

## 2009-10 Great Start Readiness Program Frequently Asked Questions

*Please see updated questions #2, 3 and 11.*

### Formula and Competitive Grantees

- Q1. What if our program is opening late and cannot run the minimum 30 weeks required?
- A1. If the program begins by mid-November, there will still be time in the school year to implement GSRP for the minimum 30 weeks per session. Report your planned dates of operation in the Project Fact Sheet of the MEGS application. If there are extenuating local circumstances resulting from the late budget this year that do not allow you to implement the program for at least 30 weeks, use the “Comments” section of the application to explain the specific reasons why and how you plan to supplement the program to ensure children receive the full benefit of GSRP. To access the “Comments” section, click “View Comments” in the blue bar at the top of the screen. Comments to your consultant can be made in the appropriate section of the “Comments Checklist.”
- Q2. If we started a modified program such as 3-days-a-week, but will expand to four days a week once funding is assured, will we be able to receive funds?
- A2. Grantees report in MEGS the starting date of an approved GSRP model; not the starting date of a lesser version of our state prekindergarten program.
- You will report in MEGS the date the district begins the four-days-a-week program, and all GSRP requirements are followed in that program.
  - If grantees choose to use the GSRP allocation to implement a lesser version of preschool programming,
    - Enrolled children are not to be indicated on the Project Fact Sheet in MEGS,
    - Enrolled children must not be reported in the MSDS as participating in GSRP,
    - Grantees should take care to ensure that the district, families and community are aware that the lesser version is not a GSRP preschool, and
    - Note that Department of Human Services, Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing, Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers must be followed.
- Q3. What do you mean by “a lesser version of GSRP”?
- A3. Examples of a “lesser version of GSRP” would include a program that does not follow program requirements as outlined in the Implementation Manual. GSRP requirements include the following:
- Cap on class size,
  - Proper credentialing for staff,
  - Program models and required weeks-in-session for each model,
  - Use of the Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten,
  - Program evaluation based on the Preschool Program Quality Assessment (PQA),
  - Use of an approved/comprehensive curriculum,
  - Use of an approved/comprehensive child assessment tool,
  - Parents are integrated as program partners and decision-makers, and

- Active support of an Early Childhood Specialist.

- Q4. Do we have to follow the new risk factors? Will there be additional guidance on the changes to the risk factors and prioritization process?
- A4. Additional guidance on the changes to the enrollment prioritization process will be posted to the GSRP website shortly. Decisions made by local districts/PSAs to date regarding prioritization of children for slots can stand. Once the School Aid Budget is signed by the Governor, as additional children are enrolled, you are required to begin using the new risk factors and prioritization process.
- Q5. I see that the previous risk factor list of 25 items is still on the website, although the new flow chart has the updated 8 item risk factor list. Could you please clarify how the longer list is used? When the flowchart is prioritizing children with 1 or 2 risk factors, I am assuming it is from the new list of 8.
- A5. We chose to leave the 'old' list of risk factors on the GSRP website for your convenience. Since PA121 has been signed by the Governor, the updated eligibility and prioritization process is now in effect. Please review the three new documents related to this topic at: [http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530\\_6809\\_50451-193781--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530_6809_50451-193781--,00.html). You will find the Guidance document to be especially helpful. Additional technical assistance will be posted at [www.michigan.gov/gsrp](http://www.michigan.gov/gsrp) within a few days.
- Q6. The 'Environmental Risk' factor in the new Risk Factor Guidance includes many of the risk factors listed separately in the 'old' risk factors. Can we count Environmental Risk twice if more than one concern applies to a child or family?
- A6. No. Although a child or family may have multiple factors within this consolidated environmental risk factor category, those risk factors can only be counted once. For example, a child may have had pre-natal drug exposure and now has an incarcerated parent. Under this consolidated environmental risk category, these would only count as one factor-not two factors.

