

Connections for Classrooms Grant Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

FAQ Categories

- General Grant Information – Category A
- Grant Application – Category B
- Grant Use – Category C
- Grant Expenditure Timing – Category D

June 16 Update: Responses to Questions A6, C8, and D5 were adjusted. Questions B22, B23, C21, and C22 were added.

June 30 Update: Questions B24, C23, and C24 were added.

August 1 Update: B25, B26, B27, and B28 were added.

General Grant Information – Category A

A1: Who should an LEA representative contact with questions during participation in the program?

Steve Korwan is dedicated to leading this grant program and can be reached at 404-971-1704 and skorwan@georgia.gov.

A2: How much grant funding is available in this program?

Connections for Classrooms combines up to \$39 million from the following two sources:

- \$14 million in bond funds from the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE)
- \$25 million in general funds from the One Georgia Authority at the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) will manage these funds.

A3: What is the high-level timing of the grant?

Key grant milestones include the following:

June 16, 2014: Grant Application Launch

August 29, 2014: Grant Application Close

Late October, 2014: Grant Awards Announced

A4: Who will evaluate these applications?

A cross-agency team will review the applications. Each eligible application will be reviewed by multiple reviewers.

A5: How will funds be dispersed to grantees?

The grant awards will specify what equipment and installation expenses will be funded. The LEA must procure the equipment or services and then request reimbursement.

A6: Where can information be found on the grant introductory teleconference that was held on May 20th?

Full audio from the May 20th teleconference has been removed from the website because some grant guidelines have changed since its release. The presentation link below is updated to reflect those changes. *Please note, this response has been revised since the previous FAQ release.*

The presentation is available as this link.

http://gosa.georgia.gov/sites/gosa.georgia.gov/files/related_files/site_page/GrantApplicationPlanning_052014.pdf

Grant Application – Category B

B1: Where are the application forms and submittal process located?

All grant materials and information will be posted on the Connections for Classrooms website: <http://gosa.georgia.gov/connections-classrooms-grant-application-information>

B2: When is the application window?

Applications will be accepted between June 16, 2014 and August 29, 2014.

B3: What is the deadline for the application of the grant?

The deadline to apply is August 29, 2014 at 5:00 PM.

B4: How much money can be requested in the application?

The purpose of this grant is to assist LEA's with distributing 100 Mbps of internet access to each school and each school's instructional areas. Applicants should use the LEA Inventory/Gap Planning Spreadsheet (released the week of June 9 on the program website) to plan the technology investments needed to accomplish this goal. There is not a cap in the amount of funds that can be requested. However, if funding requests exceed available funds, Connections for Classrooms may provide partial funding for the grant application.

B5: Although there is not a cap on grant requests, is there an estimated maximum allotment per district?

No, there is not an estimated maximum allotment per district. If funding requests exceed available funds, Connections for Classrooms may provide partial funding for the grant application.

B6: Regarding the request to submit quotes, RFI responses, or other price validations, is it acceptable to use an existing RFP or is it necessary to obtain a new one?

Each LEA should follow its own procurement rules. It is acceptable to use an existing RFP if LEA policy allows the applicant to do so.

B7: When developing the equipment plan for the grant application, should it include only include Tiers 2 and 3?

Tier 2 and 3 expenses should be prioritized. LEAs can request Tier 1 funds if there is still an outstanding need for such funds. However, Tier 1 funds will not be awarded to reimburse the LEA costs for equipment purchased as part of the FY2014 GaDOE Tier 1 grants. Tier 4 will not be funded in this round, but the application includes a section describing plans for Tier 4 implementation and expected costs for state planning purposes. If funding remains after grant awards are made, then there may be a second round of applications that would include Tier 4. While Tier 4 will not be funded, the Tier 4 information in the application is important for two reasons. First, any description of the expected positive impact of the grant on student outcomes should include a clear articulation of expected Tier 4 implementation. In addition, the Tier 4 information in the application is critical for the state to plan for potential future funding opportunities.

B8: Will LEAs be allowed to apply in both August and in future rounds?

The application window is set to begin on June 16, 2014 and end on August 29, 2014. Any future rounds are contingent upon fund availability after this round. Since another round is not a guarantee, LEAs should plan accordingly and request the eligible funds required for their project in this round.

