



THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP

*Creating Global Professionals*

## Proficiency Initiative Consolidated Q&As

### March 19, 2014 Webinar

Please Note: The following is an edited version of a transcript of The Language Flagship's (TLF) technical assistance webinar (February 19, 2014) held to address questions related to The Language Flagship Proficiency Initiative Solicitation Guidelines released in January, 2014. The questions and answers below have been edited for clarity and brevity and have been reordered by topic. They are based on an unscripted dialogue and may contain small errors in grammar and flow.

#### **GENERAL QUESTIONS**

**Q: Would it be viewed as a potential conflict of interest to engage a consultant (on an individual basis) who is employed at an institution that is also applying for a Flagship Proficiency Initiative grant?**

**A:** It is not necessarily a conflict of interest to have a consultant working on two different projects. Be sure to check on your institution's ethics policies and have the consultant check with her/his institution as well.

**Q: What if we have a combination of strong existing language programs and other language programs that may have lower enrollments? What are considered strong enrollments in a language like Arabic?**

**A:** Working with a combination of languages, both with high and low enrollments, could be a smart approach. It is difficult to say what a "strong" enrollment would be in Arabic. This definitely differs by type of institution. It will ultimately be up to the reviewers to judge enrollments across institutions, so it is really not possible to answer that question.

#### **FUNDING**

**Q: It was stated in the previous webinar that funds cannot be used for hiring faculty but can be used for costs associated with test administration. Is it possible to propose a non-faculty hire in order to have someone to help with the administration of OPIs and other assessments?**

**A:** We understand that institutions will likely need to include funds for administration in their budgets, so the answer to your question is yes. We expect each institution to have its own needs for funding. You can request funding for this, but please make sure to justify it in the budget.

**Q: We know that grant funding cannot be used for direct payments to students to entice them to take exams. Can we use grant funds to provide food at an event that would include test administration (e.g. pizza)?**

**A:** We would recommend against this. As you institutionalize testing in your programs, you want to make it clear that this is a part of your university's program. Testing should not be couched as an extracurricular event or something that a student must be enticed to do. Rather than using enticements, students should be briefed on the role of testing within your program.

**Q: We hope to provide the external organization responsible for test results analysis with as much additional data as possible. Can grant funding include the extra cost required to provide this additional data (e.g. surveys, self-assessments)?**

**A:** That would be a possible cost item, but it would need to be well-explained and well-justified in the narrative.

**Q: Cost-share is not required. Will it strengthen the proposal if we include it to show institutional commitment?**

**A:** Institutional commitment is key to showing institutionalization of assessment processes, so this would strengthen a proposal.

**Q: Can we include conference travel in our budget, especially for the purposes of disseminating results?**

**A:** Yes.

**Q: Can we include a graduate assistant as a line item in the budget?**

**A:** Yes. As has been mentioned, each proposal needs to lay out how it will carry out what is being proposed. This would be an acceptable line item so long as it is justified.

**Q: If we have external or internal reviewers of classroom practices, can we include this in our budget?**

**A:** This would need to be clearly justified as to how it relates to the proficiency initiative. We would not pay for regular classroom teaching evaluation, but it might be an appropriate expense if this is a component specific to the initiative.

**Q: Is it possible to see a sample budget?**

**A:** Unfortunately, no. We don't have any sample budgets.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

**Q: If two language programs from the same institution are applying, should they submit two different budgets?**

**A:** We would like to see one proposal from your institution that discusses what you will be doing across these two languages, along with a budget that incorporates the costs for both languages. We understand there might be departmental differences, but to the extent possible, this really should be an integrated proposal from your institution for two languages or more.

**Q: Our institution is interested in collaborating with community colleges. How many institutions can we collaborate with?**

**A:** We encourage diversity and collaboration between different kinds of institutions, so collaborating with community colleges is encouraged. It is up to the institution to decide how many partners to work with.

**Q: If our institution is planning to submit a proposal by itself, with no partners, working on two languages, how competitive would that proposal be?**

**A:** A two language proposal at a single institution is certainly eligible and could be competitive. It will, of course, depend on the scope and quality of the application. It is hard to prejudge, but it would certainly be an eligible application.

