2016-2017
TITLE I REGIONAL ASSISTANCE GRANT (RAG)
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the Grant Award Period?

The grant award period is July 1st to September 30th of the following year. Annual grants are awarded as close as possible to October 1st, however delays can and do happen. Occasionally, grant awards may necessarily be amended after the initial award date to reflect changes in Title I status of Priority and Focus schools to be served, or for other reasons affecting eligibility of the school for receipt of MI Excel services.

2. Who is eligible?

Any ISD/RESA/RESD that serves school districts with Title I schools identified as a Priority or Focus school is eligible for this grant.

3. How is the allocation determined?

The annual ISD/RESA/RESD allocation is determined based on several pieces of data:

- The number of Title I schools under their jurisdiction that are identified as Priority schools in a four year cohort.
- For the 2016-2017 school year there are no Year 1 or Year 2 Priority schools. The allocation for Priority buildings in the 2016-2017 school year is 3 and 4 (or greater), provided the Title I building is identified as Priority, and is based upon the most recent student head count of each of the Priority school buildings.
- The number of districts with Title I Focus schools identified in August 2014 under the ISD/RESA/RESD jurisdiction.
- The number of districts with Title I Priority schools identified in August 2012, 2013 and/or 2014 under the ISD/RESA/RESD jurisdiction.

4. What types of activities are supported by the RAG?

ISD/RESA/RESDs use their RAG funds to build staff capacity in the identified Priority school by supporting rapid improvement that focuses on the reason(s) why the Title I school was identified as Priority. Activities may include the following supports and services that are based on demonstrated needs:

- School Improvement Facilitator (SIF) who facilitates the Instructional Learning Cylce (ILC) with teacher teams and participates on the School Support Teams (SST) – **Required**
- The IS that participates on the SST and provides technical assistance to the district in strengthening its systems and facilitates the data conversation with district staff. – **Required**

- Content area/instructional coaches: In order to be approved as a content area/instructional coach, candidates must have successfully completed Coaching 101 and one of the following:
    - MAISA coach training (held in 2009/10) in reading and/or math OR
    - MVU coach training – four core modules plus content area in which the candidate will be coaching for content area coaches; four core modules for instructional coaches
    - The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) recommends that the rate of compensation not exceed $50 per hour
- ISs provide approximately 50 days of support at the district level
- SIFs provide approximately 35-40 days of school level support for each identified Priority school
- Staff costs associated with the above named positions
- Professional learning for Priority school and district staff, including payment of stipends to instructional staff working in the Title I Priority schools, and administrators responsible for administration of Title I Priority schools. Payment of stipends to eligible staff may <u>not</u> be in the form of gift cards. Stipends may only be paid to eligible staff for time spent in professional learning outside of the regular work day, e.g. during evenings or weekends, or summer break, when staff time would not normally be compensated by the district.
- Substitute teacher costs to permit teaching staff in identified Priority schools to attend professional learning activities
- Culture/Climate Interventions
- Professional learning on the Blueprint for Rapid Turnaround
- Materials/supplies to support the above named activities
- Travel costs associated with the above named activities
- Limited technology hardware costs to support SIF and IS staff

ISD/RESA/RESD use their RAG funds to build staff capacity in a district with identified **Focus** school(s) by supporting continuous improvement in district and building activities that target the reason(s) why the Title I school was identified as Focus and on closing the achievement gap. Activities may include the following supports and services that are based on demonstrated needs:

- District Improvement Facilitator (DIF) who conducts data dialogues with the district and provides technical assistance to district staff to address systemic improvements for district support of Focus schools – **Required**
- Build the capacity of the district to:
    - Identify teaching and learning priorities
    - Remove barriers to effective teaching and learning
    - Meet the professional development needs of teachers

- Staff costs (including travel) associated with DIF activities for approximately 40 hours per district for each district with one or more Focus school
- Limited technology hardware costs to support DIF staff
- Professional learning on the Blueprint for Rapid Turnaround

5. Can the ISD/RESA/RESD use RAG funds for classroom or student materials/supplies?

No. RAG funds may NOT be used to purchase classroom and/or student materials and supplies (including software licenses). Please refer to the previous question on the allowable uses of grant funds.

6. What is the due date for submission of an application for RAG funds by the ISD/RESA/RESD?

An approvable RAG application must be submitted by the by December 2nd for the 2016-2017 grant year in order to obtain an obligation date of July 1, 2016, for allowable expenditures to be charged to the RAG. Also to be uploaded in MEGS+ as part of the application are the MI Excel Service Plans for Priority and Focus buildings and districts by that date. See more information below in #9 about changes in Service Plans. Allowable, reasonable, and necessary expenditures, and Service Plans supporting the budget, must have been approved by the MDE in order for ISD/RESA/RESD to charge those expenditures to the RAG.

7. What should be included in the RAG Budget Detail?

Include salaries and/or stipends for all participants to be funded with the grant funds and a **detailed** description of all other resources required for project completion. The application budget should include all activities and services grouped by salaries, benefits, purchased services, supplies and materials, and other expenditures, using appropriate Expenditure Function Codes (pages 24-32) from the Appendix-Definitions of Account Codes, to the Michigan Public School Accounting Manual.

