# 2017 – 2021 Smart Transfer Early College High School Program #GC16-018

## *IMPORTANT UPDATE: as of 4/27/17

- The following clarification is made to the RFP: The minimum scoring threshold for an application to be considered for funding was misprinted as 65 points on page 22, Section XI. Evaluation Criteria. **The minimum scoring threshold is 60 points**, as correctly stated on page 20, Section IX. Distribution of Awards.

## *Reminder: Non-Mandatory Notice of Intent

The Notice of Intent (NOI) is not a requirement for submitting a complete application by the application deadline; however, NYSED strongly encourages all prospective applicants to submit an NOI to ensure a timely and thorough review and rating process. A non-profit applicant's NOI will also help to facilitate timely review of their prequalification materials. The notice of intent is a simple email notice stating your organization's (use the legal name) intent to submit an application for this grant. Please also include your organization's NYS Vendor ID. The due date is May 2, 2017. Please send the NOI to STECHSRFP@nysed.gov.

## *Important Clarifications as of 4/25/2017

- The following items are to clarify eligibility of existing ECHS partnerships with respect to bonus points and the lead fiscal agent. This information clarifies information provided in the RFP and Webinar:

  1) Any existing ECHS partnership may apply for the Smart Transfer ECHS program.
  2) Only existing Smart Scholars ECHS partnerships have the option to submit an application for the Smart Transfer ECHS program with the IHE as the lead applicant – provided the IHE is the lead applicant in their existing partnership.
  3) Five (5) bonus points will be awarded to any existing ECHS partnership that can demonstrate its graduates have earned an average of 24 or more college credits for at least 2 years prior to September 1, 2016 – not exclusively to existing Smart Scholars ECHS partnerships;

- The following item is to clarify the requirement that the four-year IHE must commit to admit ST ECHS students who graduate high school with 60 college credits or an associate degree:

  The school district must be partnered with at least one four-year IHE that commits to admitting ST-ECHS students who graduate with 60 college credits or an associate degree to their institution and provide these students with the academic and counseling supports to earn a bachelor's degree within two years of matriculation.

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## *Questions and Answers Summary*

### A.) M/WBE

1. The application period is very short and committing to MWBE vendors means conducting bidding in many cases under local and state procurement requirements. Will applicants be permitted to submit MWBE documents with "TBD" entered in lieu of vendor information and then conduct biding post award to ensure proper processes are followed?

   Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit complete M/WBE documentation, as missing or incomplete information may result in a delay of approval. If some information is unavailable, applicants should then submit documentation indicating their level of participation and identify how they are planning to meet their participation goal. TBD (to be determined) may be used as a place hold for unavailable information (i.e. price quotes), with the expectation that missing information will be provided as soon as possible, or within thirty days from the date of notice of award.

### B.) Fiscal

1. The RFP indicates on pages 1 and 2, "Estimated Funds Available: $15 million over a four-year grant cycle that includes five grant periods (August 1, 2017 – June 30, 2021) NYSED anticipates awarding up to 17 projects contingent on the total of the multi-year requests and availability of funds. It is anticipated that up to $1,287,750 in funding will be allocated to provide a smaller allocation for a planning phase and summer programming and orientation and guidance activities for students prior to the first implementation year (August 1, 2017 – December 31, 2017), and three years and six months of subsequent funding (January 1, 2018 – June 30, 2021) for the operation of the program, according to a funding plan based on student enrollment. Please see section XI., Project Funding, for additional information." Is the $1,287,750 in addition to the $15 million available, or is it part of that total?

   The $1,287,750 is part of the total $15 million available for the full grant cycle.

2. Is the $1.2 million available for planning part of the $15 million amount (that is anticipated available for the entire grant period)? Or is the $1.2 million in addition to the $15 million for implementation?

   The $1,287,750 is part of the total $15 million available for the full grant cycle.

3. Is the $1,287,750 available for planning and summer programming the total amount available statewide for those activities?

   Yes, the $1,287,750 is the total amount available to a maximum of 17 projects for a planning phase funded at a maximum of $75,750 for each project.

4. When will award notifications be made?

   We expect to notify applicants during the summer.

5. In the past, public school districts have not been required to prequalify through Grants Gateway/the New York State Grants Reform website. Are school districts required to prequalify through Grants Gateway/the New York State Grants Reform website under this program?

   No, as stated on page 24 of the ST ECHS RFP, under Prequalification for Individual Applications: Public school districts serving as the lead applicant/fiscal agent are not required to prequalify. Only any non-profit IHE applicants serving as the applicant/fiscal agent are required to prequalify by the application deadline.

