

**ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SYSTEM OF SUPPORT AND DISTRICT INTERVENTION DIVISION**

**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANT (SIG) 1003(G)**

**FY 2014 STATE APPLICATION PUBLIC COMMENT FEEDBACK**

A request for Public Comments was posted March 31, 2015 through April 7, 2015 on the Illinois State Board of Education website, School Improvement Grant 1003(g) webpage. Archived documents are located at [http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/sip\\_1003.htm](http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/sip_1003.htm). Members of the Illinois Consolidated Community of Practitioners were also contacted to provide public comments. A total of 14 comments/questions were provided resulting in no changes to the State of Illinois' FY14 SIG 1003(g) application.

**State Educational Agency (SEA) FY14 Application**

No comments submitted and no changes.

**FY16 Request for Proposal (RFP)**

**Comment/Question #1:**

*If the LEAD PARTNER doesn't have success with the progress of the school - does that LEAD PARTNER change and then does the new Partner have the same length of time to change the school around? It seems that progress must be seen in the first three years of the program, but if there is no or very little progress ...*

**Response:**

The District is responsible for monitoring the Lead Partner to ensure that all outlined deliverables have been met. The District has sole discretion to hire or terminate a Lead Partner. However, the grant implementation timeline does not change. The SIG 1003(g) has been expanded from a three-year grant to a five-year grant.

**Change:** None

**Comment/Question #2:**

*If the current principal and some staff are removed because of lack of progress, what happens if the new appointed principal and staff find that they too can not have success with the school? Is a new administrator placed in charge? Will this individual get an additional period of time to change the school from a failure into a success? I think that a new principal and staff would probably need at least 5 years to change the school culture from a culture that is greatly lacking to one of successful progress.*

**Response:**

Once a principal is chosen in a SIG school, the District must comply with the State of Illinois' Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) legislation for his/her evaluation and retention. The need to replace a principal does not extend the implementation timeline of the SIG 1003(g), which is outlined in federal regulations.

**Change:** None.

**Comment/Question #3:**

*I think too, that there will be a hard sell, to the union, for removing teachers (seniority rights, tenure rights) from a school. The union has a negotiated contract, convincing them to change that contract is NOT a given. Knowing Chicago and the CTU, I believe that ISBE would have a real fight on its hands to do any removal of personnel. I am sure other unions (IEA, AFT) would fight to maintain their members in schools, even if these schools are failing. Again, changing a collective bargaining agreement or having the unions agree to removal of teachers will be, I think, a major problem.*

**Response:**

To be awarded a SIG 1003 (g) grant, the District must provide a copy of a signed Memorandum Of Understanding between the District and the Teachers' Union outlining their agreement to take the steps as outlined as a condition of funding. . The Chicago Public Schools District 299 has complied with this condition of funding for all previous SIG 1003(g) awards. A list of CPS grantees can be found at [http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/sip\\_1003.htm](http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/sip_1003.htm).

**Change:** None.

**Comment/Question #4:**

*It would help LEA's to have a listing in the rfp (beginning) of the specific tools to assess and build capacity the SEA is providing to work with its LEAs to ensure they possess the capacity to implement a SIG model.*

**Response:**

The Pre-Needs -assessment is a federally required tool designed to help Districts determine if they have the capacity to implement a SIG 1003(g), if the school is ready to implement a SIG 1003(g), and then to determine which model would be most appropriate to implement. External evaluators are hired to score SIG 1003(g) applications for capacity and readiness and all finalists are required to participate in a face-to-face interview as a condition of the grant selection and awarding process. All ISBE support documents and webinars are found [http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/sip\\_1003.htm](http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/sip_1003.htm) under "webinars, resources and technical assistance.

**Change:** None.

**Comment/Question #5:**

*On page 24 the requirement to provide weekly site contact- I suggest it should read weekly site visit. Raising the bar to make an expectation on the partner to be present and engaged on site is valuable to the LEA.*

**Response:**

Weekly contact is a condition of funding which must be documented and would have included onsite visits. Electronic modes of weekly contact would have been permissible such as, but not limited to, telephone conference calls, internet meetings through Skype (or other such programs), and video conferencing. These types of weekly contact would allow the school more leverage and flexibility in the use of funds towards other pre-implementation activities in the planning year when funding is less than in a full implementation year. However, the recommendation for the Lead Partner to maintain an on-site presence is noted and accepted as the Lead Partner is integral in helping the school during the planning period.

**Change:** Weekly “contact” has been revised to weekly “on-site presence.”

**Comment/Question #6:**

*According to the DOE final comment s- “Continuously engage families and community throughout implementation” was referenced and I think it may be a good idea to include. Also not sure monthly is regular frequency with such a large scope initiative (p.35). Maybe a little more rigorous expectation.*

**Response:**

Family and community engagement is a federal and state requirement of the SIG 1003(g) which must be documented by the district and school. Monthly family and community engagement was considered a school minimal expectation to ensure equity for socioeconomically disadvantaged communities where there may be a variety of circumstances beyond a family’s control to participate in district or school activities. However, familial circumstances should not impact the school’s responsibility to provide weekly opportunities for family and community engagement. The recommendation to increase family and community engagement from “monthly” to “weekly” is noted and accepted.

