Race to the Top
Progress Update – February 2012 Monthly Call

Directions: In preparation for monthly calls, a State must provide responses to the questions in Part A for their overall plan, and responses to the questions in Part B for ***two*** application sub-criterion.

Part A: *In preparation for monthly calls, States must provide information that addresses the three questions below on the implementation of all aspects of its approved scope of work. This may include a written response. If your State already has a state-specific system to report on its progress, please work with your program officer to determine the best method of providing this information for your State.*

1. What were the State's key accomplishments and challenges this past month?

   Accomplishments:

   - Shared draft of State Default Model of principals' evaluation with LEA executive officers. Very positive feedback. Flexible instrument so that can it be adapted to needs of LEAs
   - Project 31/13- 25 candidates selected for Aspiring Principals Leadership cohort on the Eastern Shore Cohort has met four times. Mentors also identified.
   - Project 42/17 - Met with executive officers of 8 LEAs who will have principals participating in the summer Priority Principals' Academy
   - Project 44/41 - Representatives from Virginia shared their experiences with Indistar with the Breakthrough Center Cross Functional Team
   - Project 37/54 - Awarded $19,000 sub-grant to Allegany County to initiate a Chinese language program
   - Project 51/71 - Met with 5 Baltimore City schools to prepare for implementation of Project Lead the Way
   - Project 52/77 - Primary Talent Development training begins on February 24 in two Baltimore City schools.
   - Project 47/45 - Student Services assessment tool implemented in two Baltimore City Schools
   - Project 3/2 - Formative assessments: Draft in-house multimedia LMS content in preparation and RFP in final draft stages for select vendor content; first draft of portal for accessing content in review and Oracle Web Center Content Management system to hold content in final installation stages
   - Project 8/11 – Infrastructure: Procurements issued for SAAS help desk software, and mass storage to support reporting and content storage platforms. VMware production platform environment strategy selected costing in progress
   - Project 9/27 – Dashboards: Designs and initial development completed for AP Potential, STEM, and two financial dashboards

- Project 10/28 - Multimedia: Two multi-media OBIEE training modules operational for end-users. Three multimedia dashboard modules in UAT testing with avatars. RFP for procurement for LEA LDS data coaching services initiated
- Project 11/29 - LEA Grants: Technology grant program webinar held for LEA CIOs. Proposals due March 29, 2012
- Projects 17/32-20/35: Adaptive Testing & Item Bank: LEA Collaboration webinar held. Requirements for procurements nearing completion
- Project 27/46-MSA Vertical Alignment: Closed
- Projects 28/47&29/48- Educator Effectiveness and growth: administrator rating tool for the state system presented to LEA Superintendents; St. Mary's LEA demonstrated teacher effectiveness rating tool as a candidate for the state system
- Project 12/60–Data Exchange: Master file transfer software procurement issued; server platform designed in VM environment to support the MFT software
- Project 13/61– P20 and Higher Ed data warehouses: higher education data warehouse schema design completed; Dashboards for questions 1-4 in design
- Project 54/79 –Statewide Transcript: New ROI document created for e-transcripts for Maryland LEAs; Webinar held for LEA CIOs to rollout E-transcripts; Schedule for implementation being developed with LEA CIOs
- Completed sizing and configuration planning for DPSCS Infrastructure for all technology projects' Test/Dev environments.
- Project 14/31 - Made final product selection (Oracle WebCenter CMS suite) as the preferred platform for the Curriculum Management System.
- Project 14/31 - Completed DoIT peer review of project #31 SDLC artifacts on 2/8/2012. DoIT expressed satisfaction with the level of planning, governance procedures, and other project management tools and methods.
- Project 20/43 - Resolved concerns surrounding use of MEEC contract as a viable procurement strategy for the agency
- Project 23/55 - On-boarded the long awaited PD specialist for project #55, Dan Capozzi. Dan started in his role on 2/1/2012.
- Project 23/55 - A draft quality control review protocol has been produced along with several sample rubrics to be used in judging the quality of professional development offerings to be added to the portal.
- Project 30/49 - On-boarded Sr. Microsoft CRM developer, Kumar Gujjarlapud, to support the EIS project. Kumar started on 2/13/2012.

