

FY 24 CAEFLS Competitive Grant Application Questions and Answers - FINAL

Questions received and answered through February 8, 2023

Questions received and answered from February 9 through February 15, 2023

No questions were received between February 16 and the question deadline of February 21, 2023.

Assurances

A-1. Question: Please confirm that an applicant should complete page 8 of the assurances and certificates document (box 4 – of the Disclosure of Lobbying Activities) as a subawardee and not a prime recipient as has been done in the past?

A-1. Answer: This form needs to be completed ONLY if your agency is disclosing lobbying activities. If so, you should indicate sub-awardee.

Budget

B-1. Question: Our institution has advised that we include a salary escalation calculation in the FY24 budget to allow for COLAS. Where would we include this in our budget as an additional line item?

B-1. Answer: You would show the total salary or hourly rate that includes the salary escalation calculation for COLAS. Do not show this as an additional line item in your budget.

B-2. Question: We use CASAS as our Assessment tool for adult learners. As you are probably aware they have submitted for approval a new series for ABE Math testing which I can't wait to start using as there are 5 levels instead of only 2. (It is very hard to get a level gain the way the system is currently set up.). As soon as these new assessments become available, we would like to purchase and begin using them. However, there is no current pricing available. Can we include a line item for CASAS tests pending NRS approval and release?

B-2. Answer: Yes, you can include any projected/expected spending for future needs.

B-3. Question: We have also been looking into using eTests as an assessment tool but right now are limited as far as having adequate testing tools - i.e. iPads. Can we include the purchase of iPads for testing purposes? (This has not been allowed in the past.)

B-3. Answer: Yes, you can include the purchase of iPads for testing purposes. Keep in mind this would need approval from MD Labor prior to purchasing.

B-4. Question: CASAS is introducing new ELA assessments to be fully implemented in 2024. Both Listening and Reading tests - going from 3 to 5 levels. STEPS reading test will be available for use beginning summer 2023. Will programs be able to budget the cost of the new CASAS Assessments?

B-4. Answer: Yes, you can include any projected/expended spending for future needs.

B-5. Question: There is a mandatory "Infrastructure Cost" agreement with our county workforce partner that we must budget in our FY24 grant. This infrastructure cost agreement is significant, at \$18,376. After revising our FY24 budgets, including this amount means we are just slightly over in 5% administrative costs cap, so we are able to make most of the admin costs fit within the cap. Can an institution applying for FY24 CAEFLS funds request an exemption for some of these Infrastructure Costs counting toward the 5% admin cap, allowing us to maintain the 5% administrative cap?

B-5. Answer: You are encouraged to work with your local workforce partner and determine if the amounts charged are reasonable and appropriate. Another option is to ask your local agency to cover all or some of the infrastructure costs. If you have non-restricted agency funds, those could also be used to cover your infrastructure costs. If after all discussions have been exhausted and you are unable to make the necessary adjustments to meet the 5% admin cost cap, you may request an exemption. However, there is no guarantee that an exemption will be granted.

Consideration 5

CON5-1. Question: The 4th question under Consideration 5 states, “Describe with citations how the scheduling of instruction is of sufficient intensity to enable participants to achieve substantial learning gains”. Are we being asked to cite a specific adult education study? Or should we cite our experiences within our own programs that correlate class intensity to learning gains? I haven’t found any research that points to an evidence-based statement on what the ideal class intensity is to produce gains.

CON5-1. Answer: You are not asked to cite a specific adult education study. You can use whatever evidence you have or can find that supports your decision when determining your scheduling of class and the intensity of those class offerings.

CON5-2. Question: The application asks for a description of our Waitlist and Attendance policies as part of Consideration 5. However, after Consideration 13 under Required Documentation, it asks to attach the Learner Attendance Policy and Waitlist Policy. If our policies can fit in the boxes for consideration 5, do they also need to be included as an attachment?

CON5-2. Answer: For consistency, attach the required documents as requested.

Consideration 13

CON13-1. Question: The application asks for a description of our Waitlist and Attendance policies as part of Consideration 5. However, after Consideration 13 under Required Documentation, it asks to attach the Learner Attendance Policy and Waitlist Policy. If our policies can fit in the boxes for consideration 5, do they also need to be included as an attachment?

