

NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS: EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) ([20 U.S.C. 1228a](#)) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program.

ALL APPLICANTS FOR NEW GRANT AWARDS MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IN THEIR APPLICATIONS TO ADDRESS THIS PROVISION IN ORDER TO RECEIVE FUNDING UNDER THIS PROGRAM.

Please respond to the following requests for information:

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

The 28 state level activities at the NJDOE/OSE can be categorized into three groups:

- A. *Activities that support operations as required by the IDEA;*
- B. *Activities that are universally available to participants; and*
- C. *Activities that are targeted to a specific group.*

Activities to Support Operations as Required by the IDEA

- *Dispute Resolution System: New Jersey Office of Administrative Law, which is responsible for the dispute resolution system, and contracted mediators;*
- *Commission for the Blind, to provide itinerant services to students who are blind or visually impaired;*
- *Rutgers University, to provide data analysis for SPP/APR indicators 8 and 14;*
- *Transcription and translation services for due process hearings;*
- *Training for the State Special Education Advisory Council;*
- *Training for staff on mediation and dispute resolution;*
- *NJDOE/OSE Learning Resource Center-Network;*
- *Consultants required through litigation;*
- *Statewide assessments for students with disabilities;*
- *Parental Engagement NGO;*
- *Supplemental grant for 21st Century;*
- *Facilitated IEP program; and,*
- *The College of New Jersey's Deaf-Blind Technical Assistance Project.*

Activities Universally Available (These activities are universally available on through online platforms or opportunities to participate are open to all LEAs.)

- *Special Olympics New Jersey Unified Sports Program;*
- *Dare to Dream: Self-Advocacy Conference for Successful Post-Secondary Transition;*
- *Rutgers University Training on Community Based Instruction and Person Centered Planning;*

- *Learning Ally (Books on Tape);*
- *Professional development for teacher of students who are Deaf or hard of hearing; and,*
- *School Climate Transformation Project.*

Activities Supporting Specific LEAs (These activities support NJDOE/OSE priorities and LEAs are selected based on LEA-level data.)

- *Rutgers University: Positive Behavioral Supports in Schools;*
- *Montclair University Preschool Inclusion Project;*
- *New Jersey Equity and Inclusion Project;*
- *Rutgers University: Addressing Significant Disproportionality*
- *State Implementation of Scaling Up and Evidence-based Practices (SISEP) supporting early literacy*

The New Jersey Department of Education is committed to ensuring students have equitable access to high-quality education as evidenced by:

NJDOE Mission Statement: *The New Jersey Department of Education supports schools, educators and districts to ensure all of New Jersey's 1.4 million students have equitable access to high quality education and achieve academic excellence.*

NJDOE Vision Statement: *Become a model organization that strengthens teaching, leading and learning in order to increase educational equity for all students.*

Division of Educational Services and Office of Special Education Goals:

- *Address the reading opportunity gap in students with disabilities, students from low-income families, multi-lingual learners, students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, migratory students and students disproportionately impacted by the pandemic through New Jersey Tiered Systems of Supports (NJTSS), State Implementation and Scaling Up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP), the State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR) and ongoing technical assistance to LEAs.*
- *Support local education agencies (LEAs) in addressing the mental health needs of students and educators through the Mental Health Services and Supports Grant and the MTSS Mental Health Supporting Staff Grant.*
- *Enhance efforts to identify, collect, and report student data and access to learning opportunities that may be used to target resources and supports.*
- *Support LEAs in effectively utilizing Federal Funds to ensure the equitable delivery of services to meet the individual learning and social, emotional, and mental health needs of all students.*

New Jersey Administrative Code Addressing Equity:

New Jersey Administrative Code 6A:7: Managing for Equality and Equity in Education, ensures that "all students, regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, religion, disability, or

socioeconomic status, are provided equal access to educational programs and services by district boards of education.”

