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# **Recruitment and Retention Support Grant**

## Request for Proposals

**Deadline: Friday, February 3, 2023**

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

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VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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**Virginia Department of Education**

**RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION SUPPORT GRANT**

**Request for Proposals**

As part of Virginia’s American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) funding, over $1,000,000 in grant funding is available to assist public school divisions with recruitment and retention of educators.  Specifically, this Recruitment and Retention Support grant is designed to offer **retention and/or** **recruitment bonuses** to current educators and/or prospective educators, and/or **tuition support** to employees with an emphasis on high-need areas.  Depending on enrollment as indicated in the [Fall Membership Report](https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/apex_captcha/home.do?apexTypeId=304) for the 2022-23 school year, divisions may submit a proposal for either up to $30,000 or up to $50,000 over the course of one year (2023-2024).

All Virginia public school divisions are eligible to apply.  In submitting a proposal, divisions will identify the individuals to whom they wish to offer retention bonuses and/or the new positions for which they’d like to offer hiring incentives, and/or the amount planned for tuition support, along with an estimate of the total amount to be spent. Division employees eligible for *retention bonuses* include teachers who are currently teaching in a [2022-2023 critical teaching shortage area](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/2610/637952279047900000) as identified by the VDOE *or* who are teaching in a hard-to-staff division, as defined below. Divisions may also choose to use the funds towards *hiring bonuses* for critical teaching shortage positions or for those accepting any teaching position in a hard-to-staff division. Further, hard-to-staff divisions may also offer *hiring bonuses* to other professional positions that the division identifies as high-need areas, including counselors, school psychologists, reading specialists, etc. In order to be eligible for hiring incentives, new employees’ *hire date* (written offer) must be **June 30, 2023** or prior. Furthermore, the grant funding may be used for tuition support for division employees seeking licensure.  Specific eligibility requirements are detailed below.

Proposals are due by **4pm on Friday, February 3, 2023** and should be submitted via email to Dr. Meg Homer: Meghan.Homer@doe.virginia.gov. Divisions applying for funding will be notified of their award status by the end of February 2023 and will receive additional details on seeking reimbursement. A mid-term (August 2023) and final report (May 2024) will be due to the Virginia Department of Education, detailing how funds were used, including supplemental documentation as appropriate. Divisions awarded grant funding must request reimbursement of funds via the Online Management of Education Grant Awards (OMEGA) system no later than **Monday, June 3, 2024**.

**INTENT**

The intent of the Recruitment and Retention Support (RARS) Grant is to provide public school divisions with a structured framework upon which it can systematically develop plans to support recruitment and retention of employees through retention incentives, hiring incentives, and tuition support. The RARS Grant is designed to prioritize the retention and hiring of those teaching in critical shortage areas, as identified by the VDOE for the 2022-23 school year, with the option to also justify *hiring incentives* for other positions for which division leadership can demonstrate significant need, such as counselors, social workers, reading specialists, etc. The grant also allows divisions to offer tuition support to employees seeking licensure. It is the VDOE’s hope that the RARS grant will assist in reducing critical shortage areas in divisions across the Commonwealth while, fostering a supportive community for all school employees.

School divisions with up to **15,000 students enrolled** as indicated by the [Fall Membership Report](https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/apex_captcha/home.do?apexTypeId=304) for 2022-2023 school year may apply for up to **$30,000**.

School divisions with **15,000 or more students enrolled** as indicated by the [Fall Membership Report](https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/apex_captcha/home.do?apexTypeId=304) for 2022-2023 school year may apply for up to **$50,000**.

School division proposals must clearly describe plans to use funding to support these recruitment and retention strategies over a period of one school year (2023-2024). Specific criteria is outlined below:

* Retention Incentive for Current Teachers:
	+ Grant funding may be used to establish *retention bonuses* of **up to $5,000** per individual for certain teachers (exact amount to be articulated in the school division’s proposal).  Teachers must meet the following criteria:

  They are currently employed with the division as of January 1, 2023

  They are teaching in one of the 2022-2023 [critical shortage areas](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/2610/637952279047900000) as identified by the VDOE *OR* they are teaching in a division with overall free and reduced lunch rate of 40 percent or greater, as reported on the most recent [Free and Reduced Lunch Eligibility Report](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/programs-services/school-operations-support-services/school-nutrition/program-statistics-reports).