CON 13-1. Answer: For consistency, attach the required documents as requested.

Demonstrated Effectiveness

DE-1. Question: (Referring to the Demonstrated Effectiveness chart on page 5)

Number Who Achieved at Least One Educational Functioning Level Gain* (C)	Who Attained a Secondary School Diploma or Its Recognized Equivalent (D)	Percentage Achieving Measurable Skill Gains ** (E)	Number of Participants (B)	Number Who Achieved at Least One Educational Functioning Level Gain** (C)	Who Attained a Secondary School Diploma or Its Recognized Equivalent (D)	Percentage Achieving Measurable Skill Gains *** (E)	Number of Participants (B)	Number Who Achieved at Least One Educational Functioning Level Gain** (C)	Who Attained a Secondary School Diploma or Its Recognized Equivalent (D)	Percentage Achieving Measurable Skill Gains *** (E)
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I am assuming that the ** in the orange and green C columns are really the same * as in the blue C column, and the *** in the orange and green E columns are really the same ** as in the blue E column.

This is the only way the explanations make sense and there is no *** explanation:

*The number of participants who completed a level is measured by the progression from a participant's pre-test to post-test.
 **Column E = (Column C + Column D) / Column B
 The number of participants that have completed a level or have achieved their high school diploma or its equivalency both in the same year will only count as one Measurable Skill Gain.

DE-1. Answer: Yes, that is correct - * in column C and ** in column D for the blue, red, and green sections.

DE-2. Question: Second question: starting in FY22 the specific IELCE/IET MSGs were added to Table 4 and they counted as an MSG, but this is not on the chart in the application. When I add our numbers to the chart from the final FY22 NRS Table 4, the MSG column will not match with the original final Table since this chart doesn't count those. Is that ok?

DE-2. Answer: For the Demonstrated Effectiveness chart, only include Educational Functioning Level gains and Secondary School Diploma achievement in calculating the Percentage Achieving Measurable Skill Gains. We realize this may result in a lower Percentage Achieving Measurable Skill Gains than is on your NRS Table 4.

DE-3. Question: Since we are implementing an Adult High School model that is new to the state of Maryland, can we leverage data from our agency in other parts of the country that have implemented the same exact model for the 3 prior years of “demonstrated effectiveness”?

DE-3. Answer: An eligible provider as defined by WIOA Sec 203(5), includes “...an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy activities...” Under 34 CFR 463.24, the local provider is the entity providing services and that entity is the one that must be able to demonstrate effectiveness. Therefore, the local Maryland agency applying for these funds must be the agency that can demonstrate effectiveness, and cannot leverage data from other agencies outside of Maryland.

DE-4. Question: (For current Maryland Title II Grantees) I don't think we can access the numbers who gained or retained employment for the grant (chart on page 5). Does MD Labor staff have those available or can I find them somewhere?

DE-4. Answer: MD Labor does not have this data for each local program. If you do not have exact data, you may report an approximation or estimate. As this is considered in your eligibility determination we do not recommend that you enter N/A.

DE-5. Question: Would you please advise on how to obtain these numbers? Would they come from the NRS tables?

FY 20				FY 21				FY 22			
Number of Participants	Number Who Gained or Retained Employment	Number Who Attained a Secondary School Diploma	Number Who Transitioned to Postsecondary Education or Training	Number of Participants	Number Who Gained or Retained Employment	Number Who Attained a Secondary School Diploma	Number Who Transitioned to Postsecondary Education or Training	Number of Participants	Number Who Gained or Retained Employment	Number Who Attained a Secondary School Diploma	Number Who Transitioned to Postsecondary Education or Training

DE-5. Answer: You are required to populate this chart with data you have collected or you may use approximations or estimates based on your knowledge of your program and student population. The Number of Participants is available on NRS Table 4. Employment data is only obtained in LACES at the state level, and is not available on NRS Table 5 for each program, unless that program entered that information themselves. Applicants should use other internal data or estimates for employment data. Secondary School Diploma attainment is available on NRS Table 4. Data on transitioning to post-secondary education or training is available on NRS Table 5 if the program entered this information for FY20-FY22 in LACES. If not, applicants should use other internal data or estimates.

DE-6. Question: What is the most accurate way to collect information for the employment and postsecondary education table? I used a combination of Table 4, 5, and 6. Is that the best way? I used the "employed" number from Table 6 to determine how many participants gained or retained employment, but is that wrong? Should I look somewhere else?

