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Fourth Draft OMB Package, Version Two

Appendix D – State Coordinator Interview Protocol

PPSS TO 10: Studies of Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) Grantees

Subtask 3.5: Prepare Fourth Draft OMB Clearance Package

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Submitted to:

Andrew Abrams
Policy and Program Studies Service
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Prepared by:

SRI International
Kyra Caspary, Chris Padilla, Nancy Adelman, Rebecca Schmidt, Erica Harbatkin, and Kaily Yee

Appendix B: Interview Protocols

Study of the Needs and Experiences of REAP Grantees State Coordinator Interview Protocol

Note: Instructions to interviewer are in italics. Throughout the protocol, use the actual state name in lieu of “your state” as appropriate.

Role with REAP

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself. How long have you been at _____ [*use specific name of state education agency*]? How long have you been in your current position? What are your roles and responsibilities regarding REAP? [*Note to interviewer: The protocol includes additional questions about state technical assistance activities in a later section.*]
 - a. Do you have other job responsibilities in addition to the REAP program? [*If yes*] What do they include?
2. Are other staff at _____ [*use specific name of state education agency*] involved in the REAP program? [*If yes*] What are their job titles and what are their responsibilities related to REAP? [*The research team will code and quantify responses.*]
3. How do you work with RLIS school districts? How do you work with SRSA school districts?
 - a. [*Probe if not already addressed*] How frequently do you communicate with RLIS school districts? What does this communication consist of?
 - b. [*Probe if not already addressed*] How frequently do you communicate with SRSA school districts? What does this communication consist of?

State Goals and Priorities

4. Does your state have any special goals or priorities with respect to rural education in particular? [*If yes*] What are they? Does your state have any goals or priorities that apply to all school districts, but that your state allows rural school districts to meet in different ways? [*If yes*] What are they?
5. Does your state encourage school districts to use their REAP funds to support particular state goals or priority areas? [*If yes ask 6a and 6b in addition to 6c. If no skip to 6c.*]
 - a. Which goals and priority areas does your state encourage school districts to use their REAP funds to support, and why these? Does this differ for school districts depending on whether they receive RLIS or SRSA funds? [*If yes*] How does this differ for school districts depending on whether they receive RLIS or SRSA funds?
 - b. How does your state communicate these goals and priorities to school districts?
 - c. How does the REAP program fit into your state’s education system as a whole?

Planning Process for Use of Federal Funds

6. For the 2014–15 school year, did your state require school districts to submit any of the following as part of the planning process for the use of federal funds, **including REAP funds**? *[For any items the state requires]* When did your state require school districts to submit this?

Did your state require... <i>{Read list and check appropriate box for each row. For any items the state requires, mark date due in final column.}</i>	Required	Not required	Don't know	Date due
A needs assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
A consolidated application or plan for the use of federal Title program funds including REAP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Anything else? <i>[Please specify in box. The research team will code and quantify responses as appropriate.]</i>				

Eligibility for REAP

7. To determine eligibility for REAP funds, the U.S. Department of Education prepares spreadsheets listing the districts in each state, as well as their locale codes and percent of children from families below the poverty line. The states are asked to add the average daily attendance (ADA), state rural designations, Title IIa allocation, and population density for each of their districts before resubmitting the populated spreadsheets to the Department so that the REAP Program Office can use these data to determine eligibility for REAP and SRSA award amounts. What is your state's process for completing this spreadsheet?

- a. Does your state review the accuracy of the data provided by the U.S. Department of Education?
 Yes / No *[Circle one]*
[If yes]How?

[Note to interviewer: The state must provide the required information so that the U.S. Department of Education can determine districts' eligibility for SRSA (average daily attendance, state rural designation, population density) and their allocation amounts (a district's Title IIA allocation is used to determine the amount of its SRSA allocation). After determining that a district does not meet SRSA eligibility, the U.S. Dept. of Education REAP Office can then determine RLIS eligibility.]

- b. Where do the data on *average daily attendance* and *state rural designation* typically come from (e.g., state databases, directly from the districts, etc.)? *[For data that come directly from school districts]* When did your state require school districts to submit this?

	Average daily attendance	State rural designation	Don't know
<i>[Mark all that apply]</i>			
State databases	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Directly from districts	<input type="checkbox"/> Date due: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Date due: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Specify _____)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

- a. *[If ADA and/or state rural designation come from state database, ask]* Do you encourage or require school districts to verify these data (to avoid any problems with grant eligibility and awards)? *[Circle one]* Yes / No *[If yes]* How?
- b. *[If state obtain ADA and/or state rural designation from the districts, ask]* Does your state review the accuracy of the eligibility data provided by school districts in your state before returning these spreadsheets to the U.S. Department of Education? *[Circle one]* Yes / No *[If yes]* How?
- c. What is the timeline for this process?
- d. What challenges does your state encounter in the process of verifying or submitting eligibility data to the U.S. Department of Education?

