

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) from the Read and Lead Maryland Technical Assistance Webinars

MSDE developed this FAQ document to provide quick and clear answers to the questions asked during the Read and Lead TA webinars. The document may be updated periodically as additional questions are asked. If you have any additional questions, please submit them to us [here](#).

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## ELIGIBILITY AND PREFERENCE PRIORITIES

Q: The statutory requirements state that no less than 50% of students must qualify as academically disadvantaged or eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (i.e., FARMS), but the Preference Priorities say applicants get bonus points if 45% or more of students are 'economically disadvantaged.' Based on what criteria are LEAs eligible to apply and why are these targets different?

A: There are multiple eligibility criteria for the grant. The question references Section 2221(b) of the ESEA, which defines an eligible entity as "one or more LEAs that serve a high percentage of high-need schools." High-need schools are defined as at least 50% of elementary and at least 40% of high school student enrollment classified as low income (see p. 7 of the [GIG](#)). Section 2221(b) then adds additional criteria, as follows:

- The highest number or proportion of children served under Section 1124(c): These are children aged 5-17 in families below the poverty level, in families receiving TANF, "in institutions for neglected and delinquent children", and children in foster care.
- The highest numbers or proportions of children reading/writing below grade level.
- Serving a significant number or percentages of schools implementing comprehensive support and improvement activities

Then there are two additional, separate criteria - one related to early childhood programs with a demonstrated record of providing comprehensive literacy instruction and a second wherein an LEA or consortium partners with a public or nonprofit organization or agency that have demonstrated effectiveness in improving literacy or providing professional learning in comprehensive literacy instruction. These are listed in full on p. 5 of the GIG.

Therefore, there are several avenues through which an LEA can qualify for this competitive grant. Successful applicants will make a case for how they qualify in one of these areas (e.g., using data to show they selected schools with the highest need, noting partnerships with an organization that provides effective professional learning and referencing studies that demonstrate its effectiveness). Our reviewers will consider the quality of the proposed project, its likelihood of having a positive effect on teachers and students, and the likelihood of the plan leading to sustainability beyond grant funding. This is why the competitive "Preference Priorities" are assigned bonus points to boost applications that enroll specific portions of students with disabilities, multilingual learners, economically disadvantaged students, and students of color (3 bonus points). Additional bonus points are awarded to applications that demonstrate planning for sustainability (7 bonus points) and strong collaboration (6 bonus points).

Q: How will MSDE review and score applications?

A: Upon submission, MSDE will conduct a review to ensure that applications meet the eligibility criteria.

Eligible applications will be scored by third-party peer reviewers and MSDE staff from other offices (e.g., Early Childhood, Multilingual learners) using the rubric included in the RFA. MSDE will make subawards based on peer review feedback, Maryland's priorities (as stated in the RFA), and the CLSD grant's required funding allocations for each of the three grade bands (15% of funds to birth through age 5 programs, 40% to kindergarten through grade 5, and 40% to grade 6 through grade 12).

Q: Do applicants need to address how they are meeting eligibility requirements in the needs assessment?

A: This is not explicitly asked, however applicants should demonstrate that eligible schools are selected through your needs assessment.

## APPLICATION STRUCTURE AND GENERAL CONTENT

Q: How does an eligible local education agency (LEA) or consortium of LEAs submit the intent to apply?

A: The intent to apply form is linked [here](#). It is also linked on page 11 in the [Grant Information Guide \(GIG\)](#).

MSDE requested all submissions of an intent to apply by Monday, March 10. However, if you still plan to apply, we request that you still submit the intent to apply form. This enables us to tailor our technical assistance to meet applicants' needs.

Q: How might the priorities of the current administration and U.S. Department of Education impact Maryland's access to CLSD grant funds in forthcoming years? Can MSDE share information on the likelihood of continued federal funding in grant years 2-5?

A: MSDE is in frequent communication with the U.S. Department of Education's (ED's) Office of Elementary and Secondary Education program office (the program office). At the time of writing, ED's program office has directed us to proceed with all grant plans as approved, which includes awarding subgrants to LEAs for activities in grant years 1-5. The program office will provide us with any updates, as directed by the administration.