Follow-up question, if I use table 5 for "Number Who Transitioned to Postsecondary Education or Training," should I combine "Attained a Secondary School Diploma/Recognized Equivalent and Enrolled in Postsecondary Education or Training within one year of exit ****" and "Attained a Postsecondary Credential while enrolled or within one year of exit *****"?

DE-6. Answer: You are required to populate this chart with data you have collected or you may use approximations or estimates based on your knowledge of your program and student population. The Number of Participants is available on NRS Table 4. Employment data is only obtained in LACES at the state level, and is not available on NRS Table 5 for each program, unless that program entered that information themselves. Applicants should use other internal data or estimates for employment data. Secondary School Diploma attainment is available on NRS Table 4. Data on transitioning to post-secondary education or training is available on NRS Table 5 if the program entered this information for FY20-FY22 in LACES. If not, applicants should use other internal data or estimates.

Determination of Eligibility

DoE-1. Question: Is my agency eligible for this funding opportunity?

DoE-1. Answer: Page 4 of the Application lists all of the eligibility criteria. An agency must meet all of these criteria in order to be eligible for funding.

DoE-2. Question: If we have WIOA funding that is administered by MOED (Baltimore City), but have never received WIOA Title II before, which performance measure chart should we complete?

DoE-2. Answer: If you are not currently receiving MD Labor Title II funds, you would complete the charts on page 6 of the application using your program's data.

Family Literacy

FL-1. Question: I am concerned that our Family Literacy partner will struggle to meet the timeline to provide a signature. They are required to move this through the Attorney General, and can make a request to have it expedited, but they informed me it may take up to six months to be approved for signatures. Mind you, we have been long-standing partners with a successful history. The document and program signatures have already been completed and the document has been turned over to our partner. If I must send in an unsigned form, will it be considered for access to Family Literacy funding?

FL-1. Answer: You should submit your Family Literacy Partnership Expectations with as many applicable signatures as possible. If you cannot obtain the signatures from the partner agency by the submission deadline, you are permitted to obtain them after the deadline. You want to submit the Partnership Expectations with all necessary signatures as soon as possible.

Formatting

FORM-1. Question: We noticed none of the boxes in the continuation application narrative sections expand (files FY 24 MD Labor-AELS Application (Word) and FY 24 MD Labor-AELS-IELCE-IET Application (Word)). Is this deliberate? Are answers to be limited to the space provided?

FORM-1. Answer: Yes, this is deliberate. Pages 31, 32, and 36 of the Overview indicate the considerations with preset textboxes. Page 2 of the Application states "Text boxes are preset unless otherwise noted". Your answers are limited to the space provided.

NEDP

N-1. Question: If I just want to apply for certification as a NEDP site, do I need to fill out all of these forms or just those that deal with NEDP.

N-1. Answer: You would need to complete the Adult Education and Family Literacy Services (AEFLS) competitive grant application, including the general assurances and any other information or funding needs necessary to support the services offered to your clients. The NEDP application is an optional/additional application to the main AEFLS application. The NEDP application does not stand alone. There is necessary information in the AEFLS application that is not included in the NEDP application (cover page, determination of eligibility, considerations, data quality checklist, etc.).

N-2. Question: Can we apply to become a NEDP certified site without accepting state funding? Our organization does not accept state funding.

N-2. Answer: You can apply for whatever funding you would like. Keep in mind that this reduces the number of clients you can serve and your ability to serve them effectively. We strongly encourage you to consider all funding lines that would benefit the needs of your clients.

Overview

O-1. Question: On page five, for the Eligible Individual section, if a student is 18, do they still need to provide official documentation that they are officially withdrawn from high school, or is being 18 sufficient to receive services?

O-1. Answer: If a student is 18, there is a strong possibility that they could be enrolled in the K-12 system. You would need documentation to show that the student is not enrolled in the K-12 system. If the student is unable to provide that proof through the public school system, the student can write a statement attesting to the fact that they are not enrolled in the public school system.

O-2. Question: On page five, for the Eligible Individual section, the two bullet points “Is unable to compute or solve problems...” and “Does not have a secondary school diploma...” may be contradictory. A student with a secondary diploma may assess well below the ASE level of literacy. Are we able to serve students with a secondary diploma, but have NRS literacy levels 4 and below?

