

Race to the Top Monthly Report: November 2010 Maryland

Date Submitted: December 9, 2010

Activities

Department-wide

- Mobilized Department to deal with the review of LEA Scopes of Work with an extremely short turnaround time

Personnel

- Divisions have been interviewing and selecting individuals to fill various RTTT positions that will enable them to begin projects
- Program managers have been identified for all 54 RTTT projects
- Secured the services of a Technology Project Director

Budget/Procurement

- Members of the Office of Finance reviewed all budget submissions from the LEA Scopes of Work.
- Staff contacted the LEAs with clarifying questions associated with the budget portion of the Scopes of Work. Responses were included in the LEA final versions submitted to MSDE on November 22.
- MSDE approvals of 18 budgets are subject to minor additional clarifications before receiving a grant award; 4 budgets were approved as is.
- Race to the Top funding has been recognized via budget amendment in the State's budget system. Adjustment will be made to tie into the full LEA grant amounts.
- MSDE continues to work with the State Department of Information Technology on development of Major IT Projects associated with RTTT.
- Maryland will need to submit a budget amendment request to align the 50% LEA share of the grant with the approved Scopes of Work. The initial budget projected a 20% requirement in project year 1. Scopes of Work will be aggregated and a corresponding adjustment will be submitted to US Department of Education.

LEA Scopes of Work

- Identified staff to review (8 teams) LEA Scopes of Work
- Trained staff to ensure consistency in using the scoring rubric and to provide feedback LEAs.
- First draft of Scopes of Work received on November 3
- Review teams provided written feedback to LEAs regarding their narratives, action plans, and budgets by November 10. Additional technical assistance was provided to some LEAs by phone.
- Final versions of the Scopes of Work were submitted to MSDE on November 17
- Scopes of Work submitted to USDE on November 22.

- Will receive feedback from USDE regarding Scopes of Work on or about December 10
- Correspondence from USDE allowing us to release funds to LEAs will follow Dec. 10 feedback

Project Management

- The 54 RTTT projects have been put on Microsoft Project software for tracking purposes over the course of the grant
- For supervisory purposes, the projects have been divided into three categories. The non-technology projects will be supervised by Lyle Patzkowsky. The technology projects unrelated to the Maryland Longitudinal Database will be supervised by Donnell Josiah. The technology projects related to the Maryland Longitudinal Database will be supervised by Leslie Wilson.

Successes

- The SOW review process was efficient and effective. The training provided to review teams was succinct, yet comprehensive. Despite the quick turnaround time, review teams were able to meet and reach consensus. The LEAs received feedback that was specific, constructive, meaningful, and substantive. Phone calls were made to provide additional clarification and/or to respond to inquiries.
- Secured the services of a technology project director who brings a wealth of technical and project management expertise

Challenges

- Hiring individuals for some RTTT contractual positions has proven to be a challenge. Contractual positions do not come with fringe benefits, and as a result the pool of candidates is often limited.
- The statewide educator evaluation system continues to be a challenge. The Educator Effectiveness Council has requested a six-month extension so they can continue to discuss and try to reach consensus on some very complex issues (e.g., defining and measuring student growth, evaluating non-tested area teachers, weighting for special populations).
- The timeline issues surrounding the rollout of the Common Core State Curriculum and the accompanying assessments continue to be a problem. Educators across the country are concerned about the problems caused by working with a new curriculum while being tested on old assessments that are tied to the former curriculum (and AYP being decided based on the old curriculum).
- Getting the technology infrastructure in place in a timely way continues to be a challenge due to the need to get qualified new personnel to handle these matters.

Projected Activities for December

- Approval from USDE to distribute funds to LEAs based on LEA Scopes of Work
- Continuing interviews for RTTT positions
- Orientation for newly hired personnel
- Continuing work on Microsoft Project software

- Determine reporting instrument and review protocol for project implementation
- Begin determining process for monitoring LEA Scopes of Work
- Continue work on program evaluation

Questions

- What process and instruments will USDE use to monitor states? We were originally told that we would have this information on or about November 22. We understand that USDE is working on this protocol. Our concern has to do with the requirement that we would have to submit our plan for how we intended to monitor LEAs within 90 days of our submission of their Scopes of Work (also November 22). Will that 90 day deadline be adjusted to reflect the actual date that we actually receive state monitoring information from USDE so that there can be consistency of approach?