2017-2018
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 school in 2012, 2013, or 2014; or Priority and Focus schools that were released during the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years are 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, or that have been released during the 2016-17 or 2017-18 school years.
- The 2017-18 allocation for the identified Priority schools is based upon the most recent student head count of each of the Priority schools.
- The 2017-18 allocation for the released Priority schools is based upon a percentage of the previous year's RAG allocation.
- The number of districts with Title I Priority Schools released during the 2016-17 or 2017-18 school years under the ISD/RESA/RESD jurisdiction.
- The number of districts with Title I Focus Schools released during the 2016-17 or 2017-18 school years 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 and released Priority Schools 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 Cycle (ILC) with teacher teams and participates on the School Support Teams (SST) – **Required**
- The Intervention Specialist (IS) who 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: To be approved as a content area/instructional coach, candidates must have successfully completed one of the following:
    - Coaching 101 and MAISA coach training (held in 2009/10) in reading and/or math OR
    - Coaching 101 and 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 established coaching criteria of the ISD/RESA/RESD
    - 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 identified or released Title I Priority Schools and district staff, including payment of stipends to instructional staff working in these schools, and administrators responsible for administration of these 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 or released Title I Priority schools to attend professional learning activities
- Culture/Climate Interventions
- Professional learning on the Blueprint for Systemic Reconfiguration
- 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 released Title I Focus school(s) by supporting continuous improvement in district and building activities that target the reason(s) why the 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 each district with one or more Focus school
- Limited technology hardware costs to support DIF staff
- Professional learning on the Blueprint for Systemic Reconfiguration

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 January 2, 2018 for the 2017-2018 grant year in order to obtain an obligation date of July 1, 2017, 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 identified and released Priority schools 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 2016-2017 grant year to the 2017-2018 project year will occur for this grant year. All unexpended funds from the 2016-2017 grant year will be carried over, up to an amount that does not exceed the 2017-2018 RAG allocation. The carryover of funds to the 2017-2018 grant year will occur after the 2016-2017 grant Final Expenditure Report (due in the Cash Management System December 1, 2017) is certified by the ISD/RESA/RESD.

For 2017-2018, carryover funds may be used at the discretion of the ISD/RESA/RESD to continue RAG-supported services received in the 2016-2017 project year for Title I Priority

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

9. What are the requirements for submission of Service Plans?

ISD/RESA/RESDs with Regional Assistance Grants will submit all Service Plans for the 2017-18 school year into the Google Docs folder hosted by Calhoun ISD. The Signature Pages for the required service plans must be uploaded into the MEGS+ application.

10. How long do districts and schools receive services under the 2017-18 school year award?

All districts and schools included in an ISD/RESA/RESD RAG allocation may receive services through September 30, 2018. At this time, the MDE is not anticipating that there will be carry over funds allowed for the 2018-19 school year from the 2017-18 allocation.

11. What happens if a Title I Priority school that the ISD/RESA/RESD receives funding for is released from Priority identification by the MDE?

Mid-School Year Release

In the case of release of an identified Title I Priority school during the school year, the RAG budget may continue to support services to the district and school through the end of the fiscal year, as already approved by the MDE. For the 2017-2018 RAG that would be through September 30, 2018. Districts with Priority 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.

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

Districts with schools released from Priority identification should work collaboratively with their ISD/RESA/RESD to continue those MI Excel activities and initiatives that have helped the staff and students increase 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.

The 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).

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 go ahead with the scheduled programming 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 currently receiving the SIG are eligible for MI-Excel services, so long as the SIG school is a Title I-receiving school. There are several expectations of SIG-receiving schools for MI Excel Services:

- MDE will provide the MDE SIG Monitors with a copy of the MI Excel District and Building Service Plans for 2017-2018
- 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
- 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 2018-19 school year.