B9: Can changes to the project be made after the grant has been awarded?

There will be a change control process to review requests to modify technology purchases once an award is made. This process will be outlined in the grant guideline documentation.

B10: One of the considerations for the grant is said to be the district's ability to provide matching funds. Is this a requirement? How will this be measured?

One of the evaluation criteria will be LEA investment in network and server infrastructure that demonstrates commitment to its technology plan and helps make every dollar of the project—regardless of the source—more powerful. Applicants can demonstrate this commitment in one of two ways. First, an LEA can submit a dollar value for any matching

funds for equipment or services specifically requested in the grant application. In addition, LEAs can describe and provide the cost of investments in network and server infrastructure made between June 2013 and August 2014, as well as expected investments from September 2014 to August 2015. For these dollar amounts, the application will automatically calculate the local investment as a percentage of requested grant funds based upon applicant's answers. Reviewers will consider this figure, as well as the narrative description, when evaluating applications based on this criterion.

B11: How will the applications be scored?

At a high level, applications will be scored based upon five factors: demonstration of impact, strategy, feasibility, sustainability and commitment. A scoring rubric will be released with the grant application on June 16, 2014.

B12: When will the grant awards be made?

Award announcements are tentatively planned for late October 2014.

B13: How often can an LEA request a disbursement of awarded grant funds?

Guidelines are being developed now and will be released with the grant application.

B14: When submitting quotes, should an LEA ask for an end date longer than the standard 30-day end date?

Yes, it is advisable to request an extended quote end date based upon the grant timeline. However, it is not required and is strictly up to the LEA and vendor.

B15: Will LEAs receive communication or feedback during the application review prior to the final determination?

Applicants will receive a confirmation email when the application is submitted. However, there will not be intermediate feedback or communication prior to grant award decisions, regardless of when the application is submitted.

B16: Will a sample grant application be released with the application?

A sample grant application will not be available. However, there will be application guidance describing the information requested on the application.

B17: Can an LEA request reimbursement for planned Tier 1 expenditures that have already been allotted with local funds?

The FY2014 GaDOE grant funds for Tier 1 equipment complements this grant in its goal to facilitate broadband access to schools. However, the two grant awards are distinct and not otherwise related. Awards made by that grant program will follow its procedures and

guidelines, and Connections for Classrooms funds will not be used to reimburse LEA expenses already budgeted to pay for Tier 1 equipment under that grant program. However, if there are additional Tier 1 needs that were not funded by the GaDOE grant and the local funds budgeted for that program, the LEA may apply for those funds under the Connections for Classrooms program and will be considered.

B18: Is this grant related to PeachNet technology grants?

No. The Peachnet partnership is a project to increase bandwidth for all LEA's and should not be confused as a grant. There is no fiscal impact to the LEA's positive or negative concerning the Peachnet project. The Connections for Classrooms grant is to assist in the utilization of the increased bandwidth that will be supplied with the Peachnet project.

B19: Will awards be tiered like they were for the first grant based on the size of the district?

The size of the district may be taken into consideration when making funding decisions. However, there will not be a rigid tiered funding model based upon district size as was used in the FY2014 GaDOE technology grants.

B20: Is the request to indicate 2013 and 2014 E-Rate participation related to Fiscal Years or USAC Funding Years?

The application requests for 2013 and 2014 USAC funding years.

B21: When will the LEA Inventory/Gap Planning Spreadsheet be available?

The LEA Inventory/Gap Planning Spreadsheet should be available the week of June 9. A webinar will be held on June 10 from 1:00 to 2:30 PM to provide an overview of the template. Webinar details will be included in an email to LEA contacts. Contact Steve Korwan (skorwan@georgia.gov) if you would like more information.

B22: If an LEA currently has 10/100 PoE ports in its schools but needs to upgrade those ports as part of its new network build-out, what should it enter into the LEA Inventory/Gap Planning Spreadsheet for the Current Environment PoE+Ports per Instructional Area cell?

The LEA should enter "0" into the Current Environment PoE+Ports per Instructional Area cell even though the LEA technically has PoE ports in their existing network. These existing ports must be replaced, so the "Gap" must be calculated correctly for the new equipment to be functional in the upgraded network.

