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**TO:** Members of the State Board of Education

**FROM:** Nancy S. Grasmick *Nancy*

**DATE:** May 24-25, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Race to the Top Grant Management

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**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this item is to provide the Maryland State Board of Education with an overview on how Microsoft Project 2010 is being used as the primary management tool for tracking progress of the 54 projects in Maryland's Race to the Top grant.

**BACKGROUND:**

Each month, the Maryland State Board of Education is apprised of the ongoing efforts that comprise Maryland's reform agenda as set forth in Maryland's winning Race to the Top grant. The focus of this month's attention is the use of Microsoft Project 2010 to track the progress of each of the 54 projects.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Maryland is required to be able to demonstrate its effectiveness in tracking the progress in each of its projects. Maryland has partnered with experienced consultants to provide the requisite expertise to enable the attainment of this requirement. Given the breadth and depth of this expertise, Maryland is one of two States that has chosen to adopt Microsoft Project 2010 as the tool of choice managing implementation details for each project in the grant. Since the adoption of this tool, over 40 MSDE staff members have received training on the use of this tool, along with guidance on management protocols and standards. Two training exercises were conducted enabling project managers to meet the required deadlines for providing details on the relevant projects, consistent with the 15 goals outlined in the grant. For year 1 of the grant, each project manager detailed project activities that led to the definition of major project milestones scheduled for the first year. Details included the definition of key tasks/activities, relationships between various tasks, estimated durations for each task, assigned personnel, and project milestones following the completion of these tasks. Project managers further developed a list of milestones for years 2, 3, and 4 to help them process required project activities in the out years. Detailed tasks and activities for these years are due to program directors at the end of June from all project managers for year 2. By December, detailed tasks and activities are due for years 3 and 4 of the grant.

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An important predicate for success is effective cross-divisional collaboration. Project managers and program directors collaborate each week to review inter-project dependencies, define and validate requirements for a varied number of solutions, and share status updates on progress and risks. In addition to these methods of interaction, project managers also review activities detailed in their respective Microsoft Project schedules and complete a monthly report that summarizes accomplishments for that month, issues that have arisen, and any budgetary issues that require attention. A summary report of the individual reports is prepared by the program directors, and from that summary report, Maryland prepares a monthly report that is submitted to USDE. These monthly reports are then posted on the MSDE website in the Race to the Top section.

Today's demonstration of Microsoft Project will allow Board members to preview the internal management processes in overseeing the grant, and understand the complexities within which these 54 projects are being managed/implemented.

**ACTION:**

For information only, no action required.

NSG/jf

Attachments