**STATE OF MAINE REQUEST FOR APPLICATION**

**RFA SUBMITTED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS SUMMARY**

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| **RFA NUMBER AND TITLE:** | RFA# 202403064 Pre-K Expansion Pilot Grant |
| **RFA ISSUED BY:** | Department of Education |
| **SUBMITTED QUESTIONS DUE DATE:** | April 8, 2024, no later than 11:59 p.m., local time |
| **QUESTION & ANSWER SUMMARY ISSUED:** | April 17, 2024 |
| **PROPOSAL DUE DATE:** | April 25, 2024, no later than 11:59 p.m., local time |
| **PROPOSALS DUE TO:** | Proposals@maine.gov |
| **LINK TO THE INFORMATIONAL RECORDING:** | <https://youtu.be/63yyCH4ScaQ?si=DLUvAMUw2NfxPfGQ>  |

**Provided below are submitted written questions received and the Department’s answers.**

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| **1** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **RFA Terms/Acronyms with Definitions page 2)** | **Does before and after school support at the childcare count as partnership if we have a full day/five days a week program?**  |
| **Answer** |
| The community partner is a partner in the implementation of Public Pre-K.  Before and after school care is not supported through this grant opportunity.    |

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| **2** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **Part 1. Section A. Purpose and Background PG.5**   | **Do we need a partner if we are looking to expand our current program of ½ day/four days a week to full day/five days a week?**  |
| **Answer** |
| This grant is for new partnerships only. Expansion of SAU school-based programming or programming with an existing partner is not allowable through this opportunity.  |

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| **3** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **Part 1. Section A. Purpose and Background PG.5**    | **In RSU 1 we already have a partnership with the Bath YMCA with an MOU and 16 spots.  Are we eligible to apply for 8 more spots to be added to our existing partnership with the Y to be able to serve more families or is this money only for districts who have yet to form a partnership at all and are just establishing?** |
| **Answer** |
| This grant is for new partnerships only. Expansion of SAU school-based programming or programming with an existing partner is not allowable through this opportunity. |

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| **4** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **Part 1. Section A. Purpose and Background PG.5**   | **Does a program have to run 5 days? Or does it go by hours?**  |
| **Answer** |
| For this grant, 5 days are required. This can be 5 full days or 5 days at a half day schedule of at least 4 hours per day. |

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| **5** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **Part 1. Section A. Purpose and Background PG.5**   | **Is there only 1 partnership allowed per SAU?**  |
| **Answer** |
| Yes, one partnership per SAU may be proposed for this specific grant. Districts can have other partnerships in place already, but only one new partnership may be funded through this grant.   |

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| **6** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND PG.5**  | **Can there be more than one partner site in the MOU? More than one SAU?** |
| **Answer** |
| SAUs can only apply with one partner site. If the partner site serves children from multiple SAUs, one SAU could serve as fiscal agent on behalf of group of SAUs or each SAU could submit a separate application.  |

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| **7** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND PG.5** | **If salaries are higher in the school, can you request more funding?** |
| **Answer** |
| You can only request funding up to the ceiling amounts; you cannot request more than the ceiling amounts.   |

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| **8** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND PG.5** | **Is accreditation required?** |
| **Answer** |
| No, accreditation is not required. However, SAU applicants must demonstrate that partners can meet the requirements of Chapter 124.  |

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| **9** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND PG.5** | **Is there a specific curriculum requirement?** |
| **Answer** |
| Following Chapter 124 rules, the curriculum needs to be evidence-based. There is not a specific curriculum requirement other than that.  |

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| **10** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND PG.5** | **To what extent can SAUs count on a similar level of funding for 2nd year?** |
| **Answer** |
| Upon successful implementation during school year 2024-25, grantees will be eligible for a second year of grant funding for the 2025-26 school year.  |

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| **11** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND PG.5** | **Referring to pg. 12 of Chapter 124, Basic Approval Standards: Public Preschool Programs - Is free transportation for enrolling students required as part of this pilot? Would it be provided by the SAU? Would it be required after the pilot during subsequent years if the partnership continues?** |
| **Answer** |
| Transportation is not required, but whether or not it will be included should be outlined in the MOU between the Community partner and SAU. |

