**Achievement Coaches**

Technical Assistance FAQ

1. Q: Has the NJDOE considered an extension for submission of the Achievement Coaches grant?

A: The NJDOE is not able to change a deadline once a competitive NGO has been published. While we recognize a release date of 10/20 and a submission date of 11/19 is a relatively tight window, we believe that there is enough structure built into the Notice of Grant Opportunity to allow districts to complete quality applications in the time provided. The window was also designed to give districts as much time as possible to select Achievement Coaches *after* learning of a successful grant application.

1. Q: Can districts apply for both the Achievement Coaches and Achievement Coaches Content Developer grant?

A: Districts may **not** apply for both grants, as is stipulated in eligibility requirements. Districts should careful consider which grant is the best fit for their capacity and needs before applying.

1. Q: Are the Achievement Coaches and Achievement Coaches Content Developer grants only for this year?

A: Both are one-time grants scheduled to run from February – August 2015. Districts will not be reimbursed for any activities that occur after August 31, 2015.

1. Q: In reference to the $6,000 stipend for the teachers and administrator, will there be any FICA funds taken out, which would change the amount of funds the teachers/administrator receives?

A: On any stipend, FICA would have to be charged. Districts may either 1) include the FICA charge in the stipend amount (which would reduce the stipend amount); 2) use grant funds to pay the FICA amount and give their educators full $6,000 stipend (which would mean reducing their budgeted amounts somewhere else in the grant budget); or 3) pay the FICA amounts out of *local* funds. Applicants should discuss this with their Business Administrator (when developing their budgets) to see how they want to handle this.

1. Q: Can you assign a grant writer for the application?

A: Districts are welcome to assign grant writers to the application, so long as the grant writer is working closely with the district leadership team to ensure that the plans reflected in the grant are aligned with the operational realities of the school district.

1. Q: Does the Project Manager have to be different from the grant writer?

A: No, the district may use the project management portion of funds in a way that best positions them to support the cohort of educators they select to participate in the program.

1. Q: When should districts select cohorts of Achievement Coaches – prior to submitting the application, or after?

A: The NGO clearly states that districts should not begin the selection process until after learning that the application has entered the Pre-Award Review (PAR) process. This process was designed to avoid districts devoting time and effort to a selection process that would be wasted if the application was not selected for an award. Districts are free to describe the types of individuals they would hope to recruit for the selection process as part of the application – but should not have specific individuals selected in the application submission.

1. Q: Can a teacher who received a summative rating of Effective but not Highly Effective in 2013-14 still be included as an Achievement Coach?

A: If a district decides that they want to allow teachers with summative ratings of effective to apply for their Achievement Coaches Cohort, they should present a clear and specific justification for why they believe these applicants will improve the overall quality of their final selected cohort. See Section 1.1: Cohort Selection of NGO for full details.

1. Q: Other than summative ratings, what are the other requirements for selecting teachers?

A: The selection criteria rubric, in Appendix E of the NGO, should be used in the selection of all teachers in addition to a district-specific descriptor Any other criteria outside of evaluation and the rubric should be included when the district describes their plans for the selection process.

1. Q: Does the administrator who would be included in the Achievement Coach cohort have to be a principal?

A: No, the administrator does not have to be a principal but must be acting in an administrative, supervisory, or school-based coaching role of some kind. However, we expect districts to use the same selection criteria used to select teachers. This selection criteria rubric can be found in Appendix E of the [Achievement Coach NGO](http://www.nj.gov/cgi-bin/education/grants/gropps2.pl?string=recnum=01657&maxhits=1).

1. Q: Do teachers included in the grant have to be classroom teachers?

A: Yes, the intention is that teachers selected as part of the cohort must be classroom teachers. If someone is a coach working under a teaching certificate, they should be considered for the administrator position in the cohort. With this in mind, if a district believes there is a compelling reason to consider staff members as teachers who are not currently in classrooms they should include this information in their application.

1. Q: Can existing district coaches be Achievement Coaches?

A: See question above. It is preferred that the teachers selected in each cohort are current classroom teachers.

1. Q: Will districts have to submit reimbursement for costs such as hotel, travel, etc?

A: The Department believes that the stipend amounts outlined in the NGO are sufficiently generous to cover time spent in training and turn-key sessions, as well as to cover any travel costs incurred attending these sessions. The budget includes money allocated for supplies for training that districts can also use to support costs when training is executed in their district. Further, the Department has attempted to simplify the reimbursement process for districts in this way.

1. Q: Can part of the grant be used to pay other teachers to participate in district professional development in the summer?

A: Districts may consider using the $3,000 allocated for grant management for PD for teachers other than the selected Achievement coaches if they are not using this money in other ways.

1. Q: Is it possible to apply for 2 cohorts and only get funded for 1?

A: Yes, you could apply for 2 cohorts and only get funded for 1, based on the score your application receives and available remaining grant money.

1. Q: Will any consideration be given based on geography?

A: No, there are not any eligibility requirements specified based on geography. The Department would like to ensure that districts capable of producing the most outstanding cohorts of educators are selected for this opportunity.

1. Q: What happens to the funds if principals are not allowed to receive the stipend?

A: If principals are locally not eligible to receive a stipend, districts should outline how they might spend that money otherwise to benefit the individual’s professional development or role in the district. Some examples of this might be using money to send the principal to further professional development or allocating the funds to the administrator to be used in their building for resources or professional development of their staff. Districts may also consider using the stipend to cover related costs ( (FICA costs or transportation costs referenced above for example) and should include a rationale for this in their sample budget.

1. Q: How do districts locate other districts where they provide professional development?

A: The Department will work with cohorts - once chosen - to identify districts that are in nearby regions to limit travel and time out of classroom for each cohort.