ED disburses federal grant funds one year at a time. MSDE will award subgrants to successful LEA applicants in May 2025 for Year 1, which ends September 30, 2025. LEAs may use Year 1 funds for planning activities. In order for ED's program office to approve disbursement of the next year's funding, grantees and subgrant recipients (hereafter, subrecipients) must demonstrate that they are following approved grant activities. Typically, the program office informs grantees (i.e., MSDE) of the disbursement of grant funds between one to several months before the year's end of funding on September 30. MSDE will confirm Year 2 funding with subrecipients as soon as that information is available.

Q: What should applicants consider for site selection in grades 6–12?

A: The funding source goes from 6-12, but it may be easier for districts to differentiate efforts in middle and high school, or focus solely on middle or high school grades. The CLSD grant requires MSDE to award funds equitably among grade spans 6 to 8 and 9 to 12.

**Q: [What should applicants consider when applying to serve multiple grade bands?](#)** Could applicants submit multiple applications to serve different grade bands (e.g., if there are different goals for different grade bands) or must all grade bands be included in one application?

A: Applicants may choose to submit one application for multiple grade bands or separate applications for various grade bands. Applicants may consider the following when determining an approach to applying for multiple grade bands:

- MSDE may partially fund applications that span multiple grade bands if applicants:
  - Demonstrate that activities within a specific grade band are purposefully tailored to that grade band's unique objectives,
  - Minimize activities spanning across multiple grade bands, and
  - Submit separate budgets and budget narratives for each grade band.
- Applicants may consider the extent to which their proposed approach to serving multiple grade bands includes work that is interrelated amongst the grade bands. Applicants that propose conducting unique activities specifically tailored to each grade band may benefit from submitting separate applications, whereas applicants aligning activities across grade bands may benefit from submitting a single application.
- Applicants should consider their capacity to implement proposed activities across grade bands in one or multiple applications. Note that serving multiple grade bands requires greater

capacity, so please consider your capacity when making the decision to serve multiple grade bands.

Q: What might a consortium of small LEAs look like?

A: Individual districts that serve fewer than 10,000 students may apply as a consortium. This can enable consortium members to target the highest needs schools in each district. LEAs may work together in a consortium in the following ways:

- *Sharing costs and administrative duties:* LEA partners may contribute to various parts of the application process. If awarded, partners may share responsibilities for maintenance of financial records; submission of required financial and programmatic reports to MSDE; and responding to monitoring and compliance reviews.
- *Expanded expertise and resources:* LEA partners may bring different skills, knowledge, and strengths and may share access to technology and personnel. For example, partners could share coaches across districts.
- *Establish or strengthen cross-LEA partnerships:* These partnerships may enhance the LEAs' plan for sustainability of activities (see Preference Priority #2) or enable different offices across LEAs to collaborate (see Preference Priority #3).

Q: Are there opportunities for small districts to ask for smaller amounts, without being a consortium?

A: Yes! Applicants should request an amount of funding that makes sense for the size of the district and the scope of the proposed project. Successful applicants will justify the requested amount of funding through the narratives and budget that demonstrate the quality of the projects, their alignment with current student and teacher data, and the strength of their implementation and evaluation designs.

Q: Will these additional assurances be included in the NOGA? Or will a separate assurances be document be required for superintendents' signatures?

A: A separate assurances document will be required for superintendents' signatures. The [Grant Application Submission Form](#) has a link to the assurances form for superintendents' signatures. General assurances are found on pages 9–10 in the [CIG](#), and specific assurances to your strategies will be in your NOGA dependent on strategies awarded.

Q: What are the dates for each year of the subaward project periods and how do these align to MSDE's five-year grant period?

A: MSDE was awarded the CLSD grant on October 1, 2024. Each of the five grant years runs from October 1 of one calendar year to September 30 of the following calendar year; this aligns with the federal fiscal year. Project periods for subaward grants are as follows:

- *Year 1: May 30, 2025–September 30, 2025.* Successful applicants will receive subawards on May 30, 2025, for five project periods. This truncated project year is designated as a planning year for subgrantees to acquire materials and plan for future project years.
- *Year 2: October 1, 2025–September 30, 2026.* This year focuses on implementation of the activities described in the application.
- *Year 3: October 1, 2026–September 30, 2027.* This year focuses on implementation activities.
- *Year 4: October 1, 2027–September 30, 2028.* This year focuses on implementation activities.
- *Year 5: October 1, 2028–September 30, 2029.* This year focuses on wrapping up grant activities with a focus on sustainability of activities beyond grant funding.

