



School Improvement Grant (SIG) Program Reviewers' Training Webinar

Welcome!

Please standby. The webinar will begin shortly.



As the State Education Agency (SEA) for the District of Columbia (DC), the OSSE: sets statewide policies, provides resources and support, and exercises accountability for ALL public education in DC. Accordingly, the OSSE distributes federal grant funds relating to closing the achievement gap under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001, as amended. This includes the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program.

Thank You For Serving!

You have been selected as an OSSE reviewer for the School Improvement Grant Competition - Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 based on the following:

- 1) Your current and past professional background and experience
- 2) Your experience as a grant reviewer.

What is a School Improvement Grant?

- School Improvement Grants are grants to State educational agencies (SEAs) that SEAs use to make competitive sub-grants to local educational agencies (LEAs) that demonstrate the greatest need for the funds and the strongest commitment to use the funds to provide adequate resources in order to raise substantially the achievement of students in their lowest-performing schools.

Eligible Applicants

- Each State Educational Agency (SEA) (including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico), the Bureau of Indian Education, and the outlying areas are **eligible** to apply to receive a School Improvement Grant.
- An SEA must allocate at least 95 percent of its school improvement funds directly to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) in accordance with the final requirements (<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2010-10-28/pdf/2010-27313.pdf>). The SEA may retain an amount not to exceed five percent of its allocation for State administration, evaluation, and technical assistance.

GOAL of SIG

- Provide adequate resources in order to raise substantially the achievement of students in the lowest-performing schools in D.C.

Goals of Today's Training

1. You will learn the importance of a Request for Applications (RFA) competitive proposal review and why it is an essential part of the grant funding process.
2. You will gain an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of grant proposal reviewers.
3. You will learn about the review process and be sufficiently prepared to serve as an informed, fair, and proficient grant proposal reviewer.
4. You will learn more about the District of Columbia's demographics and any special emphasis placed within the School Improvement Grant RFA.

Training Topics

- The Request for Application
- The Role of the Reviewer
- Important Instructions for the Reviewers
- The Importance of Written Comments
- Reviewer Hints
- Food for Thought for the Reviewer
- Program Administrator's Role
- Reference Materials
- District of Columbia School Types

Training Topics (Cont'd)

- Allowable Use of SIG Funds
- Proposal Budgets
- Scoring Rubric

The Request for Application (RFA)

- Released on **Friday, February 14, 2014.**
- Official announcement that informs the public of the opportunity to compete for federal SIG funds granted to DC
- Includes criteria for Eligibility, proposal structure, proposal content, and submission

The Request for Application (RFA) (Cont'd)

Additionally, the RFA should:

- Be comprised of clear and concise requirements;
- Dictate the format of the proposal application
- Include both qualitative and quantitative outcomes
- Set scoring criteria for each section
- Be followed according to the instructions, directions, or procedures contained therein.

The Request for Application (RFA) (Cont'd)

Last, but not least...

- The release of the RFA starts the “official” clock ticking for qualified LEAs interested in submitting a competitive proposal application.
- Once all submissions are received on **Tuesday, April 1, 2014** they are evaluated and scored (rated) by reviewers.
- Proposals are then eligible to be recommended for funding.
- The RFA, the entire grant proposal packet, and all notes generated by reviewers during the evaluation process are public documents.
- The role of the reviewer is to utilize the RFA as a basis for scoring the application as fairly and objectively as possible.

NOTE: Reviewers names, addresses, and other personal information are confidential and should only be provided through Public Record requests.

The Role of the Reviewer

The Reviewer:

- Reads all applications in their entirety.
- Follows all instructions provided.
- Treats all applications in a fair and equitable manner.
- Adequately addresses the strengths and weaknesses of all sections for each application as applicable.
- Provides statements of strengths and weaknesses that (1) justify the score awarded for the section, and (2) are consistent with each criterion being rated (avoid subjective comments).
- Statements of strengths and weaknesses must be in complete grammatically correct sentences.

The Role of the Reviewer (Cont'd)

- Written comments must be professional, clearly stated, constructive, and useful (**not subjective**).
- Strength-based feedback should help the applicant when preparing future proposals.

