Application for Participation

Open-Source Phonics Matching Grant Program

Maryland State Department of Education

200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Deadline

May 13, 2025
No later than 5:00 p.m. EDT

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

Tenette Smith, Ed.D.
Deputy State Superintendent
Office of Teaching and Learning

Wes Moore
Governor

MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Joshua L. Michael, Ph.D.
President, Maryland State Board of Education

Monica Goldson, Ed.D. (Vice President)

Chuen-Chin Bianca Chang, MSN, PNP, RN-BC

Susan J. Getty, Ed.D.

Nick Greer

Dr. Irma E. Johnson

Dr. Joan Mele-McCarthy, D.A., CCC-SLP

Rachel L. McCusker

Samir Paul, Esq.

Clarence C. Crawford (President Emeritus)

Abhiram Gaddam (Student Member)

Contents

Grant Summary

The Open-Source Phonics Matching Grant Program was established under Chapter 270, House Bill 475 (2024) to provide matching funds to eligible nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and public libraries. Grantees must create or distribute free, open-source phonics materials that align with best practices in literacy instruction, including the science of reading. Materials must be freely distributable and enable adults to tutor students in Maryland. A total of $150,000 has been allocated for Fiscal Year 2025, and applicants are required to provide matching funds (in-kind or monetary). The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) will administer the program, monitor funded projects, and report to the Maryland General Assembly on the program's effectiveness.

APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS FOR OPEN-SOURCE PHONICS PROGRAM

To ensure alignment with the Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) standards for high-quality, accessible instructional materials, applicants for the Open-Source Phonics Program grant must meet the following qualifications:

1. **Evidence of Expertise in Structured Literacy and Phonics Instruction:** Applicants must demonstrate proven expertise in designing and delivering phonics instruction grounded in the Science of Reading. Specifically, applicants must show evidence of:

   - Prior development or implementation of structured literacy programs.

   - Familiarity with the five essential components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension).

   - Knowledge of evidence-based, systematic, and explicit phonics instruction approaches.

2. **Commitment to Open Educational Resources (OER) Principles**: Applicants must commit to releasing all phonics materials developed under this grant under an open license (e.g., Creative Commons Attribution license), making them freely available to the public for use, adaptation, and redistribution.

3. **Accessibility Compliance**: Applicants must ensure that all materials meet or exceed the accessibility standards outlined by:

   - Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

   - Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1, Level AA compliance.

   - COMAR 13A.06.05 (Maryland regulations regarding Digital Learning and Technology Standards). Materials must be:

     - Screen reader compatible.

     - Captioned for all audio and video components.

     - Navigable using assistive technologies (e.g., keyboard navigation).

     - Designed to accommodate students with print disabilities, English learners, and students requiring alternate formats.

4. **Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness**: Applicants must demonstrate an understanding of Maryland's diverse student population. Materials must:

    *   Reflect diverse backgrounds, languages, and experiences.

    *   Be free of bias and stereotypes.

    *   Include phonics examples appropriate for English learners and dual language learners.

5. **Technical and Content Development Capacity**: Applicants must show:

    *   Capacity to produce digital and printable resources in accessible file formats (e.g., EPUB, tagged PDF, HTML5).

    *   Ability to design materials that can be easily integrated into a variety of learning management systems (LMS) and instructional delivery platforms used across Maryland public schools.

6. **Evidence of Prior Collaboration with K-12 Educational Entities**: Applicants must document successful partnerships or contracts with K–12 schools, state education agencies, or literacy-focused nonprofits, preferably demonstrating prior experience in Maryland or similar educational settings.

7. **Data Privacy and Security Commitment:** If the program includes optional digital tools (e.g., progress trackers, assessments), applicants must adhere to Maryland's Student Data Privacy Act and relevant federal laws (e.g., FERPA, COPPA).

8. **Pilot and Feedback Commitment**: Applicants must agree to pilot the Open-Source Phonics materials in collaboration with selected Maryland local education agencies (LEAs) and to incorporate iterative feedback from educators, students, and accessibility experts during the development process.

