

**Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) Implementation Grants
Frequently Asked Questions
2002-2003 Award**

- 1. How many grants will be funded?**
Given the range of \$50,000 to \$100,000 per school, the number of schools funded should range from 20 to 25. The Department reserves the right to increase or decrease the number of grants based on the quality of the applications received.
- 2. Which schools are eligible to apply?**
Thirty-one schools with overall ABCs composite scores of 51 and below and having no fewer than fifty students were designated as eligible to apply for 2002/2003.
- 3. Why do we have to get a commitment from a model developer?**
If you plan to use an external CSR model, the Department does not want to fund a school and then find out that the model developer cannot commit resources to assist the school in implementing the model.
- 4. Are any models preferred over others?**
No particular models are preferred; however, preference points will be given to schools using any of the twenty-six models categorized as “whole school” models found in the Northwest Laboratory’s *Catalog of School Reform Models*. Our experiences show that locally developed models and content-specific models do not lend themselves to the comprehensive reform focus that is a part of this competitive grant program. However, any locally developed model submitted for consideration must address the 11 components, be rooted in a strong research base, and provide evidence of the potential to support reform.
- 5. Can grant funds be used to conduct a needs assessment?**
No. These grant funds are to be used to implement comprehensive school reform models/initiatives; they are not for planning purposes. Needs assessment is a process that leads to selection of a model/initiative to implement. Schools that have not gone through a needs assessment process should not apply for these funds.
- 6. Must a school select a model from the *Catalog of School Reform Models* published by the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory?**
Not necessarily. However, preference points will be given to schools using any of the twenty-six models categorized as “whole school” models found in the Northwest Laboratory’s *Catalog of School Reform Models*. A locally developed model that adequately addresses all 11 components and grounded in a strong research base will be given equal consideration. See note in #4 above.
- 7. Is there a priority for schools serving particular grade levels?**
No. CSR legislation clearly suggests that states should ensure a mix of elementary, middle, and high schools. This is normally an area that the State Board considers in conjunction with geographic distribution.

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8. What are the key factors the state will examine in selecting recipients?

The two key factors are:

- Comprehensiveness and research base of your reform design.
- Quality of the proposal and implementation plan.

9. Are there any special expectations from principals of schools receiving CSR grants?

Yes. Preference points will be given to schools where the principal has indicated a commitment to participation in our “Leadership Development Program for CSR Principals.” This program will require principals to participate in specially designed “leadership for reform” activities to be facilitated by the Principals Executive Program.

10. What about schools that are already implementing a model? Are they eligible to apply?

The intent of Congress is to support schools that are initiating implementation of a model for the first time, or substantially expanding a model with new components.

11. Are private schools eligible to participate?

No. SEAs and LEAs are encouraged, however, to share their knowledge with private schools.

12. Are charter schools eligible to participate?

Yes.

13. Can a school decrease other funding sources in a school if it receives grant funds?

No. A school cannot decrease state, local, and federal funds if it receives grant funds, and this requirement cannot be waived.

14. Should our school apply for these funds?

Any eligible school can apply, so each school will have to make its own decision based on the amount of time it will take to write the grant, the commitment of the faculty to the model, the need for comprehensive change in the school, and other priorities or activities in which the school is involved. Because there is a limited amount of funding available, schools can always look to other sources to support this effort.

15. Do the LEA Cover Page, School Cover Page, Abstract, LEA’s List of Schools, Verification of School Support for Comprehensive School Reform, Budget Form, Developer Commitment Letter, Budget, and Debarment forms count toward the twenty-page maximum allowed for the narrative?

No. The twenty-page limit applies to the 14 points found on pages 8-17 of the local application.

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- 16. Can grant funds be used for “pre-award” costs, including costs of developing the grant application?**
No. A school cannot pay a firm or group directly for its proposal development work nor may it reimburse itself for those costs after it receives a grant. Grant funding is to be used only for program implementation.

Grant funds cannot be used to reward a proposal writing firm for its help in developing a comprehensive school reform implementation grant that is funded. Payment for grant writing under the guise of grant evaluation is not permitted. This is not considered a “reasonable and necessary” program activity. Grant funds can only be used for program implementation.
- 17. How do Charter Schools address the issue of LEA support?**
Each grant application must address LEA support. Charter Schools should discuss the support of their governing boards when addressing this issue.
- 18. Are there any cautions regarding the use of outside firms or groups to develop a grant application?**
Schools need to be aware that there are grant writing entrepreneurs who will solicit your business. If multiple schools submit applications drafted by outside firms or groups and these applications are basically similar, this will result in applications being eliminated from consideration. Submission of an “off-the-shelf” design without a direct focus on the needs of the individual school cannot adequately address the comprehensive requirements of the grant program.

One aspect of the power of comprehensive school reform is in the process of developing an improvement plan with staff involvement. When grant writers produce a proposal for you without staff involvement, it puts you at a disadvantage.
- 19. Can an LEA charge indirect cost to grant funds?**
Yes, an LEA could charge indirect cost charges to this grant, but the rate must be consistent with each LEA’s prescribed rate for other federal funds. However, charging indirect cost is optional.
- 20. Are there restrictions on the use of funds?**
The Comprehensive School Reform grant is not a slush fund for staff positions, technology and supplies. All funds must be spent in accordance with the needs of your CSR design and the selected CSR program. As indicated in the application document, there are caps on expenditures for technology and personnel and a minimum requirement for professional development.
- 21. Is it a requirement that schools with awards have a contract with the Comprehensive School Reform program developer for technical assistance?**
Yes. This is an essential requirement.
- 22. Once awarded, is this grant automatically renewable?**
No. Renewal will be based on the impact and success you have had based on an impact survey report that you will be required to submit.