Q: Will there be an opportunity for LEAs to apply for Read and Lead grants in the future?

A: No, there will be no further competitive cycles for LEAs to apply for the Read and Lead MSDE CLSD grant. All available funds will be awarded to successful applicants for five project periods in May 2025 (May 30, 2025 – September 30, 2029) based on applications received no later than 5:00 pm on April 28, 2025. MSDE will conduct ongoing monitoring of subrecipients to ensure that grant funds are used as effectively as possible and that funds are spent as committed to in the applications.

Q: How should smaller districts that propose grant-funded specialists (e.g., coaches, MTSS specialists) write about grade bands in the application, given that a specialist would focus on PK-12?

A: There are a few approaches that smaller districts could consider:

- If applying as the sole LEA, write the application to address activities across all grade bands. Your narrative should demonstrate how the proposed approach has interrelated activities across the different grade bands and is a fiscally responsible use of funds, as one specialist's time is used to provide support across all grades in the district.
- A smaller LEA may also consider partnering with one or more other small LEAs to share strategies and staff. For example, if there is not sufficient work for a full-time specialist within the district schools, or if multiple specialists are needed to support project activities, then a consortium may benefit from applying for a greater amount of funding than a single LEA to support staff salaries.

Q: How do goals align to the objectives and performance measures?

A: MSDE created the [SMART Goals Toolkit](#) to provide applicants with an optional tool to develop SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) goals, objectives, and performance measures. In brief, goals describe the big-picture activities; objectives are specific strategies to accomplish a goal; and performance measures track progress toward meeting an objective. To think about how these are related, let's look at an abbreviated example:

- **Goal:** Reduce literacy gaps between groups of students in the district.
  - Note that this goal is broad and future-oriented. But it requires strategies and activities to achieve the goal. The objective below provides one of those steps.
- **Objective:** [LEA will] implement the Content-Focused Coaching Model in four elementary schools to support struggling readers.
  - This objective is one strategy to achieve the goal of reducing literacy gaps. It also relates to the MSDE CLSD grant objectives, listed on page 3 of the [GIG](#).
- **Performance Measure:** In years 2–5 of the grant, literacy coaches will engage in at least 60 hours of coaching per teacher, including co-planning, co-teaching, and reflective feedback sessions, as documented in coaching logs and teacher reflections.
  - This performance measure is one of many steps to measure progress toward the objective. Other measures could focus on the fidelity of the coaching implementation, teachers' improvement in implementing evidence-based literacy instructional strategies, or student growth over time in reading proficiency scores.

Q: What does it mean that this application requires strong or moderate evidence?

A: Applicants' proposed strategies or interventions must be backed by research that meets the "strong" or "moderate" evidence threshold, as described on page 8 of the [GIG](#). Through that research, the strategies must show evidence of a statistically significant positive effect on student outcomes. Strong evidence comes from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study, such as a randomized controlled trial. Moderate evidence comes from at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study, such as a study that compares groups but does not randomly assign participants. Applicants should include references or citations to studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed approach. In short, applicants need to select evidence-based strategies

that have been proven effective through high-quality research and provide documentation to support the approach.

The What Works Clearinghouse (from ED's Institute of Education Sciences) reviews and summarizes education research to help determine evidence-based practices. The "Find and Use Evidence" section of [their website](#) may be a helpful tool to you.

Q: Will the monitoring and implementation tools be developed in the early stages of the grant or as we go through the different cycles?

A: Tools for implementation and monitoring of grant activities may be developed both during the early stages and throughout the grant cycles. MSDE will work with grantees to develop data collection, program evaluation, and reporting tools. As noted in the Assurances on page 9 of the [CIG](#), "LEAs must agree to evaluate implementation of Read and Lead Maryland funds by utilizing tools to be created in collaboration with MSDE that will assess program impact and fidelity. These tools will be designed specifically to the needs of the subgrantee's project plan."