Challenges:

• As previously documented, project 37/54, International Partnerships to Recruit Teachers, has not met with success despite modifications to the program. We will request that funds be shifted from 37/54 to 36/53, Incentives for Teachers Who Obtain ESOL Certification, a highly successful project in which LEAs are asking for additional funds.

• World language specialists have resigned in project 7/5, World Language Pipeline. Will be hiring hourly consultants to assume responsibility for developing and reviewing K-1 STEM modules.

• Project manager for 53/44 (Charter Schools) has resigned. We have an interim project manager until a new project manager is hired.

• Project 47/48 - Educator effectiveness and student growth system has challenges in designing measures for non-tested courses, effectively linking teachers to student performance, and for creating a transitions process moving from state tests to PARCC tests. Strategies to mitigate being developed

2. Is the State on track to meet the goals and timelines associated with the activities outlined in its approved scope of work? If not, what strategies is the State employing in order to meet its goals?

   Maryland is on track to meet its goals and timelines.

3. How can the Department help the State meet its goals?

   At this time, no additional support or assistance is needed from USDE.

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Part B: *In preparation for monthly calls, States must submit written responses to the following questions for* ***two*** *application sub-criteria (e.g. (A)(2) and (D)(4)).* [1] *All responses in this section should be tailored to the goals and projects associated with this sub-criterion.*

Application sub-criterion: (C) (2)

STATE's goals for this sub-criterion:
- Implement the 10 key Maryland Longitudinal Data System initiatives

Relevant projects:

8/11 Develop the Overall Technology Infrastructure to Support Race to the Top Initiatives
9/27 Accessing and Using State Data-Dashboards
10/28 Multi-Media Training
11/29 LEA System Application Upgrades and Infrastructure Upgrades
12/60 Expansion to LDS-Data Exchange
13/61 Enhancement to LDS: Develop P-20 and Workforce Data Warehouse and Center
54/79 Implement Statewide Centralized Student Transcript System

2. What is the extent of the State's progress toward meeting the goals and performance measures and implementing the activities that are included in its approved scope of work for this sub-criterion?

Project 8/11: Develop the Overall Technology Infrastructure to Support Race

This project is designed to implement a full development and scalable production enterprise environments for a portal, security system, GIS database, and business intelligence reporting system to improve access to K12, higher education and P20 performance accountability data. The development environments have been installed and operational for the PK12 system, P20 system, and the higher education database. The production systems for these projects are currently under design with procurements for various components initiated. Other Race to the Top IT project managers are responsible for implementing their own development and production environments as dictated by the requirements of their software applications.

Main progress markers for this project are listed in project plan and include: 1) completion of design activities; 2) completion of procurements; 3) completion of hardware and software implementation; 4) completion of testing of environment including load tests; 5) rollout of the environments; and 6) operational maintenance of the environments.

[1] On each monthly call, program officers and states should work together to select two sub-criteria for the following month.

The business intelligence and data warehouse implementations are high quality and have used: 1) top tier Oracle state of the art virtual platform architectures; 2) scaleable data warehouse appliances; 3) scaleable application appliances; 4) a full set of security products and governance polices at all levels of the architecture including but not limited to; physical security, database access, https, file transfer encryption, data transfer encryption, database table encryption, two token authentication, role base authorization; and, 5) full implementation of SDLC methodology and documentation to guide development and oversee implementation of maintenance SOPs. The quality of the implementation is being monitored and improved by feedback from our external project assessment team and various stakeholders.

The project is mostly on time at this point. Implementation of a new data center infrastructure has been slow due to limitation of staff resources and procurements. In order to mitigate these issues a full operational development and user test environment was initiated at the beginning of the grant allowing development to proceed on schedule without any delays. Full production environment milestones is 9/28/2012 and will be reached as forecasted.

The main obstacle for this project is the procurement and implementation process. At this point, we have hired two additional DBAs, two network architecture and implementation resources, and an architecture firm to help with the design and implementation of the production hardware and setup of the security systems.

Project 9/27: Accessing and Using State Data-Dashboards

This project is to develop 12 business intelligence dashboards per year in order to improve stakeholder access to performance and accountability information for the Race to the Top educational initiatives.

