

# School Improvement Grant Application

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**I. Application Introductions and Background**

Preamble

The U.S. Secretary of Education (Secretary) views the large FY 2009 investment in school improvement funds made possible by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) as a historic opportunity to face education’s most intractable challenge: turning around or closing down our Nation’s most persistently low-achieving schools. Although there are noted

examples of successful school reforms, the vast majority of the lowest performers have not changed course, either because they have received insufficient support or because interventions have been ineffective. The Secretary is committed to turning around over five years the 5,000 lowest-achieving schools nationwide, and School Improvement Grants are a centerpiece of that strategy.

The Secretary's final requirements for School Improvement Grants are authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), and funded through both the Department of Education Appropriation Act, 2009 and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The application defines the criteria that a State educational agency (SEA) must use to award school improvement funds to local educational agencies (LEAs) with the lowest-achieving Title I schools that demonstrate the greatest need for the funds and the strongest commitment to use those funds to provide adequate resources to their lowest-achieving Title I schools in order to raise substantially the achievement of the students attending those schools. The requirements also require an SEA to give priority, through a waiver under section 9401 of the ESEA, to LEAs that also wish to serve the lowest-achieving secondary schools that are eligible for, but do not receive, title I funds. Finally, the requirements require an SEA to award school improvement funds to eligible LEAs in amounts sufficient to enable the targeted schools to implement one of four specific proposed interventions.

## **II. Application Instructions**

### Preparing the Application

In preparing the application, the Department also strongly recommends that States involve parents, educators, policy makers, technical advisors and the other community stakeholders. While such involvement is not a criterion for approval of State applications, a stronger application and more successful implementation of the state and local plan may result.

### Process

Each SEA is eligible to apply. See the attached list of the allocations, distributed by formula, to each SEA that submits an application. Applications are due (XX days from the date applications are available).

The School Improvement Fund grant funds will be distributed to the recipients by (30 days from the date the application is approved). The SEA may begin the grant project's activities as soon as the grantee receives notification of the grant award from the Department.

Applications may be submitted electronically or by paper submission.

Electronic submissions must be sent to: [school.improvement.fund@ed.gov](mailto:school.improvement.fund@ed.gov)  
Please send a follow-up paper copy of the cover page signed by the authorized representative.

If applying by paper submission, the original and 2 copies must be sent to the following address:

Zollie Stevenson, Jr., Ph.D.  
Acting Director  
Student Achievement and School Accountability Programs  
US Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202-6132

Due to potential delays of mail through the US Postal Service, applicants are encouraged to employ alternate carriers for paper submissions.

#### Application Review

Applications for this program will be peer reviewed. Reviewers will read applications for completeness when addressing the statutory requirements and elements as outlined in final notice of requirements.

Once applications are evaluated by the Department as complete through the peer review process, funds will be made available and SEAs may draw down funds. Upon completion of the peer review, the Department will contact SEAs that reviewers identified as having incomplete applications to gather more information or clarification on the proposed activities and selected strategy or strategies. The reviewers' comments may be used to provide feedback to SEAs, as appropriate.

### **III: Application**

#### Part A: General Instructions

To receive a School Improvement Grant, an SEA would submit an application to the Department. Each State application shall specify how the State educational agency will allocate funds in order to assist the State educational agency and local educational agencies in complying with the requirements in the final notice.

Additionally, to receive funds under the school improvement grant a State educational agency must submit to the Department the completed Application Material that includes:

- ✓ A completed application cover sheet that includes the signature of the Chief State School Officer
- ✓ LEA application
- ✓ SEA application
- ✓ Assurances
- ✓ Waiver Requests

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**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANT APPLICATION COVER SHEET**

Legal Name of Applicant: Click here to enter text.	Applicant's Mailing Address: Click here to enter text.
<p>State Contact for the School Improvement Grant</p> <p>Name: Click here to enter text</p> <p>Position and Office: Click here to enter text.</p> <p>Contact's Mailing Address: Click here to enter text.</p> <p>Telephone: Click here to enter text. Fax: Click here to enter text.</p> <p>Email address: Click here to enter text.</p>	
Chief State School Officer (Printed Name): Click here to enter text.	Telephone: Click here to enter text.
Signature of the Chief State School Officer: X _____	Date:
Recommend Signature from State Title I Director or person directing school improvement activities	
State Title I Director or Persons directing school improvement activities (Printed Name) Click here to enter text.	Telephone: Click here to enter text.
Signature of the State Title I Director or Person directing school improvement activities X _____	Date:

## PART A: LEA APPLICATION FORM

As part of its application for a School Improvement Grant under section 1003(g) of the ESEA, an SEA must submit the LEA application form it will use to make subgrants of school improvement funds to eligible LEAs. That application must contain, at a minimum, the following information. An SEA may include other information that it deems necessary in order to award school improvement funds to its LEAs.

### SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANT LEA APPLICATION

An LEA must:

1. Identify the Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III schools the LEA commits to serve. If the LEA is not applying to serve each Tier I school, explain why.
2. Identify the model that the LEA will use in each Tier I and Tier II school it commits to serve and describe how the model matches the needs of each school.

Note: An LEA that has nine or more Tier I and Tier II schools may not implement the transformation model in more than 50 percent of those schools.

3. For each Tier I and Tier II that the LEA commits to serve, describe how the LEA will ensure that each school will implement, fully and effectively, the required activities of the school intervention model it has selected.

For each Tier III school the LEA commits to serve, identify the services the schools will receive or the activities the school will implement.

4. Describe actions the LEA has taken, or will take, to:
  - Analyze the needs of its schools and match the interventions to those needs.
  - Design interventions consistent with the requirements in the final notice.
  - Recruit, screen, and select external providers, if applicable, to ensure their quality.
  - Align other resources with the interventions.
  - Modify its practices, if necessary, to enable its schools to implement the interventions fully and effectively.
  - Sustain the reforms after the funding period ends.
5. Provide a budget that includes the amount of school improvement funds the LEA will use to
  - Implement the selected model in each Tier I and Tier II it commits to serve and to support school improvement activities in each Tier III school; and
  - Conduct LEA-level activities designed to support implementation of the selected school intervention models in the LEA's Tier I and Tier II schools.

The LEA's budget must cover the period of availability, including any extension granted through a waiver, and be of sufficient size and scope to implement the selected school intervention model in each Tier I and Tier II school the LEA commits to serve.

The LEA's budget for each year may not exceed the number of Tier I and Tier III schools it commits to serve multiplied by \$500,000.

6. Assure that the LEA will—
  - Use its School Improvement Grant to implement fully and effectively an intervention in each Tier I and Tier II school that the LEA commits to serve consistent with the requirements in the final notice.
  - Hold each Tier I and Tier II school accountable in accordance with Section II.A.7(a) of the final notice.
  - Hold a charter school operator, a charter management organization, or an education management organization operating a restart model accountable consistent with the requirements in Section II.A.7(a) of the final notice.
  - Report to the SEA the school-level data required under Section III of the final notice.
  
7. If the SEA or LEA has requested a waiver of the following requirements, check all those that the LEA will implement:
  - Extending the period of availability of school improvement funds beyond September 30, 2011.
  - "Starting over" in the school improvement timeline for Tier I schools implementing a turnaround or restart model.
  - Implementing a schoolwide program in a targeted assistance school.



## PART B: SEA RESPONSIBILITIES

As part of its application for a School Improvement Grant under section 1003(g) of the ESEA, an SEA must provide the following information.

### SEA APPLICATION

An SEA must:

1. For each year for which school improvement funds under section 1003(g) are available, provide a list, by LEA, of the State's Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III schools. (The State's Tier I and Tier II schools would be those identified as persistently lowest-achieving schools in the State's SFSF Phase II application.)
  2. Provide an evaluation rubric that the SEA will use to approve an LEA's application and describe its approval process. At a minimum, the SEA's rubric must include criteria for evaluating:
    - The actions an LEA has taken, or will take, to:
      - Analyze the needs of each Tier I and Tier II school identified in the LEA's application and match an intervention to each school's needs.
      - Design interventions consistent with the requirements in the final notice.
      - Recruit, screen, and select external providers, if applicable, to ensure their quality.
      - Align other resources with the interventions.
      - Modify its practices, if necessary, to enable its Tier I and Tier II schools to implement the interventions fully and effectively.
      - Sustain the reforms after the funding period ends.
    - Whether the LEA has the capacity to fully and effectively implement the selected intervention in each Tier I and Tier II school identified in the LEA's application.
    - Whether the LEA has submitted a budget that includes sufficient funds to implement the selected intervention fully and effectively in each Tier I and Tier II school identified in the LEA's application.
  3. Whether the SEA intends to take over any Tier I or Tier II school and, if so, the identity of the school.
  4. If an SEA does not have sufficient school improvement funds to serve all eligible schools for which each LEA applies, describe how the SEA will prioritize School Improvement Grants to LEAs—e.g., how the SEA will prioritize LEA applications that serve both Tier I and Tier II schools.
  5. Describe the SEA's criteria, if any, that it will use to determine whether an LEA needs less than \$500,000 for a Tier I or Tier II school that is implementing a turnaround, restart, or transformation model.