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| **12** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND PG.5** |  **Is it allowable to not serve lunch and ask families to send in lunch?**  |
| **Answer** |
| In Maine SAUs, the expectation is that students have access to meals. Children need to be provided the option of meals at no cost. This could be in the form of catering provided by the SAU. It is not allowable to expect families to provide meals.   |

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| **13**  | **RFA Section & Page Number**  | **Question**  |
| **PART 1. SECTION A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND PG.5** | **Referring to pg. 8 in Chapter 124 Rules – Is providing meals to children who attend a center-based program required to those children who are coming from an SAU?  Would the partner program be required to serve meals to all children who attend regardless of whether it is through the public Pre-K model? If the center asks families to supply meals currently, and does not have the capacity to prepare meals at their facility, is this allowed?** |
| **Answer**  |
| In Maine SAUs, the expectation is that students have access to meals. Children need to be provided with the option of meals at no cost. This could be in the form of catering provided by the SAU. It is not allowable to expect families to provide meals.   |

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| **14** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND PG.5** | **Any suggestions on who in the SAU a potential community partner should contact?**  |
| **Answer** |
| Reach out to the superintendent to explore possibilities for partnership the SAU as the SAU will be the fiscal agent for the grant.   |

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| **15** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND PG.5** | **Do community partners follow the school calendar?**  |
| **Answer** |
| The minimum number of school days, per Chapter 124, must be met. Many current partnerships follow the school calendar, but some variation can occur. The MOU should specify whether the SAU calendar will be followed or if there are any variations. Partner locations need to take attendance. SAUs and partners should have should also clarify in-service days, snow days, and substitute coverage.  |

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| **16** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND PG.5** | **What is the incentive for SAUs to partner with already established, high-quality programs? Could there be incentives built-in to encourage SAUs to partner?** |
| **Answer** |
| The benefits of a mixed delivery approach to Public Pre-K includes expanding the number of children gaining access to a high-quality public pre-k program and allowing families a choice in Pre-K options that best fit their needs. Also, SAUs are able to tap into resources and expertise already available in the Early Childhood community.  |

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| **17** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND PG.5** | **Would regular tuition be waived?**  |
| **Answer** |
| Yes, since students will be attending as Public Pre-K students they cannot be charged tuition. If students stay beyond the hours determined for the school day, then families pay for that portion of the day. No tuition can be charged for public Pre-K hours.  |

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| **18** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND PG.5** |  **What if a non-profit has 2 buildings in 2 separate SAUs?**  |
| **Answer** |
| An SAU may partner with a community provider located outside their catchment area.  |

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| **19** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND PG.5 and APPENDIX A PG. 25** |  **What are the requirements for the lead teacher?** |
| **Answer** |
| The lead teacher must hold an 081 or 029 teaching endorsement. Appendix A provides details for ways to attain certification or refer to the [DOE certification](https://www.maine.gov/doe/cert/requirements) page for information.  |

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| **20** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **SECTION A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND PG.5 and APPENDIX A PG. 25** | **Where can we find information on what lead teachers would need for certification?** |
| **Answer** |
| The lead teacher must hold an 081 or 029 teaching endorsement. Appendix A provides details for ways to attain certification or refer to the [DOE certification](https://www.maine.gov/doe/cert/requirements) page for information. |

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| **21** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND PG.6** | **Do students have to be 4? Can a student Kindergarten age but not attending Kindergarten be included?** |
| **Answer** |
| Students must be 4-year-old by the October 15 deadline in the 2024-25 school year. For students who are Kindergarten age and are seeking placement in Pre-K or an additional year of Pre-K, the SAU would make that determination.    |

