



Illinois State Board of Education

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Chairman

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

TO: Eligible Applicants

FROM: Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D. 
State Superintendent of Education

DATE: June 27, 2014

SUBJECT: Request For Applications (RFA): Incentive Grant for Agriculture Science Teacher Education - Growing Agriculture Science Teachers (GAST)

General Information

Eligible Applicants: Eligible applicants include institutions of higher education that offer state approved agriculture science teacher preparation programs and public community colleges in Illinois that provide an articulated agriculture science teacher education course of study, meaning that they offer at least:

- the introductory agricultural education course for which transfer credit is accepted by the public universities under the Illinois Articulation Initiative (see the information posted by the Illinois Board of Higher Education at www.itransfer.org); and
- a one-semester-hour internship or other, equivalent field experience.

Grant Awards: All eligible applicants that submit approvable proposals will receive a grant award. The size of individual grants will vary according to the activities proposed and their responsiveness to the funding priority (identified on page 2 of this RFA) up to a maximum of \$14,000.

Grant Period: The grant period will begin no sooner than September 1, 2014 and will extend from the grant execution date until June 30, 2015. It is the intention of the Illinois State Board of Education to fund this grant for a total of five years (four additional one-year renewals after the initial year of funding). Funding in the subsequent years will be subject to a continuation application process, contingent upon a sufficient appropriation for the program, and satisfactory progress in the preceding grant period.

Application Deadline: Mail seven (7) copies of the complete application, two bearing original signatures, to Harley Hepner, Illinois State Board of Education, 100 North First Street, C-215, Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001, to ensure receipt no later than **5:00 p.m. on Friday, August 1, 2014**. No electronically transmitted applications, including facsimiles, will be accepted. Applications may also be delivered by hand to the information center at the same address.

Rules: Review the rules for the grant by visiting <http://www.isbe.net/rules/archive/pdfs/75ark.pdf>.

Contact Person: For more information on this RFA, contact Harley Hepner at 217-524-4832.

Background and Program Specifications

Pursuant to Section 2-3.80a of the School Code, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is offering fiscal year (FY) 2015 Growing Agriculture Science Teachers (GAST) grants in amounts up to \$14,000 to eligible institutions for the purpose of addressing the shortage of agriculture science teachers in Illinois. The major goals of this grant program are to:

- recruit agriculture science teacher candidates into preparation programs leading to teacher licensure in agricultural education;
- ensure that candidates' preparation as teachers make good use of the knowledge of professionals in varied agricultural occupations and exposes them to practical, field-based experiences; and
- provide support for agricultural education teachers during their first five years of service that will improve retention of these individuals in the teaching force.

The statute further identifies four categories of activities related to these goals and for which grant funds may be expended:

- Teacher education candidate recruitment and retention incentives;
- Having master teachers and practitioners assist with various aspects of the recruitment of potential candidates and the preparation of those candidates as skilled and qualified teachers of agricultural education;
- Establishing, delivering, arranging for, or providing financial support for professional development experiences for new agriculture science teachers during their first five years of teaching; and
- Professional development for faculty in universities' agricultural education teacher preparation programs and for community college agriculture faculty responsible for instruction in agricultural education teacher preparation transfer programs.

Funding Priority for FY 2015

Based on the four categories of activities allowed by the administrative rules that govern the GAST program, ISBE may identify different priorities among the four categories in different years. For FY 2015, ISBE will give priority consideration to applications that include or emphasize **recruitment incentives** (including field experiences) or other similar activities. Recruitment activities will receive priority consideration over retention incentives even though these activities are from the same category. Applicants may propose activities in the other categories, as well as for retention incentives; however, applicants are advised that ISBE intends to award the majority of available funds to those entities that propose to use grant funds primarily to recruit new students into agricultural education programs and develop opportunities for them to learn about agricultural occupations while earning money for work experience, such as through field experiences.

Allowable Grant Activities

Numerous types of activities are allowable. The following list exemplifies the types of activities that may be proposed, but is not intended to limit what applicants may propose. Allowable activities that will be given consideration for funding are denoted below.

- Field experiences, practicum, or other similar experiences providing candidates and potential candidates with an introduction to agricultural occupations (*priority*).
- Scholarships or stipends providing candidates with financial resources to pursue a career in agricultural education. Applicants are strongly encouraged to require a practicum or work experience in conjunction with any scholarship offered. Increasing the available scholarship amount to students as they progress through the program, implementing a grade point average (GPA) or financial need stipulation, or working with a specific local education agency (LEA) to target teacher placement should also be considered.
- Outreach and recruitment activities aimed at particular individuals or groups.
- Recruitment activities involving collaboration between a university and one or more community colleges to identify, meet, and/or interact with potential candidates from one or more high schools.
- Mentoring or other forms of personal support to assist potential candidates in determining whether to pursue an agricultural education career.
- Observing or aiding a teacher in a classroom in any of grades 9-12.

