

## **NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS: EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES**

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program.

**ALL APPLICANTS FOR NEW GRANT AWARDS MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IN THEIR APPLICATIONS TO ADDRESS THIS PROVISION IN ORDER TO RECEIVE FUNDING UNDER THIS PROGRAM.**

Please respond to the following requests for information:

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

Prioritizing equity, the Blueprint creates new programs and innovative approaches that aim to close achievement gaps and ensure opportunity and achievement for every student, regardless of family income, race, ethnicity, and/or ability. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future was passed by the 2021 Maryland General Assembly with 5 Pillars of focus. Specifically, Pillar 4 "More Resources to Ensure that All Students are Successful", focuses on equity and closing deeply entrenched opportunity and achievement gaps to ensure that all students, from advanced learners to those who are struggling and have been historically underserved, receive the necessary support in order to reach their full potential. The Blueprint calls for increases in funding for special education and English learner students, expansion of community schools and wraparound services, as well as before- and after-school and summer academic enrichment programs. The Blueprint also emphasizes the importance of College and Career Readiness, with a focus on ensuring that all students, including those with disabilities, are college and career ready upon graduation and have the skills necessary to attend a postsecondary opportunity or join the workforce.

2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

Barriers identified as potential sources of inequity are geographical due to the rural settings of family populations, fiscal due to the economic disadvantages of students and families, and cultural with regards to language barriers for multilingual learners. In addition sensory needs and other disabilities may impede access to activities or projects.

3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

MSDE provides virtual opportunities for attendance in professional learning opportunities and technical assistance in order to ensure accessibility in attendance. Maryland's online IEP system provides translation services for multilingual families. In addition, the English Learner workgroup is charged with accelerating the academic achievement of more than 98,800 multilingual students. The purpose of the workgroup is to collect data, study national and international best-in-class practices and make recommendations for implementing and scaling those practices in Maryland public schools. The Concentration of Poverty Grant was established to support schools with a high percentage of students living in poverty.

4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

The focus on providing accessibility is within a case by case timeline. People being provided the opportunity for the usage of accessibility features is a start. But ensuring comprehensive usage to ensure accessibility is available for Maryland families is an ongoing priority. Annually, MSDE will have growth in technical assistance in rural areas. In carrying out its educational mission, MSDE will ensure to the fullest extent possible the equitable participation of, and appropriate educational opportunities for, those individuals involved.

**Notes:**

1. Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity in order to submit an application.
2. Applicants may identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.
3. Applicants may have already included some or all of this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) and page number(s) in their applications or State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.

**Paperwork Burden Statement**

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1894-0005. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 3 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain a benefit. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate or suggestions for improving this individual collection, send your comments to [ICDocketMgr@ed.gov](mailto:ICDocketMgr@ed.gov) and reference OMB Control Number 1894-0005. All other comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual form may be addressed to either (a) the person listed in the FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT section in the competition Notice Inviting Applications, or (b) your assigned program officer.