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National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) Grant Application Process

PURSUANT TO ITEM 138.10, PARAGRAPH L OF THE APPROPRIATION ACT as adopted on September 14, 2023

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DECEMBER 2023

Guidelines for the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) Grant Process for Fiscal Year 2024

# BACKGROUND

PURSUANT TO ITEM 138.10, PARAGRAPH L OF THE APPROPRIATION ACT as adopted on September 14, 2023:

*L. Out of this appropriation, $150,000 the second year from the general fund is provided for Critical National Security Language Grants. The Department of Education shall award these competitive grants to school divisions that provide one or more foreign language courses in a foreign language that is currently identified as critical by the National Security Language Initiative for Youth scholarship program. Each grant shall be limited to an annual amount sufficient to provide one or more full-time equivalent teaching position to provide one or more critical foreign language courses. The Department shall establish guidelines for administering the program, including selection criteria that considers teacher experience and qualifications, student interest, class size and student to teacher ratios, and the number of courses to be taught.*

The Department of Education is required to develop guidelines for the administration of the program to include certain minimum requirements as established in these guidelines. The grant funding is awarded based on competitive criteria through a school division application process. These guidelines establish the competitive criteria and criteria point values used in evaluating school division applications for awarding grant funding to eligible public school division programs.

# OPEN APPLICATION PROCESS

School divisions may apply for National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) grant funding during an open application period using an online form in the SMApply system. The open application period is announced by the Department to school divisions through a Superintendent’s Memorandum at a time determined by the Department, including establishing the specific beginning and end dates of the open application period. Online applications not submitted by the established open application period deadline may be disqualified from consideration. The Department will prioritize conducting the open application process as early as possible each fiscal year the program is funded in the appropriation act.

After the open application period has closed, grant applications are reviewed by Department staff for consideration for funding. After the Department review period is completed, status notifications and funding awards will be sent to each applicant.

# APPLICATION PROCEDURES, REQUIREMENTS, AND CRITERIA

The NSLI grants aim to support school divisions that offer world language courses in languages deemed critical by the National Security Language Initiative for Youth scholarship program.

Eligible languages for the 2023-2024 grant cycle include:

* Arabic
* Chinese (mandarin)
* Hindi
* Indonesian
* Korean
* Persian (Tajiki)
* Russian
* Turkish

1. If qualifying grant award requests exceed the amount of funds available, grants are awarded based on ranked project scores, and grant amounts are not prorated. However, the last project funded based on ranked project scores may be partially funded based on the remaining funds available. In the event multiple eligible projects have the same ranked project scores and would be the last project funded with available funding, the project associated with the lowest school division composite index is given priority for award of any remaining funding.
2. The release of funds to grant awardees will be scheduled following notification of grant acceptance, and will be advanced in a single, total payment following award of grant funds.
3. Grants are awarded by the Department of Education on a competitive basis using ranked project scores based on the criteria information included in the submitted program applications. School divisions applying for a grant must (i) indicate the estimated new or increased costs to be incurred as a result of hiring or expanding the employment status to fill the qualifying FTE position and (ii) certify its intent to obligate awarded grant funds for the payment of salary and benefits for the eligible FTE position(s) during the school year following the grant award.
4. A school division may be disqualified from receiving a grant award under this program or previously awarded grant funds may be withheld from payment if a school division is not in compliance with other state laws, regulations, policies, or guidelines.

**COMPETITIVE APPLICATION CRITERIA**

Proposed public school language programs are evaluated and scored according to the scoring criteria and their associated point values listed below.

**Scoring Rubric for Critical National Security Language Grants**

1. **New Language Program (15 points)**
   * 15 points: Proposal outlines the implementation of a new critical language program not previously offered within the school division.
   * 10 points: Proposal expands an existing language program to a new school or location.
   * 5 points: proposal expands an existing language program to new grade levels in the same school or location.
   * 0 points: Proposal suggests adding additional sections of the same language at the same levels and location.
2. **Teacher Qualifications and Experience (15 points)**
   * 15 points: Highly qualified language instructors with significant experience in teaching critical languages.
   * 10 points: Qualified instructors with relevant experience in language education.
   * 5 points: Instructors with some relevant experience or expertise.
   * 0 points: Instructors lacking sufficient qualifications or experience.
3. **Program Integration (10 points)**
   * 10 points: Detailed plan for integrating the critical language program into the broader curriculum and educational goals of the school division.
   * 5 points: Some integration strategies outlined.
   * 0 points: Little to no consideration for program integration.
4. **Innovation and Program Enhancement (10 points)**
   * 10 points: Innovative approaches or features that enhance the quality and impact of the critical language program.
   * 5 points: Some elements of innovation or program enhancement.
   * 0 points: Lack of innovation or program enhancement.
5. **Sustainability Plan: Student Interest and Recruitment (10 points)**
   * 10 points: Well-documented evidence of strong student interest in the proposed critical language courses.
   * 5 points: Moderate student interest with potential for growth.
   * 0 points: Limited or unclear evidence of student interest.
6. **Sustainability Plan: Community and Stakeholder Engagement (10 points)**
   * 10 points: Comprehensive plan for actively engaging the community and key stakeholders in the critical language program.
   * 5 points: Some strategies outlined for community and stakeholder involvement.
   * 0 points: Lack of a clear plan for community and stakeholder engagement.
7. **Sustainability Plan: Financial Plans and Monitoring (10 points)**
   * 10 points: Robust and well-detailed sustainability plan that addresses financial, monitoring, evaluation, and contingency aspects.
   * 7 points: Adequate sustainability plan with room for improvement.
   * 3 points: Limited sustainability plan with significant gaps.
   * 0 points: No apparent sustainability plan.
8. **Student Population (10 points)**

* 10 points if 74 percent or greater of students are eligible for free- or reduced-price meals
* 7 points if 55 to less than 74 percent of students are eligible for free- or reduced-price meals
* 3 points if 40 to less than 55 percent of students are eligible for free- or reduced-price meals
* 0 points if less than 40 percent of students are eligible for free- or reduced-price meals

1. **Local Composite Index (10 points)**

* 10 points for division Composite Index of 0.0000 to 0.2999
* 7 points for division Composite Index of 0.3000 to 0.5999
* 3 points for division Composite Index of 0.6000 to 0.8000