

School Improvement Grant (SIG) Cohort III Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

SIG III is a competitive federal grant designed to assist priority schools on the top to bottom list from 2012 and 2013 in turning around student performance. This FAQ has been designed to address the multitude of questions from the schools that may or may not be eligible to apply. If your question is not addressed within this compilation, please contact us at mde-sig@michigan.gov so we can be of assistance to you.

- 1. I'm just checking in regarding the External Service Provider application for SIG funding. The application references secondary schools. We work in grades 2-8. I'm wondering if some of the elementary schools with which we work will be eligible.**

Elementary and Middle/Junior High schools including grades 2-8 are eligible to apply for SIG.
- 2. We have four schools on the eligibility list and are applying for all four. Is it possible that some select schools might be funded and not all four? In other words... is it all or nothing?**

SIG applications will be scored at the building level so some buildings within a district may be funded and some may not.
- 3. If we have two priority schools and they are both applying, do we need to submit just one LEA portion of the grant?**

You must submit the LEA portion of the grant application with each building application. In other words, every application must include both the district app and the building app. You may, of course, just attach the same district app with both building apps. No need to retype everything.
- 4. Is there a letter of intent required in order to apply for SIG III?**

Yes, a letter of intent (LOI) to apply for the SIG Cohort III is required and must be submitted by April 30, 2014. The LOI should be emailed to mde-sig@michigan.gov
- 5. Will there be any SIG eligible schools in the Upper Peninsula (UP)?**

If there are any schools in the UP that are Title I eligible or Title I participating and are on the 2012 or 2013 Priority lists, they are eligible to apply for SIG. Location within the state is irrelevant.
- 6. Where can I locate the approved external providers list?**

The MDE approved list of external partner providers can be found at http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530_30334_33229-251076--,00.html.
- 7. Is there a list of project models that have been used by other applicants?**

There is no list of project models that have been used for other applicants, but all approved and unapproved SIG applications for Cohort II are posted on the http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6530_56811-238570--,00.html.
- 8. How long will grantees be required to sustain the project model beyond the grant window?**

It is expected that grant recipients will evaluate SIG funded programs and initiatives and make data-based decisions to sustain those that resulted in increased student achievement. Sustainability after the grant ends is achieved by leveraging available state and local funds to support the successful elements of the project model that had the

Updated: May 30, 2014

greatest impact on student achievement. There is no requirement to maintain the SIG project model in its entirety beyond the grant period.

9. **The application requires that the following plans are uploaded: a) Schoolwide Improvement Plan; b) Redesign Plan**
Is it correct that you need both of these plans as a part of the application?
Schools must include their School Improvement Plan and approved State Reform/Redesign plan with their SIG application.
10. **Professional development (PD): all staff (teachers, admin, support staff...) must have a minimum of 8 hours of PD per month, correct?**
At least 8 hours per month of professional development must be provided throughout the school year (late start, early releases, school days without students, etc.) for all professionals in the building. This includes the administrators and support staff. Professional development cannot be compacted into only summer months.
11. **My intervention specialist mentioned that we could contract individually for math and reading PD. He states that we are not required to work with entities from the ESP list. Is that correct?**
The school is required to contract with an approved external partner provider from the list on the MDE/SIG website; however, schools are not limited to ONLY that vendor. The subgrantee may also contract with other vendors (outside of the approved list) for the work of SIG.
12. **How much could be allocated for the physical outlay of our building (if any at all)?**
Please refer to the SIG Guidance regarding approvable expenses associated with physical outlay of a building.
13. **If a person is hired under SIG, could they also be expected to complete tasks outside of what the SIG governs?**
SIG funded positions can be co-funded to include work outside of SIG.
14. **For question number 9 (Annual Goals) in the School portion of the application, are the years listed correct? For example, are the goals for 2015-2016 the goals for the first year of the grant? If so, wouldn't that be 2014-2015?**
The goal years are correct in the grant application. The goals should be set for after the 1st year of SIG implementation, which will be SY 15-16.
15. **Are there formatting requirements including font style, font size and margins for the SIG application?**
No, there are no formatting requirements.
16. **Can you please help define the timeframe for question 4 (page 6 of the paper application). It reads, "Include a timeline delineating the steps to be taken to implement the selected intervention in each Priority school identified in the LEA's application. Include the action steps to be taken, who is responsible, start and end dates, and the metric to be used to determine completion."**
Do we include ideas from our Transformation Plan back in 2012-2013? Or do we start at the pre-implementation phase, i.e. summer before the 2014-15 school year?
Start with the pre-implementation phase in the summer of 2014-15. You can also outline what you have already done.
17. **Are there font and line spacing requirements or preferences in the SIG?**

No, no requirements. The recommendation is 12 pt font, single spaced.