School divisions must provide half of the incentive payment to the individual no later than January 1, 2024 and provide the balance of the full amount to the individual no earlier than May 1, 2024.  The second installment of the bonus is only provided if the individual receives a satisfactory performance evaluation and provides a written commitment to return to the same school for the 2024-25 school year.  The incentive awards are taxable to the recipient, and the school division is responsible for ensuring all taxes are remitted.

**and/or…**

* Hiring Incentive for Current Teachers:
	+ Grant funding may be used to establish *hiring bonuses* of **up to $5,000** per individual for certain teachers (exact amount to be articulated in the school division’s proposal).  Teachers must meet the following criteria:

  They are ***hired*** (written offer) between January 1, 2023 and June 30, 2023

  They are teaching in one of the 2022-2023 [critical shortage areas](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/2610/637952279047900000) as identified by the VDOE *OR* they are teaching in a division with overall free and reduced lunch rate of 40 percent or greater, as reported on the most recent [Free and Reduced Lunch Eligibility Report](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/programs-services/school-operations-support-services/school-nutrition/program-statistics-reports), *OR* they are seeking employment in a role that a hard-to-staff division identifies as a high-needs area such as counselors, school psychologists, reading specialists, etc. (justification required in proposal).

School divisions must provide half of the incentive payment to the individual no later than January 1, 2024 and provide the balance of the full amount to the individual no earlier than May 1, 2024.  The second installment of the bonus is only provided if the individual receives a satisfactory performance evaluation and provides a written commitment to return to the same school for the 2024-2025 school year.  The incentive awards are taxable to the recipient, and the school division is responsible for ensuring all taxes are remitted.

**NOTE:** Individuals in a local school division who have confirmed their intent to continue in their role for the 2023-2024 school year in Virginia as of July 1, 2023, who accept an otherwise qualifying position in another local school division, are not eligible for this incentive.

**and/or…**

* Continuing Education Support:
	+ Grant funding may be used to cover the cost of employees’ tuition and related institutional fees, such as technology or library fees. Although those with provisional licenses may be likely participants, divisions are required to consider all prospective and current employees (teachers and non-teaching staff) taking coursework towards licensure. Although divisions will have the flexibility to develop and outline their own proposed procedure for selecting individual recipients of continuing education funds, preference should be given to those seeking **initial licensure or those seeking *secondary endorsement in a critical shortage area***. Divisions planning to use funds for continuing education support must develop a procedure for tracking enrollment and class registration and successful completion, and are advised to secure promissory notes with the individual recipients outlining plans for the recipient to return unused tuition dollars in the event that the recipient does not complete the intended class(es).

**REPORTING**

Each school division with a funded proposal will provide the VDOE with a mid-term progress report by **August 14, 2023** and a final report by **May 10, 2024**. The annual progress report should include the number of employees served, expenditures, a narrative on the impact of the grant, and supplemental materials (such as documentation of satisfactory performance evaluation, unofficial transcripts, etc.) as applicable. See details below.

**TIMELINE**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| February 3, 2023 | Application due via email to Meghan.Homer@doe.virginia.gov |
| Late February 2023 | Award notification  |
| March-June 2023 | Division to identify individual recipients of incentives and/or continuing education support |
| June 2023 | For divisions offering continuing education support for Fall 2023 semester: ensure employee recipients are enrolled and tracking/documentation procedure is established |
| August 14, 2023 | Mid-term Progress Report Due |
| January 1, 2024 | For divisions offering hiring and/or retention incentives: ensure half of incentive has been distributed to employees |
| May 10, 2024 | Final Report Due |
| June 3, 2024 | OMEGA Reimbursement Requests Due |

**PROPOSAL REVIEW**

VDOE staff will review proposals per requirements as defined in this RFP. If, in the judgment of the VDOE, an application is late or incomplete, the application may be omitted from the process. The decision of the VDOE is final. Applicants submitting proposals that are rejected by the VDOE will be notified in writing.

An expert review panel will evaluate eligible proposals based on the required components and the established criteria. The review panel will review each eligible proposal and make recommendations to VDOE in the areas of potential for impact, budget, and overall efficacy.