Progress has included development of twelve, year-one grant dashboards, and the initiation of the design process for five of the twelve year-two dashboards. Main progress markers for this project are listed in project plan and include: 1) executing dashboard designs and development activities as defined by the project schedule; and, 2) the creation of key project management deliverables.

Primary quality assessment process for this project is done via user acceptance testing of the dashboards, verification of the data quality by the data quality assurance team, and end-user satisfaction surveys. To date, stakeholders have been satisfied with the solutions made available via the user acceptance tests and dashboards demos. Quality of the implementation is also being monitored and improved by feedback from our external project assessment team.

The project is mostly on time at this point. The development of three dashboards is behind schedule due to missing data for use in the dashboards or delays in the development of the dashboards themselves due to computation complexity. Key mitigation strategies are either to reduce the scope of the dashboards if quality data is missing, implement a data clean up initiative, or add addition developers on the team to decrease time to deliver or start other dashboards to avoid delays caused by resource limitations.

The two main obstacles for this project are multimedia resources and delays in the development of the dashboards. At this point, we have hired additional resources to accelerate multi-media development for dashboards and implemented Natural Dragon software to easily create narration scripts from interviews with subject matter experts on explaining how the dashboards work. Additional business analysts have been added to dashboard project to accelerate dashboard development. The only pending obstacle may be the slowness of the procurement process for acquiring the LDS LEA coaching programs and services. This procurement is scheduled to start in February, 2012 in order to meet a September 2012 milestone date.

Project 10/28: Multi-media Training

This project is to develop multi-media training modules for the C2 business intelligence dashboards and implement LDS data usage coaching in the LEAs with a LMS backup training system. Progress to date has included: 1) business intelligence virtual classroom training; 2) the implementation of two online OBIEE basic training modules for anytime, anywhere access and use; 3) the development of four dashboard training modules; and, 4) the preliminary scoping of the LDS coaching strategy and solution for the LEAs.

Progress markers for this project are listed in project plan and include: 1) implementation of the virtual OBIEE training classroom (completed); 2) implementation of the 2 OBIEE online training modules (completed); 3) development of multi-media modules for each dashboard in assurance area C2 (in progress); and 4) implementation of the LDS data usage LEA training program (planned for fall, 2012).

The primary quality assessment process for this project is done via user acceptance testing of multi-media modules and end-user satisfaction surveys. To date, stakeholders have been satisfied with the multi-media solutions made available. The quality of the implementation is also being monitored and improved by feedback from our external project assessment team.

This project is mostly on time at this point. The development of some of the dashboards is behind schedule due to resources or delays in the development of the dashboards themselves due to data limitations.

The two main obstacles for this project are multimedia development resources and delays in the development of the dashboards. At this point, we have hired additional resources to accelerate multi-media development for dashboards, and implemented Natural Dragon software to easily create narration scripts from interviews with subject matter experts on explaining how the dashboards work. Additional business analysts have been added to dashboard project to accelerate dashboard development. The only pending obstacle may be the slowness of the procurement process for acquiring LDS LEA coaching programs and services. This procurement is scheduled to start in February, 2012 in order to meet a September 2012 milestone date.

Project 11/29: LEA System Application Upgrades and Infrastructure Upgrades

This project is to help LEAs meet the technical support requirements of Race to the Top initiative by providing either technical or financial support to overcome key technical deficiencies. This project has provided grants to a dozen LEAs since year one to help with developing LEA interface software to support SEA data collections. At present, a “Request for Grant Proposals” is being issued to the LEA to distribute the funds in this budget.

Main progress markers for this project are meeting milestones in the project plan and the progress in distributing the funds in this budget to the LEAs to support Race to the Top initiatives. LEA project plans, budgets, grant awards, and completion of work validation assessments, invoices and payments are artifacts used as evidence to support this project.

With regards to the previous grants that were issued to support the implementation of the student-grade course collection, the quality of implementation was based on the quality and timeliness of the SIS data extracts delivered to MSDE. For the general round of LEA technical grants, the project’s quality is being assessed by meeting project plan milestones, the quality of the “Grant Proposal Guidelines” document, the LEA proposals, and ability of the LEAs to complete the implementation of their grants proposals on time and as specified which are verified by an independent grant monitor.

The project is on time at this point. No obstacles/risks have been identified at this time.

