

2018-19 Regional Assistance Grant (RAG) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

November 2018

Common Acronyms:

CSI – Comprehensive Support and Improvement	TSI – Targeted Support and Improvement
ATS – Additional Targeted Support	MDE – Michigan Department of Education
RAG – Regional Assistance Grant	TAG – Technical Assistance Grant
ESEA - Elementary and Secondary Education Act	ESSA – Every Student Succeeds Act
SSoS – Statewide System of Support	

Office Roles and Responsibilities:

Q: What is the role of each of the following in the Statewide System of Support (SSoS) for CSI schools--whether the schools are Partnership or CSI Alt Ed schools: Partnership Office, OES staff (from OEII), Calhoun ISD? Who is responsible for what aspect of SSoS, and to whom should we turn when we have questions?

A: **Office of Partnership Districts** - Assigns liaisons to partnership districts; awards, manages, and monitors state aid section 21h funds; reviews performance against 18 and 36-month benchmarks and goals; ensures the next level of accountability is implemented when the 18 and/or 36-month goals are not met.

OES Staff (Regional Assistance Grants "RAG") - Review and approval of the RAG budgets; monitoring of the RAG at the ISD level; liaison for the Michigan Department of Education and the Calhoun ISD Consortium.

Calhoun ISD Consortium (Statewide Technical Assistance Grant) - Provides statewide technical assistance and training on systems (the Blueprint for Systemic Reconfiguration), Early Literacy; assessing needs. Supports and services are provided to any CSI, TSI, or ATS school (and their districts) at no cost.

RAG Usage and Allowable Activities:

Q: Our ISD services a district with multiple CSI-designated schools. Are there guidelines we should follow regarding the use of RAG funds for other schools in the district? The identified schools are the primary focus, but what are allowable RAG-funded activities for the other schools in the district?

A: Remaining RAG funds can be used to support school or district-level services for any TSI or ATS school in the district, provided the needs of the CSI schools have been met first.

Q: Can our district use RAG funds to hire coaching positions?

A: Yes. Coaching positions are allowable expense for RAG funds if the data supports the lack of coaching as a root cause for the designation. The MDE recommends that ISDs meet the MDE definition of a coach at [MDE's Definition of Coaching 2018-19](#).

Q: If we have a district that does not want to use the RAG for their designated schools, how do we document this?

A: Districts can indicate on the signature page that they are refusing services; the ISD will submit the page in the MEGS+ with the declining district signature.

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Q: As many of the districts are considering adding or expanding counseling/mentoring support, should Activity Logs be kept and sent to the ISD with all invoices requesting reimbursement for the service. How specific should these logs be? Is there any set expectation?

A: Activity logs are no longer required, however, the ISD should follow the general Title I rules relating to PARs/semi-annual certifications. If the counseling/mentoring services all fit under the same cost objective, then semi-annual certifications will suffice.

Q: Many CSI-designated Alternative HS programs rely on software programs for remediation. Can RAG funds be used to purchase software for students? Access to sites for teacher use and instructional support (i.e. Newsela for example)?

A: Yes, RAG funds can be used to purchase software if the software is purchased outright or the software subscription is for the same one-year period as the current RAG cycle.

Q: Can RAG funds be used to purchase laptop and computers?

A: We generally will not approve technology equipment unless the data demonstrates a lack of materials or durable goods are a root cause of low achievement and the school's CSI designation.

Q: Can 2018-19 RAG funds be used for direct student services?

A: Yes, Direct student services are allowable in 2018-19 if those services are tied to addressing an identified need/root cause of low achievement/identification status.

Q: Can the ISD provide teacher stipends with RAG funds?

A: The MDE suggests two options for ISD payment of teacher stipends.

- The District pays for teacher time through wages/benefits and invoices the ISD for reimbursement - If the district pays for teacher time through salaries/benefits, then the ISD considers it "Payments Made to Other Michigan Schools" under function code 411 and Other 7000/8000.
- The ISD provides stipends for teacher time using an IRS form 1099 process coded to purchased services.

Q: Can RAG funds be used for dual enrollment fees for students attending CSI-designated high schools and the local community college?

A: Yes, if the district can show that not attending a dual enrollment program is a root cause of CSI identification status as evidenced by data.

Q: Can the ISD use RAG funds to purchase food for teachers and staff?

A: Yes, food can be purchased for working lunches during regular business hours, after-school parent meetings and/or weekend professional development sessions.

Q: Can the ISD use RAG funds to purchase food for students?

A: No, RAG funds cannot be used to purchase food for students or student meetings.

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Q: Why can we now use funds for other schools when we couldn't in the past?