6. Item 10 on page 11 references 5 grant periods, however page 1 and the project period dates seem to indicate 4 grant years/period. Is the funding period 4 or 5 years in length?

   The funding period for the ST ECHS program is approximately four calendar years in length (August 1, 2017 – June 31, 2021). However, as outlined in Section VIII of the RFP, Anticipated Start Dated and Term of Grant (page 20), the grant will be dispersed over 5 grant periods:

   Project Period 1 – August 1, 2017 – December 31, 2017
   Project Period 2 – January 1, 2018 – June 30, 2018
   Project Period 3 – July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019
   Project Period 4 – July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020
   Project Period 5 – July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

7. Can you please clarify the allowable request amounts and minimum and maximum award amounts? Page 21 states, “During each implementation year, the maximum award amount possible for each applicant institution is computed by multiplying the amount of $3,165 by the number of ST-ECHS academic year student FTEs in the proposal. The minimum number of student FTE for Period 2 will be 25 students resulting in a Period 5 project size of 100 students; and the maximum number of FTE on which funding will be calculated for any ST-ECHS application will be 45 students in Period 2, capped at a sum total of 180 FTE in Period 5. Applicants that represent exiting ECHSs may provide a justification for

enrolling more than 45 students per grade level; however, their funding will remain capped at the 45 students per grade level limit. This means that the minimum total (multi-year) award amount would be set at $867,000 and the maximum total (5 Year) award amount would be set at $1,500,000."

It is unclear why the award amounts would be $867,000 and $1,500,000. From this information, it seems they would be:
Minimum: 25 students x $3,165 x 4 years = $316,500, or a final total of $392,250 if a $75,750 planning grant is also received.
Maximum: 45 students x $3,165 x 4 years = $569,700, or a final $645,450 if a $75,750 planning grant is also received.

What piece am I missing or misunderstanding to reach the $867,000 minimum and $1,500,000 maximum award amounts?

It looks like you are not adding the additional cohorts of 25 or 45 students for each new implementation period (as another grade level is added to the program each succeeding implementation period) when you multiply $3,165 by the number of students. The table on page 22 of the RFP outlines the correct calculations. For example, for the minimum award, you would not calculate the total based only on 25 students for each of the 4 implementation periods. The cost per student ($3,165) would need to be multiplied by a total of 250 students (i.e., 25 for period 2 + 50 for period 3 + 75 for period 4 + 100 for period 5), not by 100 (25 x 4 implementation periods). The total cost during the four implementation periods equals $791,250. When the planning phase grant (for period 1) is added, the total for the entire grant cycle equals $867,000.

8. My question is can we pursue the Smart Transfer grant to use the funding to pay our students tuition for College Now? If so, can we only use the funding for specific students who qualify under Free or Reduced lunch or can we use it for all?

   No, the Smart Transfer ECHS grant funds cannot be used to pay for another program. This includes college tuition for another program, regardless of whether the students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. These funds are specifically to support a Smart Transfer ECHS program.

9. Can these funds be used to cover concurrent enrollment tuition costs for individual students enrolled our College Now program/partnership with Herkimer College? For example, a junior taking College Now English 11 will receive both high school and college credit. However, in order to obtain the college credit, each student is responsible to pay $160 per course. Could these funds be used to cover these expenses?

No, the Smart Transfer ECHS grant funds cannot be used to pay for another program. These funds are specifically to support a Smart Transfer ECHS program.

10. Can the district use these funds to cover tuition costs for PTECH students? The district has to pay BOCES "x" amount of dollars/student.

    No, the Smart Transfer ECHS grant funds cannot be used to cover tuition costs for PTECH students. These funds are specifically to support a Smart Transfer ECHS program. As outlined in Section VI, Applicant and Partnership Qualifications, on page 15 of the ST ECHS RFP: A public school district may not apply for NYS ST-ECHS Program funds to support:
    a. a currently funded NYS P-TECH program,
    b. a new or existing ECHS that is not partnered with a four-year IHE and/or that does not provide students the opportunity to earn 60 college credits or an associate degree,
    c. a potential new six-year P-TECH model program, or
    d. another similar program supported in whole or in part by NYS funds.

11. Would you be able to let me know if the program "Smart Transfer Early College High School (ECHS) Program" might be program offered again for funding in the next coming years?