Project 12/60: Expansion to LDS- Data Exchange

This project is to implement a data dictionary, create specification for a master data management system determine appropriateness for the MSDE K12/P20 systems, and implement a new security master file transfer system. At present, the North Carolina data dictionary system has been installed and is under evaluation. The procurement process for a new, secure master file transfer systems has been initiated.

Main progress markers for this project are meeting project plan milestones, implementing an operational data dictionary, implementing an operational master file transfer system, and an evaluation document for master data management systems.

The quality of the implementation for this project is assessed by the ability of both the new master files transfer system and the data dictionary to meet basic requirements as specified by the project team and its usability. The quality of the master management data due diligence is determined by the completeness of the product assessments and recommendations as viewed by project review team.

The project is on time at this point. No obstacles/risks have been identified at this time.

Project 13/61: Expansion to LDS- Develop P-20 and Workforce Data Warehouse and Center

This project is to develop several data warehouses and business intelligence reporting systems that consolidate PK12, higher education, and labor data to answer specific policy questions. Progress to date includes: 1) definition of policy questions; 2) map and gap of policy questions to identify missing or limited inter-agency data to answer the policy questions; 3) initiation of dashboard proof-of-concepts designs; 4) staffing of development teams; 5) implementation of P20 and higher education data development and test environments; 6) development and testing of an inter-agency individual cross-walk ID table; 7) initiation of the development of data warehouse database schema for P20 and a higher education data; and, 8)creation of a an inter-agency P20 collaboration team.

Evidence that the project is on time is judged by meeting the work milestones of the project plan and producing the required project plan artifacts. Key artifacts produced to date for this project include: 1) project plan; 2) project scope document; 3) collaboration team charter and weekly meeting of the collaboration team; 4) executive inter-agency review board progress presentations; 5) demonstrations of proof of concepts; 6) requirements documents; 7) inter-agency memorandums of understanding; and, 8) end-user sign-offs.

The quality of implementation is judged by the high quality of: 1) the subject matter experts participating on the collaboration teams; 2) ability to meet timelines; 3) ability to gain approvals from reviews performed by inter-agency work teams, and the executive advisory board for this project. The quality of the implementation is also being monitored and improved by feedback from our external project assessment team.

A possible obstacle for this project at this time is the lack of select inter-agency data to answer specific policy questions. This problem is being mitigated by the data map and gap process that alerts all agencies as to missing data, and gives them time to address possible strategies. The Maryland MLDS inter-agency executive steering and advisor board is used to mitigate this issue.

Project 54/79: Implement Statewide Centralized Student Transcript System

This project implements the existing University of Maryland system electronic transcript system for Maryland K12 high schools as a means to reduce transcript costs and speed student applications, and standardize the reporting of courses to institutions of higher education by using USDE's SCED. Project is on time as outlined in the Maryland-USDE project plan.

Evidence that the project is on time is judged by meeting the artifact milestones of the project plan and producing the required project plan artifacts. Key artifacts produced to date for this project include: 1) webinar and associated deliverables for the LEAs on the technical specification of the interfacing with the e-transcript system; 2) ROI justification for implementing the system presented to the LEA CIOs and Superintendents; 3) an LEA collaboration portal for monitoring process; 4) kick off webinar held to coordinate the implementation of the e-transcript system across the state; 5) coordination with the LEAs to procure vendors to write the interface code that transfers SIS student transcript data into the e-transcript system for distribution to the students' designated colleges; and, 6) completion of 2 of 24 LEAs with 2 more LEAs scheduling their implementations with the SIS vendors who are implementing the e-transcript interface code.

The implementation to date is high quality in all facets of its execution including: 1) the University of Maryland staff and SIS vendors used for this project are experienced in the subject matter and are working to a well defined timeline; 2) the IT system for e-transcripts has been operational for at least ten years; 3) quality of the implementation is being monitored and improved by feedback by our external project assessment team, and LEA CIO stakeholders through surveys; 4) all implementation goes through integration testing and user acceptance testing before LEA rollout; and, 5) all rollouts include webinar and multimedia online training for end-users.

The main potential risk for the timely implementation of this project is the inability of an LEA to provide technical staff or to secure a trusted vendor to modify their SIS system to interface with the e-transcript system. The MSDE RTTT is using LEA grants to mitigate resource issues.