NOTE: Applicants are provided reviewers' feedback. Reviewer scores and comments provide feedback that may help the next time the applicant develops a proposal.

The Role of the Reviewer (Cont'd)

Last, but not least:

- Reviewers are critical to the final funding decisions.
- The reviewer scores and comments provide **the actual ranking of applications** thereby making the award recommendations.
- The final decisions and/or awards are made by the OSSE using reviewer recommendations.

Important Instructions for the Reviewers

- 1. READ** the entire application
- 2. EVALUATE** the quality of EACH response in EACH proposal, at the beginning of the scoring process by considering the following:
 - Is the response relevant and responsive to qualitative criteria?
 - Is the response comprehensive and well thought out?
 - Is the response an effective, logical, and realistic approach to solving the problems identified?

Important Instructions for the Reviewers (Cont'd)

3. **RATE** each applicable section by assigning a point score.
4. **ALWAYS JUSTIFY**, with written comments, **ALL** ratings of less than full points. Comments explaining why a narrative component received a “Perfect Score” are required. Generic comments, such as “Meets all criteria” state the obvious and add no value.
6. Comments that support a professional assessment are important and can include, but are not limited to: **concrete examples, professional constructive criticism, suggestions for improvement, highlighting noted strengths, and/or emphasizing challenges.**

The Importance of Written Comments

Comments (feedback) justify each score!

- If there are questions about scoring, reviewers' comments should be sufficient to defend the scores without further explanation (*Even a year or two after the review!*)
- Write comments that clearly explain, to anyone reading them, why a particular score was given.
- Always try to provide concrete suggestions to guide applicants in future efforts.
- Comments should be positive, constructive versus critical, professional, helpful, and impartial.
- Strength-based comments are important to the applicant and help anyone else reading the scored application understand why the scores were given.

Reviewer Hints

- If you can not locate a required item, it is better to indicate that you can't find it than to say it isn't there.
- Another method is to say “the response isn't thorough regarding...”
- If an answer is located other than in the section of the narrative where it belongs, please make a note and then credit the answer in the correct section of the rubric.

Food for Thought for the Reviewer

We can't all be EXPERTS in every area!

Be mindful of the possible tendency to utilize the “benefit of a doubt” strategy, i.e. assigning a higher than usual score in topic areas where a reviewer is not entirely familiar...

If a reviewer is aware of this happening, it is recommended that s/he review that component again (and possibly adjust some scores) to make sure all scoring is as consistent as possible.

Food for Thought for the Reviewer (Cont'd)

You're probably thinking..



“As a reviewer should I be concerned about:

- Form?
- Grammar?
- Readability?
- Neatness?

Opinions can and do differ; one acceptable approach may be to suggest that reviewers overlook these issues unless the state of the proposal brings into question the applicant's commitment to the project.

Program Administrator's Role

The Program Administrator will:

- Be “on-call”
- Manage mailings and email responses;
- Answer technical and procedural questions;
- Not comment on individual applications nor provide opinions related to the same;
- Check completed rubrics for correct addition, completeness, adequate scoring comments, and legibility;
- Follow-up with individual reviewers as needed;
- Notify all reviewers that the review is complete and formally closed;

Reference Materials

The reference materials you will need to review the SIG applications are:

- RFA
- Scoring Rubric



District of Columbia School Types

Public

- **Public charter schools**, funded by the public according to the number of students they register, are independent public schools open to all students. The "charter" that establishes a school is a contract that states the school's mission, program, goals, students served, assessment methods, and means of measuring success. Unlike traditional public schools, charter schools are not restricted to ward boundary assignments. Parents and students may actively select any charter school in the District. Charter schools are publicly funded and may not charge tuition to District residents. Charters are free from some regulations, but they may not discriminate in their admissions requirements. Charter schools exercise increased control in return for accountability for academic results and fiscal practices. In the District of Columbia, the DC Public Charter School Board oversees public charter schools.
- **Public schools** are free to the public, open to all District residents, and financially supported by District tax dollars. Public schools may not discriminate in their admissions process. The DCPS includes primary schools (kindergarten to sixth grade), junior high schools (seventh to eighth grade), and secondary schools (ninth to twelfth grades). The DCPS offers alternative instruction through vocational programs, before and after school programs, and special education programs. The DCPS also offers specialized curricula through highly competitive Magnet schools.