Next I would like to ask you a series of questions about RLIS subgrantees followed by some questions about SRSA grantees.

Management and Distribution of RLIS Funds

8. Does your state notify RLIS-eligible school districts about their eligibility to receive funds? *[Note to interviewer: RLIS funds are allocated to states which in turn make subgrant awards to school districts.]*

[Mark one]

-
- Yes *[Ask 8a]*
 - No *[Skip to 9]*
-

- a. *[If yes]* How do you notify school districts?

9. Does your state require RLIS-eligible school districts to submit a request or go through a formal planning process to receive RLIS funds? *[If no skip to 10b.]*

[Mark one]

-
- Yes, submit a request
 - Yes, formal review process
 - No (neither) *[Skip to 9b]*
-

- a. Please describe the process that must be followed by school districts. *Probe to understand the process, for example:*
- How often does your state require school districts to submit a request? What information, if any, does your state require school districts to provide to obtain RLIS funds (e.g., as part of their consolidated application, needs assessment data)? What information and assistance, if any, does the state provide to school districts about the application process?
- b. How does your state determine the amount of school districts' RLIS awards—competition or formula—and why?

[Mark one]

-
- Formula [Ask 9c]
 - Competition [Ask 9d]
-

- c. [If formula] What does your state consider in determining the amount of the awards for districts?

[Mark one]

-
- Average Daily Attendance
 - Other (Specify)
-

- d. [If competition] What criteria are used for the competition to award RLIS funds?

10. What is the timeline of your state's receipt of RLIS funds from the U.S. Department of Education and then the subgranting to school districts (e.g., how long is this process from planning to school district receipt of funds, when does the state receive RLIS funds, when does the state determine allocations to school districts, when in the school year do school districts actually receive the funds)?
- a. Are there any challenges that arise due to the timing of the receipt of RLIS funds? [If yes] Please describe these challenges.
11. Has your state's process for the allocation and award of RLIS funds changed over time? [If yes] How has this process changed over time?
12. Does your state place any restrictions on what amount or share of the RLIS grant districts may draw down at any one time (e.g., 10 percent limit)? Does your state place any other restrictions on the use of RLIS funds? [If yes] Why does your state place these restrictions?
13. Does your state conduct any monitoring or evaluation activities of RLIS-subgrantee expenditures and uses of funds? [If yes] What do these activities consist of?
- a. How does your state use this information?
- b. [Ask if the respondent has not already discussed the Consolidated State Performance Report (CSPR)] Does your state use what's been learned from monitoring and evaluation to inform what is reported on the Consolidated State Performance Report (CSPR) submitted annually to the Department?

Management of SRSA Funds and Eligibility Notification

14. The U.S. Department of Education awards SRSA funds directly to school districts. What role, if any, does your state play in the management of SRSA? [*Probe for description of the state role related to SRSA. Information will be coded and quantified based on interview responses.*]

a. Does your state notify SRSA districts about their eligibility for SRSA funds?

[Mark one]

• Yes

• No [Skip to 14c]

b. [*If yes*] How does your state notify SRSA-eligible districts?

c. In what other ways is the _____ [*use specific name of state education agency*] involved in the management of SRSA funds?

Use of REAP Flex

Now I would like to ask a few questions about a special provision of SRSA, REAP Flex, sometimes referred to as SRSA Flexibility, REAP Flex, SRSA Flex, REAPing, or Flexing.

15. How familiar are you with the REAP Flex option for SRSA grantees?

a. [*If respondent indicates some familiarity*] Could you describe your understanding of this option?

[*Note to interviewer: If respondent is not familiar with REAP Flex or expresses confusion about the provision, provide the following description of REAP Flex.*]

Description of REAP Flex: The REAP Flexibility provision (REAP Flex) provides SRSA-eligible districts the flexibility to use “applicable funding” (i.e., specific federal Title program funds) to support local activities under an array of federal Title programs in order to assist them in addressing local academic needs more effectively. “Applicable funding” includes all funds allocated by formula to an eligible district under four programs.¹ Of these four programs, currently only **Title II Part A** is funded (Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund). The REAP Flexibility provision does not provide any additional funding. Rather, it allows school districts to use all or part of its Title IIA funds for local activities authorized under one or more of the following federal Title programs:

- Title I Part A: Improving the Achievement of Disadvantaged Children
- Title II Part D: Educational Technology State Grants
- Title III: Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students
- Title IV Part A: Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities
- Title IV Part B: 21st-Century Community Learning Centers
- Title V Part A: State Grants for Innovative Programs

b. Do you think that the SRSA grantees in your state that are using REAP Flex benefit from using the this option? Why or why not?