9. **Additional Requirements**:

    *   Applicants must be a nonprofit organization, institution of higher education, or public library operating in Maryland.

    *   Applicants must submit a complete application, including a detailed project plan, budget, sustainability plan, and evaluation strategy.

    *   Applicants must commit to providing the required matching funds.

Instructions

1. Complete this application electronically by typing directly into the fillable fields and charts.
2. Do not alter or remove sections.
3. When finished, save the application document as a pdf to your computer and obtain appropriate signatures.
4. The signed and completed application should be saved as a single pdf document and emailed as an attachment to literacy.msde@maryland.gov with the subject "Open-Source Phonics Matching Grant Program".

Proposal Cover Page

Institution/Agency/Jurisdiction Name:

Name of Contact Person:

Institution/Agency Address:

Contact Person Phone:

Contact Person Email:

Project Partners:

Agency/Organization Name	Primary Contact	Partner's Project Role

*Add more rows as needed.

Amount of the request for grant period (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026): $ 150,000

(Should agree with Proposed Budget and the C-1-25.)

Signature of Contact Person   Date

Printed Name of Contact Person   Title

Signature of Superintendent of Schools   Date

Printed Name of Superintendent   LEA Name

Project Narrative

Please refer to House Bill 475 and the introduction of this application for information on the grant matching program.

PROJECT ABSTRACT (100 WORDS)

Introduce the project to the reader. The abstract should be factual, brief, and focused on the organization's efforts to produce or distribute free, open-source phonics materials aligned with the science of reading for adults tutoring Maryland students.

Enter text here.

EXTENT OF NEED

Describe the extent of need for free, open-source phonics materials in Maryland and how your organization addresses this gap to support adult tutors and student learning.

Enter text here.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Provide evidence demonstrating that the phonics materials align with best practices in literacy education, including the science of reading.

Enter text here.

GOALS, MEASURABLE OUTCOMES AND MILESTONES

List project goals, measurable outcomes, and milestones specifically focused on:

- Expanding the availability of free, open-source phonics materials.

- Supporting the effective tutoring of students by adults.

Goal 1:
Outcome(s):
Milestone(s):

Goal 2:
Outcome(s):
Milestone(s):

*Add more tables if additional goals are needed.

STRATEGIES

Describe the strategies that will be used to develop, distribute, and sustain the open-source phonics materials to support adult tutors. Explain how these strategies are appropriate, based on research, and best practices.

Enter text here.

TARGET POPULATION

Identify the target populations (adult tutors and student groups) and describe how they will benefit from access to free, open-source phonics materials.

Enter text here.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Describe the management plan for the project, including who will lead development, distribution, evaluation, and reporting.

Enter text here.

STEERING COMMITTEE (IF APPLICABLE)

Member Name	Title	Affiliations	Time devoted

PARTNER PLAN

If applicable, describe how any partners will assist with producing or distributing open-source phonics materials or supporting adult tutoring initiatives.

Enter text here.

MANAGEMENT PLAN WORKSHEET

Individual Responsible	Key Activities	Time Frame

EVALUATION AND DISSEMINATION

Grantees are required to submit an interim progress report that is consistent with the project's goal and objective(s.) A strong project plan includes an effective ongoing plan that evaluates milestones quarterly that helps project staff to make informed decisions about needed changes.

In this section, explain how the project's impact will be evaluated to ensure materials align with the science of reading and effectively support adult tutoring. Discuss how findings will be shared with stakeholders.

Enter text here.

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Describe how the project will continue providing free, open-source phonics materials after the grant period ends, including plans for maintaining and updating materials.

Enter text here.

Budget and Budget Narrative

Please provide a detailed description of the requested funds that will be spent by using the categories listed below. Add more rows if needed. A C-1-25 Budget Form must also be submitted.

SALARIES AND WAGES (LIST EACH POSITION SEPARATELY)

Line item	Calculation	Requested	In-Kind	Total
Total for Salaries & Wages:				

Using the space below, explain how these costs above are necessary, reasonable, and cost-effective.

