

Grant Program Announcement: Blind or Visually Impaired

Related to the Service Delivery, Technical Assistance, and Professional Development of Educational Teams, Families, and Individuals who are blind or visually impaired. This announcement provides potential applicants detailed requirements, timelines, and processes for submitting an application for this grant. All applications will be submitted in the Grants Management System (GMS). Directions for accessing GMS can be found at the end of this document.

Purpose

Per 16 V.S.A. § 2967(b)(2), The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) is seeking proposals from qualified individuals or agencies to provide technical assistance to individual students aged 3-22 and their educational teams, provide professional development training to educators and professionals in the field, and work in collaboration with other statewide consultants to improve local educational team's capacities to implement research-based interventions and current best practices in the field of education.

Process Timeline

Projected date for accessing GMS is June 15, 2022

Proposals due: June 24, 2022

Estimated project start: July 1, 2022

Grant Amount and Duration

1. Maximum Amount: In consideration of the services to be performed by grantee or subgrantee, the AOE estimates the granted sum not to exceed \$636,606.00, subject to appropriation in the final State budget.
2. Grant Term: The period of Subrecipient's performance shall begin on **July 1, 2022** (date application was approved at VT AOE for competitive grants but not prior to July 1) and end on **July 1, 2023**.
3. Source of Funds: Federal 0% State 100% with 0% Indirect.

Form of Grant

The grant between AOE and the selected bidder(s) will be required to be in the form of the Standard Vermont State Grant, including but not limited to standard provisions.

Please note the minimum insurance requirements, although for sole proprietors, AOE has discretion to accept proof of individual automotive insurance in lieu of the usual State Grant's requirements for auto insurance.

Scope of Work

Grantee will provide the following services statewide to children ages 3-22, who are enrolled in Vermont schools and to the Local Education Agencies (LEAs) who educate children and youth with IEPs and 504 Plans with a disability identified as blind or visually impaired:

1. Direct and consultation services to assist with the education of students with visual impairments. Grantee will provide the following services to Vermont school districts: a. Direct instruction and/or consultation to students, schools and families in the area of the Expanded Core Curriculum (described below) as cited in the NASDSE (National Association of Special Education Directors) Guidelines (Appendix G) for Blind and Visually Impaired Students. [Supporting Indicators: 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, & 13]
2. Compensatory and Functional Academics (including all communication modes such as Braille, large print, tactile symbols, calendar systems, recorded material and so forth.) a. All materials comply with the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard for the purposes of providing instructional materials to blind persons or other persons with print disabilities, in a timely manner after the publication of the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard in the Federal Register in accordance with 20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(23)(A) and (D); 34 CFR §300.172. [Supporting Indicators: 1, 3, 5, 6, & 13]
3. Orientation & Mobility (to teach students how to travel independently) [Supporting Indicator: 13]
4. Social Interaction [Supporting Indicator: 13]
5. Independent Living [Supporting Indicator: 13]
6. Recreation & Leisure [Supporting Indicator: 13]
7. Career Education [Supporting Indicator: 13]
8. Assistive Technology (including everything from keyboard skills to talking or large print software to the SBAC and related alternate assessments) [Supporting Indicators: 1, 3, 5, 6, & 13]
9. Sensory Efficiency [Supporting Indicators: 1, 3, 5, 6, & 13]
10. Self-determination [Supporting Indicators: 1, 3, 5, 6, & 13]
 - a. Accommodations for educating students with blindness or visual impairment.
 - b. Development of Individual Education Plans (IEP) and 504 plans.
 - c. Assessment and evaluation of children identified as visually impaired or functioning as visually impaired.
 - d. Support for educational teams.
11. Licensed teacher services: Grantee will employ licensed VT (AOE) Teachers of the Visually Impaired to work with schools and families to assist with providing appropriate educational services and supports for this population. [Supporting Indicators: 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, & 13]. The Grantee will provide:
 - a. Instruction using techniques designed for students with blindness and visual impairments.

- b. Information on available resources and adaptive technology that are designed to ensure the successful development of children in the home, school and community.
12. School staff and parents with information concerning their child's growth and development. Statewide services: The Grantee will provide services statewide to schools to assist with providing a free appropriate public education for this population. [Supporting Indicators: 1, 3, 5, 6, & 13]

Services (as required)

Referrals – New referrals are initiated with a student observation(s) and report to school team/staff. Based on the observation(s), recommendations are made regarding required or necessary services in order for the student to participate in the general education classroom.

Consultation Services – Consultant services are based on student needs and articulated in the student's IEP or 504 plan. Services may include direct services on site to provide continuous *direct* instructional service to a student; technical assistance and resources to the in-place educator; staff and/or peer in-service; observation with follow up contact with staff and/or student, other specialized equipment; academic content accommodations, and student/family services support.

Annual Monitoring – Student is monitored by consultant via distance technology or email with school staff to check on status/progress and provide recommendations/ technical assistance. Summer Services are contracted on an individual basis for additional fees and reflect the consultant's time for direct service (including home visit and preparation time) portal to portal and mileage.

Residential/Day Program Consultation – Consultant visits residential program for observation, IEP meetings, etc.