18. **Do we need to include the FTE for grant-funded positions in the job descriptions we are submitting with the grant?**
You are not required to include the FTE for grant-funded positions in the job descriptions, but it would be helpful.
19. **How many schools submitted letters of intent by the deadline of April 30, 2014?**
67 schools have submitted letters of intent.
20. **On the application on page 6, there are two areas (questions 6 & 7) that say no response needed, but in the rubric there are requirements. What do I do?**
Do not respond.
21. **After reviewing several of the approved plans, I see lots of data within several of the plans. Charts...tables...etc. However with the new template there are page limits now. It seems impossible to put in those charts. (and maybe that is what you were trying to do). Am I right in my thinking that we just give a narrative to fulfill the page limits and skip the charts and graphs?**
When cohorts I & II drafted their SIG applications they did not have approved SRO plans. Most of what was in the previous SIG apps is now in the SRO plan. No need to put all of the charts, tables, graphs, etc. in the SIG app. Just a succinct narrative of what you plan to do based on the analysis of those charts, tables, etc.
22. **I have been reviewing applications submitted in the past and I see that those that passed range from somewhere around 50 pages up to well over 200 pages. The template and instructions that we got for this cycle consistently asks for no more than a one-page response. Is this a change from the last cycle? Are you asking for more succinct responses? When it comes to including graphs and charts for the data are these uploaded as attachments away from the narrative responses (I've seen it both ways). Essentially I'm asking about the significance of asking for no more than a page for responses**
The shortened application is new for the SIG cohort III competition. The responses are expected to be succinct since the majority of the content is already in the approved SRO plan (this was not the case with SIG cohorts I & II). Graphs and charts should be included in the page limit of the application with the narrative. The approved SRO plan and School Improvement Plan are the only attachments to be uploaded with the SIG application. Please feel free to contact me if you need further assistance.
23. **Can you please tell me when the SIG applications are due to the state from the districts?**
May 31, 2014, by midnight.
24. **Are the schools only allowed to partner with approved external providers for these services?**
The grant requires the schools to work with an external partner provider that is on the MDE approved list; however, schools are not limited to one vendor. MDE strongly encourages schools to work with more than one vendor but only one is consider the external partner provider as required by the grant.
25. **Our team is working on applying for the SIG grant which is due the end of May. Is there any possibility of you or someone in your department looking over our app before we submit it?**
MDE cannot review your SIG grant application prior to submission.
26. **For the budget, is this reasonably flexible if we plan a particular presenter and then change to another...is that allowed? I would assume it is but want to make sure as we begin writing.**
The budget is reasonably flexible at the time of application. Fine details will be worked out when the grant is awarded and budget detail is entered into MEGS+.
27. **How should the application be submitted if it is no longer on MEGS? Your PowerPoint states that the application must be submitted on MEGS+. Please advise.**

Updated: May 30, 2014

The SIG application is to be uploaded in the MEGS+ system.

28. **Can the grant coordinator position and data coach position be combined positions in small schools that are applying for SIG 3 funding?**
Absolutely! The positions need to be based on the school's needs. If a part-time SIG coordinator and part-time data coach meet the needs of the school, that is all that is required.
29. **Would SIG pay for teachers/staff memberships for professional groups (e.g. ASCD, NCTM...)?**
Membership for teachers/staff for professional organizations is allowable under the SIG as long as the organization relates to increasing student achievement and is included in the SIG application.
30. **For section A, question 2 – the page limit is one page. Does this limit include the table for part C, or can we use the one page to answer parts A and B?**
The page limit is for the portion of the grant that the LEA/building completes. The portion of the application with text or graphs already in the application does not count toward the page limit.
31. **In Section A Part 4 of the School Building Plan for SIG III we are asked to attach the School Improvement Plan. Is this asking for the entire plan from ASSIST or the “Unpacking Tools” that is to be used as a substitute by Priority schools during their SROO oversight period?**
Yes, the entire school Improvement Plan from ASSIST should be attached as a separate document. The narrative for this section of the SIG application should address:

Transformation or Turnaround Plan Implementation - detail and provide a rationale on the how and why the LEA identified pre-implementation and implementation activities to be completed for improved student achievement. There is a clear and complete plan for who is responsible for implementation and how the activities are integrated into current instruction and align to the SIP or reform plan.

Use of data - Describe how data is and will be used to refine the School Improvement Plan, adjust instruction, set goals based on identified needs and use a variety of assessments beyond the state assessment. Detail how the school collects, analyzes, and shares data with all stakeholders. Describe how data guides instructional decisions and professional learning.

SIG Administration - Detail the responsibilities of the SIG coordinator and administration. Describe the detailed job description for the SIG coordinator (this does not need to be a separate attachment. The position duties and responsibilities should be outlined in the narrative) and the position was outlined in the budget.

Transformation or Turnaround Plan Improvement and evaluation - The plan articulates the specific needs identified in relationship to the transformation or turnaround plan and how success will be evaluated. There is an identified district staff member that will be responsible and coordinate services aligned to the approved state reform plan.