**Change:** The example of “monthly” meetings has been revised to “weekly” meetings. The example of “quarterly” meetings has been revised to “monthly” meetings. The example of “one or twice a year” has been revised to “quarterly” meetings.

**Comment/Question #7:**

*Recognition of the fact that there will be schools that gain and schools that lose with this change, is there a measure to minimize the “harm” that will impact students at the schools that will now lose the funding?*

**Response:**

No schools will lose current funds due to SIG. Nor will there be harm that impacts students. The SIG 1003(g) is a competitive grant which provides additional funds for a designated period of time to those schools who are awarded based on their capacity and readiness to do this work.

**Change:** None.

**Comment/Question #8:**

*I appreciate the fact it is being based on “All Students” and not subgroups only. However, I think the 20% criteria is not realistic in a two year span.*

**Response:**

This statement is defining a priority school according to the Illinois ESEA Flexibility Waiver. It is not an expectation of SIG schools to increase by 20% even though the SIG 1003(g) is intended to induce radical and immediate changes in the district and in student performance, so even though it is not expected it is possible.

**Change:** None.

**Comment/Question #9:**

*Transformation/Turnaround etc. – It has been my experience this has been in word only and schools have been able to manipulate the information to not make any drastic changes. There are times when that is beneficial and times when that is not. How will this be carefully monitored, evaluated? There have been so many changes rolled out and there isn't the manpower to monitor. My hope is with these new changes, healthy oversight will occur to truly benefit students.*

**Response:**

SIG schools experience regularly scheduled monitoring that includes weekly technical assistance calls, detailed quarterly reports, annual continuation applications, and planned on-site monitoring visits. More information about ISBE's monitoring of the SIG 1003 (g) program is found here <http://www.isbe.net/sos/pdf/sig-monitoring-manual-fy15.pdf> .

**Change:** None.

**Comment/Question #10:**

*Charter option – data rarely supports this as a positive change for students. This needs to be carefully monitored and held to the same standards as LEAs throughout the state.*

**Response:** All SIG schools participate in regularly scheduled monitoring visits, must submit quarterly reports, and are required to reporting on the 18 metrics, regardless of the intervention model selected.

**Change:** None.

**Comment/Question #11:**

*School closures – wow – this could be a political black hole for the state and surrounding schools/districts. This could also be wonderful – again, we need carefully constructed models with long term vision to make this successful.*

**Response:**

The Pre-Needs -assessment is a federally required tool designed to help Districts determine if they have the capacity to implement a SIG 1003(g), if the school is ready to implement a SIG 1003(g), and then to determine which model would be most appropriate to implement. Models include: Closure, Restart, Transformation, Turnaround, Early Learning, and Evidenced-based Whole School Reform.

**Change:** None.

**Comment/Question #12:**

*So much paperwork – does this really lead to student gain? I have submitted hundreds of pages of reports and never heard ANY feedback on any of them. Not one word. How is this beneficial to students? This reports pull me away from doing good things, innovative things, for students. When reading through this I worry about the pit of paperwork this is generating. I realize there needs to be accountability, but I respectfully request there be consideration for the burden of time this will create for schools.*

**Response:**

ISBE staff closely monitors SIG 1003(g) grantees through their participation in regularly scheduled monitoring visits, reviews of their quarterly reports, and requiring submission of reports on the 18 metrics. ISBE staff also requires participation in weekly technical assistance calls. ISBE must be accountable for the SIG 1003(g) funds to the United State Department of Education and its auditors. Efforts are taken to reduce the paperwork burden as much as possible.

**Change:** None.

**Comment/Question #13:**

*Why no out of state travel? There are times when we need to look outside the boundaries of our state for exceptional leaders. To think we have it all within the confines of Illinois is short sighted.*

**Response:**

School districts have the discretion to hire the candidates they feel are most qualified for employment. This may include individuals from outside of Illinois who have applied for and are seeking employment within the State of Illinois. Out of state travel is rarely allowed in grants due to past abuses and the risk for future problems. This can be reconsidered on an individual basis.

**Change:** None.

**Comment/Question #14:**

*This is a considerable undertaking. If only receiving \$50,000, the administrative component is questionable when considering the financial gain and potential student achievement.*

**Response:**

The federally established range for SIG 1003(g) awards is \$50,000 to \$2,000,000 annually, with \$50,000 being the amount minimally permissible. The budget for each recommended award is negotiated based on the SIG model implemented, building size and the submitted narrative detailing the proposed activities and expenditures. SIG 1003(g) follows the Title I requirement of “necessary and reasonable” when expending funds.

Applications by cohort can be viewed for a history of past award on the SIG 1003(g) webpage at [http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/sip\\_1003.htm](http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/sip_1003.htm)

**Change:** None.

**Local Educational Agency (LEA) Application**

No comments submitted.

**School Application**

No comments submitted.

**Pre-application Needs Assessment**

No comments submitted.