2. What methods, tools, and processes is the State using to determine the progress toward the goals and performance measures and the quality of implementation of the activities described for this application sub-criterion?

As with all sub-criteria, we are utilizing project management techniques for monitoring and controlling the program at the project/activity level and for determining progress towards milestones and goals. Microsoft Project Professional is being used to develop project level schedules. Project schedules have been detailed for 54 projects with specific activities planned for the remainder of the year. Project managers review their respective project schedule with their program director to ensure that project activities, issues, risks, and concerns are discussed. Monthly reports are also submitted by each project manager. Technology projects also follow the State's Department of Information Technology (DoIT) software development life cycle (SDLC) process. Technology projects are also subject to additional quarterly reviews by DoIT. Communication, both verbal and electronic, occurs on a regular basis between MSDE and its various vendors (e.g., MBRT, MPT). Finally, the quality of implementation of the activities will be determined by our overall program evaluation that has been built into the grant. Project teams have specified requirements to be met during each year. Some projects are also reviewed by inter-agency review teams. The formative and summative evaluation tools to be developed by USM for each project will enable us to assess the degree to which we met goals and objectives established for each project. In the second quarter of year 2, we will be receiving milestone review reports from CAIRE.

3. What is the State's assessment of its quality of implementation to date?

The quality of implementation to date has been excellent. Milestones have either been met or actions have or will be taken to ensure that timelines and goals are achieved within year 2. Through end-user satisfaction surveys, stakeholders have expressed satisfaction with the products that have been developed thus far. We have put in place a quality assessment process via user acceptance testing. Verification of data quality is assessed by quality assurance teams.

4 If the State is not on track to meet the goals, performance measures, timelines and quality of implementation related to this sub-criterion as outlined in its approved scope of work, why not, and what strategies is the State employing in order to meet goals and performance measures?

Four of the projects (11/29, 12/60, 13/6, 54/79) are on track. Actions have been taken to ensure that the remaining projects (e.g. 8/11, 9/27, 10/28) will be on track within year 2.These actions have been taken:

Project 8/11-

A full operational development and user test environment was initiated at the beginning of the grant allowing development to proceed on schedule without any delays. Full production environment milestones is 9/28/2012 and will be reached as forecasted.

Project 9/27 –

The development of three dashboards is behind schedule due to missing data for use in the dashboards or delays in the development of the dashboards themselves due to computation complexity. Key mitigation strategies are either to reduce the scope of the dashboards if quality data is missing, implement a data clean up initiative, or add additional developers on the team to decrease time to deliver or start other dashboards to avoid delays caused by resource limitations.

Project 10/28 -

The development of some of the dashboards is behind schedule due to resources or delays in the development of the dashboards themselves due to data limitations. We have hired additional resources to accelerate multi-media development for dashboards, and implemented Natural Dragon software to easily create narration scripts from interviews with subject matter experts on explaining how the dashboards work. Additional business analysts have been added to dashboard project to accelerate dashboard development.

5 What are the obstacles and/or risks that could impact the State's ability to meet its goals and performance measures related to this sub-criterion?

Obstacles and risks are identified on a continual basis and addressed (e.g. hiring of additional staff with needed expertise, slowness of the procurement process, lack of data). To date, we have not identified any obstacles or risks that cannot be overcome enabling us to meet gaols and performance measures.

Evaluation: Based on the responses to the previous question, evaluate the State's performance and progress to date for this sub-criterion (choose one)

Red (1) Orange (2) Yellow (3) Green (4)

Red – substantially off-track and/or has significant quality concerns; urgent and decisive action is required;
Orange –off-track and/or there are quality concerns; many aspects require significant attention;
Yellow –generally on-track and of high or good quality; only a few aspects require additional attention;
Green – on-track with high quality.

MSDE Work with LEAs

Our primary role and responsibility as we work with LEAs falls into three categories: monitoring their progress toward achieving stated goals and objectives as articulated in their scopes of work and as they support the State's scope of work ; supporting and responding to their needs and involving them in decision-making. There is overlap among these roles as we execute various functions in an effort to serve the LEAs and collaboratively seek to bring about reform and innovation.

