This guide explains STARTALK’s proposal process, the criteria reviewers use for rating submitted proposals and the resources available to help prepare prospective student program applicants.

**IMPORTANT:**
You must have a CAGE code to submit your proposal. If your institution does not have one, apply for one immediately so that you receive your code in time to submit your proposal before the deadline. You can apply for a CAGE code at [http://www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov).

## About the Proposal Review Process

The STARTALK proposal review process consists of three stages: an external review, an internal review, and a final determination made by the funding agency.

Following the close of the proposal submission period, each STARTALK proposal is reviewed and rated by three randomly assigned external reviewers. External reviewers are selected from among national experts and leaders in the field of world language education. The external reviewers focus on the academic and logistical viability of the proposed program and assign responses to each question one of four ratings: clearly evident, evident, weakly evident, or not evident. The following is a breakdown of the four ratings:

- **A rating of clearly evident** indicates that the applicant has provided many details or strong connections between aspects of the program and the item criteria.
- **A rating of evident** indicates that the criteria are referenced in meaningful ways in the proposal.
- **A rating of weakly evident** indicates that the criteria are mentioned or alluded to without much detail.
- **A rating of not evident** indicates little or no reference to the criteria.

Based on these ratings, external reviewers then assign an overall rating: highly recommended, recommended, recommended with support, or not recommended. These overall ratings are defined as follows:

- **Highly recommended** refers to a program proposal that receives ratings of clearly evident for most of the criteria. These programs are most likely to create meaningful and successful learning experiences for intended student populations within the specified time frames and with reasonable costs.
- **Recommended** refers to a program proposal that receives a mix of clearly evident and evident ratings for most of the criteria. These programs are likely to create meaningful
and successful learning experiences for intended student populations within the specified time frames and with reasonable costs.

- **Recommended with support** refers to a program proposal that receives a mix of *evident* and *weakly evident* ratings for most of the criteria. These programs have the potential to provide meaningful and successful learning experiences for students but will require support from STARTALK in planning curriculum, developing appropriate assessments, identifying suitable instructional strategies, and/or other areas critical to program success.

- **Not recommended** refers to a program proposal that receives ratings of *weakly evident* or *not evident* for most of the criteria. These programs are not likely to provide meaningful and successful learning experiences for intended student populations.

External reviewers also provide brief explanations to justify their recommendations. These explanations sum up the most salient arguments for or against a program. Any additional or important information that calls for special attention by STARTALK Central is also included.

The external reviewer ratings are then reviewed internally by STARTALK Central, which considers the external ratings in light of considerations such as cost effectiveness and national need. STARTALK Central then compiles a list of recommended programs and shares its recommendations with the funding agency. The funding agency then makes final decisions about granting awards.
Proposal Criteria

The following section describes the criteria that the external reviewers use to rate each section of a proposal. When responding to each proposal question, try to be as specific as possible. One of the most common critiques reviewers make is that responses lack specific details or examples. Strong responses generally demonstrate not only a solid understanding of STARTALK principles, but also a concrete and realistic plan for the design and implementation of the program.

Program

Question 1: Executive Summary

The executive summary should be an overall summary statement that should show that the program is well designed with a strong potential to be successfully implemented. The executive summary is shared with others and should be clearly written so that the reader understands at a basic level what the program will deliver. It should be a statement that can stand alone as a summary of the program.

Question 2: Please write a summary of your program of up to five sentences being sure to include the following: the outcomes; number of participants and their teaching levels; number of instructional hours and the duration of the program.

This question is primarily for administrative purposes. If the proposal is awarded a STARTALK grant, providing the information in this format facilitates the award process.

Question 3: Describe the compelling reason/rationale for offering this program in your community.

Why is it important for your particular program to be offered in your particular community? What features make this program a strong candidate for STARTALK funding? How will the program support the STARTALK mandate of building national capacity in less commonly taught languages and building student proficiency in the targeted less commonly taught language?
Major Goals and Personnel

*Question 1: Comment on your major program goals. How will your program know if these goals have been met?*

This item refers to the program goals, while question two in the implementation section refers to the assessment of student development. Does your program have a comprehensive plan for internal evaluation based on the stated goals and indicators of success? What is the plan, and how will evidence be collected? How will your program know if the major goals have been achieved?

