grants.gov.
- Finally, the system for submitting, which is Grants.gov.
As Nancy said earlier, applications are due August 29 at 4:30 p.m. and zero seconds Washington, D.C., time. If you’re in a different time zone, please make sure you adjust your due date plans accordingly.

As I said earlier, electronic submission is required. Applications must be submitted electronically, unless you qualify for and request an exemption. The notice includes the requirements for requesting an exemption, but, basically, you can only be approved for one if you don’t have access to the Internet or if you don’t have the ability to upload large files, such as you use a dial-up connection. Be aware you must request an exemption in writing at least two weeks in advance. You can’t request an exemption the day before the due date because you suddenly realize you’re having technical problems. It must be requested two weeks in advance.

So, you’re going to be submitting your application electronically. You’ve gotten to Grants.gov. What is your next step? While you can download the application package and work on it without being registered with the Grants.gov system, you must register prior to submitting. If you aren’t already registered, I would recommend that be the first thing you do when you get off this call if you do plan to submit an application. It can take time, and it is an absolute required step.

Somebody just asked when the SAM site would be up and running. I’m going to get to that in a little bit. It should be available today. I know it was down over the weekend. So that is the one of the registration steps, but it should be up and running today.
There are five basic steps for Grants.gov registration. The first, if you don’t already have one, is to obtain a DUNS number. The second is to register with SAM. SAM has, actually, just replaced the CCR system in the past week. The third is to set up your AOR profile. The fourth is to be authorized as an AOR by your organization’s E-Business point of contact. The final one is to track and verify your AOR status.

The Grants.gov registration system can take five or more business days to complete; however, the Grants.gov website recommends giving yourself at least four weeks in order to register successfully. That’s why if you do plan to submit in this competition and you haven’t already registered with Grants.gov, please start that immediately. You don’t have to be fully registered or registered at all to download the application package, to work on your application; however, you cannot submit unless you have registered.

The Grants.gov registration process. All of this is available at the Grants.gov website, and they’ll be able to answer a lot of your more detailed questions about step-by-step going through the process, but I want to give everybody an overview so you understand what’s involved. The first is registering your organization with the DUNS number. You do need to make sure that the DUNS number used on the 424, which is the cover sheet of the application, is the same one you are using to register. Somebody asked if their CMO, which is already registered on Grants.gov, can use that account to register for one of their charter schools. This comes back because your DUNS numbers will need to match. As Nancy said earlier, the applying organization needs to be the high-quality charter school. So, that’s the DUNS number that you’re going to use for the 424, and the Grants.gov registration is going to need to be the same one.
The second step is registering with SAM. This has just replaced CCR. It should be up and running this week. If you haven’t registered, this is the step that really can take additional time. Give yourself plenty of time to do this—keep following up with the SAM system to make sure your registration is going through.

Step three, AOR registration. If you’re submitting your application via Grants.gov, you, as the person submitting, must be designated by your organization as the AOR and be registered in Grants.gov. Step four, how does the E-Business point of contact recognize you as the AOR? They have to authorize you in order for you to be able to submit your application.

There may be more than one AOR in the organization, so make sure the E-Business point of contact authorized the right person, and you’re ready to go.

Part 2

In the application package instructions, there is a page entitled “Grants.gov Submission Procedures and Tips for Applicants.” I highly recommend everybody read through that carefully to make sure they fully understand what they need to do to successfully upload an application package through Grants.gov. Make sure you have the right version of Adobe downloaded. Make sure you’ve completed all mandatory forms and attachments. Make sure you’ve saved everything.
A couple other hints. Save often; submit all your documents as PDF files. Grants.gov might accept another type of file, but that does not mean it's going to transfer successfully to the Department. So, we say in the notice PDFs only. Make sure you only upload PDFs.

Once you've downloaded the application package, you can work on it offline. You'll be saving it to your hard drive or elsewhere personally, and you see multiple people can work on it at one time. You don't upload it again until the very end. Finally, the Save and Submit button is not going to become active until you've completed all of the required forms.