New Jersey ESSA State Plan

New Jersey’s commitment to ensure all students are held to, and provided with, the opportunities and resources to achieve at high levels is evidenced in the ESSA State Plan. The State Plan describes how NJDOE works to improve equity and serve all students by:

- *Empowering educators at the school and LEA levels, as well as families, by providing accessible and actionable data to LEAs and communities to ensure schools, LEAs and families can make decisions that are in the best interest of students;*
- *Empowering schools, LEAs and families by providing guidance and information to LEAs regarding how federal, state and local funds can be better utilized to meet specific student needs;*
- *Supporting schools and LEAs in the implementation of academic standards from birth through high school and enabling schools and families to assess progress toward the standards;*
- *Providing direct support for high-quality early childhood education through state supported preschool programs and partnerships with other state agencies serving the youngest and most vulnerable children;*
- *Developing and training LEAs on an optional tiered model of support for all students; and*
- *Ensuring outcomes through equity regulations.*

2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

The mission of the NJDOE, and the Office of Special Education (OSE) as it implements the requirements of the IDEA, is to ensure students have equitable access to high-quality education. Addressing the opportunity gap is the thread that connects all the work of the OSE. All projects are grounded on a foundation of equity and inclusion, with an intentional focus on ensuring representativeness and equal access. While the current template for a Notice of a Grant Opportunity (NGO) includes language that explicitly addresses equity and equitable outcomes, the template for the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) does not include that language. The mission of the NJDOE, and the Office of Special Education (OSE) as it implements the requirements of the IDEA, is to ensure students have equitable access to high-quality education. Addressing the opportunity gap is the thread that connects all the work of the OSE. All projects are grounded on a foundation of equity and inclusion, with an intentional focus on ensuring representativeness and equal access. While the current template for a Notice of a Grant Opportunity (NGO) includes language that explicitly addresses equity and equitable outcomes. However, the current templates for Notice of a Grant Opportunity (NGO) and, the template for the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) do not include language that explicitly reflects this commitment to equity and equitable access does not include that language.

The state-level projects and activities in categories B and C provide support and training for the administrators and staff of LEAs and families of students with disabilities. The major barrier the NJDOE must consider is the ability to access these programs. The shortage of teachers and related services providers occurring across the nation has been particularly difficult for the large urban school districts supporting students from historically underserved groups. This staff shortage also impacts the availability of substitute teachers. Teachers and other educational professionals may not be able to secure coverage to attend trainings or other professional development opportunities.

3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

To ensure the efforts of subgrantees and partners of the NJDOE/OSE address a commitment to equity and equitable access, the MOU template will be revised to explicitly address expectations and requirements related to equity. The revision will reflect the commitment to equity and equitable access that is embedded in the mission and vision of the NJDOE and codified in New Jersey Administrative Code 6A:7.

The NJDOE requires sub-grantees and other partners to provide access to content and resources in a variety of modalities. Live professional development opportunities are provided both in-person and through virtual means and are offered at different times to provide access to as many educators as possible. Learning opportunities are offered during the summer to encourage participation from as many stakeholders as possible. Content is recorded and housed on the NJDOE/OSE website along with resources and guidance to allow access at any time.

The NJDOE will conduct outreach through the county offices of education, parent center, and state special education advisory council to identify additional barriers and develop strategies to ensure equitable access and participation.

4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

Revisions to the NGO and MOU templates require approval from NJDOE leadership, the Office of the Attorney General, the New Jersey Department of Treasury, and the Office of the Governor and the process is likely to be quite lengthy.

The NJDOE/OSE's focus on equity eliminates or addresses barriers that may be preventing equal access to state level activities due to staff shortages. The NJDOE/OSE's multi-pronged approach to provide state level activities in multiple modalities at different times of the day and year, along with providing an increasing number of resources virtually and through online platforms begins to address an identified barrier.

The NJDOE/OSE has an ongoing process to elicit stakeholder feedback and make adjustments when new barriers are identified, or existing barriers persist.

Notes:

1. Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity in order to submit an application.
2. Applicants may identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.
3. Applicants may have already included some or all of this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) and page number(s) in their applications or State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.

Paperwork Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1894-0005. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 3 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain a benefit. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate or suggestions for improving this individual collection, send your comments to ICDocketMgr@ed.gov and reference OMB Control Number 1894-0005. All other comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual form may be addressed to either (a) the person listed in the FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT section in the competition Notice Inviting Applications, or (b) your assigned program officer.