Payment System Guidance - Question and Answers

General Information

1Q. Who can submit requests for reimbursement?
1A. The authorized representative or someone that person has designated through the Portal. The payments component of the grants management system has its own set of assurances that must be accepted by the authorized representative. If designating another individual to submit requests, the District/ESU should consider whether that person can be held responsible for meeting those assurances. A person other than the authorized representative can be designated and approved, through the Portal, as a data entry person.

2Q. Will payments and reimbursement requests be made in whole dollars?
2A. Yes. Amounts should be rounded down to the nearest dollar.

3Q. Will the payment and reporting system handle negative amounts such as might be needed for journal entries and fund transfers?
43. Yes. Transactions like these must be explained in the comments box to facilitate approval of the requests for payments. See additional information under Supporting documentation below.

4Q. Can advances be requested or obligated funds be reported?
4A. No. The system will only accommodate reimbursement requests.

5Q. When a payment is made for the NCLB Consolidated Application, how will an agency know which funds from which programs are included?
5A. The payments from the grants management system will include all approved requests in one payment. To identify the grant programs paid, go to: (https://portal.education.ne.gov/Site/DesktopDefault.aspx) and click on the Payments link in the column on the left side of that page.

6Q. Can payments be made for an application that has not been approved or an amendment that has not been approved?
6A. No, payments will only be made for approved applications or approved amendments to that application.

7Q. How will the system handle the fact that some NCLB programs receive only a portion of the State's allocation prior to October 1st?
7A. The payment system is designed to take this into consideration when making payments.

REAP-FLEX and Section 6123

8Q. What if a district transferred funds to be used for salaries and fringe benefits?
8A. Payments will be made according to the approved budget for each program. Example: A district transferred $4,000 of Title II-A funds under REAP-FLEX or Section

6123 to be used to pay a Title I-A teacher. The approved Title I-A budget has $60,000 budgeted for salary and fringe benefits that is a combination of funds. A payment would use the carryover from Title I funds (if any) first, then Title II-A funds, and then the current year Title I funds.

9Q. How should a district's accounting system record REAP-FLEX and Section 6123 activities?
9A. We have always maintained that districts must track transferred funds by the original grant. Districts can design their accounting systems to match the approved budgets as long as payments are appropriately receipted to the original grant. In the example used above, the district budget does not need a separate line of accounting of the Title II-A funds used to pay the Title I-A teacher.

Reimbursement Requests

10Q. How will reimbursement requests be handled in the payment system?
10A. The grants management system will provide the amounts by major object code for each approved budget. The District/ESU will enter the amount that has been spent and the grants management system will check to see if a) there is an approved amount in that object code and b) the request is within the allowable variance for the approved amount. The allowable variance is the greater of 25% of the approved total object code or $2,500 of the approved amount of that object code. The grants management system will not allow a user to enter an amount larger than the variance. If expenditures exceed the allowable variance, the District/ESU will need to amend the budget of the most recently approved application or amendment.

11Q. When should the District/ESU request reimbursement?
11A. When the District/ESU has spent any of the NCLB funds, they can go into the Payments section of the NCLB Consolidated Application and request reimbursement. Requests for reimbursement can be submitted for all programs in the NCLB Consolidated Application at the same time. This is a consolidated application and is designed to accept requests for all programs and it will also allow reimbursement requests to be made for any one program.

12Q. Can an applicant submit a reimbursement request for 100% of an approved amount?
12A. Yes. Every request for reimbursement must be accompanied by the supporting documentation for those expenditures.

13Q. How will the system allow indirect costs to be claimed?
13A. The pull down menu of object codes on the "Reimbursement Request" page will contain an option to select indirect costs only with the final financial report. It is important to note that indirect costs are calculated on actual expenditures in all the object codes except Object Code 500. This means that if the agency has reported expenditures that vary from the originally approved budget, the amount of funds allowable for indirect costs may vary from the amount calculated in the original budget.