O-2. Answer: WIOA states “priority shall be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient.” Additionally, “the State’s WIOA Title II workforce preparation activities, programs, and services are designed to assist participation in acquiring a combination of basic academic skills, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills...” Therefore, you are permitted to serve a student with a secondary school diploma and who is basic skills deficient. Refer to page 9 of the “Basic Education Skills and English Language Assessments” policy.

O-3. Question: On page 18 (the very bottom sentence) provides requirements regarding the documentation of attendance. I see that there is no mention of “blue ink.” Does this mean that blue ink is no longer required for learners to use for signatures?

O-3. Answer: Ideally, you would require learners to use blue ink for signatures. During a monitoring visit this would provide clear evidence that this is an original signature as opposed to a copy of a signature.

O-4. Question: The purpose of the funding opportunity denotes that “this Competitive Grant Application seeks providers of Adult Education and Family Literacy Services who will enter into a subaward granted by the MD Labor in order to carry out the purpose of WIOA Title II” (pg. 3). In the past, there has been no mention of applicants entering into a subaward agreement with MD Labor.

O-4. Answer: The language provided here gives a clearer picture of the awarding structure. OCTAE awards the State and the State subawards to the programs. Therefore, programs have always been a subawardee, whether or not it has been stated..

O-5. Question: In reference to O-4 Question, can you please provide information on how this will manifest itself if an organization is successful?

O-5. Answer: See O-4 Answer.

O-6. Question: “According to WIOA Sec. 203(4), the term eligible individual means an individual: Has attained 18 years of age
(Note: Maryland Compulsory Attendance Law requires learners to be enrolled in school until age 18. Grant funds may only serve learners above these age limits.)”
Are there any alternatives to serve participants 16 & 17 years old in this program? Although the Compulsory Education is age 18, many 16 & 17 year olds are withdrawing and enrolling in homeschool, however they are non-compliant with portfolios and referred to our agency.

O-6. Answer: There are a few circumstances in which a student would be allowed to be enrolled into a MD Labor funded adult literacy program. The link for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Youth Program (Maryland’s Compulsory Education Law) is on page 2 of the Resources. Under MD Labor funding, a student cannot be enrolled if he/she is homeschooled. Those students would need to be withdrawn from the public school system, which includes homeschooling.

O-7. Question: Adult Education Services Definition: In accordance with WIOA Sec. 203(1), the term ‘adult education’ means “academic instruction and education services below the postsecondary level that increases an individual’s ability to:

Read, write, and/or speak in English and perform mathematics or other activities necessary for attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent”

What is the measuring tool for “education below”? Is it passing a GED test or showing improvement? What is the timeline for that performance measure?

O-7. Answer: See page 9 of the Basic Education Skills and English Language Assessments for the definition of “basic skills deficient”. The link is on page 1 of the Resources. There is no timeline for any performance measure per student. However, programs are held to the performance measure targets from OCTAE for the programs within a fiscal year shown on page 12 of the Overview. .

O-8. Question: What are the requirements for testing? Do they need to be CASAS or can we use our own testing? Is there a separate performance measure for participants who are English language learners?

O-8. Answer: See page 10 (ABE) and 11 (ESL) of the Basic Education Skills and English Language Assessments for the approved assessments. If you are unfamiliar with assessments for MD Labor funded programs, you are encouraged to read the entire document mentioned here. .

O-9. Question: “The IET must be part of a career pathway. The training proposed must meet local or regional industry needs identified in the local workforce plan. MD Labor strongly recommends that adult education providers plan these activities with the participation of other core program partners, certified training providers, and businesses to develop programs that will meet the needs of a high-demand industry. IET programs should be a component in a comprehensive Career Pathway program.”

Our program offers academic education services in-house. Would that count as meeting the educational need criteria?

O-9. Answer: It depends on the content of the curriculum provided to your students as to whether it meets the required components of an IET.

O-10. Question: CASAS is introducing new ELA assessments to be fully implemented in 2024. Both Listening and Reading tests - going from 3 to 5 levels. STEPS reading test will be available for use beginning summer 2023. Will programs (if grant awarded) receive additional guidance and a timeline for implementation of the new assessments from MD Labor?

