

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FY 2025 School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program (SBMH)

GENERAL QUESTIONS

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE SBMH PROGRAM?

The SBMH program provides competitive grants to State educational agencies (SEAs), local educational agencies (LEAs), and consortia of LEAs to increase the number of credentialed school-based mental health services providers delivering mental health services to students in high-need LEAs.

WHO ARE ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS FOR SBMH?

Eligible applicants are SEAs or LEAs, including consortia of LEAs

WHAT DATE WILL THE GRANT BE AWARDED? WHAT DATE SHOULD WE USE AS THE START DATE?

We anticipate making awards by December 31, 2025. Applicants should propose a start date of January 1, 2026 when developing their applications.

WHAT IS THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION?

The closing date for the SBMH grant competition is **October 29, 2025**. All applications must be received by this date at 11:59:59 pm EST.

For further information, please see: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/09/29/2025-18895/applications-for-new-awards-school-based-mental-health-services-grant-program>

WHAT IS THE ESTIMATED RANGE OF AWARDS?

The average estimated awards range from \$1,250,000-\$1,750,000 *per year*, depending on the scope of work proposed.

HOW MANY AWARDS WILL THE DEPARTMENT MAKE?

We have approximately \$180,000,000 available for SBMH grants and estimate making 25-35 awards.

WHAT IS THE AWARD PERIOD?

The project period for these awards is UP TO 48 MONTHS.

DOES THIS PROGRAM HAVE A MATCHING REQUIREMENT?

The SBMH program does not have a matching requirement in FY 2025.

HOW MUCH SHOULD/CAN I REQUEST?

Applicants should submit a budget that supports their proposed program's goals, objectives, and activities.

HOW SHOULD I ESTIMATE INDIRECT COSTS?

This program uses an unrestricted indirect cost rate. For more information regarding indirect costs, or to obtain a negotiated indirect cost rate, please visit <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocfo/fipao/abouticg.html>.

SHOULD I USE EXACT ESTIMATES IN DOLLARS AND CENTS IN MY PROPOSED BUDGET?

Please use whole dollars and *do not* include cents when entering your budget.

IS A PLANNING YEAR ALLOWED IN THE SBMH PROGRAM?

This grant does not allow for a planning year.

ARE THERE ANY STIPULATIONS REGARDING HOW THE BUDGET CAN BE ALLOCATED?

The Department does not make recommendations on budget allocations but rather, encourages applicants to propose activities and a budget that are most likely to achieve the project's goals and objectives. Peer reviewers will determine how well applicants address the Competitive Preference Priorities and selection criteria.

Determination of costs allowable under a Federal award is made in accordance with the government-wide cost principles in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards set forth in [2 CFR part 200](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/part-200) (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/part-200>). Additional information on allocable administrative costs can also be found in this section.

WHAT ARE ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS AND IS THERE A LIMIT ON THESE COSTS?

Administrative costs for SEA applicants that receive an award under this program may not exceed 10 percent of the annual grant award. Administrative costs for applicants that are LEAs and consortia of LEAs may not exceed five percent of the annual grant award.

Administrative costs are typically expenses that are required to administer the grant that cannot be allocated to either direct or indirect costs, as explained in the government-wide cost principles in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards ([2 CFR part 200](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/part-200) (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/part-200>)).

Generally, staff time dedicated to project-related activities is considered a direct cost. Activities such as preparing reports or other general grant administration would be considered an administrative cost. If you have specific questions, please email Mental.Health@ed.gov.

ABSOLUTE PRIORITIES/ COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY**WHAT ARE THE ABSOLUTE PRIORITIES FOR SBMH?**

There are three absolute priorities for the FY 2025 SBMH program.

Priority 1—SEAs proposing to increase the number of credentialed school psychologists employed in high-need LEAs.

To meet this priority, an SEA must propose a plan to recruit and retain credentialed school psychologists for employment in high-need LEAs.

Priority 2—LEAs proposing to increase the number of credentialed school psychologists employed in high-need LEAs.

To meet this priority, a high-need LEA or a consortium of high-need LEAs must propose a plan to recruit and retain credentialed school psychologists for employment in high-need LEAs.

Priority 3—SEAs or LEAs increasing the number of credentialed school psychologists delivering early intervention and intensive mental health services in high-need LEAs.

To meet this priority, applicants must propose to increase the number of credentialed school psychologists who will engage in the following:

- (a) Providing intensive mental health services and supports to individual students most in need of those services,
- (b) Providing early intervention mental health services to address acute concerns and determine if intensive mental health services are needed, and
- (c) Building necessary capacity and local support to ensure the provision of intensive mental health services beyond the life of the grant.

DO I NEED TO RESPOND TO ALL THREE ABSOLUTE PRIORITIES?

SEAs should address **Absolute Priority 1** and **Absolute Priority 3**.

