Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) Application
Technical Assistance Guide

This document is intended to serve as additional guidance for those participating in the VPK application. Please continue to send all questions to Candace.Cook@tn.gov. Questions received will be compiled into an ongoing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document to support districts in the application process.

Background Data

Unscored Information

Data in the background section of the application will not be scored. However, it is required in order for the application to be considered. While some of the data will be automatically populated using information entered into the education information system (EIS), the district will be asked to provide information regarding the number of classes for which they are applying, and the types of preschool programs available within the school district.

Section 1 – Utilization 25% of score

Three Year Trend

The utilization section of the application does not require any response from districts. The state will access data within the EIS, and will upload the data into ePlan. For the purpose of this application, we will be looking at a three year average for percent of capacity and utilization data.

Please contact Candace Cook or liz.newsome@tn.gov with questions regarding utilization data.

What if the data that is uploaded does not match our district-level data?

If the data uploaded seems incorrect, the district may write a letter to address the concern. This letter should be written on district letterhead and should include the following:

- State the discrepancies and provide the data seen at the district level
- Site source for district-level data
- Provide details regarding the cause of the error within the Student Information System
- State plans to correct future errors
- Signed by director of schools

We do not have a report for ADA of Pre-K Students. Do you know how this can be accessed?

Each district has selected its own student information system (SIS). Reports within these systems vary. If you cannot generate a report, you may respond to the question by providing information regarding how attendance is documented and monitored. You may also provide a plan to address any areas where gaps in data monitoring have been an issue.

Section 2- Program Management 20% of score

The program management section of the application is comprised of 3 categories with questions on 9 topics. These questions are meant to elicit narrative responses.

Uploading Documents

In question II.d., applicants are asked to upload a copy of the student application. This document should be uploaded on the "related documents" page within the ePlan system.

Where do most districts pull the demographic information for the grant?

The application no longer asks for formal census and community data. Instead, question II.a. asks districts to provide information regarding the need within the district service area. It is anticipated that each district will have unique needs. Therefore, data and sources of data will also be unique.

What should be included in question II.b. "Statement of Considerations?"

This question asks you to respond to a hypothetical scenario. State law requires that districts submit this statement yearly. In general, if you were provided enough funding to serve every four-year-old in your district, how would you make this happen? Things you should consider:

- How many four-year-olds reside in your school district?
- How many classes would need to be added?
- Do you have space for these classes?
- Do you have a teacher pool to fill these positions?
- How did you include Community Pre-K Advisory Council (CPAC) in this conversation?

Our district is not considering adding a class. However, we are having trouble finding funds to support transportation and other costs. How do we request these funds?

Question II.a. asks for access and attendance considerations. One of the guiding statements asks you to consider "any other factor(s) that may impact enrollment." If there are fiscal considerations that would impact access and attendance, include them in this response.

Section 3- Teaching and Learning 35% of score

This section is comprised of 3 categories with questions on 8 topics. All questions are intended to be answered in narrative form. No attachments have been requested, and none will be scored. The behavior policy, pre-K section only, should be 'copied and pasted' into the narrative box in ePlan.

Does training offered by the Read to be Ready coach qualify as job-embedded training?

Perhaps; it will depend on frequency, intensity, and outcomes of the training. Direct coaching and reflective feedback cycles would certainly qualify as job-embedded training. However, a one-time professional development session would not.

Should responses only include those strategies we have done (or are currently doing), or can we include our future plans?

You will certainly want to include those strategies you are doing or have tried. You will want to express how you know things are or are not working well. However, because we know cycles of improvement require frequent actions, we encourage you to express your plans and expected outcomes as well. All will be scored. Remember, for a 3 or 4, you want to include details and examples. For instance, if you are planning to change your daily schedule, you will want to provide details and examples of research or experiences that show why this decision has been made. You can express predictions regarding expected outcomes based on that research or those experiences.