### **Formula Only**

- Q7. How will funds be awarded if we begin late?
- A7. Formula Grantees receive eleven state aid payments throughout the fiscal year. The first payment, 1/11th of the grant award occurred on October 22, 2009. If grantees are unable to implement the program for the minimum of 30 weeks, this should be reflected as described above in the MEGS application. If approved in the application as a good faith effort to meet the requirement, this would exempt grantees from any proration of their funds. If when submitting the Program Report next summer, a grantee unexpectedly reports that fewer than 30 weeks of services were provided and MDE determines that a good faith effort was not made, a proration of funds could occur.
- Q8. How did our poverty ranking change so dramatically from last year to this year?
- A8. Poverty percentages were calculated by dividing a school district/public school academy's fall 2008, grade 1-5, free lunch count as reported in the SRSD by the fall 2008, grade 1-5 enrollment. These numbers are entered by local districts directly into SRSD. The Early Childhood Education and Family Services Office does not manipulate the data. Once a

poverty percentage is calculated for each grantee, grantees are ranked by highest to lowest poverty percentage. Please see the “2009-10 Rank Order List” to see where you fall in the rank order and the “2009-10 Formula Funding Procedure” for an explanation of the GSRP funding formula. Both documents can be found on the GSRP website under the *Eligibility and Allocations* section.

- Q9. Is there language in the School Aid Act (Public Act 121 of 2009) allowing districts to use the GSRP allocation to absorb the reduction in per-pupil funding instead of GSRP?
- A9. There is language in Public Act 121 of 2009, giving districts some options for absorbing reductions in per pupil funding. There are some stipulations about consolidating services that must be met for that to happen. MDE is working to develop guidelines for that option. Here is the pertinent language from the Act:

Sec. 11d.

(1) For 2009-2010 only, the department shall deduct an amount equal to \$165.00 per membership pupil from the total state school aid otherwise allocated under this act to each district, except for money allocated under sections 11g, 22a, 31d, 51a(12), 51c, and 53a. If a district complies with subsection (2), a district may choose to apply this reduction to funding the district receives under any provision of this act, other than sections 11g, 22a, 31d, 51a(12), 51c, and 53a, even if the reduction chosen by the district results in a program being reduced or discontinued. If a district does not comply with subsection (2), the district shall apply this reduction to available funding under section 22b first, up to the total amount of the reduction, before reducing other funding the district receives under this act, other than sections 11g, 22a, 31d, 51a(12), 51c, and 53a.

(2) Not later than February 1, 2010, a district shall enter into an agreement with the department to develop a service consolidation plan to reduce school operating costs that is in compliance with department guidelines. The department guidelines may identify, but are not limited to, allowable cost-sharing arrangements for the provision of business services and instructional services and the creation of joint operating agreements between and among districts and intermediate districts. The department shall establish guidelines for service consolidation plans under this subsection not later than 60 days after the effective date of this section.

- Q10. If grantees choose to use 100% of GSRP money to absorb per pupil reductions in 2009-2010, will they lose GSRP funding for 2010-2011?
- A10. If districts/PSAs choose to accept the GSRP funds and do not use them for an approved GSRP program, they will report to MDE that they served zero children in 2009-2010. Ramifications for districts include:
- Being viewed as a new grantee and held to a maximum of 32 slots for 2010-2011.
  - The district hold-harmless number of slots will be zero when calculating second round funding in 2010-2011.
  - Funds carried over from 2008-2009 will be recaptured.
  - For grantees that implemented PIE in 2008-2009, not implementing the PIE option in 2009-2010 would eliminate the option for PIE in future years.
  - Local eligibility for future state and federal funding opportunities may be impacted.

\*Please note: Before applying GSRP funds toward per pupil reductions, each district should consider how that could affect their future GSRP allocations.

Q11. Is it possible to use a portion of the GSRP funds for preschool programming and the remainder to absorb the per pupil reductions?

A11. Districts may choose to utilize only a portion of their GSRP funds to provide an approved GSRP for fewer children. Ramifications for districts include:

- Fewer slots filled will negatively affect the hold harmless calculation for second round funding in 2010-2011.
- Carryover from 2008-2009 must be applied to the classroom, home-based, or PIE option for which it was originally purposed.
- For grantees that implemented PIE in 2008-2009, not implementing the PIE option in 2009-2010 would eliminate the option for PIE in future years.
- Local eligibility for future state and federal funding opportunities may be impacted.

\*Please note: Before applying GSRP funds toward per pupil reductions, each district should consider how that could affect their future GSRP allocations.

Q12. Are there other ramifications for using GSRP to absorb the per pupil reductions?