6. Describe any additional criteria the SEA plans to use to differentiate among Tier III schools with respect to prioritizing an LEA's application for funding.
7. Assure that the SEA will--
  - Carry out the requirements of the final notice and ensure that each LEA carries out its responsibilities.
  - Award each approved LEA a School Improvement Grant in an amount that is of sufficient size and scope to implement the selected intervention in each Tier I and Tier II school identified in the LEA's application that the SEA has determined the LEA has the capacity to serve.
  - Apportion FY 2009 school improvement funds, including those available through ARRA, in order to make grants to LEAs, as applicable, that are renewable for additional years if an SEA or an individual LEA receives a waiver of the period of availability of those funds.
  - Carry over 25 percent of its FY 2009 funds, combine those funds with FY 2010 school improvement funds (depending on the availability of appropriations), and award those funds to eligible LEAs consistent with the requirements of the final notice if every Tier I school in the State is not served with FY 2009 school improvement funds.
  - Ensure, if it is participating in the differentiated accountability pilot, that its LEAs will use school improvement funds available under section 1003(g) of the ESEA in a Tier I and Tier II school consistent with the requirements of the final notice.
  - Monitor each LEA's implementation of the interventions supported with school improvement funds.
  - Post on its Web site all final LEA applications for School Improvement Grants.
  - Report specific school-level data required in Section III of the final notice.

#### IV. REQUESTING WAIVERS

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## **Part V: Addendum I**

In its application, an LEA that identifies and agrees to implement any of the models in its Tier I and Tier II schools must specify how it will meet the required activities for each school implementing one of the four selected models. In the application, the LEA must detail how it will achieve each of the required elements and any permissible items the model allow and the LEA wishes to include in support of the model chosen.

### **A. Turnaround Model:**

#### **Required Activities:**

- ❑ Replace the principal and grant him/her sufficient operating flexibility (including in staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting) to implement fully a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student achievement outcomes;
- ❑ Use locally adopt competencies to measure the effectiveness of staff who can work within the turnaround environment to meet the needs of students—
  1. Screen all existing staff and rehire no more than 50 percent; and
  2. Select new staff;
- ❑ Implement strategies such as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in the turnaround school;
- ❑ Provide staff ongoing, high-quality, job-embedded professional development that is aligned with the school’s comprehensive instructional program to ensure that they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and have the capacity to successfully implement school reform strategies;
- ❑ Adopt a new governance structure, which may include, but is not limited to, reporting to a new “turnaround office” in the LEA or SEA, hiring a “turnaround leader” who reports directly to the Superintendent or Chief Academic Officer, or entering into a multi-year contract with the LEA or SEA to obtain added flexibility in exchange for greater accountability;
- ❑ Implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned from one grade to the next as well as aligned with State academic standards;
- ❑ Promote the continuous use of student data (such as from formative, interim, and summative assessments) to inform and differentiate instruction to meet the academic needs of individual students;

- ❑ Establish schedules and strategies that increase learning time, as defined in this notice; and
- ❑ Provide appropriate social-emotional and community-oriented services and supports for students.

**B. Restart model.**

Required Activities:

- ❑ Convert a school or close and reopen a school under a charter school operator, a charter management organization (CMO), or an education management organization
- ❑ Select an (EMO) through a rigorous review process and specify what the rigorous process consist of.
- ❑ Enroll, within the grades it serves, any former student who wishes to attend the school.

**C. School closure.**

Required Activities:

- ❑ Close a school and enroll the students who attended that school in other, high-achieving schools in the LEA, which may include charter schools. (This option may only be considered when there are re-enrollment options in high-achieving schools within reasonable proximity that can accommodate the students from the closed school).

**D. Transformation model.**

Required Activities:

1. Develop and increase teacher and school leader effectiveness.

Required Activities:

- ❑ Replace the principal who led the school prior to commencement of the transformation model;
- ❑ Use rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation systems for teachers and principals that—
  - Take into account data on student growth, as defined in this notice, as a significant factor as well as other factors such as multiple observations-based assessments of teacher performance and ongoing collections of professional practice reflective of student achievement; and

- Are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement;
  - Identify and reward school leaders, teachers, and other staff who have increased student achievement and identify and remove those who, after multiple opportunities have been provided for improvement in professional practice, have not done so;
- Provide staff ongoing, high-quality, job-embedded professional development (e.g., regarding subject-specific pedagogy, instruction that reflects a deeper understanding of the community served by the school, or differentiated instruction) that is aligned with the school’s comprehensive instructional program and designed with school staff to ensure they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and have the capacity to successfully implement school reform strategies; and
  - Implement strategies such as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in a transformation school.