Q: Does this grant encourage or hope to see the use of external evaluators?

A: External evaluation is not required but is acceptable if the applicant chooses to include it in their project plan. Regardless of whether the applicant chooses an external evaluator, subrecipients will need to comply with MSDE-mandated monitoring and evaluation processes. MSDE's CLSD Liaison will provide guidance and support for subgrantees' data management and reporting processes.

Q: Can the ELA supervisor serve as both the grant manager and the grant coordinator? Or are the LEA fiscal personnel required to be the grants coordinator?

A: The grants coordinator is simply the primary point of contact (POC) for MSDE, as indicated in the intent to apply. One person, such as the ELA supervisor, might be assigned to two roles in the grant, including the grant coordinator. The coordinator does not need to be the fiscal personnel.

Q: Can small LEAs have dual points of contact?

A: Yes, MSDE will coordinate with all people who the subrecipient's project director confirms should be included as POCs.

Q: If any position is vacant at the moment, what do we do?

A: On the Grant Application Form, please note that those positions are currently vacant. The person filling the position can sign once hired.

## PROGRAM SITE SELECTION

Q: If an applicant focuses on a feeder system of schools, can those all apply to one grade band (e.g., the elementary schools)?

A: Yes, applicants may choose to apply for only one specific grade band, such as elementary schools. Applications focused solely on elementary schools do not need to include early learning (birth through age 5), middle school or high school grades.

Q: If we focus on one pattern of feeder schools, do we have to serve all schools in the feeder system?

A: No, you can serve as many or as few schools as you deem are appropriate based on the available evidence of need.



Q: In the first TA session, you mentioned that if a district is proposing to implement an initiative across all elementary schools, those should be listed in the Program Site Selection chart. Would you recommend listing all schools or narrowing it down?

A: It depends on the initiative and the information discovered in the needs assessment. For example:

- If the approach is hiring five coaches to support a specific set of schools that show a need for improved job-embedded professional learning, applicants may choose to band all schools together, explaining how they can effectively share those resources.
- If the intervention assigns one coach per school based on the need of the specific school, it might make sense to list the school individually.

The decision should align with your district's needs and the project activities and goals. If an applicant proposes purchasing a resource for the entire district, the needs assessment should justify it. A strong application will show a solid correlation between the data that shows need for the evidence-based practice or tool and how the practice or tool will address that need.

## BUDGET

Q: Do we submit multiple C-1-25 or one consolidated C-1-25? **[Updated guidance]**

A: Applicants do not need to submit a C-1-25. At the time of award, MSDE will provide guidance to successful applicants to submit the C-1-25 using the Proposed Budget Spreadsheet included in their application.

Q: Where are the budget form and budget narrative?

A: The Proposed Budget Spreadsheet is an Excel file; the budget narrative is included in the Grant Application Template PDF file. Both documents are linked under "Required Documents" on the [Grant Application Submission Form](#). Applicants may submit the budget narrative as a separate PDF file if they choose.

Q: What is the purpose of a budget narrative? What should it include?

A: An effective budget narrative contextualizes the numerical information provided in the Proposed Budget Spreadsheet by specifying how the proposed budget will support the specific goals, objectives, or activities in an applicant's project plan. In the budget narrative, applicants provide a detailed explanation of the proposed use of funds per budget line item (e.g., personnel, equipment, contractual/vendors). It should illustrate how the funding is distributed over the five-year period and how it builds upon itself over time.

Additionally, the budget narrative justifies the reasonableness and necessity of the costs in relation to the grant's objectives. It may also include explanations for specific rates or calculations. For Read and Lead Maryland, the budget narrative is included in the Grant Application Template PDF but may be included as a standalone PDF document. Like the other application documents, it has no page limit.

Q: How many points is the budget and budget narrative section worth? **[NEW]**

A: The budget and budget narrative section is worth 30 points. The RFA has been updated so that this information is consistent.

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

Q: For a larger district targeting a specific feeder pattern, should the data focus on the entire district or the specific feeder pattern?

