

# Learning Bites: Engaging in Continuous Improvement



## Funding the Strategy

In contrast to the previous model where districts frequently began the continuous improvement planning process with the amount of funding they had available, used it to build a plan, and then attempted to match it to needs, MICIP is “a pathway for districts to improve student outcomes by assessing whole child needs to develop plans and coordinate funds,” sometimes referred to as Needs-Plans-Funds.

Once a district has decided on its strategy (ies), there are several questions to consider regarding funding:

- What is the total cost of strategy implementation, not just for a single year but also over the life of the implementation of the strategy?
- What funds can be used to support the strategy – including federal, state, and local funds – and how might they be blended and braided?
- What community resources can be leveraged to increase opportunities for meeting the needs of students and families?

In MICIP planners are asked to indicate the overall cost of the strategy as well as the potential sources of funding. This identification is for planning purposes only and neither the amount nor sources will actually transfer into NexSys (the new MEGS+). However, it is in Nexsys where the actual amounts for a given year and from each source will be specified.

So what does blending and braiding mean?

- Blending is a method whereby financial support is combined under a single set of reporting and other requirements, and resources contributed from each individual funding stream lose their award-specific identity. Blending requires specific statutory authorization.
- Braiding is a way for districts to use multiple federal, state, and local funding sources to support parts of an initiative while maintaining their specific identify and purpose, and no statutory authority is necessary.

A single project can have both blended and braided funding. Simply put, blending and braiding is good project management, helps ensure wise use of funds, and decreases the chance that funds will be left unused. Contact your MDE Regional Consultant with questions about this process.

Community resources can also be an important part of the funding process. Not only is it helpful to have community partners as part of the planning process for their ideas and connections; these partners can also frequently bring opportunities for additional funds. Because educational funding is so tight and districts are looking for any source of funds that might be available, it is tempting to simply accept any dollars that are offered by anyone. However, it is critical that when community partners offer funds, those funds are coordinated with existing continuous improvement efforts so that such efforts are not fragmented.

Coordinating all available funding streams will help ensure that revenue is not wasted and the MICIP goal of Needs-Plans-Funds is realized.