

# Guide to Title I School Improvement Grants

## Overview

With approximately \$546 million from the FY 2009 appropriations cycle, another \$546 million from the FY 2010 appropriations cycle, and an additional \$3 billion from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), the school improvement grants program has an unprecedented sum to support some of the nation's lowest-achieving schools. In accordance with Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (20 U.S.C. 6303 (g)), the Secretary will award grants to state educational agencies (SEA) based on the SEA's proportionate share of the funds received under Title I.

In turn, each SEA must provide subgrants to local educational agencies (LEAs) that apply for those funds to assist their Title I schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. This assistance is intended to help these schools implement reform strategies that result in substantially improved student achievement so that the schools can make adequate yearly progress (AYP) and exit improvement status.

An SEA must allocate at least 95 percent of its school improvement funds directly to LEAs, although the SEA may, with the approval of the LEAs that would receive the funds, directly provide assistance in implementing school reform strategies or arrange for their provision through such other entities as school support teams or educational service agencies.

An LEA total subgrant may not be less than \$50,000 or more than \$500,000 per year for each participating Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. *An LEA subgrant is renewable for two additional one-year periods if the LEA schools are meeting, or are on track to meet, their student achievement goals.*

## Tiers and Eligible Schools

Each SEA must give priority in awarding 1003(g) funds to LEAs with persistently low-achieving schools (which SEAs will identify in their applications for State Fiscal Stabilization Fund Phase II funding). The 1003(g) regulations, released in December 2009, included three tiers that SEAs must use to classify schools:

▶ **Tier I** – any school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that:

- Is among the lowest-achieving five percent of Title I schools in improvement, correction action, or structuring;
- Is a high school that has had a graduation rate that is less than 60% over a number of years.

▶ **Tier II** – any secondary school eligible for, but not receiving, Title I funds that:

- Is among the lowest-achieving five percent of secondary schools in the state;
- Is a high school that has had a graduation rate that is less than 60% over a number of years.

▶ **Tier III** – the remaining Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring.

## Types of Grants

Also in the new 1003(g) regulations, the US Department of Education has defined four rigorous interventions. LEAs must identify the Tier I and Tier II schools that they want to transform and then identify which of the four school intervention models described below is best suited to meet the needs of the school and the resources available to the LEA:

- ▶ **Turnaround model** – Replace the principal and rehire no more than 50 percent of the staff, and grant the principal sufficient operational flexibility (including staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting) to fully implement a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student outcomes.
- ▶ **Restart model** – Convert a school or close and reopen it under a charter school operator, a charter management organization, or an educational management organization that has been selected through a rigorous review process.
- ▶ **School closure** – Close a school and enroll the students who attended that school in other schools in the LEA that are higher achieving.
- ▶ **Transformation model** – Implement each of the following strategies: (1) replace the principal and take steps to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness; (2) institute comprehensive instructional reforms; (3) increase learning time and create community-oriented schools; and (4) provide operational flexibility and sustained support.

The regulations clarify that an LEA with more than nine Tier I and Tier II schools may not implement the transformation model in more than 50 percent of these schools. In Tier III schools, an LEA may implement any of these four models but may also choose other school improvement strategies.

## Goals and Reporting

A participating LEA must set annual goals for student achievement on the SEA state assessments. For each Tier I and Tier II school receiving 1003(g) funds, SEAs will be required to report the identity of the school, the intervention adopted, and the amount of funding provided.

**Please refer to Wireless Generation’s School Improvement Services literature for comprehensive solutions that align with specific grant guidelines to help improve student achievement from the start while developing school capacity to support new programs well beyond the funding term.**