

2016-17 Evaluation and Assessment Internal Service Fund

Joan Bush, Ph.D.

EA17-166-4

At-a-Glance

The Evaluation and Assessment (E & A) Internal Service Fund (ISF) was established to fund positions in the E & A Department using grant or other district funding set-asides. With periodic billings against the set-asides, the department provides products and services to fulfill evaluation and data requirements for specific grants and district initiatives. Funded portions of grants and district initiatives that are allocated to evaluation and data services are placed in the ISF. Billed amounts from the ISF set-asides cover a substantial portion of ISF personnel salaries, equipment, and supplies. Demands on ISF personnel that are not funded through set-asides are subsidized by the General Operating Fund.

ISF Practices and Characteristics

During the 2016-17 school year, services provided through the E & A ISF were billed at \$600 per day. Services have been billed at \$600 per diem since the 2014-15 school year. The established per diem rate was set based on estimated actual cost to the district, including per diem cost for the evaluators providing services, per diem cost for professional ancillary services (programming, managerial, and supervisory), and per diem cost for overhead (administrative services, supplies, equipment, computers, facilities). Often, multiple evaluators and/or programmers provide services under the same set-aside simultaneously.

Most projects are billed in one, two, or three payments and at the discretion of the project manager. Due to differences between evaluation beginning and ending cycles and the district's closure of accounting books at the close of the fiscal year, larger projects typically bill the entire work's effort from October through May each year. Evaluation work continues from June through the end of the evaluation cycle as outlined in the evaluation plan; however, services provided after the final billing for a project are pro bono. That is, services continue until project completion but no further billing occurs.

Time and Effort Billing

For each billing period, the assigned evaluator submits a time and effort form to the program manager for signature and returns it to ISF management. The ISF time and effort billing form attests to the total number of person days billed during each billing period and/or the total cost of the evaluation/data services. The ISF manager completes accounting journals to bill all current ISF-funded projects and submits the journals to grants accounting or the general ledger accountants for

posting of charges. The ISF manager also makes sure funds were expensed correctly and follows up with assigned accountants, as needed, until all billing has been expensed from the appropriate accounts.

2016-17 ISF-Funded Evaluations

In 2016-17, the ISF manager oversaw 59 active accounts (see Table 1). In addition, the Bilingual/ESL Department provided a full-time equivalent (FTE) position through Title III funding. Two accounts were associated with Home Instruction for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), and two accounts were associated with Summer Learning. Additionally, there were 42 separate Focus/Priority grant accounts.

Table 1: 2016-17 ISF Accounts and Amounts

Funding Source
After School
College and Career Readiness
College Readiness Indicator System – Gates Foundation
CTE/Perkins
Early Learning
Focus/Priority Schools (42 schools)
HIPPY - Title I
HIPPY - United Way
McKinney Vento Homeless
Refugee Education Program
Social Emotional Learning - Wallace Foundation
Special Education
Summer Learning – Extended Year Educational Svcs.
Summer Learning – Wallace Foundation
Teacher Excellence Initiative
Title I, Part A
Title II, Part A
Volunteer & Community Partnerships

The total expensed amount was \$908,941.72. This included \$793,418.72 for ISF services conducted in 2016-17 as well as \$115,523 for 2015-16 services that were not billed until September 2016 due to work that extended through the end of August and early September. The September 2016 billings included 42 Focus and Priority school grant accounts as well as a Wallace Foundation grant for Summer Learning. Like last year, there will be 2016-17 evaluation work billed in

September 2017 for Focus/Priority school grants and Summer Learning (Wallace grant).

In 2016-17, the largest set-aside was for Title I (\$350,000). The Title I evaluation included an overall report as well as separate reports for Academic Leadership and Coaching, African American Success Initiative, College and Career Readiness, Cottrell House, Early Learning, HIPPY, McKinney Vento Homeless Education, Leadership Development, Office of Family and Community Engagement, Promise House, Reasoning Mind, Translation Services, Transition Services, and Youth and Family Centers. A one-time amount of \$97,018.72 was for work conducted in 2014 and 2015 through a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation grant as part of the College Readiness Indicator System (CRIS).

Unfunded Services

Like the past few years, grant and general operating budget set-asides for evaluation services decreased, while demands from funded and unfunded projects increased. As a result, the evaluation services provided in 2016-17 exceeded what was in the ISF. This was mainly due to district administrators or Board members requesting that evaluation staff members conduct evaluations and/or provide data for district initiatives that did not have not enough, if any, set-aside funding for the work. General operating funds continued to be used to pay staff salaries for unfunded work.¹

In 2016-17, unfunded services included the evaluation of Accelerating Campus Excellence, Intensive Support Network, Public School Choice, Collegiate Academies, State Compensatory Education, and Student Success Initiative/Accelerated Instruction. Additional services included providing Research Review Board services (evaluators served on the review committee and/or pulled data), completing Public Information/Open Records Requests, producing the Class Size Waiver report, and coordinating the Districtwide Campus Climate Survey (fall and spring). In addition, ISF personnel coordinated analyses and reports for state accountability, Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System (PBMAS), Data Validation Monitoring, and the Community and Student Engagement Survey (CaSE).

Evaluation staff members conducted numerous ad hoc data pulls and wrote short reports that were beyond the scope of the evaluation plans because of unexpected needs of program managers. Due to an outside audit of the district's special education program, evaluation staff conducted numerous extra analyses before, during, and after the audit, as requested. In addition, services were provided for the Early Learning and Teacher

Excellence Initiative program staff that went well beyond the scope of the planned evaluations.

Challenges in 2016-17

There were two main challenges in 2016-17 related to the billing process for the ISF. First, deadlines for billing grant-funded work were not readily available and in one case, funding for the evaluation was lost due to being billed after the grant closing date. Second, there was some confusion on what signatures were needed on the grant-funded time and effort forms, which delayed the payment process.

Recommendations

- **Improve internal processes for time and effort billing and tracking.** Due to funds showing up throughout the year and varying end dates for billing, new processes should be put in place to make the billing and tracking processes more efficient. This should include ensuring that all time and effort forms have needed signatures before submission.
- **Work with the grants department as well as district accountants to develop a more efficient system for tracking fund availability and deadlines for billing.** To ensure all work is billed within grant deadlines, E & A staff should work with the grants department to get a list of grant closing dates for all grant-funded work.

For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at evaluation@dallasisd.org.

© 2017 Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD)

Mail a written request for permission to use or reproduce any part of this document to:

Dallas ISD
Department of Evaluation and Assessment
H. B. Bell School Support Service Center
2909 N. Buckner Blvd.
Box 10
Dallas, TX 75228

¹ Funding reductions have been due to constraints facing grantors at the state and federal levels, elimination of some grants, and district budget cuts for some programs.