

Use of Funds for M.Ed. Degrees

Query – 08.26.2008

<p>Query: One of the NCLB Title II, Part A proposals requests a substantial sum to pay for an M.Ed. for 25 teachers already hired in school districts. I consulted the Non-regulatory Guidance and found it to be unclear on this use of funds. My gut reaction was ‘no,’ as this is not professional development as I envision it. However, I thought I had better check to see how others were handling this.</p>	
<p>From: Utah</p>	
<p>Responses:</p>	
Kentucky	In Kentucky we will pay tuition for teachers if they choose to advance through that route. We require teachers to have a masters within 10 years, so we consider this “professional development.”
Puerto Rico	Some of our projects offer a combination of Graduate level courses in Arts and Sciences and Education to ensure that the teachers and/or principals learn the core academic subjects and the best teaching practices for the subjects. I understand that our Program may pay for some courses but not for the complete degree requirements.
South Carolina	I had a similar situation with one of our funded projects. The institution was using funds to train teachers to become administrators and they were receiving a M.Ed. as a result. I was told by Richard Mellman that I could NOT do this. According to Richard, these funds cannot be used to assist teachers in obtaining a degree. I have included his response below.
USDOE	I agree with Libby's response to you. The projects that a State agency of higher education (SAHE) sponsors under Title II, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended (ESEA), must comport with the set of authorized activities contained in section 2134 of the ESEA. This provision does not authorize a SAHE to use Title II, Part A funds to provide professional development for school principals. Nor does it authorize a SAHE to pay for graduate degrees; projects, of course, may pay for the costs of graduate-level courses that are reasonable and necessary to help participating teachers gain the subject matter knowledge and principals the instructional leadership skills they need to do their jobs. But the law does not authorize program funds to be used to pay for the costs of other degree requirements or the degrees themselves. In offering you this opinion, please understand that I am not suggesting any problem with either the quality of or need for your agency's project to train principals. I am responding only to whether the ESEA permits Title II, Part A funds to support it. Please let me know if you or your agency would like to discuss this matter further.
Wyoming	After several reviews of the guidance, I have responded “no”. The project can pay for some of the coursework that moves one toward that degree, but actually paying for the degree appears to me to be outside of the allowability of the program.
Maryland	In Maryland, we have funded up to 9 graduate credits as part of projects designed to help teachers obtain certification in discipline specific areas. We don't fund an entire Master's program for teacher-participants.
Maine	I have had Master's courses paid for in my grants when the course is specifically designed for the grant and satisfies the requirement of some facet of a Masters

	<p>program. Providing each course can be tied directly to the objectives of the grant (probably unlikely for more than one or two), then my judgment would be that it is not aligned and is not an allowable cost.</p>
Oregon	<p>My reaction is the same as yours, Teddi. However, I think that if the project had proposed to pay for graduate courses in a particular content area, or even a couple of content areas, that would make up a good portion of an M.Ed., that it would have been fully acceptable.</p>
Minnesota	<p>I suggest going to the legislation to support your response of “NO” to this proposal idea. Under use of funds the legislation says subgrant funds for -- (1) professional development activities in core academic subjects</p> <p>It does not say professional development degree areas. Some of the courses in an M.Ed. may be reflective of needed professional development in core academic areas, but I doubt if all of them will be. Does the degree mean that they will be able to address the TQ needs of Utah’s students in the core academic subjects defined by the legislation?</p> <p>I have had participants use courses from the TQ program as part of their master’s program and in my view that approach is appropriate. The MN TQ program supported their prof development around topics/issues in specific core academic areas defined by the legislation and Minnesota’s needs, but the students were responsible for working out the financing and design of their degree program. If you fund this proposal, you may set yourself up to fund similar expensive proposals for other degree seekers.</p>
USDOE	<p>Title II, Part A funds may be used to pay for stipends for school teachers, as reasonable and necessary. For example, if the professional development activity is conducted during after-school hours or in the summer, stipends may be needed to compensate teachers for their participation outside their regular employment hours. Title II, Part A funds may be used to pay tuition to an institution of higher education to permit students to take core academic courses at the college or university. The grant budget should be reviewed to be sure that everything that is charged to the grant is really necessary. If so, tuition and stipends are allowable.</p>