

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Maryland Leads** **– Partner Program**

**Note**: The Maryland Leads Vendor Partner Sessions presentation is available in the resources link on the [Maryland Leads page](https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/MDLeads/index.aspx).

1. **Question**: Does the budget count toward the page limit? Is there a template?

**Answer**: There is no required template. It is up to you how you submit the proposed budget. Keep in mind that the budget does count toward the total 40-page limit and includes a 2-page limit for the budget proposal, specifically.

1. **Question**: On the Science of Reading Strategy, do LEAs choose their own strategies or will the vendor partner choose it?

**Answer**: LEA will make choices as part of their applications. Vendors should be prepared to support a range and/or identify how you can support different HQIMs.

1. **Question**: If you subcontract, is that considered being a sub-grantee?

**Answer**: Yes, or subcontractor. Please refer to the grant terms provided at the end of the guidance document. The full set of contract terms are provided including requirements for subcontractors. These terms do not count toward the page limit so please include any term exceptions or requests in the application proposal.

1. **Question**: Are we required to submit for all strategies or sub-areas, or can we just apply for some of the sub-areas?

**Answer**: You may apply for one, some, or all of the strategies, or one, some or all of the focus areas. You can apply to a combination, or a single area of focus or strategy.

1. **Question**: Is there a deadline for written question submissions?

**Answer**: No deadline. We will work to get questions answered within one business day.

1. **Question**: What support is offered to the approved program partners to support collaboration and data collection? How can we share best practices for program evaluation?

**Answer**: There is no advanced support or joint planning sessions for program partners from the MSDE. Program partners are expected to complete applications including milestones and services to be delivered.

1. **Question**: Do resume’s count toward the application 40-page limit?

**Answer**: Yes, they count. Picking a sub-set and editing to one-page each is ok, as would use of language like: Additional resumes may be available upon request.

1. **Question**: Will LEAs be encouraged to work with Maryland Leads Partner Program vendors instead of those they have worked with in the past?

**Answer**: All LEAs must work with approved vendors only for the Maryland Leads program. They may continue work with other vendors in work that is not a part of the Maryland Leads program.

1. **Question**: Is there a limit to the number of strategies a vendor applies to support?

**Answer**: No, no limit on strategies or focus areas.

1. **Question**: Can a new company still be partnered with an LEA?

**Answer**: Yes, approved programs will be matched to LEAs based on LEA needs. Company size or newness should not prevent an applicant from submitting an application. MSDE is seeking a wide range of high-quality partners.

1. **Question**: When do LEAs have to decide their focus areas?

**Answer**: LEA applications are due April 7, 2022

1. **Question**: If submitting for multiple strategies, can we be approved for one and not another? Do we submit separately or together?

**Answer**: Please submit as one proposal. Individual strategies and focus areas will be approved, so some may be approved while others may not.

1. **Question**: What information will LEAs receive when deciding who to match with?

**Answer**: The MSDE will work with partners to gather information for sharing. MSDE will provide a Partner Program document to all awarded LEAs that includes a list of all approved Partners and which strategy/focus area(s) the respective Partners support. The document will also include ‘one-pagers’ for each Partner so that LEAs can contact, meet with, and decide on which partners with whom the LEA would like to work as part of their Maryland Leads program(s).

1. **Question**: If we over-estimate the budget will the MSDE work with partners to negotiate price?

**Answer**: Pricing is considered part of the application. Partners are encouraged to treat budgets as “best and final” when submitting the application.

1. **Question**: Will there be a specific person designated in the LEA for partners to work with?

**Answer**: Yes, within each LEA there will be a designated lead for each strategy.

1. **Question**: Is there a limit on the number of LEAs we can work with?

**Answer**: There is no limit. However, please include information about your organization’s capacity in terms of the number of LEAs/number of students your organization can support concurrently during the program period.

1. **Question**: Will the state facilitate the match process or does the vendor reach out to each LEA?

**Answer**: The MSDE will facilitate, but not suggest who they work with. As an approved partner, the LEA may choose any. Upon award, MSDE will collect information from providers and share with all LEA (one-pager per partner).

1. **Question**: What percentage of the 133 million will go to vendors?

**Answer**: Approximately fifty to sixty percent, but the final and actual amount will depend upon the LEA applications and LEA awards.

1. **Question**: Can we be an approved partner, but not be selected by an LEA?