MSDE LEA Liaisons

Seven members of the Division of Academic Reform and Innovation have been designated as liaisons to LEAs (see Appendix A, *2011 MSDE LEA Liaisons*). The liaisons maintain regular contact with the LEAs. They provide technical assistance to the LEAs in the development of scopes of work, budgets, and amendments. Each LEA grant manager submits a monthly status report that is reviewed by the LEA liaison. Any questions/concerns that may arise are addressed immediately by the liaisons. LEA liaisons are also able to direct LEA personnel to the appropriate MSDE resource to obtain information and/or resources. Throughout the first year of the RTTT grant, a trusting relationship has developed between the LEA liaisons and their counterparts in school districts. The liaison organization enables us to provide immediate and substantive support to the LEAs through the sharing of information, providing technical assistance, soliciting their feedback to initiatives, and guiding them through various processes and procedures.

Monthly Reporting Process

In addition to face-to-face contact, the LEA monthly report has become a primary means for monitoring LEA progress toward its goals and objectives. As of February 2012, their progress will be reported in relation to the four assurance areas – Standards and Assessments, Data to Support Instruction, Building the Capacity of Teachers and Principals, and Turning Around Low-Achieving Schools. The report includes accomplishments, challenges and how those challenges are being addressed, and support needed from USDE. After review, any questions are addressed immediately by the LEA liaisons. CAIRE will be reviewing LEA monthly reports and submitting quarterly review reports to MSDE. CAIRE has access to those reports through an MSDE dashboard portal.

On-Site Visit

In April and May of each year, MSDE will conduct an on-site visit to each LEA. The framework for the on-site visit is attached (see Appendix B, *Local School System Onsite Monitoring Questionnaire*). The size of the on-site team will vary by the size of the jurisdiction and the amount of funds each jurisdiction received. In addition, the length of time for the site visit will vary from three to four hours depending on the size of each jurisdiction. The LEA Liaison for the respective LEA will facilitate the review discussion. He/she will be joined by at least one additional individual from MSDE. An MSDE team of three to five will conduct the site visit in the five largest LEAs – Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Howard County, Prince George's County. Because of the late start in year one, we conducted telephone visits in July 2011. The site visit is designed to ensure that there is a properly controlled environment in which to execute the grant, an assessment of potential risks, and an understanding of the progress being made as planned in the scope of work and in alignment with the State grant. Dates for the on-site visits are being identified.

Scope of Work Review Process

During year one of the grant, LEAs submitted their scopes of work which were reviewed by MSDE teams facilitated by the LEA liaison. Professional development was provided to the review teams. The review teams of 7-8 individuals used MSDE-designed rubrics to perform both a program and financial review and assessment of the scopes of work. The rubrics were shared with LEAs prior to the development of their scopes of work and the LEA liaisons provided technical assistance. In 2011-12, we decided to integrate the RTTT scopes of work into the annual Master Plan so that only one plan had to be submitted by LEAs. The four RTTT assurance areas became the framework for the Master Planning process. Rubrics were revised and included in the Master Plan Reviewer's Manual. Techical assistance sessions were conducted for LEA grant managers in June, July, and August 2011. In October and November 2011, review teams composed of 14-15 members reviewed and approved the scopes of work. The State Board of Education approved the Master Plans/RTTT Scopes of Work in December 2011.

Amendment Process

Recognizing that LEAs would need to adjust projects and budgets and carry over funds from year-to-year, an amendment process was created enabling LEAs to file amendments on as needed basis. The RTTT Financial Manager, the respective LEA liaison, and MSDE personnel from Budget and Finance worked with representatives from the LEAs to develop amendments which included the submission of necessary budget documents and track changes to the scope of work. Again, the late start in 2011 prompted the submission of amendments from most LEAs that sometimes included changes to their original scopes of work and carryover funds from year 1 to year 2. Based on feedback from LEAs, the process worked well. Several LEAs have expressed appreciation for the immediate support and assistance they received from the RTTT Financial Manager and their liaisons.

Financial Review Processes

In addition to the Master Plan review process, Maryland conducts desk audits at least annually, and more often as necessary. The desk audits include a budget variance to ensure LEAs are spending their money as planned and a visual check of each LEA file to ensure that amendments are in order and have been processed properly. Each LEA also files an Annual Financial Report with MSDE. In addition, the auditing process includes a biannual state audit cycle conducted by MSDE that captures each LEA every other year covering the previous two-year period.