A couple of tips on recognizing whether your submission to Grants.gov was successful or unsuccessful. A successful submission—you're going to receive a confirmation e-mail with the date and time stamped and a Grants.gov tracking number. Then you're going to receive a validation e-mail, which means it's going to be transferred over to the Department. Then the final notification you're going to receive is going to include a PR award number, and this is the Department's tracking number, this U282P12 and then a four-digit number.

If your submission was not successful, you will still receive a confirmation e-mail with the date and time stamp and a tracking number. However, you will also then receive an error e-mail, but you should also track your number and application online to make sure it went through successfully. Notice I said you should receive an error e-mail.
But you can verify your submission at the Grants.gov website and make sure it went through on time and successfully. To check it, log into Grants.gov and click the Track My Application link, look for the date and time received, and make sure it’s earlier than 4:30 p.m. and zero seconds on August 29, and you really should be submitting it at least a day in advance of that to make sure it goes through successfully. And then look for the application status to validate it.

Note the last thing on the slide. Do not rely solely on e-mail to confirm whether your application has been received on time and validated successfully. Somebody asked the question how early can we submit? You can submit it any time starting today if you have an application that's ready to go. We will review the last application from your organization for this project that we receive prior to the closing date and time. So you can submit multiple times to make sure everything goes through successfully. We really do recommend you upload your application at least a day in advance.

All of this information I’m giving you on tracking your application and making sure it goes through successfully—that’s really only helpful if you give yourself enough time to resubmit and fix any problems. If you track your application and realize something went wrong after the date, after the deadline date, it’s too late at that point.
Once again, a reminder, don’t rely solely on e-mail. We have had examples in the past where the e-mail saying that an error occurred in the submission got stuck in a person’s spam filter. They did not realize it until it was too late to fix the problem, and they had done everything right, submitting early, all of that, but they didn’t know there was a problem. So, check the website to make sure everything went through successfully.

Couple of final pieces. Save a copy of your application. We may request original signatures on forms at a later time, so just keep that in mind and make sure you have those copies.

As the question was earlier, you may resubmit your application at any point up until the closing date and deadline. We review the most recent submission before the due date and time. You aren’t able to make changes to your application once you submitted it but, as I said, you can resubmit prior to the closing date and time.

What happens if you do have a problem with Grants.gov? If you’re experiencing problems submitting your application through Grants.gov, please contact the Grants.gov Help Desk. Their number is 1-800-518-4726. It’s there on the slide. It’s going to be at the end of the presentation as well. They’ll be able to help you with any technical problems that occur while you’re working on your Grants.gov application.
In addition, if a technical problem prevents you from submitting on time, we need that Grants.gov Support Desk Case Number to see what the problem was and to see if we’re able to accept your application. If you have a problem that prevents you from electronically submitting your application on the deadline date and it is because of a technical problem with the Grants.gov system, we can grant an extension for 24 hours to allow you to transmit your application electronically, by hand delivery, or through the mail.

That’s only in the case of a technical problem with the Grants.gov system itself. If you’re experiencing a problem with the system, call the Help Desk, get that tracking number in, and send your application in within 24 hours.

If you submit that application within 24 hours, call Nancy. She’s the person listed in the notice, and provide an explanation of the technical problem you experienced with Grants.gov, along with that Support Desk Case Number. What we do is we then take that description and we take that case number, and our Grants.gov liaison talks to them to figure out if that technical problem was, in fact, with the Grants.gov system. If they verify that it was a Grants.gov problem, we will be able to accept your application. Keep in mind this is something we get from Grants.gov. This is not something that the program office determines. We will then contact you after a determination has been made about whether we will accept your application or not.
Once again, that 24-hour extension only applies to technical problems with the Grants.gov system. We cannot accept your application or give you an extension if you aren’t able to fully register in time or if you experience a technical problem that was not with the Grants.gov system. If your Internet connection went down, if your computer crashed, if the electricity went out in your building, unfortunately, none of those are reasons that we can grant an extension. Once again, submit a little bit early—give yourself time to deal with these kinds of issues.

All right, so that’s everything I’m going to cover with Grants.gov. Once again, if I didn’t get to any of your Grants.gov questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me or Nancy. And then, once again, for real technical issues with the system, call the Grants.gov Help Desk.

