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Applying for a School Redesign Grant: Four Steps

There are four steps to submitting the School Redesign Grant (SRG) application.

1. Develop a 1-page “SRG Application Introduction”
2. Update the Turnaround Plan
3. Complete the Federal Models Checklist
4. Complete the Budget Workbook

In this document you will find detailed guidance for each step.

Assistance in Completing the SRG Application

ESE is committed to providing support and assistance to districts and schools as they complete all steps of the SRG application, review and scoring process. District Assistance Liaisons are available to provide guidance. For technical assistance, contact Amanda Trainor (atrainor@doe.mass.edu, 781-338-3551) or Erica Champagne (echampagne@doe.mass.edu, 781-338-3521).

School Redesign Grant Requirements Overview

An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap signed into law in January 2010 established new processes and intervention powers for improving the performance of the lowest performing schools in the state. The U.S. Department of Education provides federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds (under Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) to support this work. Massachusetts refers to this competitive grant process as the School Redesign Grant (SRG.) The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) is consolidating and integrating federal grant and state statutory requirements in order to create an aligned planning and school redesign process for districts with Level 4/Priority schools. A completed School Redesign Grant Application Package includes the following elements, aligned with the four steps to apply listed above:

1. **SRG Application Introduction**: an overview of the overall plan and theory of action.
2. **Turnaround Plan**: For schools that have already completed a Level 4 Turnaround Plan for School Year 2015-2016, update the Turnaround Plan to include any necessary SRG specific information. For schools that have not completed a Turnaround Plan, the plan template and guidance are available on ESE’s website¹.
3. **Federal Model Checklist**: Specific required information for the selected federal intervention model.
4. **Budget**: a detailed budget with narrative for how the district proposes to expend SRG funds.

School Redesign Grant Application Review and Scoring Process

The SRG application process is highly competitive and consists of 1) a review of the Introduction to the SRG Application, Turnaround Plan, and Federal Model Checklist by a Review Team of ESE staff and external staff with expertise in school turnaround, 2) a review of the Budget by an internal ESE team, and 3) a required two-hour interview of school and district leaders by a three-person team of ESE staff and external staff.

Part 1: Application Package Review. Documents will be reviewed and scored for alignment to federal requirements, and based on the SRG Scoring Rubric, which is available in this RFP posting. Districts are strongly encouraged to carefully review SRG Scoring Rubric to ensure that all aspects of the SRG application meet the highest possible rubric score.

Part 2: Budget Review. The Budget will be scored by an internal ESE team based on the Budget Review section of the SRG Scoring Rubric.

Part 3: Required Interview. An Interview Team of school and district leaders will provide a brief 15-20 minute presentation of the proposed Turnaround Plan. Following the presentation, the district and school team members will be jointly asked to respond to a set of standard questions, and if necessary, to provide additional information on any rubric items scored “marginal,” “weak” or “absent” during the review of the Turnaround Plan, in order to clarify those areas of the plan. Districts are strongly encouraged to review the Interview Scoring Rubric, which is posted with this RFP.

2015 Changes to U.S. Department of Education School Improvement Grant (SIG) Regulations

2015 federal SIG requirements include the following key changes:

- Allows for the extension of the grant period for up to five years. The five years of funding must include at least three years of full implementation, and may include a combination of up to one year of planning activities, and up to two years of sustainability activities. No more than five years of total funding are allowed. Although up to five years of SRG funding are available, the Massachusetts state law requiring turnaround of Level 4 schools in three years remains unchanged. More information about using the extended budget option is available in the federal register2. Additionally, ESE staff are available to provide additional technical assistance.

- Changes to federal intervention models. In addition to the original models (Closure, Restart, Transformation and Turnaround) districts may now also submit applications for two new models: Early Learning and Whole-School Reform.

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Additionally, federal requirements have been updated to include some modifications as well as expansion and strengthening of requirements for the four original models. Descriptions of these models and the updated federal requirements can be found in the Summary of Federal Intervention Models document, and in the Federal Models Checklist Workbook, which are both available in this RFP are posting.

Guidance on the Four Steps to Apply for a School Redesign Grant

Step 1: School Redesign Grant Application Introduction

INSTRUCTIONS

Provide a 1-page introduction to the SRG application.