Technical Assistance

As indicated previously, technical assistance is provided to LEAs on a regular and consistent basis from the LEA liaisons and the RTTT Financial Manager. In addition, specific technical assistance sessions have been conducted. These sessions enable us to share expectations and solicit feedback regarding the success of various initiatives so we can identify adjustments that need to be made in the services we provide to the LEAs. In June 2011, a technical assistance session was conducted for all LEA grant managers and financial representatives to review the new Master Planning/RTTT Scope of Work process.

Specifics were shared regarding the design of 2011-12 scope of work. Two follow-up sessions were conducted in July and August 2011 to provide guidance regarding the degree of specificity and detail (i.e. activities, tasks, evidence of success) that was required in the 2011-12 scope of work. LEA liaisons provided follow-up support. The most recent technical assistance session was held in January 2012 in which we shared the USDE annual report findings, process and procedures for the annual LEA site visit, and sought feedback regarding what worked and suggestions for improvement to the amendment process and Master Planning process. Financial reps from MSDE also attended the session to respond to any financial issues or concerns.

Communication

Guided by the mantra, “There’s no such thing as too much communication,” we have made every effort to ensure that the information communicated to LEAs is continuous, complete, clear, and consistent. We want to ensure that there are no surprises. We also recognize that LEAs are naturally most concerned about the benefits of the RTTT initiatives to their constituents. We not only share information but we also seek their feedback, advice, and counsel. We take very opportunity to share information and seek feedback during these regularly scheduled meetings with representatives from all LEAs: monthly superintendents; quarterly executive officers; quarterly LEA assistant superintendents for instruction and quarterly principal advisory council. Upon invitation, we have also visited LEAs to present an RTTT overview and share how the RTTT reform initiatives will benefit principals, teachers, and students. There is a monthly RTTT MSDE publication sent to all LEAs. There is an RTTT website that is continuously updated. In many of the 54 RTTT projects, collaborative teams including representatives from the LEAs meet on a regular basis to guide the work of the projects. Lastly, recognizing the fundamental importance of communication to the RTTT reform effort, we are in the process of hiring a communications specialist whose sole purpose will be communication with the LEAs focusing on building relationships with superintendents.

Pilot and Non-Pilot LEA Visitations

Embedded within the fifty-four projects that comprise Maryland’s Race To The Top Grant is the intent to implement statewide evaluation processes that associate the effectiveness rating of educators to the academic growth of students. To facilitate this intent, seven LEAs agreed to pilot evaluative processes of their choosing during the 2011-2012 school year; exploring and simulating ways to equate levels of educator effectiveness to measures of student growth and professional practice. In preparation for the 2112-2013 school year, the remaining seventeen other LEAs (non-pilots), were also beginning the process of planning for the implementation of local evaluative models. The scope and fluidity of the projects related to evaluation combined with the variation in the pilot and non-pilot experiences resulted in continuous changes in the information to be shared with all LEAs. To accommodate this need, forty-two visitations to both pilot and non-pilot LEAs have been conducted by the Center Coordinator for project 40/15. All visitations have been used to gather updated information for project teams at MSDE and in turn to relay information back to LEAs.

The initial visitations with pilot LEAs were conducted primarily with system leadership personnel and were designed both to obtain baseline information regarding the start-up status of their local models and to gather matters of concern to be shared with appropriate project teams at MSDE. Then, based on individual needs and pilot designs, the visitation process served to direct pilot LEAs to technical supports, available resources, and peer pilot experiences. With the advantage of time and reflection, initial visits to the non-pilot LEAs were used to relay on-going pilot experiences, to provide updates on RTTT projects, and to provide a sense of emerging direction to systems in the early developmental stages of their local models. Serving as MSDE Liaison to the pilots and non-pilots, the Center Coordinator worked to identify both commonalities and differences, to collect successes and concerns, and to foster the sense of shared responsibility and trust between LEAs and MSDE.