A: The data presented should eventually narrow down to focus on the specific feeder pattern(s). Applicants may use the needs assessment to guide them in narrowing what feeder to focus on, but the data for the chosen feeder system(s) must be included to clearly justify the need for the project..

Q: If the districtwide data does not reflect the need at a specific set of schools, can we just present the data for those schools?

A: Yes, the needs assessment will ask to indicate focus schools and present the data that allows you to target needs. However, the applicant should provide district data to provide context and further emphasize the need in those focus schools.

Q: Can the Comprehensive Literacy Plan be updated?

A: Yes! If you find that your project plan does not currently align to your district's Comprehensive Literacy Plan, it should be updated to reflect that focus.

Q: Is there a requirement for how many years of data is included in the needs assessment?

A: There is no specific requirement for the number of years of data to include. You have the flexibility to determine the most relevant timeframe for your assessment. You may choose to compare current data with pre-pandemic figures, analyze trends over the past two years, or use another approach that best supports your needs assessment.

Q: Could you please provide clarification on interpreting "students of color"? It is not specified in the GIG.

A: To align with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), applicants should list "students of color" by their race/ethnicity categorization. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) established the following federal categories for all races/ethnicity:

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Two or more races

Q: What does it mean that this application requires strong or moderate evidence?

A: Applicants' proposed activities must be backed by research that meets the "strong" or "moderate" evidence threshold, as described on page 8 of the [GIG](#). Through that research, the activities must show evidence of a statistically significant positive effect on student outcomes. Strong evidence comes from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study, such as a randomized controlled trial. Moderate evidence comes from at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study, such as a study that compares groups but does not randomly assign participants. Applicants should include references or citations to studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed approach. In short, applicants need to select evidence-based strategies that have been proven effective through high-quality research and provide documentation to support the approach.

The What Works Clearinghouse (from ED's Institute of Education Sciences) reviews and summarizes education research to help determine evidence-based practices. The "Find and Use Evidence" section of [their website](#) may be a helpful tool to you.

## AWARD SIZE

Q: How may the administrative burden of implementing the grant impact smaller districts that serve students with high needs?

A: We recognize that the management of grants inherently adds an administrative burden. To address this burden, applicants may consider proposing to use grant funds to defray the costs of additional administrative support to administer the grant. Additionally, small districts may consider applying as a consortium with other small districts; see page 5 of the [GIG](#) and our response to this question: *Q: What might a consortium of small LEAs look like?*

Q: Could we use grant funds to hire literacy coaches? As a smaller district, we don't know whether we can request sufficient grant funds to cover the salary of one or more coaches.

A: Absolutely—go for it! Applicants may consider structuring their requests based on grade bands (e.g., birth to age 5, K–5, 6–12) to demonstrate how literacy coaches will support targeted student groups. Also, carefully assess whether the available grant funding aligns with the cost of hiring coaches, including salaries and benefits. Considering the high cost of such an initiative, applicants may need to be more creative in how to effectively implement literacy coaching. If full funding for a coach isn't feasible, applicants may propose partial funding options, such as supporting a portion of a coach's salary or funding professional development for existing staff to serve in coaching roles. Additionally, if your needs assessment indicates that multiple schools and grade bands may benefit from literacy coaching, consider a “phased in” approach where the direct assistance a coach gives any one school or grade band shifts throughout the entirety of the five-year grant period.

With any approach to including literacy coaches, applicants should clearly explain within the Comprehensive Project Plan how hiring literacy coaches directly supports the grant's objectives, provide a detailed cost breakdown in the Proposed Budget Spreadsheet, and tie the justifications of costs in the Budget Narrative back to the project's goals and outcomes.

Q: Since there is no average grant award or award range mentioned in the GIG, will MSDE issue a partial award?

A: MSDE will not be awarding partial funds per grade band. MSDE may not award all of the grade bands in a district's project plan, however. For example, if your district applies for all 3 grade bands, we may only award for one of those grade bands based on the strength of the grade band's project plan. For further information, please see our response to this question: [Q: What should applicants consider when applying to serve multiple grade bands?](#)

Q: Can we put in hyperlinks to data, if we have existing charts located online?