    NYSED plans to administer this Smart Transfer Early College High School Program in a four-year (5- grant period) grant cycle, contingent on availability of funds. At this time, it is too early to determine whether a new RFP for a new cohort of grants would be issued next year or in the next coming years.

12. Tuition and/or costs associated with paying professors to teach credit-bearing college courses are included in eligible activities, correct? Could you clarify how direct and indirect costs are defined as it relates to tuition?

    Yes, as outlined in Section XXIII, Allowable Costs, on page 37, college tuition for non-remedial courses is an allowable cost. To further clarify, costs associated with paying professors to teach credit-bearing college courses is also included in eligible activities. As also noted in this section, college tuition cannot be included in the calculation of indirect costs.

13. Is there a cost share involved?

    A specific match is not required; however, we do expect that all partners will contribute some form of resources to promote the sustainability of their project. Note that applicants must complete Attachment IV, the Comprehensive Program Budget Plan & Overall Resource Plan worksheets. These should demonstrate how the proposed ST ECHS partnership will contribute resources in addition to

the ST ECHS funding from the State to support their ST ECHS program. This document is addressed further in Section XXII of the RFP, Application Instructions (pages 34 – 35).

14. Is there a maximum percentage of indirect costs?
    As noted in Section XXIII of the RFP, Allowable Costs (page 37), school districts must use the restricted indirect cost rates calculated by the State Education Department. For existing Smart Scholars ECHS partnerships that apply for this program, and the IHE continues as the lead fiscal agent, these agencies continue to use an 8% rate. For more information on indirect costs, visit the NYSED website.

## C.) Program

1. Will previous Smart Transfer ECHS awardees be prioritized over applicants that have not previously won awards?

   The Smart Transfer ECHS Program is a new grant program being initiated with this RFP. There are no previous Smart Transfer ECHS awardees. As was clarified on the first page of this Q & A: Five (5) bonus points will be awarded to any existing ECHS partnership that can demonstrate its graduates have earned an average of 24 or more college credits for at least 2 years prior to September 1, 2016 – not exclusively to existing Smart Scholars ECHS partnerships.

2. Are there particular criteria that are required in order to submit an application (i.e., % of free/reduced lunch enrollment, first generation college bound students, etc?). We are continuing to work to increase our college-going rate but we currently have approximately 45% of students enrolling in 4 year colleges and 25-30% enrolling in 2 year colleges upon graduation.
   Any additional information you can provide would be helpful.

   The applicant and partnership qualifications outlined in Section VI (pages 14 – 19) of the RFP articulate the eligibility requirements for applicants to submit an application. Your question appears to refer to criteria for the students to be served by the ST ECHS. Applicants are referred to the definition of eligible students provided on page 9 of the RFP, and Section (a) of the Target Population guidelines provided on page 42 of the RFP.

3. Are charter schools eligible to apply?

   No. As stated in Section VI of the ST ECHS RFP (page 15), Public charter schools and non-public schools are not eligible to apply for these funds or participate in this program.

4. I am writing to inquire as to if the BOCES can be the applicant/fiscal agent on the NYS Smart Transfer ECHS Program? Please advise.

   No. As outlined in Section VI of the RFP, page 15, a single school district, a consortium of school districts, a BOCES, or any combination of these entities may participate in a ST ECHS application. However, only a school district or an IHE in an existing Smart Scholars ECHS partnership may apply as the applicant/fiscal agent for the NYS Smart Transfer ECHS Program. Please note that a BOCES may be designated as the implementation lead for the project. The role of the implementation lead is outlined on page 16 of the RFP.

5. The application states on page 9, "Focus Districts: Districts identified as Focus districts for the 2016-2017 school year. Applicants that will have at least 51% of their students enrolled from a Focus district(s) will receive a 5 point bonus. A listing of the eligible Focus districts and Priority and Focus schools may be found on the NYSED website." Are Priority and Focus Schools also eligible for bonus points?

   A district with a Priority or Focus School is always a Focus District. If the school is a Priority or Focus School, whose students will make up at least 51% of the ST ECHS enrollment, the applicant will be eligible to receive 5 bonus points.

6. Can multiple districts partner to apply for funding? If one of the districts is a Focus district and at least 51% of the participating students are from that district, would the application receive the 5 bonus points?

   Yes, as outlined in Section VI of the RFP, page 15, a single school district, a consortium of school districts, a BOCES, or any combination of these entities may participate in a ST ECHS application. However, one school district, or an IHE in an existing Smart Scholars ECHS partnership, must serve as the applicant/fiscal agent for the NYS Smart Transfer ECHS Program. If one of the districts is a Focus district and at least 51% of the participating students are from that district, the application would receive 5 bonus points.