- Describe the theory of action that links together all aspects of the application, including the strategies in the Turnaround Plan, rationale for the chosen federal model, and an overview of budget priorities.

- Articulate how this intervention will differ from previous reform efforts and how the proposed turnaround effort will lead to rapid student achievement and will build the capacity of the school to sustain efforts beyond the SRG funding period.

Step 2: Update or complete a Turnaround Plan

INFORMATION

The completed Turnaround Plan for Level 4 Schools serves as the foundational document for the School Redesign Grant Application package. The Turnaround Plan guidance and template were designed to streamline the SRG application process by incorporating and aligning state requirements for school turnaround as well as federal SRG requirements. However, the previously submitted Turnaround Plan will require alignment to federal model requirements, updated MAGs and benchmarks for SY 16-17, and may require additional information to align to the SRG Scoring Rubric.

Schools not currently required to complete a Level 4 Turnaround Plan under state law must still use the Turnaround Plan template to describe their plans for improvement and apply for School Redesign Grant funds.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Alignment to Federal Model Requirements:
   - Each federal intervention model has its own specific set of requirements. The Federal Model Checklists (for more information, see the “Federal Models Checklists” section on
page 4 of this document) are designed to help the applying district ensure that all requirements of the given federal model being applied for are included in the SRG application package. Use the “Federal Models Checklist” document to indicate where in the package all requirements of the selected intervention model are addressed in the SRG Application Package.

- In some cases, the original Turnaround Plan may already include information about how the specific federal requirements will be met. For example, schools applying to implement the Transformation Model are required to “provide ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement”. This may already be discussed at length in the school’s Turnaround Plan under Turnaround Practice #4, which can be noted in the Federal Model checklist. However, if the requirement was not part of the original completed Turnaround Plan, be sure to update the Turnaround Plan to include evidence that the relevant federal model requirements have been addressed.

2. **Measureable Annual Goals (MAGs) and Interim Benchmarks:** Update all benchmarks for the 2016-2017 school year.

**NOTE:** While the following are not required by ESE as MAGs in school Turnaround Plans, ESE must report on the following indicators at the end of each year of the grant to meet federal reporting requirements SIG. (ESE will collect this data directly through SIMS and EPIMS; there are no additional reporting requirements for the district for these three items.)

- Number of minutes within the school year
- Distribution of teachers by performance level on the district’s teacher evaluation system
- Teacher attendance rate

3. **Alignment to SRG Scoring Rubric:** Carefully review the SRG Scoring Rubric to ensure that all aspects of the SRG application meet the highest possible score and that any items omitted in the original completed Turnaround Plan have been included. For example, the scoring rubric includes a number of items related to district systems of support. If necessary, update the Turnaround Plan to include additional information about district systems of support as described in the scoring rubric.

**Step 3. Complete the Federal Models Checklist**

**INFORMATION**

As noted above, newly adopted federal SIG requirements include the addition of three new intervention models (Whole-school Reform, State-Determined, and Early Learning). The State-Determined model is not currently available in Massachusetts.

A **summary** of each of the requirements of all SRG models is available in the RFP Posting. Full descriptions of all changes to the federal SIG requirements are available in the federal register.

INSTRUCTIONS

Using the Required Federal Models Checklist Workbook in this RFP posting, complete the relevant checklist and submit as part of the SRG Application Package. Definitions of federal requirements, and links to additional federal information regarding the models, are available in the last tab of the workbook.

Note regarding the School Closure model: If a district opts to close an eligible school using the federal “School Closure” model, it may apply for one year of SRG funding to pay certain reasonable and necessary costs associated with the closure. In this case, the district only needs to submit a budget workbook with justification for closure costs included.

Step 4. Complete the Budget Workbook

INFORMATION

As noted above, new federal SIG regulations allow for the extension of the grant period for up to five years. The five years of funding must include at least three years of full implementation, and may include a combination of up to one year of planning activities, and up to two years of sustainability activities.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please complete the separate Microsoft Excel budget workbook located in the RFP. Read the Instructions tab carefully before completing the workbook.