A: Yes, you can include hyperlinks. However, if the data is essential to your project, it should also be incorporated into the project narrative. Ensure that key information is directly presented in the narrative so that reviewers can easily access and consider it.

## FUNDING PROCESS

Q: What are the details of the reimbursement process, including the timeline to request reimbursements?

A: MSDE will process reimbursements on a monthly basis. MSDE's CLSD Grant Liaison will serve as the main point of contact for subgrantees, providing support on processes and timelines for submitting reimbursements (including ensuring that districts submit the required documentation) and ensuring that funds are reimbursed in a timely manner.

Q: How will staff salaries paid through the grant be reimbursed?

A: Subgrantees will also submit reimbursement requests for staff salaries on a monthly basis.

Q: Given the reimbursement process, how should applicants budget grant funds for position salaries, particularly in Year 1 (May 30 to September 30, 2025)?

A: Since this is a reimbursement grant, applicants could request partial funding for Year 1 (i.e., a portion of a full-time equivalent [FTE] salary for the 2024-25 school year) and then FTE salaries in the other grant years.

Q: For the HQIM strategy, will LEAs be purchasing the materials directly or will MSDE make the purchases on our behalf (similar to the process for the Maryland Leads initiative)?

A: Subgrantees will be purchasing their materials directly and submitting the appropriate documentation to MSDE for reimbursement of those costs.

Q: Since the grant ends on September 30, 2029, how should we budget for FTE staff during the 2029-30 school year and beyond?

A: Applicants are encouraged to submit a sustainability plan as part of the application (Preference Priority #2 awards 7 bonus points, as noted on page 6 of the [GLC](#)). The sustainability plan may outline how that position will be funded beyond the grant period. Otherwise, the FTE would likely end at that time. Reimbursements for the last project period (Year 5) will be made for expenses through September 30, 2029. MSDE will work with subgrantees to establish reimbursement processes and timelines, which will include the final reimbursements in Year 5.

Q: Do funds that don't get spent carry over to the future year?

A: As a rule, subgrantees should work diligently to avoid carryover of awarded grant funds from one year to the next. ED's carryover threshold for the CLSD grant is very low. **ED stipulates that if there is "excessive carryover", the next year's award amount could be reduced.**

When establishing budgets, applicants should consider:

- *Realistic Spending Projections:* Ensure that funds can be fully utilized within each grant year to minimize carryover. This includes Year 1, which is truncated due to the timing of subgrant awards (May 30–September 30, 2025).
- *Timely Implementation:* Plan for an efficient and realistic timeline for the rollout of activities, staffing, and resource allocation to avoid delays that could lead to unspent funds.
- *Allowable and Strategic Use of Funds:* Identify eligible expenses that align with the grant's goals and ensure spending is maximized within the approved categories.

Additionally, applicants should establish internal systems to regularly track and monitor grant expenditures. This will facilitate addressing reimbursement requests and regular monitoring from MSDE. If changes to spending timelines or budget categories are anticipated, subrecipients should notify MSDE's CLSD Grant Liaison as soon as possible to collaboratively make necessary modifications.

## REQUIRED AND ALLOWABLE USAGE OF FUNDS

Q: Are applicants required to include funds in every budget category (e.g., fringe benefits or travel)?

A: No, you might not need to include funds in every category. However, MSDE will host at least one annual Read and Lead Convening that is required for all grant leaders, so please budget appropriately for travel costs.

Q: Can the professional learning funds be used for training in interventions or would that fall into the HQIM band?

A: Training for specific instructional materials can be grouped under “Professional Learning Models” or “HQIM.” MSDE acknowledges that there may be significant overlap with some strategies. HQIM, Professional Learning, and Literacy Coaching, for instance, are all strategies that will most likely include training for teachers.

Q: For the partnership with Higher Ed bucket, are we required to work with UMD (given their connection to MILE) or may we work with other universities?

A: MSDE does not require grant funds to be used for any specific vendor or contractor. Districts are encouraged to follow their own procurement processes to select vendors and contractors that best meet their unique needs.

Q: Will you provide a list of approved vendors?

A: MSDE will not provide a list of approved vendors for this grant, and you are not mandated to select any specific vendors or contracts as partners. Upon request, MSDE can provide support in identifying or narrowing down vendor options that meet the needs of the proposed project. Consider scheduling an office hours session using this [link](#) for guidance on choosing vendors.