¹ (1) Subpart 2 of Part A of Title II (Improving Teacher Quality State Grants); (2) Part D of Title II (Educational Technology State Grants); (3) Part A of Title IV (Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities); and (4) Part A of Title V (State Grants for Innovative Programs).

- c. Do you think that the SRSA grantees in your state that are *not using* REAP Flex would benefit? Why or why not?
- d. What about RLIS school districts? If a provision like REAP Flex were available as part of RLIS, do you think RLIS subgrantees in your state would benefit from using this option? Why or why not?

16. What information and assistance, if any, does your state provide to school districts about REAP Flex?

Probe for:

- a. Notifying school districts of the existence of REAP Flex
- b. Restrictions/limitations on applicable funds—amounts or types of funds that could be used under REAP Flex
- c. Restrictions/limitations on allowable uses—how to coordinate REAP funds with allowed federal total program funds

Technical Assistance Needs and Challenges

17. Does your state provide any types of technical assistance to REAP school districts? [*Note to interviewer: For Question 9a the respondent may have already mentioned technical assistance provided concerning the RLIS application process.*]

- a. [*If yes*] What types of assistance does your state offer? Does that assistance differ based on whether school districts receive RLIS or SRSA grants?
- b. Is technical assistance provided by another organization (e.g., Regional Educational Laboratory, Regional Comprehensive Center, Content Center)? [*If yes*] Which one(s)? [*Mark all that apply below*] What types of assistance do they offer?

[Mark all that apply]

•	Regional Educational Laboratory [<i>Ask only about lab that serves state</i>] Appalachia, Central, Midwest, Northwest, Pacific, Southeast, Southwest, Pacific
•	Regional Comprehensive Center [<i>Ask only about center that serves state</i>] Appalachia, California, Central, Florida and Islands, Great Lakes, Mid-Atlantic, Midwest, North Central, Northeast, Northwest, Pacific, South Central, Southeast, Texas, West
	<i>Content Centers</i>
•	Center on Building State Capacity and Productivity
•	Center on College and Career Readiness and Success
•	Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes
•	Center on Great Teachers and Leaders
•	Center on Innovations in Learning
•	Center on School Turnaround
•	Center on Standards and Assessments Implementation
•	Other [<i>Specify</i>]

18. What are the major technical assistance needs that your state has and the challenges that it faces in supporting the needs of REAP districts?

19. Has your state received any technical assistance to help the state administer the RLIS program (e.g., from the U.S. Department of Education REAP Program Office, fellow state coordinators, Regional Educational Laboratories, Regional Comprehensive Centers, Content Centers)?

[Mark all that apply]

•	U.S. Department of Education REAP Program Office
•	Fellow state REAP coordinators
•	Regional Educational Laboratory <i>[Ask only about lab that serves state]</i> Appalachia, Central, Midwest, Northwest, Pacific, Southeast, Southwest, Pacific
•	Regional Comprehensive Center <i>[Ask only about center that serves state]</i> Appalachia, California, Central, Florida and Islands, Great Lakes, Mid-Atlantic, Midwest, North Central, Northeast, Northwest, Pacific, South Central, Southeast, Texas, West
	<i>Content Centers</i>
•	Center on Building State Capacity and Productivity
•	Center on College and Career Readiness and Success
•	Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes
•	Center on Great Teachers and Leaders
•	Center on Innovations in Learning
•	Center on School Turnaround
•	Center on Standards and Assessments Implementation
•	Other <i>[Specify]</i>

- a. *[If received technical assistance]* How useful have you found this assistance to be? Do you have any suggestions to improve the technical assistance provided? Do you have any suggestions for other types of technical assistance that would be useful for your state?

20. Does the state collect information from districts on technical assistance needs? *[Note to interviewer: refer to any information learned earlier in the interview about program evaluation and reporting activities]*

[If yes] What information does the state collect? Does this differ for RLIS and SRSA districts? What do you do with these data?

Recommendations for Change

21. What recommendations do you have to improve the REAP program? *[Probe for eligibility, allocations, authorized uses for funds.]*
- What recommendations do you have to improve the administration of the RLIS program? *[Probe for timing of eligibility notification, timing of allocations and awards.]*
 - What recommendations do you have to improve the administration of the SRSA program?
 - What recommendations do you have to improve the administration of REAP Flex?

22. Would you describe your overall satisfaction with the REAP program as *[Read options below]*? Why?

	Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied
<i>[Mark one]</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

23. Would you describe your overall level of satisfaction with the administration of the REAP program by the U.S. Department of Education REAP Program Office as *[Read options below]*? Why?

	Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied
<i>[Mark one]</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>