**Answer**: Yes, that is possible.

1. **Question**: How do we submit our budget proposal? Is there a template?

**Answer**: There is no required template. It is up to you how you submit the proposed budget. Keep in mind that the budget does count toward the total page limit. The budget should include unit-level costs.

1. **Question**: Does the budget include a unit cost and staffing?

**Answer**: The budget may be presented by unit or using a blended staffing model. This depends on your delivery model and how you would like to submit the budget. However, the MSDE must be able to determine the full cost of the prospective agreement based on unit level costs.

1. **Question**: Since the budget includes time and materials, does this mean we will submit monthly invoicing? Can we build-in an upfront cost?

**Answer**: The contract will be based on the specific program based on reimbursement for services delivered. The MSDE is not inclined to award in advance.

1. **Question**: Can you clarify for one area, Science of Reading, must the partner respond to all four focus areas, or may the partner respond to less than four?

**Answer**: Even for the Science of Reading, Partner Program applicants can apply to one, some, ro all focus areas. The requirement to respond to all focus areas within the Science of Reading strategy area is only for LEA applicants.

1. **Question**: If approved under a specific strategy, do we have to provide services in all the sub-bulleted focus areas?

**Answer**: Determination of services will be at the focus area level. While the partner is not required to provide services in all focus areas, please be clear about which areas your organization is responding to and how those services support the overall strategy goals.

1. **Question**: In each strategy, we must address each sub-bullet. For example, in Staff Support and Retention has some required and some not required. Do we have to include all areas of a focus?

**Answer**: Please acknowledge all bullets in a strategy but include only those you will address. You do not need to provide services for all sub-bullets.

1. **Question**: When organizations submit workplans and budgets as part of our grant proposal by April 5, 2022, we will be guessing how many LEAs and schools will want our services. What is the process for us to iterate our workplans and budgets?

**Answer**: If approved under a specific strategy, partners will be matched and contracted for a specified number of LEA and schools. Please include in your proposal if there are requirements or limits to the number of LEAs or schools you can serve.

1. **Question**: Are small out-of-state organizations welcome to apply to be a partner, or is this geared for Maryland-based or regional/national providers specifically?

**Answer**: Yes, any organization is welcome to apply, regardless of size or location. However, applicants should specify their ability to work across the state and note any limitations in terms of scale (number of LEA and/or schools).

1. **Question**: Does a collaborating Community College have to complete the Partner application?

**Answer**: Yes, all Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) must be an approved partner to participate in the Maryland Leads program.

1. **Question**: Can an approved partner decline to work with LEAs? Can we focus our efforts?

**Answer**: Partners must be able to work with LEAs based on the strategy and matching process. Please include in your proposal if there are requirements or limits to the number of LEAs or schools you can serve.

1. **Question**: Can we identify confidential information?

**Answer**: Yes. Applications are public, in nature, however, you may specify what parts of the application contain confidential information. You cannot provide a blanket assertion of confidentiality to cover an entire application.

1. **Question**: For the budget proposal, we must use a unit-cost. However, we are also asked for time and materials. How do we submit?

**Answer**: It is up to you how to submit the budget proposal. The unit cost should be to the unit if delivery. State restricted indirect cost rate may be applied.

1. **Question**: What is the State Restricted Indirect Rate?

**Answer**: 15%

1. **Question**: Can we submit proposals under different strategies? Can we be part of multiple proposals?

**Answer**: No. There should be one application per entity. However, it is permissible to, for example, be a sub in another entity’s application. Applicants should submit one application total regardless of how many strategies for which the applicant applies.

1. **Question**: How is LEA-led program defined?

**Answer**: Jointly operated initiatives, but led by the LEA.

1. **Question**: Is it required for there to be a $3M aggregate for the general liability and professional liability insurance or can this be updated once awarded? And do you need separate cyber security / data breach insurance if it's not related to the work we're applying for? 2. Do you need a certificate of good standing for Maryland?

**Answer**: We will evaluate any and all requests for exceptions to application requirements or terms. Please specific those requests in the application and provide a justification thereto.

1. **Question**: Does the Certificate of Insurance count toward the 40-page limit?

**Answer**: Yes.

1. **Question**: Will you read letters of recommendation sent directly to you?

**Answer**: No, this must be included in the proposal, and part of the 40-page limit.

This page will be updated with frequently asked questions and answers on a continual basis.