*Question 2: Name your program director and lead instructor(s). Describe how their backgrounds match the specific responsibilities that each person will have in order to ensure the success of your program.*

Applicants are required to name both the program director and lead instructor(s) in their proposals. It is important that the proposal explain clearly the expertise that each person has as it relates to the proposed program. While all programs are required to have a program director and lead instructor, the particular responsibilities of these people may be defined to fit your program’s specific needs. The explanation should make it clear what the responsibilities of each person are and why the named people are the best possible people for the job.

Both the program director and lead instructor should be involved in the program on a daily basis. Between the program director and lead instructor, the following qualifications should be evident:

- Proficiency in the target language(s) and target culture(s)
- Experience implementing world language pedagogy
- Experience in working with the targeted student populations
- Knowledge of the US education systems

The program director’s and lead instructor’s relevant experience and training, as it relates to organizing and running a language program, should be included. Experience might include working in heritage schools and community organizations as well as previous STARTALK student programs, traditional academic-year programs, or after-school programs. Examples of relevant training can include formal education as well as attending professional development opportunities, such as conferences, workshops, and/or STARTALK teacher training programs.

*Question 3: What other staff members will you need to run your program and what will their responsibilities be? Describe each staff member’s background in terms of the responsibilities s/he will have in the program.*
The proposal should identify all additional staff positions that will be needed to run the program. If a position is listed in the budget as a payroll staff position, it should be explained here. Please consult the budget guide and glossary for clarification if needed. Applicants are free to identify additional staff members by name, though this is not required. If, however, an additional position is identified, the responsibilities and qualifications for that position must be clearly stated.

For example, what will the roles and qualifications of additional instructional staff members be? If your program identifies the need for an administrative support position, specific responsibilities should be identified for that position. Be sure that your personnel list also addresses all aspects of the program, including any specialized needs of the program, to demonstrate to reviewers that all needs of the program will be met. For example, if the program will train participants to work with elementary school students, is there someone with elementary expertise involved in the program? Please also use this section to address any potential concerns that reviewers might have about the program being understaffed or overstaffed.

**Implementation**

STARTALK programs are expected to incorporate in their design specific principles of instruction, curriculum, and assessment. These principles reflect the current agreement among world language professionals regarding the most effective practices. STARTALK’s website contains many resources for becoming familiar with these principles:

- The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (the “5 Cs”), which include the standards related to the three modes of communication
- Explanations of additional best practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- Online teacher-training workshops to explore many of these concepts in greater detail
- PowerPoint presentations from workshops and sessions held during previous STARTALK conferences (please visit the archives section of the STARTALK website for conference presentations from before 2014)
- Various guides and templates for planning curricula and lessons and other language learning experiences, such as field trips
- Sample materials created by previous STARTALK programs

In addition to these resources, potential applicants might also consider attending a STARTALK teacher-training program to explore STARTALK-endorsed principles in greater depth and acquire hands-on experience. Many successful STARTALK student programs have been started by individuals who previously attended a STARTALK teacher-training program. STARTALK teacher-training programs are held during the summer months of June, July, and August and are typically announced in the early spring of each year. Check STARTALK’s website,
https://startalk.umd.edu, to learn more about available opportunities.

**Question 1:** Describe how the curriculum of your program will address the goals that are outlined in by the ACTFL World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages. Comment on what participants will know and be able to do as a result of this program.

Reviewers will be using the following considerations to rate this response: Does the proposal clearly address the five goal areas of the national standards (the 5 Cs): communication, cultures, connections, comparisons and communities? Are the standards addressed in terms of what students will be able to do (can-do statements), and are student learning outcomes in line with the program goals? Does the response to this proposal question make it clear that there is a conceptual understanding of the standards?

Does the proposal provide evidence that students will develop their competence in all three modes of communication, interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational? Are culture and content integrated in meaningful ways? Will students have opportunities to compare their own language and culture with the target language and culture? In addition, does the program create opportunities for students to demonstrate what they have learned in real-life situations, whether with native speakers or with virtual (online) communities? (For your reference, the ACTFL World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages can be found here: https://startalk.umd.edu/resources/WorldReadinessStandardsForLearningLanguages.pdf.)

**Question 2:** Describe how you plan to assess participants’ learning. Comment on how you will know if participants have met the major instructional goals of your program.

Reviewers will consider the following questions in rating this response: Is it clear how students will demonstrate what they have learned? Are the assessments performance based? Are the assessments realistic and meaningful for the specific students involved in the program? Are the assessments appropriate for the age and proficiency level of the students, the length of the program, and the context of learning?