B23: Are detailed vendor quotes or other back-up documentation required for the cost estimates entered into the LEA Inventory/Gap Planning Spreadsheet?

No, detailed vendor quotes, RFI responses, or similar documentation are only required for validation of the requested grant funding amount in the application for a Connections for Classrooms grant.

B24: If an LEA does not currently have a Strategic Plan, can it upload their CLIP (Consolidated LEAP Implementation Plan) as part of their application submittal instead?

Yes. However, the LEA must reference and highlight the portions of the plan that discuss the alignment of its technology plans with the grant application's requested equipment, materials, and services.

B25: Should LEA e-rate funding and/or grant matching funds be included in the Local Investment funding section of the application?

No, only additional local funding not associated with e-rate or grant matching funds should be included in this section of the application.

B26: Should all Priority 1 item costs be included in the e-rate funding section or just those for internet related items/

The LEA should include funding costs for all Priority 1 items.

B27: Should the "Requested" e-rate amount be the discounted or pre-discounted costs?

The "Requested" e-rate amount should be pre-discounted costs.

B28: Should the "Spent" e-rate amount be the total expenses or just the LEA matching portion?

The "Spent" e-rate amount should be only the LEA matching portion.

Grant Use – Category C

C1: What are allowable expenses under this grant program?

The purpose of the grant is to ensure an LEA can fully leverage 100 Mbps or more in broadband access in its schools' instructional areas. The program focuses on capital expenditures, but a portion of the grant funding is available for non-capital expenditures such as installation, materials, and other expenses required for equipment usage. Because of recent investments from the FY2014 GaDOE Tier 1 grants, it is not expected that a significant amount of Tier 1 technologies will be requested or funded. However, Tier 1 requests can be included in the application if an LEA can demonstrate outstanding needs in that tier. Tier 1 funds will not be awarded to reimburse the LEA costs for equipment purchased as part of the FY2014 GaDOE Tier 1 grants.

C2: Can an LEA request funds for installation?

Refer to Question C1.

C3: Should LEAs apply for both Tier 2 and Tier 3 in this application?

Yes, applications should consider technology needs at both the school and classroom levels.

C4: Will Tier 2 requests be a higher priority than Tier 3?

Refer to Question C1.

C5: Are Tier 4 – student level – technology requests being considered for funding?

Refer to Question B7.

C6: Is there a list of approved equipment and materials?

A list of eligible and non-eligible equipment types, materials, and services is posted at the following link: <http://gosa.georgia.gov/connections-classrooms-grant-application-information>

C7: Is there a list of services covered with the grant?

Refer to Question C6.

C8: Can an LEA use the grant to cover equipment leasing?

No, equipment leasing and lease-to-purchase are not within the guidelines of funding uses. *Please note, this response has been revised since the previous FAQ release. Grant funds cannot be used purchase leased equipment.*

C9: Can the funds be used for Pre-K broadband technology?

Yes, applications facilitating broadband connections to Pre-K classrooms will be considered.

C10: Can the funds be used to cover the cost of equipment that has previously been purchased?

No, funds may be applied to new purchases only.

C11: Would a virtual server/SAN for support of student digital content creation and use be funded through this program?

No. For more information please refer to Question C6.

C12: Is AppleTV considered a Tier 3 device if it is used for projection to the classroom?

No, AppleTV is a Tier 4 device and therefore cannot be funded in this round.

C13: Should an LEA use its local purchasing procedures for the equipment, material, and labor required to implement this project?

Yes, LEAs should use their local procedures. In fact, demonstration of procurement readiness is a consideration in the application scoring.

C14: If an LEA is not awarded full funding, will it still be required to purchase everything it requests?

An LEA is not required to purchase everything requested if it receives partial funding. Once the grant award is received, an LEA will have the opportunity to submit change requests to ensure funds are leveraged to best meet its needs. However, it will be required to spend awarded funds on eligible costs that it included in its application.

C15: Does cabling include all internal connections?

The cabling includes all internal connections to instructional areas. Administrative offices are not included. A list of eligible and ineligible expenses is posted with Question C6.