- Development of a webpage promoting the agricultural education program at a particular institution.
- Professional development workshops and experiences for new agricultural education teachers (see Section 75.40(b) of the administrative [rules](#)).
- Professional development for staff members of agricultural education teacher preparation programs.
- EZ-Records Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) webpage sponsorship.
- Activities to assist students in improving preparation for testing.

Field Experiences

The field experience is a key concept of recruitment and retention incentives in this grant. The idea of rewarding students who gain experience (i.e., learning by doing) in agricultural education is important. These students can be current agriculture or non-agriculture students (i.e., perhaps from a general studies or undecided major), but all field experiences must be related to agricultural education and supervised by a professional. A good model to consider is a junior advisor program where students would be involved in various activities with a local agriculture teacher. Examples of appropriate activities for students who have entered or are thinking of entering teacher preparation in this field could include working with an advisor or other agriculture professional to train a Career Development Event (CDE) team, organizing an Agriculture Department and/or FFA event, assisting an instructor in the classroom or in preparation for class, and conducting activities to elementary or middle school students. Working with a local business professional in an agricultural career pathway is another profitable way for a student to spend part of a field experience, because of its value in helping him or her gain confidence and experience. Another useful option is supervised experience in the classroom or laboratory as a teacher's assistant. Acceptable field activities must provide valuable and relevant experiences related to teaching agriculture. Field experience programs must develop a reference of approvable and non-approvable activities. Students cannot be reimbursed for the same field experience at more than one sponsoring institution. Those involved in field experiences are required to keep a record to document hours and experiences. The grantee must also conduct a follow-up survey with those involved in the field experiences addressing the value of their experience and providing suggestions for improvement.

For consistency across the state, the following compensation guidelines or work standards must be followed when setting amounts to be paid for field experiences.

- Pay rates for students in grades 11-12 should be \$8/hr.
- Pay rates for students in grades 13-14 should be \$10/hr.
- Pay rates for students in grades 15-16 should be \$12/hr.
- Total field experience hours and student rewards can be flexible, but should follow the reward-for-time model of \$2,000 for 200 hours of field experience based on a rate of \$10/hr. The total amounts may differ somewhat depending upon the grade level and the amount of time allotted for a field experience.
- In the same spirit of consistency, student teacher scholarships should follow a similar standard. When applicable, student teacher scholarships should not exceed \$1,000 per individual.
- When applicable, scholarships should be determined by an impartial application review committee.
- Scholarship or stipend awards should reward only above average effort.

Project Timeline

The grant period will start no sooner than September 1, 2014 and end June 30, 2015, and funds may not be carried over. The FY 2015 grant application must be submitted by August 1, 2014. Grantees must propose activities that can be accomplished within the grant period and are encouraged to propose activities that will contribute to the sustainability of teacher recruitment, retention, and training initiatives. A planning guide for grant timelines has been provided in Appendix A.

Reporting Requirements

Grantees will be responsible for submitting two types of project reports to ISBE.

1. **Expenditure Reporting:** Fiscal information must be reported quarterly relative to project expenditures and in accordance with the [State and Federal Grant Administration Policy, Fiscal Requirements and Procedures](#) handbook.
2. **Final Narrative Report:** Progress toward delivering grant activities must be reported to ISBE no later than 30 days following the end date of the grant. Required data collection categories are provided below, and corresponding forms will be provided by ISBE for grantees to submit as a separate Final Narrative Report. Failure to submit the final report may, without limitation, result in ISBE withholding subsequent years' project funding until the report is submitted. Any printed materials produced with grant funds must be included with the Final Narrative Report.

Required Data Collection: Below are the required data elements that must be collected for the Final Narrative Report. For data collection and reporting purposes, students and candidates refer only to individuals in agricultural education courses or agriculture science teacher preparation programs.

A. Recruitment

1. Number of students enrolled in agricultural education, by grade level and gender, for the current year and the previous two years.
2. Number of students enrolled in agricultural education in the teacher licensure and non-licensure tracks.
3. Number of students transferring into and out of agricultural education, including the program to which each student came from or went.
4. Number of agricultural education students transferring to a university or from a community college, as applicable to the grantee.
5. List of student organizations related to agricultural education offered and number of members in each. (i.e., Collegiate FFA, Postsecondary Agricultural Student Organization (PAS), Alpha Tau Alpha, Illinois Association of Vocational Agriculture Teachers (IAVAT) Student Branch, Agricultural Education Club, etc.).
6. Total number and level of recruitment activities and visits made possible by this grant, number and level of students participating in each, and number recruited.
7. Total number of students, teachers, and others impacted by the grant's activities.
8. Other recruitment activities not paid for through this grant.

