

Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program 2022 Request for Application Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Application Process (AP)

AP-1: Will all potential grantees be offered a conversation and be able to negotiate the grant adjustments? Will OCDEL negotiate and can grantees ask for increased number of children and increased cost per child?

Negotiations may happen if needed. They are **not** guaranteed.

AP-2: In the Letter of Intent (LOI) for the HSSAP application, does the Chief Authorized Official's (CAO) signature mean the signature from the President of the agency's Board of Directors?

This depends on the applying agency's organization type. See Appendix D in the application guidance for more information.

AP-3: Does the Partner Letter of Commitment need to be uploaded with the application or the Letter of Intent?

Yes, the Partner Letter of Commitment will be uploaded as part of the application process. The Letter of Intent (LOI) is due to the RA account **prior** to the application opening and gives the applicant access to the application.

AP-4: The eGrants electronic signature (Appendix D) Resolution section only needs to be submitted if the proposal is successful. It does **not** need to be submitted in the eGrants system with the application on or before March 28?

Yes.

AP-5: Are there word counts or character limits for the questions?

There are word counts, but applicants should have enough to respond to each question. Be sure to only include information in responses relevant to the question.

AP-6: Our CEO retires March 31st. His replacement has been hired. If signatures are due after the grant is submitted, the signature will **not** be what was on the LOI. Is that okay?

This should not pose a problem as long as OCDEL program staff are updated through RA account as soon as this change occurs.

AP-7: Is the signature on the LOI (Chief Authorized Official) the Executive Director of the agency or the Board of Directors President?

Whoever is listed in Education Names and Addresses (EDNA) as the administrator should be listed on the LOI. If these do not match, the contact submitted on the LOI will be notified.

AP-8: Is there a date when we can expect to receive notification of award?

Initial negotiations may start as soon as June 2022, but official contracting cannot occur until budget passes. This typically happens in early July.

AP-9: Can we upload other items to the application such as letters of support, and other items to support our application?

Only upload the items being requested as part of the application process. Other uploads will **not** be reviewed. The LOI goes to the RA email and should **not** be uploaded to eGrants. The following should be uploaded in the application:

- Partner letter of commitment (if applying with partners)
- 5-year budget projections
- Partner line-item budgets (if applying with partners)
- Partner and location excel template (if having issues with charts in this section of application).

AP-10: If response to Letter of Intent indicates EDNA agency information needs to be updated, is a response through email notification the right way to handle or do we need to change online somewhere?

Jim Redd or Brian Bell will work to support applicants in this case, if needed or the applicant will be emailed LOI correction/update instructions.

AP-11: The Program Assurance section in eGrants makes the below statement and requests affirmation of accuracy: "The applicant is fully enrolled (federal and state enrollment) and agrees to maintain full enrollment for the duration of the HSSAP funded year. Full enrollment, including enrollment in partner sites, will begin on the first day of agreed upon services and adhere to the federal Performance Standards for maintaining full enrollment." An applicant may not be fully enrolled due to the impacts of COVID-19/understaffed and made every possible effort to be fully enrolled...would that answer be yes or no here?

All assurances must be answered in the affirmative (yes) for the application to be considered, therefore you should respond "yes." Full enrollment is a program requirement in a typical year. Any enrollment flexibilities throughout the program year will be handled through additional communications and policy announcements.

AP-12: My question is about the Program Assurance question "filing of this application has been duly authorized by the governing body of the applicant". Would this be specifically referring to the governing body as is defined in the Head Start Performance Standards AKA our board? As you know Head Start has both a governing body (board) and a policy council. We have a Policy council representative who sits on our board. Is this question referring specifically to the governing body (board) or interchangeably either the governing body (board) or policy council?

This question is referring to the governing board.

AP-13: There is a discrepancy between the application in eGrants and the application guidance for section on Program Structure. The eGrants application has three questions in this section, while the application guidance only lists two. There are 30 points awarded for Q2 as indicated in the application guidance. How will these 30 points be attributed in the eGrants application since there is an extra question?

Zero points will be awarded to Q2 in the Program Structure section of the eGrants application, and all 30 points will be attributed to question 3 in that section, however reviewers will use the responses for both questions when determining the score for Q3.

Scoring (SC)

SC-1: Will current HSSAP grantees who are not requesting additional slots still be scored?