LEAs /LEA Consortia should address **Absolute Priority 2** and **Absolute Priority 3**.

Applications that do not respond to these Absolute Priorities are ineligible for review.

ARE THERE COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITIES?

Yes. There are two competitive preference priorities in the FY 2025 SBMH competition. We will award up to an additional 3 points to an application from an SEA that meets Competitive Preference Priority 1.

We will award an additional 3 points to an application from an SEA, LEA, or consortium of LEAs, that meets Competitive Preference Priority 2.

The total number of competitive preference points an SEA applicant may compete for is 6. The total number of competitive preference points an LEA or consortium of LEAs applicant may compete for is 3.

An applicant must clearly identify in the project abstract and the project narrative section of its application the competitive preference priority or priorities it wishes the Department to consider for purposes of earning competitive preference priority points.

These priorities are:

Competitive Preference Priority 1— SEAs proposing respecialization for existing professionals to become credentialed school psychologists. (up to 3 points)

To meet this priority, an SEA must propose to increase the number of credentialed school psychologists employed in high-need LEAs by implementing a respecialization plan. The respecialization plan must support professionals who hold, at a minimum, a degree in a related field (*e.g.*, special education,

clinical psychology, community counseling) to obtain a license or certification from the SEA or relevant State regulatory body as a school psychologist.

Competitive Preference Priority 2— Rural Applicants. (0 or 3 points)

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the following:

- (a) The applicant proposes to serve a community that is served by one or more LEAs—
 - (i) With a National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) locale code of 32, 33, 41, 42, or 43; or
 - (ii) With a NCES locale code of 41, 42, or 43.

HOW WOULD I KNOW IF QUALIFY AS A RURAL COMMUNITY THAT WOULD BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE POINTS?

Applicants can determine if they are in a National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) locale code of 32, 33, 41, 42, or 43 [here](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/maped/LocaleLookup/) (<https://nces.ed.gov/programs/maped/LocaleLookup/>).

WHERE DO I SHOW THAT I INTEND TO APPLY UNDER COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 1?

Please clearly indicate that you intend to create a program that incorporates or addresses approaches to respecialization in your project abstract and narrative, such as in the description of your program design in the project narrative in response to the *(b) Quality of project design* selection criteria.

HOW DO I SHOW THAT I QUALIFY FOR THE COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 2?

Please clearly indicate your locality code in your project abstract and narrative, such as in the description of your community in your project narrative in response to the *(a) Need for the Project* selection criteria.

SUBGRANTS

ARE SUBGRANTS ALLOWED?

An SEA grantee under this competition may award subgrants to LEAs to directly carry out project activities described in the application. The SEA grantee may award subgrants to entities it has identified in an approved application or that it selects through a competition under procedures established by the grantees. However, an SEA grantee is not required to award subgrants and may instead administer the program directly. LEAs may not make subgrants.

ELIGIBILITY

WHO ARE ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS?

Eligible applicants are SEAs or LEAs, including consortia of LEAs.

ARE CURRENT GRANTEEES ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

Current grantees may apply for a grant in the FY 2025 competition but please note, your proposed project should be substantively different from the current project, such as serving different students or schools in high-need LEAs that are not currently being served to be considered for funding. This should not be used to duplicate your current work or as a sustainability plan.

HOW IS “HIGH-NEED LEA” DEFINED IN THIS COMPETITION?

A “high-need LEA” means an LEA that has a significant need for additional school psychologists based on:

- a) (1) a ratio of students to school psychologists that exceeds a ratio of 500 students to 1 school psychologist and
(2) high rates of school violence, poverty, substance use, suicide, trafficking, or other adverse childhood experiences;
- b) having received a Project School Emergency Response to Violence (SERV) grant from the U.S. Department of Education since October 1, 2020; or
- c) having experienced a traumatic event since January 1, 2025, and did not receive a Project School Emergency Response to Violence (SERV) grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

ARE NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR THIS GRANT?

Non-public K-12 schools are not eligible to apply for this funding opportunity. Eligible applicants for SBMH are SEAs, high-need LEAs, or consortia of LEAs.

IS A CHARTER SCHOOL ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR THIS GRANT?

A charter school is eligible to apply for this grant if it is recognized as an LEA by their SEA. Please keep in mind that the entity would also need to meet the definition of high-need LEA, which means an LEA that has a significant need for additional school psychologists based on:

- a) (1) a ratio of students to school psychologists that exceeds a ratio of 500 students to 1 school psychologist and
(2) high rates of school violence, poverty, substance use, suicide, trafficking, or other adverse childhood experiences;
- b) having received a Project School Emergency Response to Violence (SERV) grant from the U.S. Department of Education since October 1, 2020; or
- c) having experienced a traumatic event since January 1, 2025, and did not receive a Project School Emergency Response to Violence (SERV) grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

ALLOWABLE USE OF FUNDS**CAN THESE FUNDS SUPPORT TELEHEALTH SERVICES?**

Telehealth mental health services are permissible, ensuring that these services are being provided to students in high-need LEAs. Please note, applicants that receive an award under this program must ensure that any school psychologist hired under this grant, including any services provider that offers telehealth services, is credentialed to work in an elementary or secondary school.

