

**1003(A) SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANTS (SIG)
2013 – ROUND 1
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

1. QUESTION:

NYCDoE is considering submitting applications for SIG 2013 in Round 2. Could you please confirm that Round 2 will be available for us to apply?

1. ANSWER: Confirmation of the availability of a SIG 2013 Round 2 for NYCDoE cannot be made at this time. While it is the intent of the NYSED to provide (LEAs) with opportunities to support the implementation of a whole-school change model in its Priority Schools, the release of a SIG Round 2 RFP will depend upon the availability of funds. If an opportunity is provided, LEAs will need to reference the eligibility requirements to find out which of its schools can apply.

2. QUESTION:

If a school chooses to implement the Transformation or Turnaround model, must the principal be replaced? In previous years, flexibility was provided to a school if the school had hired a new principal within the last two years as part of a school reform effort. That previously hired principal could remain in their position to continue the school's reform efforts. An LEA taking advantage of this flexibility should be able to demonstrate that: (1) the prior principal in the school at issue was replaced as part of a broader reform effort, and (2) the new principal has the experience and skills needed to implement successfully a turnaround, restart or transformation model.

2. ANSWER: The same flexibility is afforded to schools choosing either the Transformation or Turnaround model, given that the LEA is able to demonstrate that: (1) the prior principal in the school at issue was replaced as part of a broader reform effort, and (2) the new principal has the experience and skills needed to implement successfully a Turnaround, Restart or Transformation model. Please see section G-1b:
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/sifguidance03012012.doc>.

3. QUESTION:

Will NYSED be providing the information to complete the NYS State Average column for Attachment B, School-level Baseline Data and Target-Setting Chart?

3. ANSWER: No. The LEA applicant may leave the NYS State Average column blank; however, the LEA must report the data in all other columns related to its school/district.

4. QUESTION:

What is considered a rigorous process for identifying, screening, and selecting partner organizations?

4. ANSWER: A rigorous process is one that speaks to the quality of the partner organizations that will provide critical services to Priority Schools. It is one that is transparent, broad in its scope of searching for potential organizations, clear in its expected deliverables of an organization, and specific in conveying the correlation between the school's needs and the organization's ability to meet those needs.

5. QUESTION:

Is there a specific allowable and unallowable expense list that needs to be adhered to for this grant?

5. ANSWER: No. The LEA should reference the *Non-Allowable Costs* and the *Additional Budget Guidance* sections of the RFP (pages 8 - 9).

6. QUESTION:

Can a district propose to change the cycle of the school year for just the Priority school for which the grant application is for? For example proposing a different school year calendar for just that school? Does this fit with the operational autonomy, use of time, etc.?

6. ANSWER: Yes, if the district can show that it is complying with State law.

7. QUESTION:

Timeframe for grant development and submission may not allow for the changes necessary for board policies, contracts/labor management agreements and final approval of partners. What will be acceptable evidence to demonstrate proposed actions will occur?

7. ANSWER: Applicants must comply with the grant requirements pertaining to APPR and the Consultation and Collaboration Documentation Form, as stated in the RFP. In other areas of the RFP where board policies, contracts/labor management agreements and final approval from partners are requested, these items must be in place at the time of submission in order for it to be possible to receive a score of "Acceptable" or "Exemplary" in that category. Other forms of evidence, such as early letters of agreement coupled with a strong action plan and timeline to achieve final actions before the end of the pre-implementation period, or other evidence that the applicant feels will make the case for a successful implementation, may support scoring of "Approaching" or "Insufficient" in that category.

8. QUESTION:

If a school has recently replaced teaching staff (within the last two years), does that school need to replace 50 percent of the existing staff?

8. ANSWER: To determine the number of staff members that must be replaced for purposes of implementing the Turnaround model when the LEA is taking advantage of the flexibility to continue an intervention it has begun to implement within the last two years, reference Item G-1c: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/sigguidance03012012.doc>. If you choose the Transformation model there is no requirement to replace at least half the staff.

9. QUESTION:

Can we replace the 50% of staff in stages? ie: 20% year , 20% year 2 and 10% year 3?

9. ANSWER: A school implementing a Turnaround model must meet the Turnaround staffing requirement by September 1, 2013. In addition, see the answer to Question 8.

10. QUESTION:

Will there be another round of SIF funding for the 2014-15 school year? Will there be another round of SIG funding? If so, when do you anticipate the RFPs being posted for both SIF and SIG?

10. ANSWER: A future release of a SIF3 RFP is being considered but cannot be confirmed at this time. Such information would be posted at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/turnaround/SchoolInnovationFundSIFGrant.html>. With regard to SIG, see the answer to Question 1.