14Q. Why are comment boxes provided?
14A. Whenever you want to provide a written explanation that will assist the NDE staff in approving your request(s), you should use the comment box that is available on this page. There are comment boxes for the NDE Financial Services staff to use when approving the reimbursement requests or financial reports to convey messages/information to the agency.

Submitting Supporting Documentation

15Q. When will applicants need to submit supporting documentation?

15A. **Supporting documentation is required with each request for reimbursement**.

16Q. What is meant by supporting documentation?

16A. The supporting documentation is period to-date full general ledger report at the transaction (vendor/payee) level for all the NCLB programs for which either scheduled payments or reimbursement requests have been made. Additional information (vendor/payee name, original transaction date and description) must be provided for transactions with a vendor name or description such as Activity Fund, Petty Cash, Charge Accounts, etc. Summary reports also do not provide sufficient information.

If your accounting system allows, this information can be “cut and pasted” into a spreadsheet or produced in a .pdf file and submitted electronically through the grants management system. Supporting documentation can also be mailed to the Financial Services section of the Department. The payments component of the system replaces the reporting forms used previously (NDE 28-003, etc.). If submitting supporting documentation by mail, **please** print the Reimbursement Request page from the grants management system and submit it with your supporting documentation. Any delay in submitting supporting documentation will delay payment approval and processing.

17Q. What if supporting documentation does not support a payment?

17A. If a District/ESU attempts to claim reimbursement without having actually spent the funds, it risks being placed on a system where payments are made only after supporting documentation has been approved.

18Q. What documentation is needed for journal entries?

18A. Journal entries must be identifiable in the supporting documentation which should identify the original transaction date, vendor and amount. The date of the journal entry should be entered into the Reimbursement Request and be further explained in the comment boxes.

19Q. What documentation should be submitted for indirect costs?

19A. Indirect costs can only be used for general activities in an agency that support a grant program. Refer to the Nebraska Department of Education’s State and Federal Grant Management Guidance and Requirements for further information on indirect costs.

Appendix A

Overview of the Grants Management System
A complete overview is provided in the Instructions to the NCLB Consolidated application. The following provides helpful information for the payments component.

System Rules:
- A check in a box or radio button means “yes”, a blank box means “no”.
- SAVE: Use the Save Page button at the end of each page. Whenever a page is SAVED, the system brings the user back to the top of that page. If something needs to be changed on that page, an error message will appear at the top of the page.
- DO NOT use the “BACK” button on the browser to move among the pages. Links have been placed in the upper right hand corner of the page.
- Data that has been SAVED can be changed at any time until the payment request or report is submitted.

Page Design
- At the top of each page is the name of applicant and a unique number assigned to each applicant. The first two digits are the year of the application, followed by the ESU area, the county, district, nonpublic (if applicable) and building number.
- In the upper right hand corner of the page is an option to print a page without the graphics (Printer Friendly). If you desire to print a web page within the GMS, it is recommended to first click the Printer Friendly link, and then use your browsers File -7 Print option.
- A link (identified by the underline) to instructions for that page is also on the right hand side of most pages.

Assistance to Applicants
- A “Contact Us” link at the bottom of each page provides a list of NCLB program and Financial Services staff names, email and phone numbers. If program questions or technical problems arise, use this link to determine whom to contact.
- A link to Instructions is provided on every page that requires data to be entered by the applicant. The link to Instructions on the NCLB Consolidated Application OVERVIEW page will allow an applicant to print out all the instructions at once.

History

The grants management system will record the activity for each payment request or report. This includes the date submitted, approval dates, amendment dates, etc. The system will keep applications from year to year and, in future years, all previous actions will be available for review.

Built-in Validations and Accuracy

The system has several ways to ensure that when an payment request or report is submitted, it is as accurate and complete as possible. For example, an error message will appear in red at the top of the screen if a number is entered when a word is required. Validation errors must be corrected before the data can be saved. When the correct entry is made, the error message disappears and the data is saved.

Communication

The system will automatically send email messages to the authorized representative, as defined in the NDE Portal, whenever there is an approval or an application, including payment information, is returned for changes. The system will notify the staff person in the Department when an application, amendment or payment request or report has been submitted.