C16: Is UPS gear (batteries, etc.) eligible?

Yes, such items will be considered if directly related to broadband delivery to classrooms. A list of eligible and ineligible expenses is posted with Question C6.

C17: Is VDI licensing eligible?

No, VDI licensing is not eligible for funding under this program. A list of eligible and ineligible expenses is posted with Question C6.

C18: Would you consider maintenance contracts for existing equipment in the grant application?

No, maintenance costs cannot be included in the request. A list of eligible and ineligible expenses is posted with Question C6.

C19: Can an LEA request funding for network cabling in administration and staff offices?

No. Funding for work in administrative areas will not be considered. A list of eligible and ineligible expenses is posted with Question C6.

C20: Can an LEA request funding for Tier 2 and 3 items for the central office?

Funding for Tier 2 items in the central office will be considered if those items are required to provide Tier 2 interconnect to the schools. Tier 3 funding for the Central Office will not be considered.

C21: Can an LEA request funding for equipment and installation in school rooms used exclusively for testing purposes?

Yes, these areas are eligible for grant funding.

C22: Can an LEA request funding for equipment and installation in alternative programs?

Yes, all LEA facilities that house instructional programs, including alternative programs, can be included. If you have questions about eligibility, please contact Steve Korwan (skorwan@georgia.gov).

C23: Can an LEA request grant funds for new school facilities that are scheduled to open after the 2014-2015 school year?

No, funding for school facilities due to open after the 2014-2015 school year is not grant eligible.

C24: Are fiber-to-the-desktop materials and installation grant eligible?

No, fiber-to-the-desktop deployment is not grant eligible.

Grant Expenditure Timing – Category D

D1: Once a grant is approved, how long does an LEA have to purchase and install the equipment?

The desire is for LEAs not to rush purchases and add risk effective to the plan implementation. The purchase and installation plan should fit the LEA's unique needs and circumstances. The final date for LEAs to submit reimbursement requests is June 30, 2016. The LEA's project implementation plan in the application must clearly specify projected purchase and installation dates.

D2: When can an LEA make a purchase eligible for reimbursement?

Purchases made on or after the grant award announcement date are eligible for reimbursement. No purchases of equipment, materials, or services made prior to the grant award date will be eligible. Please note that some original communication about the grant stated that expenses made prior to the grant award decision would be reimbursable. This is not the case. Only expenses made on or after the grant award announcement date will be eligible for reimbursement.

D3: Are any expenses prior to the grant award announcement eligible for reimbursement?

No purchases of requested equipment, materials, or services made prior to the grant award will be considered for reimbursement. However, an LEA can request up to \$2,500 in its first

reimbursement request to cover application preparation assistance. This cost will only be reimbursed for LEAs who are awarded a grant. It does not include engineering, legal, design, or accounting services. In addition, the assistance must be conducted by a third-party provider, not internal staff.

D4: Is it a hard and fast rule that no funds spent on equipment or services prior to the grant award will be considered?

Yes. See Question D3 for a full explanation.

D5: How will the grant process take into consideration if an LEA receives quotes during the E-Rate submission process and purchases are not expected to be made until summer 2015?

The LEA's E-Rate participation will be indicated as part of the application process. Grant-related systems that are going to be funded with E-Rate funds should not be requested as part of the grant application submittal, with the exception of network items eligible for Priority 2 E-Rate participation since funding for Priority 2 is unlikely in the near future. Purchases for eligible grant-related systems made on or after the grant award date will be considered for reimbursement from the grant award date through June 30, 2016. LEAs will be financially responsible for equipment that was not included in the award and for equipment that was purchased prior to the award. *Please note, this response has been revised since the previous FAQ release to clarify grant requests involving Priority 2 Funding.*

D6: If purchases are made ahead of an award, can the award dollars be applied to refund the school?

See answer to Question D2.

D7: Is it possible to have eligible services purchased or to have work begin prior to the grant award as long as payment is not required or made until after the grant award?

Purchases or services performed prior to grant award are not reimbursable, regardless of when the invoice is received. If an LEA chooses to enter into a contract prior to the award date to purchase services or equipment on or after the award date, then it is recommended that the contract include a clause where the contract is void if the LEA does not receive requested grant funds.