

Louisiana's Mathematics and Science Partnership Program

2015-16

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the purpose of the Mathematics and Science Partnerships (MSP)?

The Title II, Part B, MSP legislation was passed to provide funding for state educational agencies, local education agencies (LEA), and institutions of higher education to work together to raise student achievement and interest in math and science by improving math and science content knowledge and the teaching skills of classroom teachers.

2. Who are the partners required in the 2014-15 Louisiana MSP application?

To be eligible, a partnership must include, a:

- a high-need LEA and/or low performing LEA,
- an engineering, mathematics or science department from an institution of higher education (IHE).

Additional partners may include other local educational authorities (LEAs), another university department including a teacher training college, foundations, community organizations, or businesses.

3. What is the definition of a high-need district for the 2014-15 MSP cycle?

High need LEAs are defined as those with 60% or greater of the student population eligible for free or reduced lunch. Low performing LEAs are those with a letter grade of C, D or F.

4. Who serves as the fiscal agent for the MSP projects that Louisiana will fund in 2015-16?

The fiscal agent for successful proposals must be one of the partnering LEAs.

5. When is the application due?

Applications will be due February 27, 2015.

6. My district is not a high-need school system. May we still participate?

All LEAs may participate by entering into partnerships with one or more of the LEAs submitting applications. The LDOE hopes such arrangements are forged. Your district is encouraged to partner with an LEA that is eligible to submit a proposal.

7. May a system that has previously received funding for an MSP project submit a proposal for funding of a new project?

Yes. LEAs interested in expanding their MSP efforts may apply for a new proposal or choose to participate in a partnership applying for 2014-15 funding.

8. What are some of the costs that MSP funds will cover?

MSP monies may be used to cover teacher stipends and fringe benefits, substitute costs, university salaries for content and education faculty staff, contracts for consultants, some materials, and selected travel as allowed by state regulation.

9. What expenses may not be covered by MSP funds?

The following are not allowable expenses:

- Permanent equipment
- Capitol improvements
- Administrative personnel
- System salaries
- Site Coordinators
- Materials for student classroom use
- Food and/or beverages, entertainment
- Land or building acquisition
- Promotional or marketing items
- Property or furniture for office use
- Support for research of individual faculty members
- Software site licenses
- Pre-award costs or costs associated with writing the application
- Tuition charges and/or university fees

10. May the LEA serving as the fiscal agent request indirect cost funds?

The indirect cost provided to the LEA fiscal agent shall not exceed 8%. LEAs may only receive indirect costs at the rate they have been approved for during the present fiscal year. Therefore, the indirect cost rate of a proposal may be less than 8% but can be no more than 8%.

11. Who should be involved in the development of the MSP application?

During development of a proposal all stakeholders should be actively involved. Representatives from each partnering LEA, the IHE, any private schools in the geographic area who wish to be included, foundations, organizations and businesses committing to the proposal should be part of work to develop the application from the beginning.

12. Are teachers of private and parochial schools allowed to participate in MSP Projects?

Yes. The Title IX Uniform Provisions that require the equitable participation of private school students, teachers and other educational personnel in this program govern MSPs. Any LEA submitting an application should communicate with local private and parochial schools in the region during the development of the proposal, and if funded, the opportunity to participate must be offered to eligible private school teachers.

13. What evaluation measurements are expected?

The MSP legislation requires every partnership to design and implement an evaluation and accountability plan which includes information on the project's impact on teachers and students. Each MSP project will be required to complete an Annual Performance Review (APR) for the US ED. The Government Performance Results Act measurement values to be reported in the APR include teacher pre- and post-test scores and indicators of student achievement. The Institute for Education Science at the US ED has developed a guide, *The Criteria for Classifying Designed of MSP Evaluations*, which provides further guidance to partnerships that use experimental and quasi-experimental designs.

14. Will new MSP projects be funded for a three-year cycle as previous projects have been?

Partnerships should project and plan for three (3) years of activity. Grants will be awarded for a period of 15 months. Second-year and third-year renewal of these awards will be contingent upon continued federal funding of the Title II, Part B MSP Program and upon the LDOE's evaluation of the project.

15. What is meant by the statement that foundations, community organizations, and businesses may be included in the MSP Program?

Louisiana is home to one of only two Laser Interferometer Gravitational Observatory facilities in the United States. The facility has partnered with MSPs in neighboring districts offering itself as a meeting site. Community facilities, such as zoos and parks, often have outstanding non-formal educators who are excellent providers of content to teachers and students alike. The state's economic development plan calls for a strengthening of efforts to bring technology-based businesses to Louisiana. Career opportunities in several businesses are based on mathematics and science, and these industries may be considered as potential partners when districts are designing their applications.

16. Our district is not located near a university. Must all of the teachers travel to the college, or may we request that the institute be held in our district?

There are several valuable reasons for holding the training in a school in the district. This would be one of the logistical questions the partners should answer before submitting their proposal.

17. It is often hard for families to give up weekend time. Must the academic year follow-up be held on Saturdays?

There are several creative ways to schedule school year follow-up training. An LEA might consider arranging for substitutes, allowing the participants from the institute to meet during a regular school day. Mini-courses could be scheduled to meet for three hour blocks of time on a certain number of days to cover particular topics. Another way would be to provide online training to cover modules with specific assignments being developed to answer the needs of the LEA and the participants. However, some face-to-face meetings may need to be scheduled by the project and Saturday sessions may be necessary, especially when several LEAs are in one partnership, and matching system school schedules is difficult.

18. May a system allow new teacher participants to join an MSP Project during the academic year follow-up training?

No. The summer institutes provide the critical foundation for the professional development of MSP projects. As the term indicates, school year “follow-up” is exactly that – a continuation of the program. Those sessions should be part of the ongoing efforts of the program and are meant to ensure continued professional growth and development. Teachers interested in joining the program should be encouraged to sign up for the second or third year of an MSP.