

# STEM Initiatives RFP

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Updated April 20, 2010

### Question 1:

**Can an organization submit a proposal for both Category A and Category B of the STEM Initiatives RFP?**

#### Answer:

Yes, an organization can submit a proposal for both Category A and Category B assuming the proposal aligns with the eligibility requirements outlined in the STEM Initiatives RFP:

**Category A:** Proposals may be submitted by a single organization representing regional partnerships of school districts, higher education entities, and business organizations desiring to support existing STEM schools and/or facilitate regional impact.

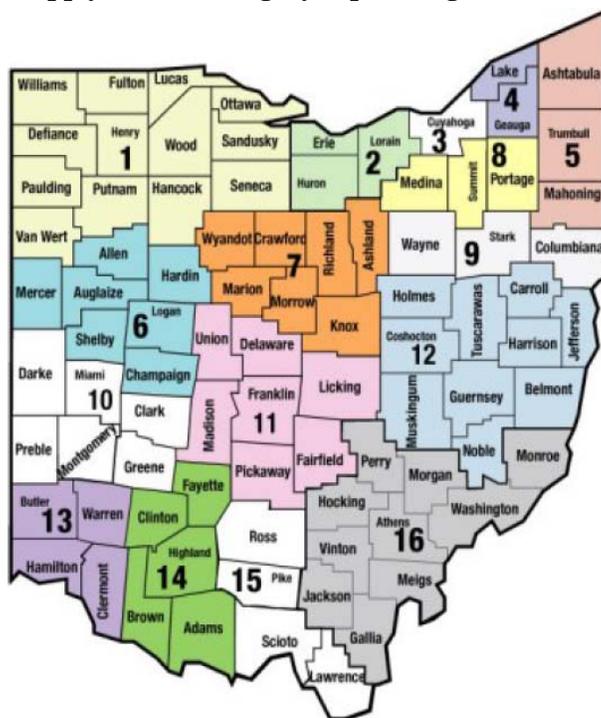
**Category B:** Proposals may be submitted from entities representing nonprofit organizations in partnership with (a) one or more LEAs or (b) a consortium of schools in the specified region. In addition, the partnership planning group must include at least one higher education entity (or consortium) and one STEM-oriented business (or consortium). An institution of higher education can be recognized as the nonprofit organization. The Northwest region is defined as the LEAs designated in regions 1, 6 and 7 by the Ohio Department of Education. The Southeast region is defined as the LEAs designated in regions 12, 14, 15 and 16. Applicants are encouraged but not required to include in the planning process the Regional Economic Development Directors assigned to their region from the Ohio Department of Development.

### Question 2:

**If my school or nonprofit organization lies outside the Northwest Ohio Regions of 1, 6 and 7 or Southeast Ohio Regions of 12, 14, 15 and 16, am I eligible to apply for the Category B planning grant?**

#### Answer:

Schools or nonprofit organizations located outside the Ohio Department of Education LEA regions listed above are **not eligible to directly apply for funding** through Category B of the RFP. However, schools or organizations outside the designated areas can partner with collaborative efforts in those regions as part of the planning grant. The specified regions should remain the targeted areas of service.



**Question 3:**

**Are there specific guidelines for how the grant monies should be used within either Category A or Category B?**

**Answer:**

The STEM Committee has not established specific guidelines for how monies should be spent to support the requirements for Category A or B funding. That said, the committee will determine if the proposed budget narrative aligns with the statewide impact intent of the RFP.

**Question 4:**

**Is there a specific format for Letters of Intent?**

**Answer:**

While there is no specific format or template for letters of intent, submitting entities must include the names of partnering organizations, the name of the primary grant contact and fiscal agent. Partnering organizations must include a school district, institution of higher education and a business organization. Listing the category/categories to which you are applying is preferred. Letters are due by 4 p.m. Friday, April 9.

**Question 5:**

**If an LEA partnered with a Career Tech Center and a Technical College along with regional business partners to promote career pathways for STEM, would they be eligible for Category A funding?**

**Answer:**

Yes, the partnership described above would be eligible for Category A funding. The partnership, however, must make it clear that STEM faculty engaged in the supported efforts demonstrate expertise in one of the STEM disciplines. This would include an educational background and/or experience that has led to either an advanced degree or evidence of success in a STEM endeavor.

**Question 6:**

**Is there a limit on the number of appendix materials that can be included with Category A or Category B proposals?**

**Answer:**

The RFP outlines that there is a 15 page limit on the number of letters of commitment that should be included in the proposal. It is strongly suggested that appendix materials – in addition to the letters of commitment – not exceed 15 pages. Any appendix material included with the proposal should build a strong case for funding the proposal. That said, it is not guaranteed that reviewers will read any appendix materials.

**Question 7:**

**Can the primary grant contact, fiscal contact and/or partnering organizations change from what is submitted in the letter of intent?**

**Answer:**

The primary grant contact and fiscal contact may change **only** if the proposal explicitly notes which entity submitted the original letter of intent. Partnering organizations can also change from

the letter of intent assuming that the proposal includes at least one partner from each of the following entities: school district, higher education institution and business organization.

***Question 8:***

**The RFP makes several references to favorable consideration to proposals that link to Northwest and Southeast Ohio. What would be considered a linkage? Does it require preexisting partnerships or activity, or can it be newly proposed opportunities?**

***Answer:***

There are several ways a proposal could demonstrate linkage to Northwest and Southeast Ohio. This could include demonstration of sharing lessons learned and innovations, demonstration of past partnership endeavors or newly proposed opportunities for engagement. If the proposal includes newly proposed opportunities for engagement, it must demonstrate the planning activities underway to bring Northwest and Southeast Ohio partners into the work.