NANCY:
Okay. One more important section that we need to get through here—what you put in your application package. Some of you will be very familiar with it; some of you, not so much.
There are quite a few required forms, and, as on parts of the narrative that you need to submit, the forms listed on this slide are, many of them are, standard forms that you use for a great many number of different grants. And we’ll, for purposes of fitting them on the slide, we have numbers for them, which you’ll become all too familiar with by the time you finish applying. All of these forms, along with instructions, are in the application package. Then there are also different parts of the narratives, and you upload the narrative and all the other attachments to your application in PDF read-only, non-modifiable format.

This is what the top part of the SF 424 looks like, and this is the standard Federal Grant Application Form, and it comes with all sorts of detailed instructions for what you do. With this form, like I said, it’s quite detailed.

There are frequently asked questions we get, and the ones we have on this next slide go through the ones that people seem to find the most troubling. First of all, 8c, which is the organizational DUNS number, and this must be the same DUNS number that you used when you registered with Grants.gov. Then 16a and b, the Congressional District; you enter the district the applicant’s organization is in and the district in which activities will occur. For some of you with collaborations, partnerships, you’re going to be listing more than one Congressional District.
17a and b—the proposed project start and end dates. The start date will be the beginning of the next fiscal year, which is October 1, 2012, and this grant can be for up to 24 months. Some of you won’t want to be taking that much time. So, it could be for two years after that, or it could be for a shorter period. Estimated funding—this should show the total amount requested for the project in Federal funds. Then we have on 19—EO 12372, and the point we want to make here is that this charter school program is not subject to the Executive Order.

You are required to fill out Section A, and the funds requested should match the detailed budget narrative required in another segment of the application. This is the budget form, and it’s a standard budget form for all non-construction projects for the Federal government, and this is definitely a non-construction project. You are not allowed to use funds for construction. You fill out—this form is sort of a summary in various categories of what you expect to spend, and then, as I said, you do provide a detailed budget narrative in another part of the application that spells out what exactly you plan to do in each area of the ED 524. If you have an approved indirect cost rate, you need to provide details in the budget narrative as well as on this sheet. Construction, as I had mentioned before, is not an allowable cost. Section B of the form should only be completed if you are making a matching commitment, and this is not a program that requires a match.
Next, I’m going to talk a little bit about the GEPA statement, and this does not need to be a long statement. Section 427 of GEPA requires an applicant’s Federal funds to include a description of the steps they will take to ensure equitable access to and participation in the grant project. There are some applicants who get confused. This is not simply a statement saying we don’t discriminate. To meet the requirement of this statement, an applicant must include, you have to include, a statement that does two things. First of all, you have to identify at least one barrier that might prevent someone from participating in grant activity, and then you need to explain what you plan to do to overcome the barrier. That’s it.

Now, this is, we’re going to talk about the Grants.gov narrative attachment, and, as Erin explained before, all of them need to be uploaded as PDF files.
First of all, you need to provide an abstract, and the abstract narrative needs to include the name and the address of the organization and the name, phone number, and e-mail address of the contact person for this project. What we want on the abstract is a brief and clear statement of the, you have to clearly state the project title, if applicable, and we want to know what are your goals, what do you, what are the expected outcomes, and what are the contributions that you hope the project will make for research, policy, practice, or whatever. The abstract is going to be read by a broad range of audiences, so we ask that you use clear language that a range of audiences can understand. The abstract can be either single or double-spaced.

Now, the narrative—well, I’m not sure if I mentioned the abstract should be [inaudible]. The narrative has several components. What you need to do is you need to cover the selection criteria, explain how your program addresses each of those, each of the seven, and then you want to talk about the competitive priority and what ways your project maybe meets the competitive priority. Then you also need to address the application requirements, and you should double-space all your text in the narrative and use a font that is either 12 point or larger and no smaller than 10 pitch (characters per inch). You need to provide a table of contents.
The following information, and, again, this is described in the Application Requirements section of the Federal Register notice, is expected to include an application narrative of the following. This information is expected to be included in the application narrative. First of all, we're looking for a clear description of the goals and the desired outcomes of the proposed collaboration and the current or proposed measures that will be used to gauge success in meeting those goals and described outcomes. We also would like a description of any past existing or anticipated obstacles to implementing the collaboration or to disseminating information about the collaboration and the strategies that were or will be used to help overcome the obstacles.

