MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Achievement Matters Most

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS) FOR

MARYLAND LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES (LEAS)

ON

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANTS (SIG)

UNDER SECTION 1003(g) OF THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT OF 1965

Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)
Division of Student, Family, and School Support
Program Improvement and Family Support Branch

School Improvement Grants Under Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The School Improvement Grants (SIG) program is authorized by section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). The U.S. Department of Education (Department) has published final requirements for the SIG program, which were published in the Federal Register at 74 FR 65618 (Dec. 10, 2009), and amended by interim final requirements, which were published in the Federal Register at 75 FR 3375 (Jan. 21, 2010) (collectively, final requirements).

The purpose of this document is to draw attention to specific questions and answers that have been received and responded to from Maryland LEAs. Although we believe that the frequently asked questions (FAQs) included in this document are of particular interest to Maryland LEAs, we encourage all LEAs and other stakeholders to review carefully the final requirements, the complete SIG Guidance, and the addenda thereto in order to ensure that you have the most complete and up-to-date information about the SIG program.

For more FAQs, go to http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/faq.html.

Frequently Asked Questions

FAQs

1. **We have Tier III schools, because we are attending this SIG training does this mean we must submit an application by the first LEA application due date?**

    After the discussion at the Maryland LEA Technical Assistance Trainings on March 25 and March 26, 2010, MSDE has decided that LEAs with Tier III schools may submit their system's first draft on or before May 20, 2010 for its Tier III schools only. Once LEAs with Tier I and Tier II schools submit their first application draft on or before April 20, 2010, MSDE would have a clearer picture available funds for Tier III schools. MSDE first priority is funding Maryland's Tier I and Tier II schools.

2. **Is it possible for the Tier II schools that are Title I eligible but not Title I to layer Title I Part A funds to support the intervention/reform model? This would be in addition to the 1003(g) dollars.**

    No.   You cannot allocate Title I, Part A funds to a Title I eligible school in Tier II to support the intervention/reform model. Title I, Part A funds can only be used for Title I schools.

3. **In regards to the letter of intent from the LEA to participate in the Title I 1003(g) School Improvement Grant, the sample letter has 2009-2011 in the text. Is this accurate or should the dates be 2010-2011?**

    Located in the appendix of the LEA application, the dates (2009-2011) in the sample letter of intent are correct.

4. **On page 33 of the grant application, Timeline for Monitoring of Tier I and Tier II Schools, when the LEA/Schools complete this chart for the application process, is it the expectation for the entire document (that references the three year monitoring) to be completed, or will the portion that references Year 1 the only part to be completed?**

    Complete the entire document. If the monitoring will be conducted the same each quarter each year, then follow the same process each year. Consider differentiating the LEA monitoring procedures based on AYP data annually.

5. **Page 22 of the grant application for "Restart" models has only one page of questions, whereas "Turnaround" and "Transformation" have 4 and 7 pages of questions. Are we missing something?**

    You are not missing anything on page 22.   The "restart" model is one in which an LEA converts a school or closes and reopens a school under a charter school operator, a charter management organization (CMO), or an education management organization (EMO) that has been selected through a rigorous review process.   It is the responsibility of the school system to ensure deliverables in the contract with an outside group, as well as monitoring for academic progress. When setting deliverables in a contract, the LEA may want to incorporate requirements and/or permissible strategies from other intervention models.

6. **Page 33 of the grant application – for monitoring and oversight – can you explain what you are looking for? On-site visits? Data monitoring?**

   Regarding your guidance question on page 33 of the LEA application (Timeline for LEA Monitoring of Tier I and Tier II schools)….

   a) **In the directions, it states, "….with a <u>detailed description</u> of how the LEA will monitor each school's intervention model and how progress monitoring will be assessed throughout the year."   It is very important to focus on the details; do not be broad and vague in the text.**
   b) **Also, make certain in your detailed description there is an alignment between the following:**

   - **LEA 1003(g) Central Support Team for the Identified Tier I or Tier II school (page 11 of the SEA Application);**
   - **LEA's culminating matrix for each Tier I or Tier II school (page 17-18 of the SEA Application);**
   - **LEA's monitoring on what the Tier I or Tier II school submitted in the LEA application, in terms of the intervention model requirements and school goals;**
   - **LEA's monitoring of the school budget;**
   - **LEA's monitoring of not only quantitative data but also qualitative (surveys, parent and families, communities);**
   - **LEA's on-site visits…how often, include SANE (sign-in sheets, agendas, meeting notes, and evaluations (when applicable).**
   - **LEA's monitoring of the outlined Tier I and Tier II Grant specific and General Assurances (page 59 of the LEA Application); and**
   - **LEA's monitoring and oversight to include rapid delivery and rapid response to the identified schools.**

   c) **MSDE reviewers of the LEA application need to be able to read with transparency and should not have to infer.**
   d) **Remember, what you write the system must deliver.   When the MSDE SIG Teams conduct their three onsite visits each year, they will monitor what the LEA identified in their approved LEA application.**