Enter text here.

CONTRACTED SERVICES

Line item	Calculation	Requested	In-Kind	Total
Total for Contracted Services:				

Using the space below, explain how these costs above are necessary, reasonable, and cost-effective.

Enter text here.

SUPPLIES & MATERIALS

Line item	Calculation	Requested	In-Kind	Total
Total for Supplies & Materials:				

Using the space below, explain how these costs above are necessary, reasonable, and cost-effective.

Enter text here.

OTHER CHARGES

Line item	Calculation	Requested	In-Kind	Total
Total for Other Charges:				

Using the space below, explain how these costs above are necessary, reasonable, and cost-effective.

> Enter text here.

EQUIPMENT

Line item	Calculation	Requested	In-Kind	Total
Total for Equipment:				

Using the space below, explain how these costs above are necessary, reasonable, and cost-effective.

> Enter text here.

TRANSFERS

Line item	Calculation	Requested	In-Kind	Total
Total for Transfers:				

Using the space below, explain how these costs above are necessary, reasonable, and cost-effective.

> Enter text here.

Appendices

The following appendices must be included but not apply to the page limit of the Project Narrative. Include other appendices as deemed necessary.

Appendix A: A signed C-1-25 MSDE budget form

Appendix B: Evidence of status of a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, if applicable

Appendix C: Resume(s) of key personnel

Appendix D: Current W-9 for the organization

Appendix E: A completed GEPA Section 427 Statement, if applicable

Application and Award Timeline

Activity	Date
RFA Release Date	April 28, 2025
Application Submission Deadline	May 16, 2025 at 5pm
Application Review Period	May 17, 2025 – May 31, 2025
Notification of Awards	June 1, 2025

Application Review

Applications submitted under the Open-Source Phonics Matching Grant Program will be reviewed by an internal panel of Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) personnel. Reviewers will have expertise in structured literacy, phonics instruction, accessibility standards, content development, and educational equity.

Each application will be evaluated using the following nine criteria listed in the Application Requirements section of the RFA:

- Evidence of Expertise in Structured Literacy and Phonics Instruction **(High Priority)**

- Commitment to Open Educational Resources (OER) Principles

- Accessibility Compliance **(High Priority)**

- Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness **(High Priority)**

- Technical and Content Development Capacity **(High Priority)**

- Evidence of Prior Collaboration with K-12 Educational Entities

- Data Privacy and Security Commitment

- Pilot and Feedback Commitment **(High Priority)**

- Additional Requirements

Special emphasis and additional points will be awarded to the high-priority areas listed above. Reviewers will assign scores using the following scale:

- High-Priority Areas: 9-12 points

- Standard Areas: 7-10 points

SCORING

Each application can earn a maximum of 100 points. Reviewers will assign scores in each category using the following scale:

- Exemplary

- Proficient

- Developing

- Insufficient

FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS
- 90-100 points: Highly Recommended for Award

- 75-89 points: Recommended for Award

- 60-74 points: Consider for Award

- Below 60 points: Not Recommended for Award

Only one applicant will be selected to receive the Open-Source Phonics Matching Grant. The applicant with the highest overall score that meets the minimum threshold for quality (a score of 75 points or higher) will be recommended for funding. If no applicant meets the minimum quality threshold, MSDE reserves the right not to award the grant.

Applicants are encouraged to clearly demonstrate their alignment with the program priorities, with particular attention to structured literacy expertise, accessibility compliance, cultural and linguistic responsiveness, technical and content development capacity, and commitment to piloting and incorporating feedback.