A: Under the ESEA, the U.S. Department of Education limited funds to just services for Title I schools. The new ESSA law now clearly states that 2018-19 RAG funds can be used for any CSI, TSI, or ATS designated schools regardless of Title I status.

Q: What services does the RAG provide for Alternative High Schools?

A: Alternative High Schools are provided services on the same basis as any other identified school. Supports and services must be tied to demonstrated need through data analysis or root cause analysis.

TSI and ATS-Designated Schools:

Q: If a district with CSI-designated schools wants to hire positions for non-instructional services, i.e., high school counselor, can that position provide services to TSI-designated schools?

A: Yes, on a case by case basis, district data must support the lack of non-instructional services as a root cause for TSI designation.

Q: If I invite TSI schools to a CSI-funded professional development, can the TSI schools receive stipends or sub costs, materials, etc.?

A: TSI schools can attend the professional development but district funds should be used for stipends, sub-teacher costs, materials, etc.

Q: What is an Additional Targeted Support (ATS) school? How is an ATS school different from a TSI school?

A: TSI schools have 2 or 3 sub-groups that fall within the Department's accountability system. ATS schools have more than 3 sub-groups that fall within the accountability system.

Technical Assistance Grant (TAG):

Q: Who can take advantage of the TAG?

- Staff from any CSI, TSI, or ATS School
- Any district staff supporting CSI, TSI or ATS Schools
- Any ISD/ESA staff supporting CSI, TSI or ATS Schools
- Supports and services are available by subscription fees for entities not supporting CSI, TSI or ATS Schools

Q: Are non-designated schools eligible for TAG services?

A: No, not currently.

Q: How does a district or school receiving MI-Excel services know if they are eligible for Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) funded services?

A: All 2018-19 CSI TSI and ATS-designated schools are eligible for TAG services provided by the Calhoun Intermediate School District Consortium.

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Carryover Funds:

Q: Can carryover be used for 2017-18 Priority schools as transitional funds during the 2018-19 RAG cycle?

A: Yes, carry over can be used for 2017-18 Priority schools as transitional funds if a district has CSI-designated schools. Districts that have carryover without CSI-designated schools during the 2018-19 RAG cycle should contact John Taylor at taylorj8@michigan.gov.

Q: When will our ISD know how much our carryover will be for the 2018-19 RAG cycle?

A: Carryover is calculated when the ISD files the Final Expenditure Report (FER) which is due by November 30, 2018.

Q: Can we use carryover funds for out-of-state training?

A: Yes, if it can be shown that there is no one in the state that can provide the same level of training.

Q: Can we use new funding for sustainability/released schools?

A: No, you can only use carryover funds for released schools.

Q: Are we required to provide RAG services using carryover funds to a building that has been released in Spring, 2018?

A: No, these supports are optional.

Service Plans:

Q: Is a service plan required for the TSI schools?

A: No, a service plan is not required for TSI schools. The school district is responsible for developing a plan of action for TSI schools.

Q: Do the Priority schools released during the 2017-18 school year require a service plan for the 2018-19 transition year?

A: No, 2017-18 Priority schools would continue with their previous service plan unless the analysis of data shows a different need.

Implementation Facilitator (IF):

Q: If there is a Partnership District that has identified CSI schools, does that district still need an Implementation Facilitator?

A: Yes.

Q: Can a district hire their own Implementation Facilitator?

A: No, the Implementation Facilitator is hired by the ISD and services the district.

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Q: Does the MDE have specific expectations for the Implementation Facilitator?

A: Yes, an [Implementation Facilitator position description](#) is available through the MDE's website, the MI-Excel Resource Center and is embedded in the service plan.

State Law 21h:

Q: Partnership districts are eligible for funding under Section 21h of the state school aid act, P.A. of 1979. A district assigned to a partnership by the superintendent is eligible for funding under this section if the district includes at least one school that has been named a CSI school in the state accountability system rating. What is 21h funding for?

A: 21h is state funding for CSI schools that goes directly to the district. The Office of Partnership Districts oversees these funds. Districts [must apply for 21h funding](#) and have a plan to show how the funds will be used in conjunction with other dollars to improve student achievement and exit CSI status.

School Designation Exit Criteria:

Q: How is the exit criteria determined for the newly identified CSI and TSI schools?

A: Exit from CSI status only occurs in three-year intervals in conjunction with the identification of CSI schools. The next identification cycle and the first exiting of CSI schools will occur after the 2021 spring state assessments. Likely this will be late summer or fall of 2021. The exit criteria as defined in [Michigan's Consolidated State Plan Under the Every Student Succeeds Act](#) (approved November, 2017) is that the school is no longer identified by the system as a Comprehensive Support School in no more than four years, and has demonstrated improvement in math and ELA proficiency rates over two years.

The local school district determines the exit criteria for the TSI-designated schools.