When responding to the question regarding curriculum (VI.b), are we considering the "boxed" curriculum, or all of the things we do to address standards?

The question asks you to explain how you ensure fidelity for all teachers and assistants. When you look at the rubric, you will see specific guidance regarding training and access. Curriculum could include any resources given to teachers and assistants to aid in instruction. However, you will want to highlight your published curriculum and any strengths or weaknesses within the program. This will allow you to speak to how you accommodate for those gaps.

Daily Schedule

Do I need to provide a daily schedule for each classroom with a description to answer all questions on the rubric?

There is no need to provide a time-stamped schedule this year. The application asks districts to provide general timeframes. For example, if your flexible schedule requires teachers to spend 150 minutes in student-led centers, you would simply state that you spend 150 minutes in centers.

If your sites have different expectations, you should plan to state the differences and provide a rationale.

Section 4- Continuous Quality Improvement 20% of score

This section is comprised of three categories with questions on five topics. Each question should be answered in narrative form. There is one table within the data-driven discussion component. This table asks for smart goals in four areas: ELA, Math, Social/Personal competencies/Approaches to Learning, and a program goal.

SMART goals

All goals should be written in SMART goal format. They should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time based. Examples can be seen on the application training webinar on the VPK website ([here](#)).

Other sections in ePlan

Budget

Ignore this section until after the grant awards have been communicated. This detailed budget section is not required for the grant application.

Local Match

Ignore this section until after the grant awards have been communicated. This detailed budget section is not required for the grant application.

Teacher Information

Ignore this section until after the grant awards have been communicated. This section requiring teacher certification information is not required for the grant application.

Site Locations

Ignore this section until after the grant awards have been communicated. This section requiring the locations of sites information is not required for the grant application.

Completing the Application

Next Steps and ePlan

Use all Word documents to begin constructing responses now. The application will be in ePlan in January. Districts will be notified as soon as the application is accessible in ePlan. Responses constructed in Word can be copied and pasted directly into ePlan. Tables can also be entered. All applications must be complete and submitted by Feb. 14, 2018.

Will there be an extension due to inclement weather?

There are currently no plans to extend the deadline. The due date remains Feb. 14, 2018.

Using the Rubric

The rubric is a scoring guide for analysts. It can be used to construct your responses. Using the rubric will help you understand components that the analysts may be looking for.

The rubric is ***not a checklist***. Grant analysts will take a different approach to scoring this year. They will look at each response holistically. The analyst will compare the response to the rubric to determine which score the response is most like.

For example, when explaining professional development opportunities, a list of compliance trainings would be most like a score of 1. However, detailed examples of job-embedded, pre-K-specific training offered to VPK teachers, principals, and teacher assistants would be more characteristic of a 4.

You need not include every indicator under a level 4 to garner that score. However, the score that the response most closely resembles is the score it will receive.

In reading through the final application, I noticed many of the rubric items start off with "evidence of." Does actual evidence need to be embedded into the narrative, and if so, what is an example of this?

Remember that a 4 is an exemplar. Those items receiving a score of 4 should be of the highest standard with evidence that supports the response. Districts may provide a narrative that explains the evidence. For example, if you gathered teacher data via a survey, you could describe the survey and results. No uploaded documents will be considered for scoring, except where requested.

State Supports

Training Opportunities

A webinar was conducted on Dec. 11 to outline the specifics of the grant application process. The recording of that webinar was sent to all VPK directors and webinar participants. There will be a link to the webinar posted on the VPK website located here.

ELM Phase II, the VPK convening, and the [Developmentally Appropriate Practices](#) book supplied by the state should be resources used when considering your application.

Technical Assistance

To offer further assistance to districts, a series of technical assistance webinars were provided throughout the month of January. Within these technical assistance sessions, we discussed any questions and concerns that were generated throughout the application process. This guidance document has been updated with those questions, and will continue to be updated as questions are submitted to Candace.cook@tn.gov.