Allowable Use of SIG Funds

Allowable Expenses	Non-Allowable Expenses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Costs should clearly align with the selected guiding strategy/strategies.✓ Costs should have a feasible link to increasing academic achievement.✓ Costs must address the needs identified in the needs assessment.✓ Costs must meet requirements of permissible use of Federal funds within EDGAR 34 Part 75, Part 76, and Part 80, as well as applicable OMB Circulars.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Unallowable costs per Federal Government guidelines.✗ Costs that do not align with the principles outlined in the ESEA Waiver or the guiding strategies.✗ Costs that do not meet the purpose of this grant.

Proposal Budgets

- Must be detailed and adequately justify the use of the requested Federal funds.
- Must demonstrate that the requested Federal funds will be used to **supplement** not supplant existing funds, curriculum, programs, etc.

Scoring Rubric

Please review each application assigned before inputting a score for each criterion –



Tab v.	
Leading Indicators: (Points: 10 points)	
<input type="checkbox"/> The LEA's provides a detailed explanation of the current or proposed plan for collecting SIG leading indicators data.	
The current actions and/or planned activities for collecting SIG leading indicators' data are clearly stated, reasonable, and contain a proposed plan for the collection of data not currently collected along with a detailed timeline that outlines a system for submitting timely data as requested by the SEA.	Strong (8-10 points)
The current actions and/or planned activities for collecting SIG leading indicators' data is minimally stated but lacks feasibility.	Adequate (5-7 points)
The current actions and/or planned activities for collecting SIG leading indicators' data is not clearly stated, reasonable, nor does it contain a proposed plan for the collection of data not currently collected or a detailed timeline that outlines a system for submitting timely data as requested by the SEA.	Inadequate (1-4 points)
<i>Strengths:</i>	
<i>Weaknesses:</i>	
Total Points: _____/10 points	

Scoring Rubric (Cont'd)

All scores and comments must be entered directly on the score sheets. Please highlight in yellow, the entire box that indicates your ranking for each item.

Sample

Tab v. Leading Indicators: (Points: 10 points)	
<input type="checkbox"/> The LEA's provides a detailed explanation of the current or proposed plan for collecting SIG leading indicators data.	
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The current actions and/or planned activities for collecting SIG leading indicators' data is minimally stated but lacks feasibility.	Adequate (5-7 points)
The current actions and/or planned activities for collecting SIG leading indicators' data is not clearly stated, reasonable, nor does it contain a proposed plan for the collection of data not currently collected or a detailed timeline that outlines a system for submitting timely data as requested by the SEA.	Inadequate (1-4 points)
<i>Strengths:</i>	
<i>Weaknesses:</i>	
Total Points: _____ /10 points	

Scoring Rubric (Cont'd)

- Comments and scores must be typed.
- All comments and scores must be electronically submitted to leetosha.henry@dc.gov no later than COB on Monday, April 21, 2014.

Scoring Rubric (Cont'd)

1. **RATE** each applicable section by assigning a point score.
2. **ALWAYS JUSTIFY**, with written comments, ALL ratings of less than full points. Comments explaining why a narrative component received a “Perfect Score” are required. Generic comments, such as “Meets all criteria” state the obvious and add no value.
3. Comments that support a professional assessment are important and can include, but are not limited to: **concrete examples, professional constructive criticism, suggestions for improvement, highlighting noted strengths, and/or emphasizing challenges.**

Questions



Contact Information

For further information please reach out to...

LeeTosha Henry, Ph.D.
Program Analyst
(202) 481-3797
leetosha.henry@dc.gov

Danielle Rollins
Program Analyst
202-741-0255
danielle.rollins@dc.gov

Sharon Gaskins
Deputy Assistant Superintendent of Accountability, Performance and Support
1-202-654-6112 (office)
sharon.gaskins@dc.gov