11. QUESTION:

Is an International Baccalaureate primary years program an acceptable option for educational programming with this application?

11. ANSWER: This RFP requires a whole-school plan. Any school-wide program that fits within the framework provided in the RFP and meets all standards and scoring requirements would be acceptable.

12. QUESTION:

Transformation/Turnaround/Restart template: Are there any model-specific requirements that schools must address? Or are all questions in the application applicable for all 3 models?

12. ANSWER: The chart within the *SIG Plan Standards - Turnaround, Restart and Transformation Models* section of the RFP (pages 4-6) identifies the SIG plan requirements for all three models. The *Proposal Narrative* section (RFP pages 15-23) provides additional details of those requirements for all three

models. The LEA (applicant) should provide responses to each section/question within the context of the particular model chosen.

13. QUESTION:

Transformation/Turnaround/Restart template: On page 19 (School-level Plan, E. Instructional Staff) states: *“iv. Describe the process and identify the formal LEA/school mechanisms that enable all instructional staff to be screened, selected, retained, transferred, and/or recruited. Identify any barriers or obstacles to assigning the appropriate staff as required by the model and new school design, as well as strategies for overcoming them.”* Is the re-screening of all staff required for models other than Turnaround?

13. ANSWER: Regardless of the model chosen, the LEA should demonstrate the capacity to screen, select, retain, transfer and/or recruit the staff necessary for its successful implementation. These actions in Transformation and Restart models do not necessarily need to meet the 50% staffing threshold.

14. QUESTION:

Transformation/Turnaround/Restart template: Is the principal replacement not applicable if the principal has been at the school less than three years?

14. ANSWER: See the answer to Question 2.

15. QUESTION:

For using the Turnaround model to phase out schools and phase in new schools: NYCDOE has a number of new schools replacing a closing school site over multiple years. In such cases, may we add new schools for SIG funding consideration in subsequent years? May we request 3 years of SIG funding for that new school from the time it receives its award?

Example: John Doe High School has begun phasing out in 2012 and will close at end of June 2015. It is awarded SIG for 2012-13 through 2014-15. The first replacement new school, Alpha High School, opened in fall 2012 and is also receiving SIG until 2014-2015. In fall 2013, the second replacement school, Beta High School, is opening at the school site as part of the DOE’s replacement strategy for John Doe HS. Could the district apply for Beta High School to receive SIG funding beginning in 2013-14? Could its funding be in place until 2015-2016 (3 years of SIG)?

15. ANSWER: For this current SIG competition, the funding period is for a maximum of three years, plus a five-month pre-implementation period, beginning April 1, 2013. If the Turnaround phase-out school is currently receiving, or has received SIG funds, neither it nor its new phase-in school is eligible for an award under this competition.

16. QUESTION:

For the Turnaround model, should the LEA submit separate applications for the phase-out school and for each of its replacement new schools?

16. ANSWER: No. If the LEA is proposing a Turnaround model by which the Priority School is phasing out and a new school is phasing-in, the complete plan for the Priority School and its replacements must be contained in one application.

17. QUESTION:

Closure template: Are there required elements to the Closure model that the school must include in its plan?

17. ANSWER: Yes. The chart within the *SIG Plan Standards for Closure Models*' section of the RFP (pages 6-7) identifies the SIG plan requirements for this model. The *Proposal Narrative - Closure Model* section (RFP pages 25-27) provides additional details of those requirements for this model. Additional program guidance on school closure can be found in Section D: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/sigguidance03012012.doc>.

18. QUESTION:

How should we present Central costs? May we submit separate application for Central costs (particularly if there are initiatives/personnel affecting multiple schools)? (The total request would be no more than 10% of schools' grant request amount.)

18. ANSWER: The central (district-level) costs should be presented in each individual school application, and cannot be submitted as a separate application. In the Budget Narrative, the applicant can indicate the total district-level project costs across multiple schools, but must also clearly identify the specific funding amounts that are being requested for the specific school identified in each individual application. Only those district costs that are directly associated with the specific school should be included in the Budget Summary Chart and FS-10 Forms.

19. QUESTION:

Budget: On page 8, the fourth bullet states that "*For Turnaround, Restart, and Transformation model applications, LEAs must budget for a minimum of \$200,000 for the pre-implementation period of this grant, and there will be no carryover of funds from the pre-implementation period to the implementation periods.*" During the pre-implementation period, may schools utilize their year-one implementation period funding?

19. ANSWER: Yes, the pre-implementation budget may exceed \$200,000; however, the total costs of both the pre-implementation period budget and the year-one implementation period budget may not exceed \$2,000,000.