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| **22** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND PG.6** | **What is the regular funding formula for funds from the state to qualifying districts and how does this rate compare to the rate offered for this grant?** |
| **Answer** |
| The funding formula is the Essential Programs and Services (EPS) formula and the amount of state funding varies per SAU. The funding scale offered through the grant is based on a per classroom rate generated through comparisons to a number of resources, including EPS, National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) and outreach to other states.  |

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| **23** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION A PURPOSE AND BACK GROUND and SECTION D ELIGBLITY TO SUBMIT APPLICATIONS PG. 6-7)** | **Does this apply to minimum receiver districts who do not get funds currently? If so, what would happen after the pilot?** |
| **Answer** |
| The grant is open to all SAUs and EUTs, whether or not they are minimum receivers. The expectation for all is that there will be planning for sustainability once the grant is complete. After the grant, the SAU needs a plan for how it will continue to offer programming.   |

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| **24** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION B. GENERAL PROVISIONS PG.6** | **Who do childcare partners report to? Superintendent? Principal?**  |
| **Answer** |
| Administrative oversight will need to be discussed and determined for each SAU/partnership. In the application, the SAU contact person who will provide oversight and coordination (superintendent, principal, Pre-K coordinator, curriculum coordinator) will be noted. It is encouraged to outline administrative oversight in the MOU.    |

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| **25** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION B. GENERAL PROVISIONS PG.7** | **What about insurance? Will they be covered by the school department?**  |
| **Answer** |
| Partners and SAUs will need to review insurance policies to determine appropriate coverage.    |
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| **26** | **RFA Section & Page Number**  | **Question**  |
| **PART 1. SECTION D. AWARDS. PG.7** |   **Is there a minimum number of students served?**    |
| **Answer**  |
| Yes. The minimum number of students that must be served is 4 and the maximum is 16.   |

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| **27** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION D. AWARDS. PG.7** | **Are the minimum and maximum student enrollments for providers the same for a family vs. center-based (4-16)?** |
| **Answer** |
| Yes. The minimum number of students that must be served is 4 and the maximum is 16.   |

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| **28** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION D. AWARDS. PG.7** | **If a program cannot accommodate 4 spots, does that disqualify them from the grant?** |
| **Answer** |
|  Yes; at least 4 spots for Public Pre-K are required for this grant.  |

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| **29** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 1. SECTION D. AWARDS. PG.7** | **What is the timeline for decisions? How will this allow for recruitment and enrollment in time for fall?** |
| **Answer** |
| Applications will be scored following the submission deadline with conditional awards made following the scoring. Every effort will be made to ensure approved applicants have time for recruiting and enrollment for fall of 2024. |

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| **30** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **Part 2, Component A. Pg 9** | **Are there requirements or templates for what should be included in the Provider’s Letter of Intent?** |
| **Answer** |
| The Letter of Intent is outlined in the RFA application on pages 4 and 5.  |

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| **31** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **Part 2 Component B. Pg 9.** | **Does Public Notice have to be given prior to grant application submission? Must an SAU offer an open or competitive invitation for multiple providers, or can they select one independently?** |
| **Answer** |
| The submitted application must provide evidence regarding how public notice of Public Pre-K has been provided and disseminated by the SAU.  There is not a specified process for SAUs to identify a community provider for this grant opportunity.  |

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| **32** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **Part 2 Component C. Pg. 10** | **What qualifies as “joint professional learning opportunities”? For example, could our (as a provider) offering of a PD opportunity open to SAU staff count? Or our teachers attending an SAU-provided PD? Or SAU staff and provider staff attending an external conference or training (MaineAEYC conference)? Or does this need to be a separate, dedicated PD designed for both parties specifically?** |
| **Answer** |
| Joint professional learning should be discussed as part of the partnership and outlined in the MOU.  Professional learning should support the needs of the staff for which it is being designed. Professional learning may be differentiated for the partner and SAU staff, but SAUs are also encouraged to have partner and SAU Pre-K staff participating in joint professional learning opportunities. |