Are there multiple measures for assessing student learning? Are students offered a choice in how they demonstrate what they have learned? Will assessments be both formative and summative? How will the instructors know if students have achieved stated learning goals? What evidence will the program require instructors and students to collect in order to demonstrate student growth? If a final performance event is described, is it clear that students will use the target language in meaningful ways to showcase what they have learned?
**Question 3:** Describe how your program will differentiate professional development experiences to meet the various needs of your participants.

This question concerns how a program plans to meet the needs of students of diverse backgrounds. What provisions will be made for students with different target language experiences and levels of proficiency, such as heritage students or students who have studied the language in a classroom setting previously? How will the program determine the incoming language proficiency level of students if students do come from different backgrounds?

How will the curriculum, instruction, and assessment be differentiated in order to accommodate the needs of students of different races, ethnicities, genders, socioeconomic statuses, and educational abilities? Are the strategies that are suggested specific in nature or do they just suggest that students will work in groups? Do they indicate how students will be grouped? Will students have a choice in how the material is learned or in how they showcase their learning?

**Question 4:** Describe how the STARTALK-endorsed Principles for Effective Teaching & Learning and Characteristics of Effective Language Lessons will be incorporated into your program.

The response to this question can be used to summarize the points in the previous three responses that relate to best practices and to address any additional best practices that have not yet been discussed. Is it apparent that the curriculum will be backward designed, thematic, and focused on how students will be able to use the target language in all three modes of communication? Are activities designed in ways that enable students to develop proficiency and literacy in the target language? Are instructional activities, tasks, and assessments designed to promote meaningful and purposeful interaction in the target language and culture? Do the instructional strategies and activities allow the program to achieve its stated goals and objectives? It should be made clear how the following best practices emphasized by STARTALK ([https://startalk.umd.edu/principles/](https://startalk.umd.edu/principles/)) are incorporated throughout the program:

- Use of target language
- Facilitation of a student-centered classroom
- Meaningful interaction in the target language
- Integration of content, language, and culture
- Adaptation and use of authentic materials
- Differentiation of instruction based on student need

**Question 5:** If you plan on using technological tools, explain how those tools will support instruction and learning. If technology is part of your budget, describe how items purchased will support instruction and enhance learning.
Programs are not required to use technology; however, if your program does plan to use technology, your proposal should explain how the technology will be used to enhance instruction or learning. If STARTALK funds are used to purchase technology, this question is mandatory.
Professional Development

**Question 1:** Describe the professional development activities you plan to implement to prepare your staff prior to and during the program.

Student programs typically include training or orientation sessions for instructional staff prior to the beginning of classes. This section should be used to describe your program’s plans for such professional development activities. When will the training occur, what will the length of the training be, who will facilitate it, and what will its focus be? Does the plan also include ongoing opportunities for mentoring and reflection during the program?

Proposal reviewers will also consider whether the proposed program has incorporated sufficient time for planning, preparation, and implementation. Are professional development opportunities integrated with the program’s development of curricula, units, and lessons? Are instructors provided time to plan lessons prior to the start of the program? Are other related aspects of program planning and implementation addressed in a realistic manner (e.g., hiring and training of staff, selection and acquisition of materials, arrangements for field trips and extracurricular activities, time for student assessment, program evaluation, and staff reflection?)

**Question 2:** Explain the process that will be used to develop the more detailed required curriculum template documents and describe how your instructional staff will be involved in this process.

This question focuses in even greater detail on the development of the required curriculum from STARTALK’s curriculum template. This template can be found [online](#). Does the proposal clarify who will be involved in the development process? Is it clear that there is a plan for how the work will be divided and completed? Will someone with experience with the targeted age group be involved in the design of the curriculum template? Will those who are teaching in the program be involved in the design of the curriculum? Will the curriculum template be available for any professional development completed prior to the start of the program?

**Proposed Schedule**

**Question 1:** Describe what a typical day would be like for a participant.

This section can be used to address your participants’ daily schedule in terms of the schedule and variety of learning activities, as well as the supervision of students. What time will the program start and end? Is the length of day reasonable in terms of program goals and appropriate, in terms of the targeted students’ age? Do students spend a significant portion of the day engaged in a variety of activities that require use of the target language? Does the schedule allow for a blend of activities? Will students have the chance to move from one location to another and/or engage
in physical activity? Do students have breaks, lunch, etc.? Is it clear that students are supervised at all times?

**Question 2 (residential programs only):** Please explain your rationale for offering a residential program. Describe the types of activities that will occur during the evening and on weekends.

Residential programs are very costly. Is there a compelling reason for your decision to offer a residential program? Does the schedule for the typical day extend to evenings and weekends? Are evening and weekend activities integral to the learning experience? Do the evening and weekend activities contribute to the immersion experience?