   **Please keep in mind that the application must include a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by *all* partners in order to be reviewed for consideration.**

7. On page 13 of the RFP it states, "At least 51% of the students are eligible to participate in the free or reduced price lunch program." Does this mean 51% of the applicant district needs to be eligible for free/reduced lunch, 51% of the combined district populations if multiple districts apply together under 1 district, 51% of the high school student population, or just 51% of the actual Smart Transfer ECHS *participants?*

The statement you are referring to is a performance standard for ST ECHSs. At least 51% of the actual Smart Transfer ECHS students should be eligible for the free or reduced price lunch program.

8. If a single school district serves as the applicant, can multiple school districts participate in the application as partners?

   Yes, as outlined in Section VI of the RFP, page 15, a single school district, a consortium of school districts, a BOCES, or any combination of these entities may participate in a ST ECHS application.

   **Please keep in mind that the application must include a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by *all* partners in order to be reviewed for consideration.**

9. If multiple districts may apply together as partners under a single district applicant, if at least one of the districts in the partnership is a focus district, will the application receive bonus points?

   Provided students from the Focus District will make up at 51% of the enrollment at the ST-ECHS, the application will receive 5 bonus points.

10. If multiple districts may apply together as partners under a single district applicant, if the total student body across all of the districts is 51% or more free/reduced, is that sufficient to meet eligibility requirements? Or does the applicant's own student population have to be 51+% free/reduced?

    The standard is for at least 51% of the ST ECHS students to be eligible to participate in the free or reduced price lunch program. In the case of a consortium, the students do not all have to come from one school.

11. If a district chooses to apply in partnership with other districts, what is the proper and eligible approach? Should one of the districts be listed as the applicant and the other districts be listed as partners? Or should it be approached another way?
    As outlined in Section VI of the application (page 15), eligible applicants will be New York State public school districts ("school districts") or IHEs currently serving as the fiscal agent in existing Smart Scholars ECHS partnerships, applying on behalf of a partnership. One school district must be listed as the lead fiscal applicant, and the other districts listed as partners. **Please keep in mind that the application must include a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by *all* partners in order to be reviewed for consideration.**

12. Can there be more than one four-year institution of higher education partner?

Yes, there can be more than one four-year institution of higher education partner. **Keep in mind that all partners must sign the Memorandum of Understanding.**

13. Is a college allowed to be a partner in more than one proposal?
    Yes, a college may be a partner in more than one ST ECHS proposal.

14. Page 1 of the application indicates there will be up to 17 awards, but other sections indicate there will be one award made per region for the 10 Regent regions, which would only be 10 awards. Please clarify the anticipated number of awards.

    As stated on page 1 of the RFP, NYSED anticipates awarding up to 17 projects contingent on the total of the multi-year requests and availability of funds. As stated in Section IX, pages 20 – 21, awards will first be made to the highest scoring application that meets the minimum scoring threshold (60 points) in each of the 10 Regents regions (one award to each region). This section of the RFP further explains that 1) In the event that there is not an eligible partnership to be funded in one or more regions, those funds will be awarded in the statewide ranking, and 2) The remaining grants will be awarded to the highest scoring eligible proposals in a statewide ranking until there are no fundable applications remaining or until the multi-year amount of funding is exhausted.

15. Where can we find a map or listing of the 10 Regent regions referenced in the RFP?

    A link to a map of the 10 Regents regions is provided in Section IX of the RFP on page 20 as a hyperlink. Here also is a list of Regents Regions.

16. Are there any restrictions on or requirements for where the Smart Transfer ECHS program should be located? For example, are districts *required* to house their programs on college campuses?

    As stated on pages 12 - 13 of the ST ECHS RFP, if the ST ECHS is not located on the partner IHE campus, the ST-ECHS and partner IHE(s) should be no more than a 45-minute driving distance from each other. Furthermore, as noted on page 15 of the RFP, if the ST ECHS includes a consortium of schools, the ST ECHS must be located at one common site.

17. Is the partner IHE required to accept any student who graduates from the ECHS program, or do graduates still have to go through the normal admissions process?

    Yes, the partner IHE is required to accept any ST-ECHS graduate, provided the student graduates high school with 60 college credits or an associate degree. However, the IHE may in partnership with the School District(s) determine the

admissions process for ST ECHS students who graduate with 60 college credits or an associate degree.