[Audio not captured for Slide 66]
There are some other attachments that we ask that you provide. We need you to give us resumes for the project director and other key personnel that you identify in your application. This is definitely important—with the collaboration, you need to submit a partnership agreement that meets the requirements of what was spelled out here on the PowerPoint presentation. Your agreement needs to include written assurances from authorized officials of entities involved in the partnership that all participants, first of all, agree to submit an application for an award and to have read, understand, and agree with the application for the competition. And, authorize the executive summary or narrative of the application, with proprietary information redacted, to be published on the U.S. Department of Education’s website, which is www.ed.gov. Also it should be published at www.data.ed.gov or on the National Charter School Resource Center website, which is www.charterschoolcenter.org, or any other website or publication deemed appropriate by the Secretary.

Budget narrative—we’ve talked a little bit about this. You provide an itemized budget narrative that gives more detailed information about expenses in each category listed in Section A of ED 524 Form. If you have proposed a grant period that extends beyond one year, where it’s going to ask you to break down each category according to the budget year. We list a resource for you where you can receive more information about the budget. It’s an OMB Circular A-122, and, as I mentioned before, this is a non-construction grant, and CSP funds may not be used for construction, which will add to the permanent value of a property or appreciably prolong its life.
Awards notices—this is the good part for anyone who is successful. If your application is successful, we’ll notify your U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators and send you a Grant Awards Notification, which is a GAN. We may also notify you informally as well. If your application is not evaluated or not selected for funding, you’ll also be notified. I guess we’ll have Stefan give us some closing words.

STEFAN:
Yeah, so that about sums it up. You know, we thank you for your interest in the competition. We have been capturing all of your questions, and we will get back to you. As I mentioned, we’ll get back to everyone. We’re looking at some of them now and see if there’s any easy to answer. We’re very excited about learning about the exemplary collaborations, which high-quality charter schools are engaged in internationally to advance this policy issue. If you have further questions, please contact Nancy Paulu, and her contact information is there.

Let’s see, we’re just kind of scrolling through some of the recent questions. There’s a question when awards will be made.
ERIN:
This is Erin. Awards will be made no later than October 1, 2012. We will be, we have recorded this conversation, so this presentation will be available at a later time. We'll send out the link once it’s posted to everybody who registered for the call. Somebody also asked a question about allowable costs. The resource Nancy mentioned, OMB Circular A-122—these are the cost principles for non-profit organizations, and it gives a general overview of what is allowable under a Federal grant. However, costs that you propose need to be allowable and reasonable to the project that you’re proposing, so keep in mind the activities that you’re going to complete, what is necessary to complete it, and how reasonable is that request. Budgets are reviewed based on those factors: reasonability, allowability, and focus on the grant project that you proposed.

Somebody asked about proposing or applying for a 12-month project or a 24-month project. As Nancy explained, this grant is for up to 24 months, which means, depending on the needs of your proposed project, you request that amount of time. You could request 12 months if that’s all you need, 18 months, or 24 months.

Somebody also asked a question about character award limits in the application. There are—for the application package, you’ll notice that the narrative section is limited to 30 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font. There is no overall limit on other attachments or additional sections that you include in the application. However, do be aware—people do review these, and so if you’re going to be including a lot of attachments, tables of contents indicating where things can be found are very, very helpful.
STEFAN:
There’s a question here about is this grant for proposed collaborations or established collaborations? This is for existing collaborations, and the funds and the award may be used to expand upon that collaboration, and that’s mentioned in the notice.

Okay, so I believe we’re going to close this out, and, as I mentioned, we will get back to folks with individual questions, so please contact Nancy. We really look forward—we realize that it is somewhat of a short turnaround given that this is from our National Activities funds. There was some special actions that had to be taken to cue this up. But we believe that these successful collaborations that are already occurring on the field should be able to put together some high-quality applications before the application deadline that will permit us to obligate these funds by the end of this fiscal year, which is September 30, 2012.

Thank you very much for your time, and we look forward to receiving your applications. Have a great day.