**Question 3 (residential programs only):** Provide specifics on how the program will ensure the safety and security of students when they are not involved in structured activities. Comment on the housing arrangements and the plans for adult supervision throughout the program.

Programs should provide extended detail on how they will address issues concerning the safety and security of students. Will a responsible adult be living in the student dorms? Will there be both a male and female dorm counselor? What will happen on weekends? Programs should provide sufficient detail here so that parents of students who read the answer would feel that their concerns have been addressed.

**Recruitment**

**Question 1:** Describe your targeted population and note if your program will serve a diverse population. Discuss how you will publicize and market your program to reach the targeted population.

Does the proposal include clear descriptions of the targeted student population? The recruitment plan should aim to be as inclusive as possible, given the nature of the program. Some programs target specific populations such as heritage students or students from underserved communities. In programs without specific target populations, equal opportunities should be provided for students of different races, languages, ethnicities, genders, socioeconomic statuses, and educational abilities. Are specific strategies described for reaching out to students from different backgrounds? Does the program specify the language proficiency of the targeted population? If the program will provide support to students who may need help with daily commuting costs, are these costs reflected in the budget?
**Question 2: Justify your target enrollment numbers.**

This question focuses on whether the proposed program’s target enrollment numbers are realistic in light of the targeted population and the stated marketing plan. Given the size of the target population, is it likely that the targeted enrollment can be reached? What is your program’s plan to reach the targeted population through marketing? Will this plan be sufficient to draw the intended number of students?

**Continued Learning**

**Question 1: Describe the opportunities you will organize or recommend for continued learning beyond this program.**

In addition to the proposed summer activities, the STARTALK student programs should provide or link to opportunities or programs that will enable students to continue or at least retain what they have learned during the summer. Does the program specify plans that will allow for follow-up sessions during the school year? Past programs have used a number of successful methods for providing follow-up learning opportunities. These include both face-to-face and online or distance learning opportunities.

**STARTALK Legacy**

**Question 1: Describe the steps your program will take to ensure that STARTALK language programs will continue to be offered in the absence of STARTALK funding. For example,**

- Activities that advocate for the integration of STARTALK language instruction during the academic year;
- Activities that will result in partnerships with academic or local communities to advocate for STARTALK language programs;
- Activities that will result in long-term community interaction with the STARTALK language(s) and culture(s);
- Activities that develop relationships with potential long-term sponsors/funders.

As the STARTALK program begins its ninth year, there will be a focus on building and maintaining the STARTALK legacy. This question asks what you will do to ensure that STARTALK language programs will continue to be offered in the absence of STARTALK funding. Programs that offer strong plans for legacy building will receive preference during proposal review.
Budget

Question 1: Provide an explanation for all costs listed in your budget that are not addressed in the personnel sections.

External reviewers will review this section and the personnel section of the proposal to ensure that the proposal aligns with the budget. Please make sure that all payroll staff positions that appear in the budget are explained in the personnel section. List and explain all additional budgeted expenses in this section.

STARTALK Central will also conduct an internal review of all programs’ budgets. In this review we will examine all budget items to ensure that they are transparent, reasonable, nonduplicative, and cost effective. Please familiarize yourself with STARTALK’s budget resources to ensure that your budget meets STARTALK’s guidelines. These resources include a budget guide, budget samples, and a budget glossary.

Reflection

Question 1 (previous STARTALK programs only): Describe how the lessons you learned in previous STARTALK program(s) are reflected in your proposal.

If your program was a previous recipient of STARTALK funding, has your program taken the time to reflect on the suggestions made by last year’s site visit team? Consider the program from a management point of view. What did you learn from your STARTALK program last year? What positive elements will you work into this year’s STARTALK program, if you are funded? What problems will you address? For example, did you modify how you recruited participants based on your experience last year? Did you shift duties and responsibilities from one staff member to another based on your experiences with your staff last summer?

Question 2 (previous STARTALK programs only): List the challenges and recommendations provided in your 2014 site visit report. Explain how you will address each recommendation. If you cannot address a recommendation, provide a reason.

If your program was a previous recipient of STARTALK funding, look at the recommendations made by the site visit team that came to observe your program. List the recommendations they made and how you attempted to address the recommendations in planning this year’s program. Proposal reviewers will have access to the previous year’s site visit report for your program, so please make sure that all issues from last year are adequately addressed. If there are any recommendations that your program will not be adopting, please provide an explanation.