Q: May applicants propose using funds to renew the district’s tier 1 curriculum?

A: Applicants may be able to use grant funds to support the district’s existing curriculum in specific situations. However, as directed in Section 2301 of the ESEA, applicants must ensure that all proposed use of funds “supplement, not supplant” district spending. This means that districts should not divert existing funding away from a curriculum in order to have it covered by the grant. However, if local budget cuts would cause districts to eliminate current activities, such as implementation of the tier 1 curriculum, then an applicant may make the case to use grant funds to secure curriculum materials and serve students in need.

Please reference further guidance for “supplement, no supplant” on pages 7–8 of the [GIG](#).

Q: Could applicants budget for purchasing a HQIM in Year 1 to use in project years 2–5, since it may be more cost effective?

A: Yes, applicants may consider paying a lump sum for HQIM at the beginning of the grant period. However, keep in mind that this would require an applicant to request a substantial amount of funding at the beginning of the grant period.

Q: Can applicants purchase HQIM for use across the system, including the specific gap schools, if the district meets a threshold of need?

A: Yes, applicants may justify this in the budget narrative to demonstrate how this will benefit the schools that are the focus of the grant as well as the district writ large.

Q: Can funds be used for position salaries?

A: Yes, grant funds may especially be used for position salaries such as coaches and interventionists.

Q: How can applicants budget for purchasing a tool for use across multiple grade bands?

A: Include this detail in your budget narrative and spreadsheet to ensure funds are allocated correctly for each grade band. This helps align funding with the grant requirements for each grade band. You can describe the tool's use in your Project Plan, ensuring that it aligns to your budget. This is an example of why you might want to submit a single application for multiple grade bands.

Q: Will the AIM course continue to be offered as a free resource or should it be included as a cost in the grant? Can applicants budget to pay teachers stipends for participating in the AIM course?

A: AIM will continue to be provided as a free resource through June 2028, so applicants do not need to budget to pay for the program itself unless they choose to offer a course not currently offered by MSDE (i.e. AIM Pathways to Proficient Reading for students in grades K-5). However, applicants may budget to pay teachers a stipend for time spent in getting certified through the AIM course.

Q: What considerations should applicants make about using grant funds to acquire HQIM? How should EdReports be used before acquiring core instructional materials?

A: Guidance on acquiring HQIM using Read and Lead Maryland funds can be found on page 17 of the [GIG](#). Due to the timeframe of this grant, the MSDE review process of instructional materials will not have been completed for core instructional materials (IM). As a result, LEAs may use these funds to acquire grade-level and standards-aligned materials with the understanding that the IM may not meet the expectations of quality based on the [MSDE ELA/Literacy Instructional Materials Rubric](#) in the future.

Due to the fact that no core instructional materials have yet been reviewed for quality in Maryland, all purchased materials must be green-rated by [EdReports](#). MSDE suggests using the [MSDE ELA/Literacy Instructional Materials Rubric](#) in conjunction with [EdReports](#) when considering the purchase of any core instructional materials. MSDE also encourages using these funds to acquire instructional materials focused on foundational skills because MSDE will not be reviewing IM focused only on foundational skills in the near future.

Q: Since grant funds may not be used to pay for work that is legislated, how would the passage of Success for Maryland's Public Schools Act, which includes a coach and PL coordinator, impact funding eligibility?

A: As of the time of writing, the Success for Maryland's Public Schools Act has not been passed. Regardless, MSDE interprets the legislation as focusing on coaches and professional learning coordinators that report to MSDE instead of staff that report directly to districts. Therefore, MSDE does not foresee that utilizing CLSD funds for district coaches will be an issue.

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Q: Will LEAs have access to the state literacy coaches to support LEA training?

A: Yes! State Literacy Coaches that were written into MSDE's CLSD application will support district literacy coaches in their implementation and support, as well as to facilitate professional learning. It is important to note, however, that, as of writing, MSDE will only have two State Literacy Coaches. This means that the focus of the CLSD-funded State Literacy Coaches is to support the CLSD-funded district literacy coaches.