***Question 9:***

**The RFP indicates that Category A applicants must “Demonstrate how the partnership will be engaged to ensure quality, access and equitable distribution of STEM funds to qualified recipients in each region.” Since regions will be charged with sub-granting the state dollars, is there a different schedule/timeline for funds to flow from the state grant recipients to the regional grant recipients?**

***Answer:***

The allocation of funds will be determined by the STEM Committee once it announces awarded applicants.

***Question 10:***

**What if there are circumstances that prevent our project from being completed during the grant period? Will extensions be granted?**

***Answer:***

It is expected that projects be completed and funds expended within the project period outlined in the applicant’s award letter. Any request to extend the project or expenditure period beyond that date will be judged by the STEM Committee on a case-by-case basis and will be evaluated based upon the merit of the request.

***Question 11:***

**Can Category A funding be carried over past September?**

***Answer:***

Possibly, yes, but that will be determined on a case-by-case- basis pending approval by the STEM Committee. Funding must be allocated by September 30 and spent within 90 days.

***Question 12:***

**What is the project activity timeline?**

***Answer:***

The project activity timeline begins May 2010 and concludes September 2010.

***Question 13:***

**Do the sub-grants outlined in Category A need to be out the door by September 30, 2010?**

***Answer:***

The funds should be committed during the activity period that begins in May 2010 and ends September 30.

***Question 14:***

**How is the STEM Committee defining existing STEM schools? And how is the STEM Committee defining regional impact?**

***Answer:***

Existing STEM schools are those that were established through H.B. 119, the state's FY 08-09 biennial budget. In regard to regional impact, the desire of the Committee is to not have just an island of excellence – they intend to enhance the success of the existing STEM schools through spreading best practices and lessons learned across regions.

***Question 15:***

**Can you clarify what is meant by “rigorous process for awarding grants” as outlined in Category A?**

***Answer:***

Winning proposals in Category A must create a similar process for disseminating regional sub-grants similar to the process adopted by the STEM Committee. The regional hubs must rate and evaluate any sub-grant submissions and define the criteria for a winning proposal.

***Question 16:***

**Is there a specific timeframe in which sub-grantees should spend their STEM funds?**

***Answer:***

The answer will depend on what is defined in the awarded Category A proposals. It is intended that the grant funds should support the programs within the FY 10 fiscal year. There will also be a second round of funding for the FY 11 budget late summer.

***Question 17:***

**What are examples of successful collaborations and partnerships for STEM initiatives?**

***Answer:***

There are several examples across the state that include but are not limited to actual cash donations. For instance, Duke Energy has donated money to the Cincinnati Hub Partnership to help establish the FUSION STEMM Center. Time Warner also supports the work of the center. In Cleveland, GE is donating a facility and providing in-kind support for the MC<sup>2</sup>STEM High School, which houses 10<sup>th</sup> grade students.

***Question 18:***

**Is it the intent of the STEM committee to fund only one grant for SE and one grant for NW Ohio?**

***Answer:***

The STEM Committee has not made an official decision on how many grants it will award in NW or SE Ohio. That said, they have allotted \$100,000 for the planning grant, and the intent is not to spread resources too thin, thus reducing regional impact. The Committee would like proposals to be as broad-based as possible.

***Question 19:***

**What does the RFP mean when it says "theory of action"?**

***Answer:***

Theory of action means what the applicant plans to do to establish systems that will last beyond the grant period. It is also a component of a sustainability plan.

***Question 20:***

**What is meant by data collection in the RFP?**

***Answer:***

The data collected by the STEM Committee will be facilitated through its private partner, Battelle. Battelle will work through the Ohio STEM Learning Network (OSLN) to provide guidance on data collection methods. There will be a central location for data collection, but there will not be a standard format to collect this data.

***Question 21:***

**How does the STEM Committee define business (big or small)? And are partners businesses required to be in Ohio?**

***Answer:***

The size of the business does not matter. Most businesses involved in STEM proposals in the past have had some connection to Ohio, but there are no limitations or restrictions on whether a business must be in Ohio to serve as a partner.

***Question 22:***

**What makes a high-quality Category A grant application?**

***Answer:***

A high-quality application would fulfill the requirements outlined in the RFP and include:

- Hubs that have reached out the areas that haven't been served by STEM schools;
- Detailed plans that are not limited by an isolated program;
- Clearly defined means of program sustainability; and
- Plans for regional impact.

***Question: 23:***

**What makes a high-quality Category B grant application?**

***Answer:***

The proposal must describe the creation of a STEM school in the given region and outline how quickly the program will be ready. It must also provide detailed plans for the creation of a regional STEM hub. The goal of Category B funding is to enable a partnership that will be eligible for Category A funding in FY 11.

***Question 24:***

**Describe a smart budget that supports a winning grant proposal.**

***Answer:***

A detailed budget must demonstrate sustainability of the program, must include reasonable numbers that make sense and add up, and must explicitly identify who will manage the funds.

***Question 25:***

**Are there specific qualifications/expertise the principal investigator of the proposal must have? Can there be multiple principal investigators?**

***Answer:***

There are not specific qualifications required for principal investigators in the RFP. However, a principal investigator who has the ability to ensure the work maintains the spirit and direction of the response to the RFP would add strength to the grantee's application. Applicants are not prohibited from having multiple principal investigators.

***Question 26:***

**The budget narrative included in the report templates requires that applicants outline cash and in-kind investments from partners. Is it a requirement to have cash and in-kind matching funds for each item of the budget?**

***Answer:***

No. The intent of the RFP request is not to have a line item match. The intent is to determine local commitment and the probability of sustainability.