

**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.

All students, including those with disabilities, are held to high expectations and have equitable access to education opportunities that enrich their lives and prepare them for future success.

Our goal as a State Education Agency is to improve outcomes for all students. This can be accomplished through a system that ensures equity and access. As a State Education Agency, the Department of Education strives to achieve improved outcomes for each student. A system that ensures access and equity will assist achieving this. The inclusion of individualized supplemental aids and services, modifications, or supports to enable every student to engage meaningfully in the general education curriculum is known as equitable access. Equitable access must be accompanied by a school-wide acceptance or belief in shared responsibility, shared accountability, and high expectations. According to the Dear Colleague letter on the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (November 2015) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (December 2015), improving outcomes also requires a strong core curriculum, high quality instruction, unbiased assessment that guides instruction, and collaboration among administrators, general and special education staff, parents, and the community. Multi-tiered system of support and universal design for learning provide the foundation necessary to reach the overall goal.

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

In special education, Indiana does not have an equitable ratio of students from diverse backgrounds to a diverse number of educators and administrators.

In 2023-2024 school year, Indiana experienced a severe shortage of special education teachers. At the beginning of the 2023 school year there were over 215 job postings throughout public and charter schools. The number of students enrolled in special education license programs at higher education institutions was declining. People from various backgrounds were not interested in careers in education or administration.

Special education educators who chose to continue their careers were concerned about a lack of resources. This is especially true for special education teachers in their first and second years. To retain teachers, support resources had to be available.

Many educators who would like to continue their education or add a special education license to their current license are discouraged by the cost of continuing education. As a result, additional special education teachers are limited with resources.

**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?**

In 2019, Indiana Department of Education, Office of Special Education in partnership with Indiana Council of Administrators of Special Education, developed the Aspiring Special Education Leadership Institute, (ASELI). The Office of Special Education developed the Institute a one-year leadership development program designed to improve outcomes for all students by preparing a diverse group of educators for leadership roles in special education. The goals of the institute include:

- 1) To increase the capacity of and retain a network of aspiring diverse special education leaders at the local education agency level to improve systems serving children with disabilities and their families.
- 2) To develop, improve, and expand system-level collaborative practices between SEA, LEA, Parent Center, IHE, and other children-serving agencies to ensure the delivery and maintenance of a special education leadership development program.
- 3) To increase the number of diverse early intervention and special education leaders at the local education agency level with the knowledge, skills, and competencies to improve systems serving students with disabilities and their families.

Indiana is in the third cohort of participants who have completed the ASELI Institute. In 2022-2023 the number was increased from ten participants to twenty, providing a background knowledge to 60 participants plus 60 mentors to date.

In November 2021, Indiana announced a partnership with the University of Indianapolis' Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning (CELL) to strengthen Indiana's special education teacher pipeline, with a focus on supporting special education teachers as they work to earn full licensure. The Indiana Special Education Assisted Licensure (I-SEAL) streamlines the required coursework for teachers to earn full special education licensure. I-SEAL provides financial assistance and scholarships to educators while their complete these requirements. To date, there are 901 participants in the program and a completion of 276, the number will increase per Higher Education semesters.

The Office of Special Education has made increasing stakeholder input from community members, students, and parents a priority. In collaboration with Indiana's PTI center, INSOURCE, the Office of Special Education has held monthly Office Hours on a variety of topics, including evaluation, case conference committee members, state assessments, and least restrictive environment.

Indiana currently utilizes an on-line based IEP system for every public school in Indiana. Indiana currently translates the IEP and NOPS into the following languages for families: Spanish, Burmese, Arabic, Punjabi, Mandarin (all varieties), Japanese, Vietnamese, Russian, French, Mandarin (Sichuanese), and German (Amish/Pennsylvania Dutch).

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

In fiscal year 2018-2019, Indiana launched the ASEL program to address the lack of diversity in administration, with a focus on special education leadership. The Institute is a one-year leadership development program designed to improve outcomes for all students by preparing a diverse group of educators for leadership roles in special education. Because of the continued lack of leadership diversity, the Office of Special Education continues to support this project.

Indiana started contracting with the Council for Exceptional Children in 2019 to provide support to first- and second-year special education teachers. The project's goal is to provide support to 750 first and second-year teachers. Three webinars, a CEC membership, High-Leverage Practices trifolds for teachers, the book, "The Survival Guide," 24/7 peer support, and the Council for Exceptional Children newsletter are among the resources provided by the funding. Because of the continued shortage of special education teachers, the Office of Special Education continues to support this project.

The I-SEAL project was fully funded by ESSR funds and timeline of completion will be the 2024 school year. I-SEAL is currently supported by ESSR III funds, and the Office of Special Education will continue to do so if the need exists.

**Notes:**

1. Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity 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.