B. Retention

1. Number of students beginning and completing student teaching. (*universities only*)
2. Number of graduating students entering the teaching profession (specific to agricultural education) and with a science endorsement. (*universities only*)
3. Number of graduating students entering another profession other than teaching agricultural education. (*universities only*)
4. Number of graduating students electing to further their education, including the area chosen by each.
5. Number of individuals graduating from the program and number of years required by each for completion. Report transfer and four-year students separately.
6. Number of professional development activities provided to teachers who are in their first five years of teaching experience, including the title and description of each and the number served in each case.
7. Number of university graduates over the preceding five years who are currently teaching agricultural education. (*universities only*)
8. Number of community college graduates over the preceding year who remain an agricultural education major. (*community colleges only*)

C. Training

1. Number of students, by grade level, who completed field experiences funded by this grant. Of these, the number who subsequently changed majors and the number still participating in the agricultural education program.
2. Number of students participating in field experiences in each range of accumulated hours and grand total of field experience hours from all individuals participating.
3. Number of students, by grade level, who completed some other type of field experience.
4. Number and titles of professional development workshops attended by teacher educators with funding through this grant.
5. Number of master teachers and/or practitioners* employed outside the recipient institution who were used for:
 - a. Guest speakers
 - b. Student teacher coordination/classes
 - c. Other activities (specify)

**Master teacher and practitioner as defined in the [rules](#).*

Fiscal Information

The allocated amount for the GAST program for FY 2015 is \$120,000. As such, the maximum grant award will be \$14,000 per grantee. It is the intention of ISBE to fund this grant for a total of five years (four additional one-year renewals after the initial year of funding). Continuation funding in the subsequent years will be subject to a continuation application process, contingent upon a sufficient appropriation for the program and satisfactory progress in the preceding grant period. Allocations and payment under this grant is subject to passage of a sufficient appropriation by the Illinois General Assembly or sufficient appropriation by the U.S. Congress for federal programs. Obligations of ISBE will cease immediately without further obligation should the agency fail to receive sufficient state, federal, or other funds for this program.

Grantees are advised to administer the grant funds in accordance with the [State and Federal Grant Administration Policy, Fiscal Requirements and Procedures](#) handbook, the Certifications and Assurances, and Standard Terms of the Grant, Program-Specific Terms of the Grant, and all other agreements required for this grant.

Allowable Expenditures: Funds *may* be used to conduct the following activities:

- Consultant and contracted services;
- Substitute teachers at the secondary level;
- Travel associated with grant activities. All out-of-state travel must be approved by ISBE at least 30 days in advance. Requests for out-of-state travel must include the following information: activity name, number of individuals traveling, dates of the activity, amount of grant funds to be used, and the benefit to the grant of attending the activity. Travel expenses must be paid in accordance with local policies and be most cost-effective;
- Communications;
- Supplies, materials, and other similar items as necessary to conduct grant activities that fall within one of the specified categories; and
- Professional development for staff of the agricultural education teacher preparation program in an amount up to 5% of the total grant award.

Non-Allowable Expenditures: Funds *may not* be used to conduct the following activities:

- Duplicate or supplant local site or other funds for similar activities;
- Meet minimum grant eligibility requirements;
- Purchase equipment;
- Materials that are purchased for giveaways (such as, but not limited to, key chains, mugs, writing utensils, clothing, and other trinkets) that display an entity's logo or similar identifier and that are not used for educational purposes such as in a professional workshop or training;
- General administrative or departmental expenses; and
- Indirect costs.

Grant Amendments

Amendments to the most current grant agreement may be submitted to ISBE in accordance with the [State and Federal Grant Administration Policy, Fiscal Requirements and Procedures](#) handbook. Final amendments must be submitted no later than May 31, 2015. To amend the grant (i.e., programmatic and/or budget), the following documents must be submitted to ISBE with appropriate, original signatures:

- Cover letter explaining and justifying the proposed change(s) and summarizing the movement of funds by activity,
- Revised work plan (see Exhibit A),
- Revised Budget Summary and Payment Schedule (see Exhibit B), and
- Revised Budget Summary Breakdown (see Exhibit C).

Proposal Format

Each proposal must be submitted in the format outlined below. Each applicant is required to submit seven (7) copies of the entire proposal, **two of which must bear the original signature of the official legally authorized to act on behalf of the grantee**. Proposals will be reviewed using the criteria listed in the "Criteria for Review and Approval of Applications" section below. Proposals will be considered ineligible if not submitted in the format consistent with the requirements of this RFA. Please use the following as a checklist in assembling your completed proposal.