The Budget Detail should be expanded to accommodate the level of detail required to assess its breadth and completeness, and whether costs are reasonable and necessary.

8. Is there carryover from one RAG budget year to the next?

Carryover of funds not expended in the 2015-2016 grant year to the 2016-2017 project year will occur for this grant year. All unexpended funds from the 2015-2016 grant year will be carried over, up to an amount that does not exceed the 2016-2017 RAG allocation. The carryover of funds to the 2016-2017 grant year will occur after the 2015-2016 grant Final Expenditure Report (due in the Cash Management System November 29, 2016) is certified by the ISD/RESA/RESD.

For 2016-2017, carryover funds may be used at the discretion of the ISD/RESA/RESD, to continue RAG-supported services received in the 2015-2016 project year for Title I Priority

August 31, 2016

schools and their districts, and districts with Title I Focus schools released from Priority or Focus identification.

9. **Have the requirements for submission of Service Plans changed from past years?**

Yes. Different from last year, for **2017**, ISD/RESA/RESDs with Regional Assistance Grants will upload all the signature page for the four ~~of the~~ required Service Plans for districts with Focus and Priority School Districts, Single Building Districts, and the Service Plans for Priority schools into the MEGS+ application.

- RAG 2016/17 MI Excel Sustainability Services, continuing 2015/16 MI Excel services for released Priority schools and districts, Single Building Districts and districts with Focus schools, must be agreed upon by the ISD/RESA/RESD, district, and school to be continued in 2016-2017. MI Excel Sustainability Services require MDE-approval of the 2016/17 MI Excel Sustainability Service Plan Documentation for Priority Schools, and the 2016/17 MI Excel Sustainability Service Plan Documentation for Districts with Priority Schools, and/or the 2016/17 MI Excel Sustainability Service Plan Documentation for Districts with Focus Schools.
- 2016/17 MI Excel Sustainability Service Plans for Districts with Priority Schools, the MI Excel Sustainability Service Plans for Priority schools, and/or the 2016/17 MI Excel Sustainability Service Plan Documentation for Districts with Focus Schools will be uploaded in their entirety in MEGS+.
- 2016/17 MI Excel Sustainability Services may include continuation of Professional learning on the Blueprint for Rapid Turnaround

After the authorized Level 5 for the district has initiated the grant, the applicant will click on View/Edit and scroll down to the document links below the label Attachments. A separate page may be linked for each of the three types of Service Plans that must be uploaded:

- Focus District Service Plan Signature Page for districts with MI Excel Focus Schools and/or 2016/17 MI Excel Sustainability Services Plan
- Priority District Service Plans for districts with MI Excel Priority Schools and/or 2016/17 MI Excel Sustainability Services Plan
- Priority School Service Plans for MI Excel Priority Schools and/or 2016/17 MI Excel Sustainability Services Plan
- Single Building District Service Plan Signature Page for MI Excel Single Building Districts and/or 2016/17 MI Excel Sustainability Services Plan

The content and format for the MI Excel Service Plans for Title Priority Schools, the District Plan for Districts with Priority Schools, and Plan for Districts with Focus schools has changed from 2015-2016.

August 31, 2016

NOTE:
1. MI Excel Service Plan Documentation for 2016/17 School Year: Districts With Title I Focus Schools is used for districts with Title I Focus Schools identified as Focus in August 2014. Follow the directions on the form.
   - This form content must be submitted to MDE online using Qualtrics survey software. The Service Plan signature page must be uploaded in MEGS+ by the District Improvement Facilitator by December 2, 2016
2. MI Excel Service Plan Documentation for 2016/17 School Year: Districts with Title I Priority Schools is used for districts with Title I Priority Schools identified as Priority prior to the current school year. Follow the directions on the form.
   - This form content must be submitted to MDE online using Qualtrics survey software. The Service Plan signature page must be uploaded in MEGS+ by the District Improvement Facilitator by December 2, 2016
3. 2016/17 MI Excel Service Plan Documentation for Priority Schools: Implementation is used for Title I Priority schools. Follow the directions on the form.
   - This form content must be submitted to MDE online using Qualtrics survey software. The Service Plan signature page must be uploaded in MEGS+ by the District Improvement Facilitator by December 2, 2016

10. How long should a school receive services under the current year award?

As long as the Title I Priority School is identified by MDE as Priority, and the RAG funds remain available, it may continue to receive services.

As MDE will not identify new Focus schools in 2016 and 2017, Title I Focus schools identified in 2014 will continue their 2014 Focus identification, and Year of identification status, in the 2016-2017 school year. A Focus school will continue to receive RAG services provided it is a Title I receiving school. It is unknown at this time how the Title I Regional Assistance Grant may be changed to provide MI Excel supports and services to districts and schools in the 2017-2018 school year to address the changes under the federal law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

11. What happens if a Priority or Focus school that the ISD/RESA/RESD receives funding for is released from Priority or Focus identification by the Office of State School Reform (SRO), or by the MDE?