Permissible activities.

- ✓ Provide additional compensation to attract and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in a transformation school;
- ✓ Institute a system for measuring changes in instructional practices resulting from professional development; or
- ✓ Ensure that the school is not required to accept a teacher without the mutual consent of the teacher and principal, regardless of the teacher’s seniority.

2. Comprehensive instructional reform strategies.

Required Activities:

- Use data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned from one grade to the next as well as aligned with State academic standards; and
- Promote the continuous use of individualized student data (such as from formative, interim, and summative assessments) to inform and differentiate instruction to meet the academic needs of individual students.

Permissible activities

- ✓ Conduct periodic reviews to ensure that the curriculum is being implemented with fidelity, is having the intended impact on student achievement, and is modified if ineffective;
- ✓ Implement a schoolwide “response-to-intervention” model;
- ✓ Use and integrate technology-based supports and interventions as part of the instructional program; and  
In secondary schools--
- ✓ Increase rigor by offering opportunities for students to enroll in advanced coursework (such as Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate), early-college high schools, dual enrollment programs, or thematic learning academies that prepare students for college and careers, including by providing appropriate supports designed to ensure that low-achieving students can take advantage of these programs and coursework;
- ✓ Improve student transition from middle to high school through summer transition programs or freshman academies;
- ✓ Increase graduation rates through, for example, credit-recovery programs, re-engagement strategies, smaller learning communities, competency-based instruction and performance-based assessments, and acceleration of basic reading and mathematics skills; or
- ✓ Establish early-warning systems.

3. Increase learning time and create community-oriented schools.

Required Activities:

- ❑ Provide increased learning time, as defined in this notice; and
- ❑ Provide ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement.

Permissible activities

- ✓ Partner with parents, faith- and community-based organizations, health clinics, the police department, and others to create safe school environments that meet students’ social, emotional and health needs;
- ✓ Extend or restructuring the school day to add time for such strategies as advisory periods to build relationships between students, faculty, and other school staff;
- ✓ Implement approaches to improve school climate and discipline, such as implementing a system of positive behavioral supports or taking steps to eliminate bullying and student harassment; or

- ✓ Expand the school program to offer full-day kindergarten or pre-kindergarten.

4. Provide operating flexibility and sustained support.

Required Activities:

- Give the school sufficient operating flexibility (such as staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting) to implement fully a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student achievement outcomes; and,
- Ensure that the school receives ongoing, intensive technical assistance and related support from the LEA, the SEA, or a designated external lead partner organization (such as a school turnaround organization or an EMO).

Permissible activities

- ✓ Allow the school to be run under a new governance arrangement, such as a turnaround division within the LEA or SEA; or
- ✓ Implement a weighted per-pupil school-based budget formula.



## **VI: Definitions**

**Increased learning time** means using a longer school day, week, or year schedule to significantly increase the total number of school hours to include additional time for (a) instruction in core academic subjects including English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography; (b) instruction in other subjects and enrichment activities that contribute to a well-rounded education, including, for example, physical education, service learning, and experiential and work-based learning opportunities that are provided by partnering, as appropriate, with other organizations; and (c) teachers to collaborate, plan, and engage in professional development within and across grades and subjects.

**Persistently lowest-achieving schools** means, as determined by the State--

(1) Any Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that—

(i) Is among the lowest-achieving five percent of Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring or the lowest-achieving five Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring in the State, whichever number of schools is greater; or

(ii) Is a high school that has had a graduation rate as defined in 34 CFR 200.19(b) that is less than 60 percent over a number of years; and

(2) Any secondary school that is eligible for, but does not receive, Title I funds that—

(i) Is among the lowest-achieving five percent of secondary schools or the lowest-achieving five secondary schools in the State that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds, whichever number of schools is greater; or

(ii) Is a high school that has had a graduation rate as defined in 34 CFR 200.19(b) that is less than 60 percent over a number of years.

(b) To identify the lowest-achieving schools, a State must take into account both-

(i) The academic achievement of the “all students” group in a school in terms of proficiency on the State’s assessments under section 1111(b)(3) of the ESEA in reading/language arts and mathematics combined; and

(ii) The school’s lack of progress on those assessments over a number of years in the “all students” group.

**Student growth** means the change in achievement for an individual student between two or more points in time. For grades in which the State administers summative assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics, student growth data must be based on a student’s score

on the State's assessment under section 1111(b)(3) of the ESEA. A State may also include other measures that are rigorous and comparable across classrooms.

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**Part VII: Appendices**

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