**REQUIRED COMPONENTS AND APPLCIAITON PROCEDURE**

Proposals must be submitted by **4pm on Friday, February 3, 2023** via email to Dr. Meg Homer: Meghan.Homer@doe.virginia.gov.

Listed below are the required components of a school division proposal in the order they must appear. The narrative sections of the proposal must be single-spaced with one-inch margins, and the font used must be 12-point Times New Roman. **Please adhere to word count limits** noted for each section.

**Cover Page and Abstract**

* Divisions must submit a complete cover page, found on page 8. The cover page must be the first page of the division’s application.
* All proposals must include an abstract (**up to** **350 words**) briefly describing the plans for the funds including **retention incentives,** **hiring incentive**s and/or **continuing education support**. Provide justification for seeking funds such as noting critical shortage areas and any recruitment/retention challenges specific to the division, including vacancy data. If the division plans to use funds for hiring incentives, discuss targeted hiring efforts and the divisions’ greatest needs. If planning to use the award to support continuing education, note any trends in significant barriers to completing coursework among employees and include a brief summary of plans to select recipients. If partnering with a specific Institution of Higher Education, note any reasons for the partnership such as location, offering of online courses, or a negotiated tuition discount.

**Recruitment and Retention Support Plan**

All proposals should include a plan using the following headings:

Participants (up to 300 words):

Discuss which individuals are likely to benefit from the funding, such as prospective employees or current employees seeking licensure in Virginia. Although divisions are not required to list the names of participants, divisions are asked to **estimate the number and type of employees** (bus drivers, instructional assistants, teachers, etc.) expected to be served.

If the division plans to use funds to assist in covering cost of post-secondary coursework leading to licensure, explain the **selection process**. Divisions should comment on how administrators will ensure that a range of employees (teachers, counselors, social workers, teacher’s aides, support staff, bus drivers, and other classified staff) are considered and how the selection process will support efforts to recruitment and retention efforts.

Budget (up to 500 words):

Provide a paragraph summarizing the overall plan for using the funds accompanied by an outline of anticipated expenses (table or chart). The DOE will make awards of up to $50,000 for each school division. Divisions will submit a mid-term report (template to be provided) by August 14, 2023 as well as a final report by February 12, 2024, along with supplemental documentation.

It is important to note that although divisions are asked to provide an estimate of costs, the actual award amount cannot exceed the estimated figure. For example, if a division submits a proposal for $30,000 to cover tuition but that actual cost of tuition exceeds $30,000, the DOE cannot cover the overage. Divisions are advised to plan accordingly.

Operations and Record Keeping (up to 250 words):

Include a plan for fiscal procedures and identify the designated contact person to handle distribution of any monetary incentives, payment of tuition bills, collection of invoices, and unofficial transcripts showing successful course completion, as applicable. The division should indicate who will be responsible for submitting mid-term and final reports with copies of supplemental documents.

Evaluation (up to 500 words):

Divisions must outline a plan for evaluating their entire Recruitment and Retention Support Grant. This section should include how the division plans to evaluate the *effectiveness* of the awards in addressing recruitment and/or retention challenges for the division. Distinct from the mid-term and final reports (mentioned above), the Evaluation Plan should cover how the division will measure the *impact or effect* of the grant, such as measuring an anticipated increase in the number of fully licensed teachers, improved evaluation results, reduced vacancies in specific areas, or effect on employee’s perception of the professional development support from leadership as measured through a questionnaire, etc.

**APPLICATION COVER PAGE**

**School Division:**

**School Division Enrollment (per the** [**Fall Membership Report**](https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/apex_captcha/home.do?apexTypeId=304) **for 2022-23):**

**School(s):**

**Superintendent’s Region (enter I-VIII):**

**Mailing Address:**

**Division Superintendent:**
**Email:**

**Grant Contact Person:**

**Title:**

**Email:**

**CERTIFICATION BY AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL**

*The applicant certifies that to the best of his/her knowledge the information in this application is correct and that the filing of this application is duly authorized by the local school board of this School Division.*

**Typed or Printed Name of Superintendent:**

**Signature of Superintendent:**