18. Is a ST-ECHS graduate required to matriculate at the four-year IHE immediately after graduation, or can they take a year off?

    The RFP does not directly address this question. The ST ECHS partnership may determine this policy.

19. Can you confirm (because the RFP mentions targets of 24 and 60 college credits from Smart Transfer program graduates on page 8): that the program must allow students to achieve up to 60 college credits, and if a program's students graduate with fewer than 60 college credits, the applicant would lose some funding?

    The RFP identifies a target of at least 24 college credits for the Smart Scholars ECHS program, not the Smart Transfer ECHS program. The Smart Transfer ECHS program must enable students to achieve at least 60 college credits or an associate degree. Section V of the RFP, Performance Standards (on page 14), outlines how grantees will face financial penalties if at least 75% of students at the 10th, 11th or 12th grade level do not meet this target.

20. Page 13 of the RFP – Performance Standards – states that student demographics include "at least 51% of the students are eligible to participate in free or reduced price lunch program."

    Does this mean that at least 51% of the students who enroll in the program qualify for free/reduced lunch, or at least 51% of the students in the school, or in the school district served?

    This performance standard refers to the students enrolled in the ST ECHS program. At least 51% of the ST ECHS students are eligible to participate in the free or reduced price lunch.

21. Page eight of the RFP (first paragraph) mentions that ECHS students can be historically underrepresented in college education, at-risk and/or economically disadvantaged. However, page 13 states that at least 51% of students must be eligible to apply for free/reduced-rate lunch. Does that mean that if we target students who are historically underrepresented in college, such as Latino students, at least 51% of them must be eligible for free/reduced-rate lunch for us to receive funding? In other words, that they are from a population historically underrepresented in college education isn't enough to qualify?

    At least 51% of the ST ECHS students should be eligible to participate in the free or reduced price lunch program. This 51% can include students of any ethnicity. We do also want ST ECHS projects to target historically underrepresented

students. However, if the majority of the students are not economically disadvantaged, this may affect how the Target Population section of the application is rated. The standard is for at least 51% of the ST ECHS students to be eligible to participate in the free or reduced price lunch program.

22. In the three courses high school students must take on the college campus, do those classes have to also be open to the college's regular population (i.e. other college students)? Or is it okay if they're only open to the ECHS students?

    These courses may be provided to the ST ECHS students as cohort classes, provided they are taught by IHE faculty and are courses offered to the college's regular population. However, the ST ECHS students will receive even greater benefit from taking college courses along with students in the regular college population.

23. Can the required 3-week summer programming on the partner college's campus count toward the extended learning time requirement?

    Yes, summer programming can count toward the extended learning time requirement, provided it is academic content.

24. If a student fails a college course and intends to re-take the course over the summer, can the district expect the child's family to pay for the course? Or does the district have to fund it?

    No. The child's family should not pay for the course provided the student is still enrolled in the ST ECHS program. ST ECHS students must be able to earn the 60 college credits or an associate degree at no cost to their families.

25. If a graduating senior has met all high school requirements but is several credits short of 60 at graduation in June, may the student take summer courses following graduation but before enrolling in the four year partner IHE, and have those credits be offered free through the ST ECHS program?

    No. The ST ECHS grant program funds students' college courses through their graduation from high school. The cost of college courses taken by a student after he or she graduates from high school may not be covered by the ST ECHS grant funds.

26. What if a student wants to drop out of the program at the end of 9$^{th}$ grade, and another student wants to enter the program and is advanced/capable enough to enter at the beginning of 10$^{th}$ grade; could that be okay?

    No. As stated in the RFP, Section IV. Detailed Requirements/Specifications (page 3), eligible students enter the ST-ECHS at **no later** than the 9$^{th}$ grade level.

27. Is there any latitude on the requirement that at least 75% of students are on track to meet 60 credits (as outlined on page 13)? For example, what if students move, or otherwise have to drop out. Would the district then lose funding for all years those students would have been in the program? Or, can we fill those slots with other students?

    If students leave the program for whatever reason, that will not impact the credit attainment requirement. The 75% will be based on students enrolled in the program. However, funding for each grant period after the planning phase will be based on the projected student enrollment for a given grant period. As outlined in the first paragraph of Section V, page 13, funding will be proportionally reduced if actual enrollment is less than 95% of the projected enrollment for that grant period. As stated in the RFP, Section IV. Detailed Requirements/Specifications (page 3), eligible students enter the ST-ECHS at **no later** than the 9th grade level; therefore, projects cannot fill slots of students who leave the program with other students.

