OMB Control Number 1894-0005
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NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS: EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program.

ALL APPLICANTS FOR NEW GRANT AWARDS MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IN THEIR APPLICATIONS TO ADDRESS THIS PROVISION IN ORDER TO RECEIVE FUNDING UNDER THIS PROGRAM.

Please respond to the following requests for information:

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

   The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) vision is that all students graduate choice ready with the knowledge, skills, and disposition to be successful. The NDDPI mission is to partner with schools and communities to provide a statewide system of excellent service and support to ensure a healthy school environment that fosters student success.

   The NDDPI adheres to Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA). The NDDPI will ensure equitable access to, participation in, and appropriate educational opportunities for individuals served. Federally funded activities, programs, and services will be accessible to all teachers, students and program beneficiaries. The NDDPI ensures equal access and participation to all persons regardless of their race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, age, citizenship status, disability, gender or sexual orientation in its education programs, services, and/or activities.

   The NDDPI will hold Special Education Units accountable for ensuring equal access and providing reasonable and appropriate accommodations to meet the needs of a diverse group of students, staff, community members and other participants. All Special Education Units are required to provide a written narrative response within districts in the Special Education Units identifying the activities the district is undertaking to reduce barriers that would prohibit students, teachers and other beneficiaries access to participation in federal programs.

2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

   The "ND Teacher Critical Needs and Shortage Areas 2022-2023" report indicated that Special Education was number one in the top five critical need teaching positions across the state. This shortage is more extreme and difficult to fill in rural areas of the state. Some districts may have to hire less experienced teachers; therefore, all students may not have the equal access to effective educators.

3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

North Dakota has made numerous attempts to solve the teacher shortage problem by developing a variety of Grow Your Own (GYO) programs as a pipeline for recruiting special education teachers. Annually, the ND Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI), Office of Specially Designed Services supports the following GYO programs. 1) The Resident Teacher Program increases graduate-level endorsed special educators by offering a full-year internship in a school district or special education unit with mentoring by a master-level teacher. 2) The Traineeship Scholarship increases graduate-level endorsed special educators by offering a scholarship for coursework to retrain current educators in special education endorsement areas. 3) The Speech-Language Pathology Loan Forgiveness Program recruits Speech-Language Pathologists to ND public schools by offering ten loan forgiveness award agreements to graduate-level (first and second year) speech-language pathology students. 4) The Speech-Language Pathology Paraprofessionals Scholarship increases the number of Speech-Language Pathology Paraprofessionals in ND. Annually, the NDDPI issues a total of ten scholarships to one college in ND with the Associate in Applied Science in Speech-Language Pathology Paraprofessional program. 5) The Para to Teacher Pathway seeks to attract special education paraprofessionals by transitioning them into licensed special education teachers. The candidates are funded for six semesters while continuing to work as a paraprofessional to earn their bachelors degree in special education.

North Dakota continues to develop GYO programs and began or will begin implementing three or four additional programs to help in recruitment and retention efforts. 1) Special Education Technicians assist special education teachers in a school and are allowed to conduct academic and behavioral screenings, document student progress, assist with regulatory paperwork, participate in multidisciplinary team meetings, prepare materials, assist with scheduling and maintain space and equipment under the supervision of a special education teacher. 2) The Educator Pathway program offers dual credit so students in high school can earn high school and college credit simultaneously for completing coursework to enter the teaching profession. 3) The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction is working with universities and school districts to establish the first ever registered apprenticeship program for the K-12 teacher occupation in the state. The apprenticeship program will be based on the success of the Para to Teacher partnerships that have been established between universities and local school districts. 4) The ND Legislature passed the Special Education Teacher Authorization that allows candidates who have not yet completed their bachelors degree in special education, but who have completed all special education coursework, successful student teaching in special education, and the passing of the Praxis test, to obtain temporary authorization allowing them to teach while completing the remaining courses for their bachelors degree within two years.

4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

The NDDPI, Office of Specially Designed Services, funds the Resident Teacher Program at the university level. In addition to funding the program, NDDPI awards up to 30 scholarships annually for interested applicants.

The Traineeship Scholarship can be completed within nine semesters or three years. An applicant may have a lapse of two years after being registered in the program to complete the requirements. Scholarships are awarded annually during the Fall and Spring semesters. In 2022, NDDPI awarded 40 Traineeship Scholarships, and in 2023 NDDPI awarded 32 Traineeship Scholarships.

Through NDDPI, the Office of Specially Designed Services works with four different universities annually to fund up to ten awards annually for the Speech-Language Pathology Loan Forgiveness Program.

One university offers the Speech-Language Pathology Paraprofessionals certificate, for which ten scholarships are awarded annually.

The Para to Teacher Pathway has led multiple special education paraprofessionals to receive their special education teaching licenses. The 2023 ND Legislature allocated 3 million dollars to the Para to Teacher Programs in North Dakota.

There are currently four Special Education Technicians in North Dakota, and 44+ people are currently enrolled in the program. Some of the participants will receive their certificate during the summer of 2023, and additional people will be certified during the Fall of 2023 and Spring of 2024.

The Educator Pathway Program started in the Fall of 2022, and offers five courses that students can choose to enroll in. At that time, one university offered coursework, and 44 students completed a semester of one of the classes offered in the Program. During the Spring Semester of 2022, four additional universities offered coursework to high school students. The program will continue to provide classes to students over the summer of 2023 and during the 2023-2024 school year.

The NDDPI is the sponsor for the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program in North Dakota. NDDPI has created a list of ten North Dakota universities that have been approved to be providers of the Program. From the list of ten universities, 4 North Dakota universities applied for and were granted round one of the application period.

The Special Education Teacher Authorization is a pathway for special education licensure in North Dakota.

In addition, the NDDPI is beginning a registered principal apprenticeship program.

Notes:

1. Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity in order to submit an application.
2. Applicants may identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.
3. Applicants may have already included some or all of this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) and page number(s) in their applications or State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.

Paperwork Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1894-0005. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 3 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain a benefit. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate or suggestions for improving this individual collection, send your comments to ICDocketMgr@ed.gov and reference OMB Control Number 1894-0005. All other comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual form may be addressed to either (a) the person listed in the FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT section in the competition Notice Inviting Applications, or (b) your assigned program officer.