Summer Release: Prior to the Start of the School Year

Once identified as a Priority school, the school remains a Priority school for four years and will remain eligible until it is released from the Priority status by the SRO. Schools and districts remain eligible for services only if the identified Priority or Focus building is a Title I receiving school. Services should continue until the first day of the new school year following the release of the school from identification as a Priority or Focus school. Any

remaining funding earmarked for that school may be transferred to support any other MI Excel school the ISD/RESA/RESD currently serves. The ISD/RESA/RESD determines the priority and need for transferring funds in this scenario. If the released MI Excel Priority or Focus school and their district wishes to continue MI Excel Sustainability Services in the coming grant year using any carryover funds available to the ISD/RESA/RESD, 2015/16 MI Excel Services may continue through September 30, 2017. These options are available with the agreement of the ISD/RESA/RESD and the district and school.

If existing contracts or obligations prevent the cessation of services, the ISD/RESA/RESD may continue services until those obligations or contracts expire, not to exceed the end of the grant period (September 30th).

Mid-School Year Release

In the case of release of an identified Title I Priority or Focus school in the middle of the school year, the RAG budget may continue to support services to the building and/or district through the end of the fiscal year, as already approved by the MDE. For the 2016-2017 RAG that would be through September 30, 2017. Priority and Focus schools released from their identification mid-year and receiving MI Excel services through the RAG are not required to submit to the MDE the Progress Monitoring Reports going forward, but must submit all Progress Monitoring Reports to their school board and to the MDE due as of the date of release by the SRO or the MDE.

Schools and districts with Title I Priority and Focus schools released mid-year from their identification must continue to implement the Title I set-asides approved by the MDE Office of Field Services, and required by the ESEA Waiver, and must continue to implement the activities that those set-aside funds support, through the end of the fiscal year, and/or through the end of the school year, dependent upon the activities approved.

Districts and schools should continue to implement those activities and initiatives contributing to the Priority and/or Focus school's increased student achievement that supported the release of the school's Priority or Focus identification.

Districts with schools released from Priority and Focus identification should work collaboratively with their ISD/RESA/RESD to continue those MI Excel activities and initiatives that have helped the staff and students narrow the achievement gap and resulted in improved student proficiency. Examples of activities that should be continued in released Priority schools include completion of the Instructional Learning Cycle (ILC) and SST meetings, and completion of documentation of these activities.

MDE believes that districts and schools should continue to participate in those ISD/RESA/RESD supported activities that will benefit students and staff to solidify the academic achievement gains already made and which are available to them through the end of grant project period (September 30th).

August 31, 2016

12. **My ISD/RESA/RESD receives an allocation for Priority schools in the following amounts: $65,000 for one school, $105,000 for another, and $80,000 for a third, for a total allocation of $250,000. Do I have to budget those exact amounts for each Priority building or do I have some leeway in expenditures?**

Actual needs will vary according to individual circumstances. MDE recommends that ISD/RESA/RESDs build budgets based on those needs. This seldom results in exactly $65,000, $80,000, or $105,000 worth of services going to each eligible school.

13. **What if a school is no longer Title I and the ISD/RESA/RESD had scheduled programming for it in September? Can the ISD/RESA/RESD continue to serve them since the grant period ends September 30th?**

No. Services must stop by the first day of school. Federal statute is clear that these funds are for identified Title I schools only. These funds may not be used for non-Title I schools.

14. **Could we fund professional learning with this grant and allow participants from other non-identified Title I schools or non-Title I schools to attend?**

Yes, so long as these participants are charged a fee to attend or you find another funding source that allows you to cover their costs. Make sure to document how you funded the session(s) and detail the measures taken to ensure that Regional Assistance Grant funds were not spent outside of the statutory requirements and guidelines.

15. **What if a MI-Excel School receives a Section 1003(g) School Improvement Grant (SIG)?**

Priority schools receiving the SIG in earlier years, SIG Cohorts I, II, and III, were **not** eligible for MI-Excel services.

For the 2016-2017 RAG Grant, SIG Cohorts III, IV and V in 2016-2017, Priority schools receiving the SIG are eligible to receive RAG services from the ISD/RESA/RESDs, so long as the SIG school is a Title I receiving school.

Due to the recent changes in the SIG III, SIG IV and SIG V Priority school eligibility for 2016-2017 RAG services, several expectations MI Excel services to SIG receiving schools are warranted.

- MDE will provide the MDE SIG Monitors with a copy of the MI Excel District and Building Service Plans for 2016-2017
- The MI Excel IS and SIF and the SIG Monitor will make every effort to coordinate visits and communication so to present a coherent delivery system to the school
- The MDE SIG Monitors will participate in the SST meetings at the MI Excel school that is receiving the SIG

August 31, 2016

- The SIG-funded Data Coaches will work with the MI Excel SIF on implementation of the required ILC in the MI Excel school receiving the SIG.

New FAQs will be developed for the 2017-18 school year.