28. Our district wants funding to help students get college credits in high school, but the prescribed program is very restrictive. Do you foresee changing any of the requirements? What if fewer than 17 eligible programs (meeting the RFP's required minimum score) apply?

    No, we do not foresee changing any of the RFP requirements for this funding cycle (August 1, 2017 – June 30, 2021). The ST ECHS Program is a new initiative in the development of NYSED's early college high school program designs. NYSED will review the responses to this RFP and project outcomes to determine how to proceed with future funding. Section XX of the RFP, Project Funding (pages 21 – 22) demonstrates how up to 17 projects can be funded at the minimum award level of 25 students per grade level, and up to 10 projects can be funded at the maximum award level based on 45 students per grade level. This section also outlines how an increase or decrease in available funding will be addressed.

29. A school district is considering partnering with a two-year IHE and a four-year IHE. The high school students would take their college courses at the two-year IHE, which is a 15-minute drive from the proposed ECHS site. The ECHS would have a matriculation agreement with the four-year IHE for high school graduates to complete their bachelor degrees at the four-year IHE. However, the four-year IHE is an 80-minute drive from the proposed ECHS site. Would this arrangement be allowable?

    Yes, the partner four-year IHE may be greater than 45 minutes driving distance from the ST ECHS provided there is another partner IHE where students will take college courses within 45 minutes driving distance from the ST ECHS.

30. Can the applicant school district charge non-partner school districts tuition for students from the non-partner districts to participate in the ECHS?

    No. Only students who are enrolled in the partner school district(s) may enroll in the ST ECHS.

31. What activities are allowed during the summer program?

    Activities allowed during the summer program include academic support and enrichment classes, Regents and SAT prep classes, college courses, and activities that build a college-going culture. e.g., campus tours, presentations on college knowledge topics.

32. Can we offer ECHS summer programming every summer, for all grades? Or just for ninth graders?

    Summer programming may be offered any and/or every summer. As stated in the RFP, Section IV., Detailed Requirements/Specifications (page 11, #5): A summer program may be offered to more than one grade level; however, one should be offered at least the summer prior to the first school year that students take college courses on the partner IHE campus.

33. At the top of page 44 of the RFP, the third acceptable program location says, in part, "…where ECHS students are a separate cohort with their own teachers, leader, schedule, and curriculum plan." If a school district proposes to house an ECHS within the existing high school, does this mean that no staff can be shared between the ECHS and the existing high school? Or could a math teacher, for example, be 0.4 FTE in the ECHS and 0.6 FTE in the existing high school?

    Yes, if a school district proposes to house a ST ECHS within an existing high school, staff may be shared between the ECHS and the existing high school provided their time, responsibilities and compensation are clearly divided between the ST ECHS and the existing high school.

34. Page 12 of the RFP states that existing ECHS partnerships that demonstrate their graduates have earned an average of 24 or more college credits in the last 2 years will receive 5 bonus points.

    Does this priority apply only to existing Smart Scholars ECHS partnerships, or do other high school/college partnerships that have achieved this threshold for their participating students count?

    For example, would outcomes achieved by the partners' concurrent enrollment or dual enrollment program agreements count toward this priority?

Although PTECHs cannot be expanded through the NYS Smart Transfer ECHS program, would outcomes achieved through PTECH count toward this priority?

As we clarified at the beginning of this Q & A document, any existing ECHS partnership that can demonstrate its graduates have earned an average of 24 or more college credits for at least 2 years prior to September 1, 2016 will qualify for 5 bonus points. This does not exclusively apply to existing Smart Scholars ECHS partnerships. It does not apply to other types of high school/college partnerships, e.g., concurrent enrollment programs. College credit outcomes achieved through NYS P-TECH or arrangements other than an existing ECHS partnership, cannot count toward the earning of 5 bonus points.

35. Page 12 of the RFP states that NYSED will assign bonus points to partnerships in which "The partner school district from which the majority of the students are enrolled (i.e., 51% or more of the students) is a focus district…"

    If the partnership will serve a specific high school within a district, and that school exceeds the 51% threshold for percentage of students who qualify for free/reduced lunch but the school district does not, would the partnership meet this priority?