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| **33** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **Part 2 Component C. Pg. 10** | **To what extent must a provider’s full classroom mirror the demographics of the sending district? For example: if we are enrolling 4 children from the sending district, should their demographics reflect the sending district demographics as a whole, or must our whole classroom, inclusive of those not from sending district, reflect those same demographics?** |
| **Answer** |
| For the purposes of this grant, the Pre-K eligible children that will be included in the grant funding should mirror, to the greatest extent possible, the SAU’s demographics and include inclusive enrollment protocols.  |

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| **34** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **Part 2 Component C. Pg. 10** | **If this is a “choice” for enrolling families to attend our program, can we maintain expectations for parent participation as part of our “cooperative” model even if they are coming through public Pre-K pilot funds/sending SAU?** |
| **Answer** |
| Any additional requirements not outlined in Ch. 124 need to be negotiated between the SAU and community partner in the MOU agreement.  |

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| **35** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **Part 2 Component C. Pg. 11** | **To what extent does this mean that the SAU will evaluate the pilot itself (whether it worked, was effective, sustainable, met needs of families/provider/district, etc) vs. evaluating the provider’s Pre-K program?** |
| **Answer** |
| The DOE will be using its Technical Assistance visit process which includes classroom observations and a review of Chapter 124 implementation. For the purpose of this grant, Teaching Strategies Gold will be used as the child assessment and this data will be collected. The outside evaluator for the Preschool Development Grant will also be collecting information. SAUs should have a process for evaluating ongoing implementation of pre-k programming and this should be outlined in the MOU agreement with partners.  |

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| **36** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **Part 2 Component C. Pg. 11** | **Is the expectation that SAUs will be evaluating provider programs directly and providing formal evaluations to provider teachers? If providers are already evaluating their own teachers and formally assessing and tracking student progress, could they continue to own these processes and share that information back with the SAU?** |
| **Answer** |
| How data and information is collected and shared between the community partner and SAU should be determined through the MOU and evidence should be described in the application. All methods will need to demonstrate meeting Chapter 124 Standards.  |

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| **37** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **Part 2 Component C. Pg. 11** | **What are the “Preschool Development Grant evaluation activities” referred to here, and what expectations are there for both providers and the SAU? Is the time required to participate in these activities compensated separately, or should the associated costs (e.g. paying for staff time to participate) be worked into the grant budget? (If so, we would need to understand time commitments and expectations)** |
| **Answer** |
| Each partner site will receive a technical assistance visit in the fall and spring which will include a CLASS observation to inform resource and coaching needs. Sites will be required to utilize Teaching Strategies Gold at 3 check points to track children’s progress across all learning domains.  Technical assistance will be available to support partnerships and programs. Most of the evaluation activities will take place as part of the regular day. If there are expectations for time out of duty, those costs should be incorporated in the budget.  |

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| **38** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **Part 2 Component D. Pg. 11** | **Is there a complete list of allowable or non-allowable costs in the budget?** |
| **Answer** |
| In the budget examples pages in Appendix C there are examples of allowable costs under this grant. |

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| **39** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **Part 2 Component E. Pg. 12** | **Does the preference for Family Providers still hold if there are not Family Providers who are eligible/have capacity to offer Pre-K to SAU students in the SAU area?** |
| **Answer** |
|  The preference for Family Providers is through the awarding of additional Competitive Priority Points. If the SAU partners with a Center-based provider, the priority points will not be awarded. |

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| **40** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **Part 2 Component E. Pg. 12** | **Are the SES criteria the same as the CCAP income levels? (CACFP)**  |
| **Answer** |
| The SES criteria are not the same as CACFP.  The link to find SAU SES percentages is included on pg. 12 of the RFA.   |

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| **41** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 4. APPLICATION AND EVALUATION SELECTION. PG.22** | **When would funds be allocated?** |
| **Answer** |
| The funds will be allocated following contract approval based on grant awards. After contract approval, purchases can be made.  |

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| **42** | **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| **PART 4 SCORING CRITERIA PG. 15-22.** | **Will grant applications be less likely to be accepted if the district currently has Pre-K and it is not full?**  |
| **Answer** |
| All applications will be evaluated following the scoring criteria outlined on pages 15-22 in the RFA.  |