By the time of the second visitations, many LEAs had expanded the nature of the visit of the MSDE liaison to include participation in work group sessions with superintendents' staff, teacher associations, administrative associations, and representative teacher, principal, and supervisory personnel. These meetings consisted of purposeful dialogues and courageous conversations that challenged participants to address the most difficult aspects of measuring educator effectiveness in a fair and accurate fashion and frequently provided the direction needed for LEAs to move forward. While not specifically providing the answers, the MSDE liaison, drawing from interactions with other LEAs and current thinking at MSDE, helped facilitate these discussions and guide the group by giving situational feedback and potential examples. Of greatest value has been the liaison's ability to reassure the LEAs' confidence in their work, to maintain the LEAs' informational capacity, to provide localized consultative services, and to maintain the focus of LEAs on the professional development priority that will emerge from the educator effectiveness process and result in ever increasing levels of teacher, principal, and student performance .

Visitations will continue to be extended to all LEAs and will take on increased value as systems approach implementation of the second year statewide pilot and as the State regulations and State models are finalized.

Appendix A

2011 MSDE LEA Liaisons

First Name	Last Name	LEA Assignments	Phone Number	Email Address
Tony	Annello	Queen Anne's County, Wicomico County, Worcester County	(410) 767-3765	tannello@msde.state.md.us
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Appendix B

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Local School System Onsite Monitoring Questionnaire

Race to the Top

(This should capture any changes since submission of the last Master Plan Annual Update)

School System: ____________________________

Monitoring Date: ___________________

School System Representatives:

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MSDE Representatives:

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I. Overall Race to the Top Progress

Issue: What are the major successes and challenges faced by the LEA in implementing its LEA Scope of Work?

Guiding Questions:

1. What are your major RTTT implementation successes since the last onsite visit?
2. What are your biggest RTTT implementation challenges since the last onsite visit?
3. Describe what you have done or plan to do to address the challenges you identified in your monthly reports.
4. How can the state help the LEA to maximize your successes and/or overcome your challenges in implementing the grant?

Evidence/Documentation: Monthly RTTT Reports to MSDE; processes implemented; products designed and/or delivered

Maryland, February

II. Student Achievement

Issue: What kind of progress is the LEA making in student achievement?

Guiding Questions:

1. Describe the progress you are making in the following areas:

- MSA
- HSA
- Graduation Rate
- Dropout Rate

2. Describe why you think such progress is being made (or not being made).

3. What assistance can MSDE be in helping you make progress?

Evidence/Documentation: Maryland Report Card

III. Assurance Areas/Project Management

Issue: How is the LEA assisting the State in making progress in the four assurance areas: (a) standards and assessments; (b) data systems; and (c) teachers and leaders; and (d) supporting low-achieving schools?

Guiding Questions

1. Generally, how is the LEA assisting the State in making progress in each of the four reform areas?

   Standards and Assessments:

   Data Systems:

   Teachers and Leaders:

   Low-achieving Schools

2. Review each project and do the following:

- To what degree is the LEA on track with each project?
- What risks, if any, exist that could cause the project to fail?
- Are any changes needed in the projects?

Maryland, February

- Are there any alignment issues with the State Scope of Work?

3. What assistance can the State provide to help you with your projects?

Evidence/Documentation: Monthly RTTT Reports to MSDE; RTTT Scope of Work Integrated into Master Plan

IV. Fiscal Oversight of RTTT Funds

Issue: Does the LEA have appropriate policies, procedures, and records for ensuring fiscal oversight of RTTT funds.

Guiding Questions:

1. What internal controls does your LEA have in place to ensure that RTTT funds are expended for allowable and approved activities?
2. How does your LEA ensure that it complies with the requirements of the Cash Management Improvement Act (CMIA)?
3. How does your LEA maintain records that separately track and account for RTTT funds to ensure that they are being spent as approved?
4. What procedures does the local school system use for Section 1512 reporting?

Evidence/Documentation:

a. Grant award notification from the State for RTTT funds

b. Policies and procedures regarding obligations and expenditures

c. Financial management policies and procedures

d. Policies and procedures on compliance with CMIA requirements

e. Reporting guidelines and protocols

f. Documentation for data provided in Section 1512 quarterly reports

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 74 hours (annually) per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain benefit (34 CFR 75.720, 75.730-732; 34 CFR 80.40 and 80.41). Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20210-4537 or email ICDocketMgr@ed.gov and reference the OMB Control Number 1894-0011.