    The criterion you are referring to for bonus points pertains to students enrolling from a Focus district. However, your question pertains to students who qualify for free and reduced price lunch. Having students who qualify for free and reduced price lunch does not meet this criterion for bonus points. It is partner school districts that are Focus districts that qualify the application for bonus points, provided at least 51% of the students enroll from Focus districts.

36. Do students have to "matriculate" to a partner IHE to pursue a bachelor's degree or can they remain non-matriculated so that they can simultaneously be part of the high school program?

    For the ST ECHS program, students cannot remain non-matriculated students on the high school roster after 12th grade to pursue a bachelor's degree at a partner IHE. As stipulated in the RFP, Section IV. Detailed Requirements/Specifications (page 11), the ST-ECHS program does not extend the senior year of high school into a 5th year or longer. ST-ECHS students should graduate high school within four years. ST ECHS students would have to matriculate at a four-year IHE to pursue the bachelor's degree. Four-year IHEs that are in a ST ECHS partnership commit to admitting those students who graduate from their partner ST ECHS with at least 60 transferable credits or an associate degree.

37. Does the funding apply to an initial 'cohort' of students in the way that Smart Scholars does? If that's the case, are their restrictions or guidelines about which cohort the Smart Transfer begins with? For example, can a partnership begin funding for 12th graders and build from there (13th and 14th)?

A Smart Transfer cohort begins in the 9th grade. As stipulated in the RFP, Section IV Detailed Requirements/Specifications (page 11), Eligible students enter the ST-ECHS at **no later** than the 9th grade level and complete the ST-ECHS program in four years. A ST ECHS partnership cannot begin funding for 12th graders and build from there.

38. I understand that either a school district or an IHE currently serving as a fiscal agent in existing Smart Scholars partnerships are eligible to apply. Is it possible that either a school (and not the Central NYCDOE) or a CUNY college (other than City Tech and Medgar Evers) are eligible to apply? I have a scenario that I'd like to pursue with York College and an existing ECHS – York Early College Academy - that offers students up to 60 college credits by the end of 12th grade, but it's not clear to me whether the idea would meet eligibility.

    As we clarified at the beginning of the Q & A document, eligible applicants will be New York State public school districts ("school districts") or IHEs currently serving as the fiscal agent in existing Smart Scholars ECHS partnerships, applying on behalf of the partnership. An individual school building or an IHE that is not applying on behalf of an existing Smart Scholars partnership may not apply as the lead fiscal agent for this grant. Therefore, a CUNY College that is not serving as the lead applicant/fiscal agent for an existing Smart Scholars ECHS partnership may not apply as the lead fiscal agent for this grant. In addition, a school may not apply in lieu of the Central NYCDOE. **The NYC DOE would be the eligible school district applicant in NYC, not individual Community School Districts. The NYC DOE must designate the location for the ST ECHS.** Also note that any existing partnership would begin its Smart Transfer program with only the 9th grade level, and add a grade level each grant period. In addition, as noted in Section XXII., Application Instructions, on page 35, the Budget Narrative, an existing ECHS partnership should take special care to address issues of supplanting and duplicative services. **ST ECHS funding cannot supplant existing funding sources.**

39. It would appear that requiring a minimum cohort of 25 students for the STECHS grant places smaller districts at a disadvantage. Is it possible for two districts to partner, or could a smaller district offer the program to a cohort of less than 25 each year?

    As outlined in Section VI of the RFP, page 15, a single school district, a consortium of school districts, a BOCES, or any combination of these entities may participate in a ST ECHS application. Note that in all cases, the ST ECHS must be located at one common site. In addition, one district must be designated as the lead applicant/fiscal agent. An applicant may not offer the program to a cohort of less than 25 students.

40. The cohort number is my biggest concern with this. Looking at our current 8th grade class (because if this were to start next year they would be our incoming 9th graders), to get 25 students enrolled would be 30% of that entire class. My question is whether or not we can apply for a waiver to oversee this, or if there was any possibility of going off of a percent of a grade. My understanding of what I read was that if you do not meet the 25 student minimum then you are disqualified from the funding. They also put a cap of 45, which a district can try to get raised. I do not believe it says anything about changing the minimum though.

    As outlined in Section X. Project Funding (page 21), the limits for the size of grade cohorts are a minimum of 25 and a maximum of 45 students. Existing ECHS partnerships applying for this grant program may present their case for serving larger cohorts by providing justification in the Target Population section of the Proposal Narrative.

41. May two or more districts, all within 45 minutes of the partner IHE's campus, partner together under one proposal in order to meet the minimum number of students per grade level, provided that at least three college courses are held on the partner IHE campus along with other program activities for all participating students?