If a current grantee is at least 90% enrolled and isn't requesting more funding or slots, the application will still be scored.

SC-2: Our Program Review is scheduled after the submission deadline for the application. Our 20-21 FY PRI was conducted February 2021. How should I answer the question regarding the PRI score?

There may be a discrepancy between what the program enters on the application and the most recent PRI if there is an overlap between the time the applicant enters info in the application and when the FY 2021-2022 PRI is completed. Staff will use the MOST RECENT PRI score in PELICAN at the time scoring is completed to determine the score for this question of the application.

Eligibility (E)

E-1: How can a center participate in the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP)?

A program must be a federal Head Start Program or federal Early Head Start Program to be eligible to apply for HSSAP. Federal Head Start and federal Early Head Start programs are funded by the federal Office of Head Start. The Office of Head Start posts funding opportunity announcements (FOAs) to solicit applications for grant funds to specific service areas or a national competition. Programs can find more information and search for specific service area funding opportunities by visiting this website:

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ohs/funding>.

E-2: Can an EHS-CCP grantee apply or does it have to be a Head Start grantee only?

If the agency holds a federal "Notice of Award" for any Head Start or Early Head Start grant, including EHS-CCP, they would be eligible to apply. Subgrantees of these federal awards are NOT eligible to apply for HSSAP.

E-3: As a current Early Head Start partner site through Maternity Care Coalition and a current Pre-K Counts Lead Agency, are we eligible to apply for Head Start Funding as a Lead Agency?

No, partnering agencies are **not** eligible.

E-4: Do you expect this to go to Open Bid at any point for organizations not currently funded to have the opportunity to apply?

This opportunity is the open recompetes and is open to new eligible grantee applicants.

E-5: Can only the agency who holds a Federal HS grant apply for HSSAP?

Yes, only the holder of the federal notice of awarded is eligible.

Proposed Service Area, Locations, and Risk Score Calculations (PLR)

PLR-1: Can others encroach on our defined service area for HS/HSSAP? For the future and Pre-K Counts, is it all statewide and is there a piece of documentation that potential grantees need to include that states there were discussions about what programming is currently in place and what would be expansion?

For HSSAP, applicants can only apply for their defined service area. The RFA for the PA Pre-K Counts program will occur at a later date, therefore, OCDEL isn't answering questions about Pre-K Counts at this time.

PLR-2: Must we abide by the service area designated by our federal NOA?

Yes.

Partnerships (P)

P-1: If a federal Head Start Program partners with a child care provider to offer HSSAP services, would the lead HS grant be in jeopardy IF that child care partner did something out of compliance such as get a violation from DHS?

It would depend. If the incident resulted in an overall deficiency on the Federal Head Start grant, the HSSAP grant may be impacted.

Program Requirements (PR)

PR-1: We understand that if a grantee did not have 90% enrollment on March 1, the award will be prorated and will be considered when distributing remaining funds. So, should the grant application be written for the full number of slots we desire to have funded or just the number of slots enrolled as of March 1. If only for the number enrolled as of March 1, how will the department know we are interested in additional slots?

The application should include **all** slots and funding the applicant wishes to receive.

PR-2: Would the submitted justification of enrollment be needed for current grantees through recent policy meet the expectation of the 90% enrollment?

No, OCDEL will be looking solely at PELICAN enrollment percentages to determine enrolled percentages for this application process.

Fiscal (F)

F-1: If an IU is the grantee and has child care centers that partner with them and the child care centers hire their own staff, do the teachers in the child care center need to make \$45,000?

Setting salaries is the responsibility of each grantee. \$45,000 is not a requirement of the HSSAP grant. If it is required for some other reason, it would be the responsibility of the grantee to determine necessary salaries.

F-2: I did see that they said the rate was increased and that we just have to put our cost per child in the application. Will they let us know at the bidder's conference what the maximum cost per child is? There is no set maximum cost per child for HSSAP. The applicants determine their cost per child and the application responses along with the budget should be the evidence to support the cost per child being requested.

F-3: When considering the full 5-year grant cycle when applying - does that mean that each year our cost per child would be the same each year? Does this mean, that our budget would be segmented to be a different amount each year?