**Q: Can we propose to work on our own during the first program year to get the initiative going and then add partnerships in the second year, perhaps with community colleges?**

**A:** Yes, an institution could propose that by explaining and mapping out how they would add a partner in the second year and justify why they are not starting with a partner in the first year. The institution would need to be careful with budgeting. It might be problematic if the institution is asking for a significant increase in funds in the second year.

**Q: We understand no funds should be spent to test Flagship students. However, if we collaborate with Flagship colleagues, can we spend grant money on conferences and travel for them to assist in dissemination of project results?**

**A:** Yes, funding can be used for dissemination of your results and practices at a variety of venues, and certainly travel funding is acceptable for this purpose. We do provide some funding for dissemination to our Flagship institutions for travel and outreach, so please check with us if you plan to include this in your budget so that we are sure that funds will be used effectively and the funding need is there.

## **ASSESSMENT TYPES AND ARRANGEMENTS**

**Q: Our campus has an independent assessment center. Can we provide OPI training for members of that center to do the assessment of students in this project? They are not those students' professors, and do not know them.**

**A:** Having OPI raters on hand in a separate testing center could be efficient. Please justify any expenses proposed.

**Q: It was stated during the previous webinar that two institutions collaborating on an application could propose to have ACTFL-certified testers on each campus conduct OPIs with students at the other institution. Would having OPIs conducted by ACTFL-certified consultants not employed by either of the partner institutions be a viable alternative option, and if so, would it be recommended to also send these interview recordings to ACTFL for a second rating? And/or would it be permissible to have ACTFL-certified testers who teach only academic-year language courses conduct OPIs in our intensive summer institute with students who attend other institutions during the academic year, and are only at our institution during the summer (and are not being taught by these same instructors while they are here)?**

**A:** We do not have a specific policy on this. To the extent possible, the question of how rater bias would be dealt with should be explained in your proposal.

**Q: Can an OPI be used to assess both speaking and listening, or do we need to use a separate listening test?**

**A:** The OPI only tests proficiency in speaking, so a separate listening test would be required in this project.

**Q: Is the OPIc as acceptable as the regular OPI? We plan to test a large number of students, so the computer OPI seems more viable.**

**A:** This is up to the applicant, but a rationale for this choice must be included. We are charting new territory with this initiative, so there are many different approaches that institutions can take.

## **PROGRAM DESIGN**

**Q: Is it possible to apply to include an immersion (in country or abroad) component into the project in order to test the impact of such a component on student proficiency?**

**A:** Yes, that is possible. We would recommend you include this if you have a study abroad component that is already a regular part of your language programs. We would not advise including a variety of different study abroad experiences that are not integrated into your language programs. What we are interested in is the overall language program and how study abroad is integrated into it.

**Q: Is there a preferred format for submitting the project results?**

**A:** We will have more specific reporting requirements once the review process has been completed and awards have been made.

### **PROPOSAL STRUCTURE**

**Q: In Section 2, bullet 3 of the RFP, a "description of administrative and academic leadership overseeing language education" is requested. Can we supply a flow chart of reporting structures and type of faculty (tenure-track, lecturer or part-time) or are you looking for a description of the investment or buy-in of upper level administration to language instruction at the university?**

**A:** Reviewers will be looking both at the overall administrative structure of language instruction and institutional support for the project. More details on this can be found in Section 3 of the Solicitation - Merit Review Process and Evaluation Criteria.

It would be fine to provide a flow chart, like the one described above, but please remember to provide roles and responsibilities of the individuals that are part of that structure. It is up to each applicant to determine how best to present this information in the proposal.

**Q: In Section 2, bullet 1 of the RFP, applicants are asked to provide a "list of faculty and other instructional staff who actively teach in the target language." Does this list have to be part of the narrative or can it go into the appendix? Can we say, e.g. in the narrative "We have four full time faculty in French teaching X number of courses and five part-time faculty teaching X number of courses" and then list the faculty names in an appendix?**

**In the Section, bullet 2 of the RFP, you ask about the overall enrollments in the target languages. Can we say, e.g., we have 300 students taking German this year and place the exact numbers per language into the appendix?**

**A:** It is fine to include these lists as appendices.

**Q: Is the budget narrative part of the 25 page proposal narrative or is it in addition?**

**A:** The budget narrative is separate from the proposal narrative.