O-10. Answer: Yes, upon NRS approval and in conjunction with the guidance and timelines from CASAS, MD Labor will provide additional guidance and timelines for the new assessments.

Professional Development

PD-1. Question: Is it possible to select more than one priorities/ focus areas for some PD activities like conference, VTI etc?

PD-1. Answer: Yes, indicate all priorities/focus areas that apply to the PD activity.

PD-2. Question: For conferences, webinars, VTI etc, we do not know the theme of the event yet, so it could be difficult to put specific learning objectives. Therefore, can we put general expected outcomes for attending a conference/webinar?

PD-2. Answer: Yes, you can put general expected outcomes for attending a conference or webinar.

PD-3. Question: Under the column 'Facilitator', is it possible to use TBD when we are unsure who the person is?

PD-3. Answer: Yes, if the facilitator is unknown at the time of your application submission, you can use "TBD".

PD-4. Question: CASAS is introducing new ELA assessments to be fully implemented in 2024. Both Listening and Reading tests - going from 3 to 5 levels. STEPS reading test will be available for use beginning summer 2023. Will programs receive guidance and training on use, or should training and associated costs be included in the PD plan?

PD-4. Answer: Yes, upon NRS approval and in conjunction with the guidance and timelines from CASAS, MD Labor will provide additional guidance and timelines for the new assessments.

PD-5. Question: In the grant application overview, it states: Applications must be completed in form and content as specified. The initial Professional Development Plan must be submitted as Section 3 with the full grant application. Once the Notice of Grant Award is received, a final professional development plan must be submitted within 30 days. In the webinar, you indicated that the PD plan should be submitted 30 days after the Notice of Grant Award. Should we be submitting the PD Plan with our application?

PD-5. Answer: Yes, you should be submitting the PD Plan with your application. This will be a preliminary plan. Based on final funding amounts, your PD plan may change, but you need to be planning for your PD activities now. This will also provide the reviewers with information regarding your ability to provide and carry out PD activities.

Miscellaneous

M-1. Question: I cannot make the date of the Technical Assistance webinar. Will this be recorded so I can watch at a later date?

M-1. Answer: The Technical Assistance Briefing recording will be posted on the application website.

M-2. Question: Is this grant different from Title II funding?

M-2. Answer: No, this is funding for Title II.

M-3. Question: Is this funding for Maryland's Adult High Schools?

M-3. Answer: An eligible organization may submit an application for funding to provide adult education services and activities that are in accordance with the purpose and outcomes of WIOA Title II.

M-4. Question: If we have WIOA funding that is administered by MOED (Baltimore City), but have never received WIOA Title II before, which performance measure chart should we complete?

M-4. Answer: If you are not currently receiving MD Labor Title II funds, you would complete the charts on page 6 of the application using your program's data.

M-5. Question: With regards to the FY 2024 MD Labor Consolidated Adult Education and Family Literacy Services Grant Application, is it permissible to add cited works as end notes underneath the table of the application, to save space in the body of the application? Also, is it permissible to add links to data sources, rather than adding the data in the body of the narrative – as a space saver?
See below as an example:

Who will provide the support services?

Depending on the identified need for support services, Program participants are directed, referred or supported by WIOA Program partners, community-based organizations (e.g., [Catholic Charities](#), [MUM](#)) or government agencies (e.g., [Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center](#)), as well as other Montgomery College Programs and Offices (DDS, Community Engagement, MC Foundation, [Shaw Center](#)) that collaborate to support learners by removing barriers to participation and completion.

Contextualization of adult education

<https://tcall.tamu.edu/docs/ContextualizingAdultEdInstructionCareerPathways.pdf>

M-5. Answer: If you do not want to include citations in the textbox provided, attach them as an additional document as directed in the grant application instructions (Page 32 of the Overview.). Reviewers will not be checking websites to obtain data or other program information. You are expected to supply the pertinent information that you want reviewers to consider when reading your application.

M-6. Question: I just want to confirm that this competitive grant period is for four (4) fiscal years, and not three (3). The dates provided in the RFP (July 1, 2023-June 30, 2027) correspond to FY24, FY25, FY26, and FY27. Is this correct?

M-6. Answer: Yes, this is correct. This competitive grant period is for four fiscal years.