General Requirements

1. Services are provided by licensed educators and related service providers, as well as qualified providers with appropriate credentials to demonstrate proficiency.
2. Must have knowledge related to the population served and in areas of collaborative teamwork, creative problem-solving, inclusive education to improve access to general education curriculum, distance-based consultation, systematic instruction, adult learning, assistive technology, related services cross-disciplinary, interagency resources and VT Multi-Tiered System of Supports (VTmtss) [Field Guide](#) and the components of the implementation of an effective MTSS framework within a K-12 school environment.
3. Support practices that promote universal design for learning, differentiation, and the inclusion of all students in the general education curriculum and classroom.
4. Coach and facilitate the collection, analysis and skillful use of data to inform decision-making on instructional practices and resource allocation at the student, class, and grade level in the targeted school and supervisory union/supervisory district levels.

5. Remain current in recommended practices for students who are blind or visually impaired and be able to support teams in the implementation of these practices by providing technical assistance, training, and teaching to adults.
6. Coordinate with the AOE to host virtual and live events, newsletters and social media opportunities that highlights products for students who are blind or visually impaired.

Targeted Indicators

The Grantee will ultimately work to support the following Targets for students with disabilities that are generated by the Vermont State Performance Plan (SPP):

Indicator 1: Percent of youth with IEPs graduating from high school with a regular diploma.

Indicator 3: Participation and performance of children with disabilities on statewide assessments:

- a) Percent of the districts with a disability subgroup that meets the State's minimum "n" size that meet the State's AYP targets for the disability subgroups.
- b) Participation rate for children with IEPs.
- c) Proficiency rate for children with IEPs against grade level standards, modified and alternate academic achievement standards.

Indicator 5: Percent of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21 served:

- a) Inside the regular class 80% or more of the day;
- b) Inside the regular class less than 40% of the day; and
- c) In separate schools, residential facilities, or homebound/hospital placements.

Indicator 6: Percent of preschool children with IEPs who received special education and related services in settings with typically developing peers (i.e., early childhood settings, home, and part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education settings).

Indicator 8: Percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities.

Indicator 13: Percent of youth with IEPs aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals that are annually updated and based upon an age-appropriate transition assessment, transition services, including courses of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those postsecondary goals, and annual IEP goals related to the student's transition service's needs. There also must be evidence that the student was invited to the IEP Team meeting where transition services are to be discussed and evidence that, if appropriate, a representative of any participating agency was invited to the IEP Team meeting with the prior consent of the parent or student who has reached the age of majority.

Application Requirements

Applicants must have the expertise and structure necessary to provide the above-mentioned services, technical assistance and training, upon request. Applicants shall demonstrate ways

they will work with existing programs to provide wider access to services for persons who are blind or visually impaired by responding to the prompts below.

1. Prepare a summary outlining the planned service delivery model that includes methods for providing the required services to Vermont school districts serving children and youth aged (3–22) who are blind or visually impaired. Summary should validate the organization's capability to perform the proposed services.
2. Provide a description of experience and familiarity with current best practice and evidence-based resources (including but not limited to; collaborative teamwork, creative problem-solving, inclusive education to improve access to general education curriculum, distance-based consultation, systematic instruction, adult learning, assistive technology, related services cross-disciplinary, interagency resources, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, Positive Behavior Interventions Support),
3. Provide a description of experience providing professional development and technical assistance related to current best practice and evidence-based practices to educators including Supervisory Union/District leadership teams as well experience providing direct services to children who are blind or visually impaired,
4. Provide a description of knowledge and application of federal regulations of IDEA, State Rules, and the Standards for the delivery of services and process, best inclusionary practices that align with the general curriculum in the regular education environment, data collection and analysis, instructional coaching, and ability to conduct a multitude of professional development activities to accomplish the Scope of Work.
5. Describe the cost effectiveness and plan for sustainability by responding to the following
 - a. Describe how awarded funds will be utilized to provide services in the most cost-effective manner.
 - b. Describe the methodology for determining cost allocations to each program and the portion of the cost which benefits the program.

Bidder Selection Process

The AOE will review proposals and evaluate their merits using the criteria and score points below. A review panel will score the proposals according to the criteria below. Depth and breadth of experience specific to content and educational leadership, as well and applied experience with the implementing current best and evidence-based practices.

CRITERIA	POINTS
Prior Experience	
A. Satisfactory completion of projects of similar scope or complexity	A. 15
B. Experience is providing leadership in educational settings	B. 15

CRITERIA	POINTS
<p>Quality of Response</p> <p>A. Responsiveness to each bullet in the general requirements and scope of work above</p> <p>B. Degree to which the bidder has the credentials sought</p> <p>C. Evidence of cost saving measures for LEAs</p> <p>D. Creative solutions/ideas</p>	<p>A. 20</p> <p>B. 20</p> <p>C. 20</p> <p>D. 10</p>

Accessing Grants Management System

If you are interested in submitting an application, please complete this [brief web form](#). Entities must be current members of State of Vermont’s Vision Vendor System. If you are unsure of your status, contact Meg Porcella at AOE.SSSDivisionLeadsTeam@vermont.gov. To obtain a Vision Vendor number, email the following to Meg Porcella at AOE.SSSDivisionLeadsTeam@vermont.gov:

1. Verification of [SAM.gov](#) registration:
 - a. Search for your status on [SAM.gov](#) and save the PDF of your active registration.
 - b. To register your entity on [SAM.gov](#), follow the instructions on the SAM.gov homepage to obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)- formerly a DUNS number-and complete the registration process (Note: this process may take several weeks to complete).
2. The month in which your fiscal year begins
3. An updated [W9](#)
 - a. Typewritten
 - b. Signed in blue or black ink
 - c. Dated within the past 6 months