7. **We are in the process of bringing on board partners for our restart schools and their plans for these schools are evolving daily. We are worried that we may not have all the details ironed out for the 1ˢᵗ application draft date. How does this play out?**

    There are three dates for LEA Application Approval (April 20, May 20, and June 30). In your system's April 20 application, clearly note items that you are in the process, such as bringing on partners, what the system is requiring of partners, etc.   Make certain in the April 20 draft that you identify timelines. Hopefully, contracted partners will be on board by the May 20ᵗʰ date. It is the LEA's responsibility to ensure contracted partners understand all SIG requirements and the higher level of monitoring by the LEA and MSDE.

8. **Define graduation rate, p. 15 #1**
    - **The Graduation Rate Definition can be found on the Maryland State Department of Education website at**
      Graduation Rate: Definitions :2009 Maryland Report Card

9. **Define high school diploma, p. 15 #1**
    - **As defined in the Code of Maryland Regulations (13A.03.02.09) at http://www.msde.state.md.us/CompHSA/docs/COMAR_REQUIREMENTS.doc**

10. **Our school achievement data will be from 2008/2009. Any other previous school years, p. 15 #1?**
    - **In addition to MSA/HSA 2009 for school year 2008/2009, we are asking for trend data, (a minimum of 3 years).**

11. **What should be the "as of date" for data on school staffing, p. 15 #2?**
    - **As of the first day of school for students for the 2009-2010 school year.**

12. **Pages 16 #3, bullet 2, define "achievement quartile."**
    - **Do not respond to this bullet item at this time. MSDE is working on this federal reporting requirement.**

13. **Page 15 #2, on Staff Profile – Do we need data on every data point?**
    - **Yes**

14. **On page 16, under "Staff Profile",**
    - **"Number of school-based reading and English resource personnel" - What exactly do you mean by "*resource*" personnel? Are you referring to special education?**

In the MSDE Staff Reporting System Specifications and Procedures manual, there is a category of "other instructional professional personnel". These staff members are assigned to work with and support students in a particular content area such as reading or math but they are not considered the teacher of record. This person could be a "reading or math specialist". Special education teachers should be included in this count unless they are the teacher of record.

- **"Number of mentor teachers and number of teachers being support"** – Is there a specific definition/classification that you could share? For instance, must the person have a title of Teacher Mentor? Do they need to have formal training? What about a buddy teacher?
  There is not a specific MSDE definition for Mentor Teachers.   It depends on the type of mentor teacher program each school is operating.   For example, a principal may have allocated funds for a full time or part time mentor teacher position (count this one). In another school example, the principal decided not to allocate funds for a position and decided to implement an informal "buddy teacher" approach (do not count).   For this category, mentor teachers are full or part time positions and are to help teachers become better teachers. They do not work with students. A Restructuring Implementation Specialist who fulfills this responsibility of mentoring teachers may be counted.
  According to federal statute, all Title I schools in improvement must have a mentor teacher program. But again, we only want counts of mentor teachers who only work full or part time helping teachers becoming better teachers.

15. **Can you clarify if the High School Diploma Rate is the 12th grade completion rate?**
    Yes. The High School Diploma Rate is the number of 12th graders earning a diploma MINUS those students who earned a special education certificate of completion or earn early college admission.

16. **For the High School Diploma Percentage, do we take the number of diplomas and divide by the number of 12th graders, then, this is the number we want?**
    Yes. In order to get a high school diploma percentage, the number of 12th graders earning a diploma and divide by the total number of 12th graders.

17. **Can grant funds be used to develop and support the 1003(g) Central Support Teams (District Leadership Team)?**

    In Maryland's LEA application, the LEA must identify a 1003(g) Central Support Team (District Leadership Team).   An LEA may use SIG funds to pay for district-level activities and staff to support implementation for one of the four school intervention models in each Tier I and Tier II school. However, an LEA may not use SIG funds to support district-level activities/staff for schools that are not receiving SIG funds.

18. **Can the 1003(g) Central Support Team be made up of central office and/or regional office personnel?**

    1003(g) Central Support Team must be staffed with highly knowledgeable individuals with specialized skills and knowledge in school improvement, understanding of school/community culture and climate, and relate well to all school/community stakeholder groups. The Central Support Team, assigned to an identified Tier I and/or Tier II schools, must have the authority to deliver a rapid response to support the identified needs of the school.   LEA Central Support Team is expected to document their actual time spent on-site at each of the Tier I and/or Tier II schools. This team must also demonstrate they communicate regularly with the LEA executive team, including the Chief Executive Officer/Superintendent of School.

19. **If your school exits School Improvement after Year Two, can the grant continue into Year Three?**

    Yes.