- ___ 1. **Applicant Information Page (Attachment 1):** Complete and include as the cover page for the application.
- ___ 2. **Work Plan (Exhibit A):** Complete the work plan and detail the use of the funds.
 - A. **Specific Work Plan:** Specifically detail the work plan by thoroughly explaining the proposed activities, events, programs, or tasks to be completed, how they will be carried out, and how funds will be used. Activities with multiple components must be individually described and explained as to how they fit within the overall program. Each work plan must provide the following information.
 - Goals and objectives of the event planned.
 - Activities, events, programs, or tasks to be completed.
 - Complete descriptions of the activities, events, programs, or tasks to be completed and a description of how the funds will be used accordingly.
 - The GAST related category for the activities, events, programs, or tasks.
 - Budgeted amount for each activity, event, program, or task.
 - Expected completion date/timeline for each activity, event, program, or task.
 - B. **Expected Impact:** Describe how involvement in this grant will fit into the long range plan for growing agricultural education at the institution. Describe the expected impact from the use of grant funds.
 - C. **Additional Information:** Name the person(s) responsible for completing the proposed activities of the plan. Also provide information pertinent to the grant activities or its functionality as it relates to the institution. Describe any special circumstances which ISBE staff should be aware.
- ___ 3. **Budget Summary and Payment Schedule (Exhibit B):** Must be completed and submitted on the form provided and signed by the official legally authorized to submit the proposal. The amounts indicated in the payment schedule should be based on the projected dates of expenditures. Budget the dollars accordingly.
- ___ 4. **Budget Summary Breakdown (Exhibit C):** Must include descriptions of the anticipated expenditures correlated to the line items set forth on the Budget Summary. Specifically identify activities and dollars spent in each category for that activity.
- ___ 5. **Program-Specific Terms of the Grant (Exhibit D):** Complete the appropriate areas and sign.
- ___ 6.. **Certifications and Assurances (Exhibit E):** Complete the appropriate areas in the document and sign.
- ___ 7.. **Documentation and Letters of Support:** Provide proper documentation to prove the existence and operation of the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) approved and articulated Introduction to Agriculture Education course **and** the semester-hour internship or other, equivalent field experience. Attach a letter of support from the heads of the agriculture department, **and** education department (or person responsible for educational course study).

If chosen for funding, a grant agreement will also be required.

- ___ 1. **Grant Agreement (Attachment 2):** Complete the appropriate areas and sign.

Criteria for Review and Approval of Applications

Each applicant may propose to expend grant funds for one or more of the four categories of activities listed on page 2 and discussed in subsection (b) of Section 2-3.80a of the School Code. The rules include review criteria, identified below, for all four categories of activities. However, the individual criteria that have no related activities will receive no points in the review. Each proposal will be reviewed using the criterion for “cost-effectiveness” and just those criteria for “quality of the plan” that are relevant to the categories of activities proposed in the application. A committee of impartial individuals will review the proposals and make final determinations regarding the amounts to be provided based upon the total funds appropriated for this initiative and the amounts necessary to fund high-quality proposals that are most responsive to the identified area of priority. Among applications with substantially equal ratings, priority consideration will be given to those that include activities related to teacher education candidate recruitment and retention incentives. It is favorable to include activities that work with other secondary or postsecondary institutions directly benefiting potential agriculture science teacher candidates. Activities that supplant funds will not be considered. ISBE reserves the right to clarify various aspects of the application with the recipient. If clarification cannot be resolved or if the activity is inappropriate for the grant, then a line item denial for those activities will result.

Total: 100 Points

1. Quality of the Plan (80 points*)

A. Proposed recruitment and retention strategies appear likely to:

1. promote increased awareness of agricultural education as a potential career among students from varied backgrounds and communities;
2. create enhanced incentives for individual students to enter and persist in teacher preparation programs in agricultural education; and
3. help eliminate barriers that may otherwise prevent individuals from completing preparation programs in this field.

**The identified priority has a maximum of 40 points.*

- #### B. Proposed expenditures for the services of master teachers and practitioners as support for student teaching will enhance candidates’ understanding of agricultural education as a profession and broaden their awareness of the varied facets of agriculture and agriculturally based careers.
- #### C. Plans for delivery of professional development for new teachers provide evidence that the training is designed in response to the expressed needs of individuals who are in their first five years of teaching in the field of agricultural education and the districts or cooperatives where they are employed.
- #### D. Planned expenditures for professional development for agricultural education faculty are demonstrably related to the needs of those individuals.

2. Cost-Effectiveness (20 points)

The proposal represents a cost-effective use of State resources, as evidenced by the amounts requested for the proposed activities in relation to the numbers of students or teachers to be served and the services to be provided.