    As outlined in Section VI of the RFP, page 15, a single school district, a consortium of school districts, a BOCES, or any combination of these entities may participate in a ST ECHS application. Note that in all cases, the ST ECHS must be located at one common site. In addition, one school district must be designated as the lead applicant/fiscal agent.

42. Can an entity apply for Smart Scholars ECHS monies (the four year grant cycle) without necessarily applying in tandem for planning, summer programming and orientation etc., activities.

    First to clarify, this question must be referring to Smart Transfer ECHS monies, not Smart Scholars ECHS monies. NYSED expects that all Smart Transfer ECHS grantees will need to conduct some level of planning to implement their program; however, as addressed in Section VIII page 20, and in Section XXIII, page 36, the funding provided for the planning phase may also be used to conduct activities for the initial 9th grade cohort.

43. If an entity *were* to apply for planning etc. monies in tandem with Smart Transfer ECHS , could they phase the planning in as discussed on pages 35 and 36 in the pre-opening phase thru Dec 2017, then implement a summer program plan and orientation through August 2018, then begin the four year cycle for the larger program in Fall 2018?

No, the implementation of programming for the initial 9th grade cohort must start by January 1, 2018; however, it may start during the planning phase (August 1 – December 31, 2017).

44. Can an entity apply for the planning and summer orientation funds, basically the college ready funds, without applying for other funds? Is that a stand alone option and funding opportunity?

    No, an entity may not apply for the planning and summer orientation funds apart from implementing a full Smart Transfer ECHS Program.

45. For existing (Smart Scholars Early College High School Programs), how do we adequately phase out our current group of students?

    As noted in Section XXII., Application Instructions, on page 35, the Budget Narrative, an existing ECHS partnership should take special care to address issues of supplanting and duplicative services. **ST ECHS funding cannot supplant existing funding sources.** The ST ECHS program will start with a new cohort of 9th grade students. Applicants should work with the program officer of their existing ECHS program to address phasing out their existing program.

46. How does the free college tuition initiative proposed by Governor Cuomo affect Early College High School Program recipients while pursing/completing their bachelor's degree trajectory?

    This question refers to the Excelsior Scholarship Program. At this time, NYSED cannot anticipate the impact of this new scholarship initiative on graduates of the Smart Transfer ECHS Program or other early college high school programs. You may want to refer to the Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) Excelsior Scholarship FAQ for current information on this scholarship program.

47. Can you please clarify page 11, #4? What does that mean "The ST-ECHS is a stand- alone school or an autonomous academy or a small learning community within a school."?

    The ST ECHS must be conceptualized and designed as a school or an academy/school-within-a school. This school must conduct its high school classes at one common location using its own integrated high school and college curriculum. ST ECHS students are not mixed with the general student population in a high school, with the only difference being they are provided extra academic and social supports, and taking college courses for free. These design features support the alignment of the ST ECHS high school and college curriculum, and the development of a college-going culture.

48. Am I correct in believing that a BOCES cannot be the lead school?

Yes, this is correct with respect to serving as the lead applicant and fiscal agent. As outlined in Section VI of the RFP, on page 15, (and clarified on page one of this Q & A) eligible applicants will be New York State public school districts ("school districts") or IHEs currently serving as the fiscal agent in existing Smart Scholars ECHS partnerships, applying on behalf of a partnership. However, a BOCES may serve as the implementation lead for a ST ECHS project. A definition of the implementation lead is provided in Section II, Definitions of Frequently Used Terms (on page 9) of the RFP. An additional description of the implementation lead is provided in Section VI, Applicant and Partnership Qualifications (on page 16) of the RFP.

49. Given women earn a disproportionately lower percentage than men of degrees in several scientific fields, math, and especially engineering and computer technologies (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/rampage/wp/2015/01/27/women-falling-behind-in-stem-bachelors-degrees/?utm_term=.0ca13c99866a), if a project proposes to offer a degree pathway in engineering, computer technology, math, and/or sciences other than social sciences/psychology and biology, can girls be considered underrepresented and eligible to participate in the specific pathway?

    No, while they may be underrepresented for a degree pathway you want to propose for your ST ECHS application, girls cannot be considered underrepresented for the purposes of the ST ECHS RFP. The populations considered underrepresented for the ST ECHS RFP are outlined in Section II, page 9: African American/black, Hispanic/Latino(a), American Indian or Alaskan native; first generation college goers; or students with disabilities.