Cost per child and funding should remain the same across all five years on the 5-year projected budget template. Line-item allocations may change year-to-year and should be explained.

F-4: Is there a maximum percentage increase in teacher wages that we can apply for? What kind of evidence do we need to support this request to increase wages while keeping slots the same? Is that applicable to wages for all staff? We're struggling to find program aides and asst. teacher.

Percentages are RECOMMENDED. If exceeding the recommended percentage, justification **must** be provided. For direct service staff (teachers, aides), examples of justification might include aligning salaries with other early learning programs (provide data) and/or making salaries comparable to local school districts (provide data).

F-5: While you stated the grant amount is the same each year, if we use the same amount each year then we are not considering rise in health insurance, other cost or consider a COLA for staff. How do you propose we handle potential increases over the next 5 years?

Applicants should consider things like rising health care costs, COLA, etc. in the 5-year budget projection. In other words, work backwards from year five. Determine the amount needed by year five. That amount will be the budgeted amount for year 1 through year five and may be distributed across line items differently year-to-year.

F-6: If we think we will need all of the money we've allocated in Year 1 for each of the budget categories across all five years of the grant cycle, and any cost increases would therefore need to be absorbed by alternate/local funding sources, then could we provide a five-year HSSAP budget projection that does not change year-to-year for the purposes of the e-Grants application?

Yes.

F-7: Just to clarify, when you say "option" to do the 5-year budget projection, you don't mean that it is optional (i.e., you must include a completed five-year budget, with all tabs completed), but it could be an identical cost distribution for each year, with a simple narrative explanation that any increased expenses that become necessary for the continued operation of the program at the proposed scope (that are not offset by unexpected reductions in other costs) would be absorbed by local resources, correct?

Yes, you must upload (not optional) but it is optional as to whether it changes from year-to-year.

F-8: Can the link be provided to access school district teacher salaries or where to look on PDE?

[Professional Staff Summary \(pa.gov\)](#)

F-9: In the section: HSSAP Status, Partnerships and Locations, 5-year Budget Projections, the 5th question asks: If the proposed expansion budget is not approved, my program is willing to continue with the current cost per child. The question only allows for a yes/no response.

The question is, if the response is no, does that mean there would be no HSSAP funding awarded to the program if the budget expansion is not approved, and the program is unable to continue with the current cost per child? There is no opportunity to provide any explanation for a response to explain why it would or would not be possible to continue with the current cost per child. Due to inflation and the significant increase in costs for everything from supplies to labor, I would anticipate programs would find that extremely difficult to support. Are you able to tell us the planned impact of the response to that question?

This question will only be used if the proposed cost per child is deemed unreasonable by reviewers. If an application is not awarded as proposed, a negotiation call will explore willingness to make changes to the proposal. Answering "no" will not automatically remove an applicant from consideration.

Miscellaneous (M)

M-1: The information in the HSSAP RFA says "This RFA is intended to support providers in preparing to enroll and serve children by September 2022." One of our currently funded classrooms is a year-round program. We typically provide in-person services the entire summer, except for the last two weeks of August. Should we tell families that we cannot serve them in July or August of this year?

Due to the timing of contracting, funding may **not** be available in July and August. If the provider can maintain services through other means while contracting is being finalized, then those funds would be reimbursed.

M-2: Previously with some state grant systems there was a recommendation to use one specific platform to complete our grants (ie...Firefox vs. Chrome). Is there any restrictions like this for the eGrants system?

Any platform EXCEPT Internet Explorer can be used.

M-3: What does EDNA stand for?

EDNA stands for "Education Names and Addresses" and is used by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to link agencies to the eGrants system.

M-4: Regarding Appendix A: other than the most recent Reach and Risk Assessment (2016-2017) which now is outdated, is there somewhere applicants can find unmet need data at the school district level?

This map, created by Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, shows Unmet Need for high-quality Pre-K at the school district level:

<https://papartnerships.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=7c283f08a4a5450e8b91deb6ed1dbd7>

M-5: Why are the numbers in Appendix A significantly lower than what the PA Partnerships for Children map indicates?

Column two of Appendix A shows the number "un-served" or the unmet need, not the number served. The calculation to arrive at this number is shared in the footnote. Also, Appendix A is calculated using numbers at 100% FPL, while the PA Partnerships for Children map uses 300% FPL.