



RFA Questions

National Safe Supportive Schools Learning Collaborative

We will update questions and responses as they are submitted to the NCS3 until the application is due on April 30, 2021.

Q: Can non-public schools apply?

A: Yes. All schools are welcome, including private and charter schools. Applications should come from school districts.

Q: What grade level is this geared towards?

A: This learning collaborative is for K-12 schools.

Q: How many districts will be accepted?

A: A total of 15 districts across the United States will be accepted. The NCS3 is funded for 5 years and will add additional cohorts through this learning collaborative. Both training content and lessons learned through this collaborative will be shared more broadly with the field.

Q: How will participation acceptances be determined?

A: The NCS3 is looking for diversity of participants in terms of district size, geography, urbanicity, readiness or robustness of school mental health efforts, and racial and ethnic make-up of students served by the schools. What will be appealing in applications are sites who have demonstrated some readiness to take this on and an eagerness to engage in quality improvement around the topics of culturally responsiveness and equity, trauma-informed schools, and school mental health quality; sites that are seasoned or beginners in target areas are welcome. The NCS3 also hopes to have a range of K-12 schools across the cohort, but districts may choose to focus on schools with a specific grade cohort (e.g., high schools).

Q: Should applicants highlight what their districts and schools are already doing, or should they focus on the gaps?

A: A little bit of both! We want to hear what you hope to focus on, and what you already have in place.



Q: What if there is only 1 school in my district?

A: Single-school districts are encouraged to partner with another school during this application process. However, single-school districts are encouraged to apply individually as well if they are unable to partner in the application process.

Q: Who should be identified as the district leader if we are applying for a charter school and not associated with a district?

A: We recommend that an entity is identified to take on the responsibilities of the district role. In this case, the entity could be a charter management organization, one of the schools, or another entity, as long as the entity is able to take on the responsibilities specified in the district role described in the RFA.

Q: Can a single charter school with 2 separate campuses apply with the campuses counting as the 2 identified schools?

A: Yes, both campuses should apply jointly in one application. One entity should be designated to take on the responsibilities specified in the district role described in the RFA.

Q: Will CEU credits be offered?

A: The NCS3 will work with the Continuing Education Boards to acquire CEUs for eligible trainings, but CEUs may not be eligible for all participating disciplines/professionals.

Q: How will this learning collaborative align with already existing MTSS teams?

A: This work will align with existing MTSS efforts. Districts are encouraged to leverage school teams that already exist. The training and implementation support will be general enough to tailor to the MTSS systems in place within the participating districts and schools.

Q: Can Canadian school districts apply?

A: Since this is a federally funded initiative, applicants must be located within the United States. There is tremendous work happening in Canada, and the NCS3 hopes to partner with and learn from these districts in other ways.

Q: Will social and emotional learning (SEL) be incorporated?

A: Yes, we will discuss both student and adult SEL as part of district/school efforts to promote culturally-responsive, trauma-informed comprehensive school mental health systems.

Q: If we are already implementing [Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools \(CBITS\)](#) or [Bounce Back](#), will we still benefit from this learning collaborative?



A: Yes. These interventions are a small piece of the larger learning collaborative. Four clinicians each year can be trained in an intervention program. There are other interventions available in addition to CBITS and Bounce Back. CBITS and Bounce Back are offered through our partnership with the [NCTSN TSA for Resiliency, Hope, and Wellness in Schools](#).

Q: What is the financial cost?

A: There is not cost for participating districts. This learning collaborative is funded by the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) through [The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#).

Q: Is there a paper copy of the application to view as a guide?

A: Yes, please see pages 7-8 of the [RFA](#).

Q: What kind of mental health community partnerships are acceptable for the district team?

A: Partnerships can be with local entities that support behavioral health broadly, a specific behavioral health provider organization, or individual provider.

Q: If all school staff are unable to participate in the trainings, would it be acceptable to have a team represent the school staff?

A: Over the course of 2 years, participating schools are required to offer 6 asynchronous learning opportunities to all school staff. If this is not feasible, please describe how many staff members will be able to participate, keeping in mind that we are aiming to reach as broad of an audience as possible for these asynchronous learning sessions. The 20 virtual learning sessions are for the district teams including 2 school leaders, not for all school staff.

Q: What would state leadership participation look like?

A: District applicants should name a state leader with whom they will engage quarterly to provide updates on their progress on S3-LC goals. Ideally, there will be a bi-directional relationship between districts and state leaders to promote school mental health quality improvement.

Q: What does "healing-centered" mean to the NCS3 in terms of trauma practice and healing-centered work?

A: Many groups have been talking about this shift in the language around trauma-informed work. "Healing-centered" has become a term that resonates with the NCS3 team and we have increasingly used this language. It takes some emphasis away from individual pathology and places the focus more toward healing systems. While trauma is an important variable, we want to focus on resiliency and healing.

Q: Can a Department of Education apply?

A: Local Departments of Education can apply. State Departments of Education cannot apply as the lead, but they can be listed as a district team member or as the state lead.

Q: Can non-profits working closely with schools apply for this learning collaborative?

A: The lead applicant needs to be a school district, but non-profits can be included as district team members.

Q: After 2 years, will ongoing support and consultation be available?

A: There will be a cohort immediately following this one. The NCS3 hopes that participants from this first cohort can engage in the next series of learning sessions as ambassadors, exemplars, and for continued learning opportunities.

Q: How does this collaborative intend to engage districts within indigenous communities?

A: The NCS3 has strong intentions to support BIPOC and Newcomer communities as stated in the NCS3 goals. We hope to engage leaders from Indigenous communities of participating districts and from national partners, including our partners at the [National American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Technology Transfer Center](#) that focuses on behavioral health and safe supportive schools efforts with indigenous communities.