MSDE reviewers will complete a score summary sheet and provide narrative comments to support the funding decision. Final award determination will be made by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) based on reviewer recommendations, available funding, and alignment with the goals of the Open-Source Phonics Matching Grant Program

SCORING RUBRIC

High Priority Criteria	Exemplary (11-12)	Proficient (8-10)	Developing (6-7)	Insufficient (>5)
Evidence of Expertise in Structured Literacy and Phonics Instruction	Strong, documented expertise in designing and delivering phonics instruction grounded in the Science of Reading; demonstrates deep understanding and use of evidence-based, systematic, explicit, and cumulative instructional practices covering phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.	Moderate experience with structured literacy and the Science of Reading; evidence of systematic instruction with minor gaps in coverage of key components.	Basic understanding of structured literacy or partial implementation of Science of Reading principles; coverage of essential components inconsistent or superficial.	No evidence of structured literacy expertise; approaches are not aligned with evidence-based Science of Reading practices.
Accessibility Compliance	Materials fully meet Section 508, WCAG 2.1 AA, and COMAR standards; full integration of screen reader compatibility, captioned content, keyboard navigation, and diverse learner accommodations.	Most accessibility standards are addressed; minor gaps in usability or navigation.	Some accessibility features present but significant gaps remain.	No effort to address accessibility requirements or non-compliance with accessibility standards.
Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness	Materials meaningfully represent Maryland's diverse student population; examples are culturally and linguistically appropriate, bias-free, and explicitly supportive of English learners and dual language learners.	Materials show some diversity and responsiveness, but minor gaps exist in representing all learners.	Limited diversity or responsiveness; some stereotypes or cultural gaps present.	Materials reflect little to no cultural or linguistic responsiveness; may reinforce stereotypes or exclusion.

Technical and Content Development Capacity	Demonstrates clear technical proficiency in producing accessible, user-friendly digital and print materials; ensures seamless integration into various LMS platforms and compatibility across instructional delivery systems.	General technical and content development capacity; minor limitations in accessibility or LMS integration.	Basic ability to develop content; significant revisions needed for accessibility or compatibility.	No demonstrated technical capacity or materials are not viable for intended use.
Pilot and Feedback Commitment	Strong, detailed plan for piloting with Maryland LEAs, incorporating structured feedback loops from educators, students, and accessibility experts to inform iterative improvement cycles.	General pilot and feedback plan provided; some aspects lack specificity.	Limited piloting or feedback strategy outlined; no clear iterative process.	No piloting or feedback plan described.

Standard Criteria	Exemplary (9-10)	Proficient (7-8)	Developing (5-6)	Insufficient (>4)
Commitment to Open Educational Resources (OER) Principles	Full commitment to releasing materials under an open license (e.g., Creative Commons); clear plan for adaptation, redistribution, and public access.	General open licensing commitment; redistribution plan has minor gaps.	Limited discussion of open licensing; unclear strategies for public access.	No open licensing commitment or significant restrictions placed on use.
Evidence of Prior Collaboration with K-12 Educational Entities	Well-documented successful collaboration with K-12 schools, state agencies, or literacy-focused nonprofits, preferably within Maryland; strong references provided.	Moderate experience collaborating with K-12 education entities; general references included.	Limited collaboration evidence; relationships not clearly relevant or documented.	No collaboration history with K-12 education entities provided.

Data Privacy and Security Commitment	Strong, clear alignment with Maryland's Student Data Privacy Act and applicable federal laws (FERPA, COPPA); detailed policies and procedures provided if digital tools are included.	General adherence to privacy laws described; some policies not fully detailed.	Minimal discussion of privacy or security measures.	No plan for compliance with data privacy and security requirements.
Technical and Content Development Capacity	Demonstrates clear technical proficiency in producing accessible, user-friendly digital and print materials; ensures seamless integration into various LMS platforms and compatibility across instructional delivery systems.	General technical and content development capacity; minor limitations in accessibility or LMS integration.	Basic ability to develop content; significant revisions needed for accessibility or compatibility.	No demonstrated technical capacity or materials are not viable for intended use.
Additional Requirements	*10 points:* Application is fully complete and compliant: eligible applicant type, matching funds commitment, detailed project plan, budget, sustainability plan, and evaluation strategy all provided.			*0 points:* Incomplete application; critical eligibility or documentation requirements not met.