A12. Yes, there are great ramifications for children in the state of Michigan.

- Fewer children are able to receive a year of high quality preschool programming and will be less prepared for Kindergarten in 2010-2011.
- State eligibility for federal funding may be impacted (e.g., Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), system building grants, and Child Care Development Block Grants (CCDBG)).

Q13. How will we indicate our decision to use all or part of our GSRP funds to absorb the per pupil reductions?

A13. Grantees will need to initiate the GSRP Formula MEGS application and complete the Project Fact Sheet, identifying all or a portion of the GSRP allocation to be applied to the state aid per pupil reduction and maintain a signed participating resolution in administrative files. MDE is in the process of updating the MEGS application to accommodate Section 11d and grantees will be notified and provided with further direction when the programming is complete.

Q14. Do you anticipate any extra dollars in GSRP, seeing how many schools opted NOT to proceed with their Great Start Readiness Programs for the 2009-10 school year?

A14. Additional second round funding for formula programs may be available as final expenditure reports and carryover budget requests for 2008-2009 are finalized. Because of Section 11d of PA 121 of 2009, it is impossible to predict if additional grantees will be returning GSRP funding for 2009-2010.

Q15. My district participates in a GSRP consortium where all members have agreed to recruit and enroll from within the consortium region. My superintendent is requiring that a percentage of our FY10 GSRP award be used for Section 11d. Can we do this and still remain part of the consortium?

- A15. This topic is one that all GSRP consortiums should discuss. GSRP allows two forms of consortia:
1. The original consortium option provides for two or more districts to apply for the grant with one fiscal agent; in this case, each district recruits and enrolls children for preschool from within established School District/PSA boundaries.
    - A grantee participating in this consortium option could conceivably choose to apply a portion of the GSRP award for preschool, a portion for PIE (if that option was implemented in 2008-09), and a portion to absorb the reduction in K-12 foundation allowance.
    - A consortium member may apply 100% of funding to absorb the reduction in K-12 foundation allowance.
    - A grantee may withdraw from the consortium. In this case, the MDE Consultant should be promptly notified as manual accommodations in MEGS will be necessary to apply as an individual grantee.
  2. The newer consortium option allows consortium members to recruit and enroll children for classroom programming from within the entire consortium region. This option excludes PIE programming, which must still occur within individual School District/PSA boundaries. In other words, only slots accepted for preschool programming are pooled within the consortium.
    - A grantee participating in this consortium option could conceivably choose to apply a portion of the GSRP award for preschool, a portion for PIE (if that option was implemented in 2008-09), and a portion to absorb the reduction in K-12 foundation allowance.
    - A consortium member may apply 100% of funding to absorb the reduction in K-12 foundation allowance. Other grantees in the consortium, which are providing preschool programming, could assist in serving children from any consortium member that chooses to apply 100% of funding to absorb the reduction in K-12 foundation allowance.
    - A grantee may withdraw from the consortium. In this case, the MDE Consultant should be promptly notified as manual accommodations in MEGS will be necessary to apply as an individual grantee.

### **Competitive Only**

- Q16. Could you provide me with some clarification on the competitive dollars? Is there a chance for it to be reinstated at some point yet this year? Will competitive slots become available for the 2010-11 school year, or are they pretty much a thing of the past?
- A16. In PA 121, the GSRP Competitive funding was cut by 50%, from \$15,150,000 to \$7,575,000. Competitive programs that were in their second or third year of an award and did not need to compete for funding this year, were all awarded the same number of slots as they received last year. From the 54 applicants that applied for first round funding for 2009-2010, only 14 were funded, based on applicant scores. Some advocacy from the local level is being done to encourage the legislature to restore the cut funding. There is no way to determine what will happen with any of the GSRP funding for 2010-2011. With revenue predicted to fall again for next year, continued advocacy for valued programs is essential.

Q17. How do we access funding?

A17. Competitive Applications are live in MEGS. Complete the application, save it and have the Level 5 person submit it. Competitive Applications have to be reviewed and approved by a consultant before that can be put into a status called "Grant Funds Available". Only after that can a grantee use the Cash Management System to bill for reimbursement of expenses. All three consultants are checking daily for submitted Competitive applications so that they can be reviewed as soon as possible.