**Early Childhood Community Network Lead Agency 2016 Request for Applications (RFA)**
**Questions and Answers**

**Funding**

**Q.** After the Lead Agency allocation is approved on June 22, when can we expect the budget to be approved?

**A.** The Department's budget will be final on July 1. The Grants Management Division will notify us when the system is ready for your budgets to be submitted. Both the Early Childhood team and the Grants Management team will review Lead Agency budgets for approval. The Early Childhood staff will make every effort to quickly accomplish our review.

**Q.** How much less funding will Cohort 3 receive?

**A.** Cohort 3 will not receive the startup funding that was allocated last year.

**Q.** Are there any guidelines/rules on funding administrative cost through the grant?

**A.** Each Lead Agency has discretion over how it uses its funding to support and carry-out its responsibilities. To guide Lead Agencies, the Department set recommendations for the use of funds that can be found on page 3 of the RFA. Generally, funds may be used for staff or professional services to ensure that CLASS observations, enrollment and other expectations for Lead Agencies are completed.

**Q.** Can the funding pay for training new CLASS observers next year as well as recertification of observers?

**A.** Yes, training new *CLASS* observers and recertification of observers would be acceptable expenditures.

**Q.** Will the classroom count (and therefore funding available to lead agencies) be changed for the 2017-2018 year based on the actual number of classrooms for the 2016-2017 year?

**A.** The Department is not able to address funding for 2017-2018 at this time. However, we are committed to providing ongoing financial support for Lead Agencies.


**Observer Reliability**

**Q.** Which individuals are allowed to conduct shadow observations within a network? Must shadow observers come only from the Lead Agency or may other certified and reliable observers provide shadow observations?

**A.** The Lead Agency has discretion in choosing the certified observers it uses to ensure that a minimum of 10% of the local Fall observations and 10% of the local Spring observations are shadow scored. If observers from the Regional Resource and Referral Agency are used, charges for the observation must not be billed to their contract with the Department.

**Q.** If the third party observer does not shadow the site observer, why would you assume that the results would be within one point across domains when observations are done on different days?

**A.** Third party observations are used to ensure an accurate rating of the typical experiences an average child has in a classroom. The *CLASS* tool is structured to measure the average experiences in a classroom, including the four twenty minute cycles on 8-10 dimensions that are then averaged together to make 2-3 average domain scores. Since the observation is both extensive in time and documentation and compiled into averages, the tool itself reduces the likelihood of one-off

occurrences negatively or positively overly influencing the score. If there is a difference greater than one point between the local and the third party score, or any questions about the local results, we use the third party score as the default because we know it to be an accurate representation of the experiences in those classrooms. The greater than one point margin, both above or below, allows for reasonable shift within an overall average that is based on several day's points and day to day changes.  Using the greater than one point flag for third party replacement ensures that the LDE is reporting accurate results publicly.

**Q.** Is there a number of observations that the local observer can be off of the third party? Or is it just one observation and then they cannot observe in the spring?

**A.** The analysis of accuracy for local observers will be at the domain level and the rule is that if the number of domains compared with the third party is off by 50% or more, the observer will be disallowed.  For example – with PreK observations, there are three domains to compare.  If there is one observation from a local observer to compare with third party scores and two of the three domains are off by more than one point, then the local observer will be disallowed.  If there are two PreK observations (6 domains) to compare with third party scores, and three domains are off by more than one point, the local observer will be disallowed.  The accuracy rate for a local observer must be greater than 50%.

**Q.** Will there be more detailed instructions on what will define majority of all domains to replace the observer and will the observer be able to see if their score was replaced?

**A.** Refer to the previous answer.  Third party scores are available in the *CLASS* system and Lead Agencies should monitor observer accuracy.

**Q.** Will there be updated Portal reports to allow us to better track observer accuracy?

**A.** Improvements to the *CLASS* System will be ongoing to respond to the needs of Lead Agencies including better tracking of observer accuracy.

**Q.** If an observer would need to be removed because of inaccuracy, who would be responsible for notifying the observer? Will the system flag that person?

**A.** The Department will work with Lead Agencies to identify observers who are to be excluded from *CLASS* observation assignments.


**TOTS**

**Q.** For districts that operate on a four day schedule for summer, how do we request permission from LDOE for TOTS purposes?

**A.** Please submit these requests to [kaye.eichler@la.gov](mailto:kaye.eichler@la.gov) .

**Q.** Over the past year, our staff has spent a significant amount of time helping families navigate the CCAP process, including helping them fill out the application, fax or email in required documentation, and check the status of their cases. This work stream has arisen as a direct result of our work with TOTS. Will this CCAP support be an expectation of lead agency activities?

**A.** No, CCAP support in not an expectation for Lead Agencies.


**Program Partners**

**Q.** Can we have a copy of the Program Partner Assurances so we know what partners are agreeing to?

**A.**   Yes, the Department will provide Lead Agencies with a copy of the Program Partner Assurances.

**Q.**   Are Program Partners required to participate in coordinated enrollment activities or will it be optional next year?

**A.**   Yes, Program Partners are required to participate in their Community Network's Coordinated Enrollment System.

**Q.**   What are the consequences for partners who do not share waiting lists?

**A.**   They are subject to loosing Academic Approval which, if they have a Type III license, will initiate the revocation of their license.

**Q.**   Will you notify Lead Agencies of any action for non-compliant centers?

**A.**   Lead Agencies are copied on all compliance-related correspondence directed to program partners in their Community Network.


**General**

**Q.**   10 operational days - does that mean 10 working days or 10 calendar days?

**A.**   An operational day is a day that both the Lead Agency and a Program Partner are open for business.

**Q.**   Will the RFA webinar be posted for review later?

**A.**   The webinar is posted at the Department's website.  Use this [link](#).

**Q.**   On p. 9 of the RFA, there are two items in the list of "Administrative Functions for the Community Network" about which we had questions:

   a.   *Facilitate and reconcile on an ongoing basis an accurate accounting in the GOLD™ online system of all classrooms at publicly funded sites in the Community Network that contain children from age birth to age five.*

   Please provide more information about what would be expected of the lead agency with regard to the reconciliation of TS GOLD classrooms.

   b.   *Verify through the Department's verification process Community Network-level data that has been collected and reported to the Department for the Community Network Performance Profile.*

   Can you describe the Department's verification process that we would have to use to conduct this verification? Depending upon the requirements, this could require a very significant amount of staff time. As such, we would like more information about this so that we can adequately plan our staffing and budget for the upcoming year.

**A.**   For "a.", Lead Agencies need to design an ongoing means for providers to verify that all of their classrooms are in the *GOLD™* online system and that the information is complete.

   For "b.", the Department is currently designing the verification system and will make every effort to minimize the amount of staff time necessary for Lead Agencies.

   Much of the work for both of the aforementioned can be accomplished with existing system reports.

**Q.**   Page 10 of the RFA states that lead agencies must: *Establish and implement a written process and timeline to ensure that written results and feedback from each local observation are reported to sites within 10 operational days.*

   Our Network is using *myTeachstone* to share results of observations in addition to using the Early

Childhood Web Portal.  *myTeachstone* allows coaches and administrators to see the notes for the observation so that they can provide teachers with better feedback.  *myTeachstone* also recommends specific professional development based on the observation results. Will the results and feedback provided through *myTeachstone* be considered sufficient for these purposes?

**A.**     Yes.