CAN THESE FUNDS BE USED FOR MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT PERSONNEL THAT WE ALREADY HAVE ON STAFF OR IT IS ONLY TO HIRE MORE STAFF?

Current staff would need to undertake different tasks in addition to their current role to ensure that their tasks are supplementing, not supplanting existing work. Applicants should keep in mind that the purpose of the program is to increase the number of credentialed school psychologists in high-need LEAs.

ARE SOCIAL WORKERS, COUNSELORS, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS, OR OTHER SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ALLOWED UNDER THIS PROGRAM?

While schools may continue to hire and train school social workers, counselors, occupational therapists or other school-based mental health professionals using State and local funds, this program is only intended to fund school psychologists because of their expertise to both assess and identify students with the greatest needs and to provide specialized services appropriate to those needs.

APPLICATION STRUCTURE/REQUIREMENTS

IS THERE A PAGE LIMIT FOR THE APPLICATION NARRATIVE?

No. The application package suggests a narrative of up to 15 pages. However, this is not a requirement, and applicants will not be penalized for going over the suggested limit.

ARE THERE SPECIFIC FORMATTING INSTRUCTIONS?

All formatting instructions can be found in the [Common Instructions and Information for Applicants to Department of Education Discretionary Grant Programs](#).

WHERE CAN I FIND DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS?

The definitions of “credentialed,” “early intervention mental health services,” “high-need LEA,” “intensive mental health services,” “recruit or recruitment,” “respecialization,” “retain or retention,” and “telehealth” are from the [Notice of Final Priorities](#). The definitions of “local educational agency” and “State educational agency” are from [20 U.S.C. 7801](#).

HOW DO I DEMONSTRATE THAT MY LEA OR THE PARTNER LEAs IN OUR CONSORTIUM MEET THE DEFINITION OF HIGH-NEED LEA?

Applicants should provide a description of how they and/or their partner LEAs meet the definition of high-need LEA in response to selection criteria *(a) Need for the project*.

IN WHAT PART OF THE APPLICATION SHOULD WE DESCRIBE OUR PARENTAL CONSENT PROCEDURES?

Applicants can describe their parental consent procedures they will implement to adhere to the Program Requirement in their narrative, such as in response to selection criteria *(b) Quality of project design*.

HOW AND WHERE SHOULD WE SHOW THE CURRENT NUMBER OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS AND THE TARGET NUMBER THAT WE PLAN TO HIRE?

Applicants are required to provide the number of current school psychologists and those they plan to hire as part of the application. Applicants should provide these numbers on the performance measure form, which is required for submission.

CAN WE INCLUDE OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IN A CHART AS AN APPENDIX OR MUST THIS BE PART OF THE NARRATIVE?

Per the [Notice Inviting Applications](#), applicants can include appendices to their application, such as charts representing goals and objectives. These appendices will not count towards your narrative pages. However, we encourage applicants to be responsive to the selection criteria, including providing a clear description of the goals and objectives aligned with the purposes of the grant program in selection criteria *(b) Quality of project design*.

CAN WE INCLUDE OUR TIMELINES AND MILESTONES IN A CHART AS AN APPENDIX OR MUST THIS BE IN THE NARRATIVE?

Per the [Notice Inviting Applications](#), applicants can include appendices to their application, such as charts representing timelines and milestones. These appendices will not count towards your narrative pages. However, we encourage applicants to be responsive to the selection criteria, including providing a clear description of the timelines and milestones for accomplishing project tasks in selection criteria (d) *Quality of management plan*.

ARE LETTERS OF SUPPORT REQUIRED?

No. Letters of support are not required.

HOW WILL MY APPLICATION BE SCORED?

An application should address the criteria used by peer reviewers to score submitted applications and referenced in the application package. The extent to which an application addresses that criterion is determined by the peer reviewers.

Please note, SEAs and LEAs will not be competing against each other.

HOW DO I SUBMIT MY APPLICATION AND WHAT HAPPENS AFTER?

All instructions about application submission, including confirmation of successful submission, can be found in the [Common Instructions and Information for Applicants to Department of Education Discretionary Grant Programs](#).

HOW CAN I GET SUPPORT FOR GRANTS.GOV, INCLUDING ADDRESSING ERROR MESSAGES?

Applicants can contact the Grants.gov help desk at (800) 518-4726 or visit [the Grants.gov Support Center](#) for issues with or questions about Grants.gov.