School Improvement Grant Guidance

Division of School Turnaround | Winter 2026

Use of Funds

The **State School Improvement Grant (SSIG)** is a funding opportunity provided to districts to support schools designated as Priority/Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI). Grant funds must be used to implement strategies outlined in approved District/School Turnaround Plans. Indirect costs cannot be charged to SSIG grants.

The **Turnaround Action Grant (TAG)**, through Title I, Part A, Section 1003 school improvement funds, is provided to districts that are geographically diverse and serve Priority/Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools.[1] The purpose of the TAG grant is to support the (root causes of the) identified needs outlined in the district/school turnaround plans to substantially raise student achievement and outcomes. Indirect costs can be charged to this grant.

The **Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI)** grant, through Title I, Part A, Section 1003, is provided to schools to support the work needed to increase student achievement for the student group(s) that led to the ATSI identification. These funds are provided to districts that are geographically diverse and serve Additional Targeted Support and Improvement Schools.[1]

For the district to receive an allocation of SSIG or TAG funds, the district must utilize a comprehensive support and improvement [3] plan (approved District Turnaround Plan) based on a comprehensive needs assessment [5] to:
- **select evidence-based strategies/interventions** [6] aligned to the identified prioritized needs,
- **develop a detailed process to monitor implementation and effectiveness** of turnaround strategy/interventions used to support the Priority/CSI school's improvement plans toward increasing student achievement, and
- **create a budget** to support the evidence-based strategies/interventions that are in compliance with federal requirements of allowability under the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR).

The Division of School Turnaround will award grant funds to districts that serve Priority/CSI schools based on the current Priority/CSI schools served in each district using a Per-Pupil Allocation (PPA) formula [7]. Districts are required to allocate eighty percent of funds to schools with a Priority/CSI identification. The remaining twenty percent of the grant funds can be used to implement district strategies that support the common needs of Priority/CSI schools.

To receive ATSI funds for each school identified for Additional Targeted Support and Improvement, the school must utilize an approved School Improvement Plan[3] based on a comprehensive needs assessment [5] to:
- **select evidence-based strategies/interventions** [6] aligned to the identified prioritized needs of the ATSI-identified student group(s),
- **develop a detailed process to monitor implementation and effectiveness** of turnaround strategy/interventions used to support the ATSI school's improvement plans toward increasing student achievement for the ATSI-identified student group(s), and

- **create a budget** to support the evidence-based strategies/interventions that are in compliance with federal requirements of allowability under the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR).

Districts with schools identified for ATSI are eligible to apply for the ATSI grant on behalf of those schools. One hundred percent of ATSI grant funds must be used to support school-level strategies that are clearly outlined in the schools' approved School Improvement Plan. The purpose is to improve student outcomes for the student group(s) that led to the ATSI designation.

Application Overview

Each district receiving ATSI, SSIG or TAG funds is required to submit a grant application.

The cover page and program details sections will be completed in ePlan.

Districts choosing to use SSIG or TAG funding to support district strategies must complete a district-level application.

The district strategies component of the SSIG and TAG grants is intended to support a set of common, high-impact school improvement strategies across all Priority/CSI schools—or a targeted subset of them. These strategies should be well-coordinated, clearly focused, and reflect the district's key priorities or core initiatives for improving low-performing schools.

Suggested use of district funds:
- focus on implementing high-quality curricular resources in a given subject,
- differentiated pay to recruit and retain priority school leaders and teachers,
- partner with an outside agency to conduct a comprehensive school analysis of the effectiveness of the current school turnaround structure, systems, and processes,
- address common prioritized needs identified across the district's Priority/CSI schools.

Each school leader must complete an ATSI, SSIG and TAG school-level application, which will be submitted by the district in the Related Documents section of ePlan. The district and school-level applications can be found in the ePlan Related Documents section.

Supporting Research
When using school improvement funds, interventions for school improvement must adhere to strict evidence-based criteria. The criteria, delineated in three tiers, must demonstrate a significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on one of the following:
1. Tier 1: Demonstrates strong evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study.
2. Tier 2: Demonstrates moderate evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study.

3. Tier 3: Demonstrates promising evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls

Resources for Evidence-Based Strategies

- Evidence for ESSA. (2019). Center for Research and Reform in Education. Johns Hopkins University. https://www.evidenceforessa.org/
- Guidance on Evidence-Based Intervention Selection. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/private/pdf/77066/ib_Contextual.pdf
- National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. What Works Clearinghouse. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/
- School turnaround: An evidence guide. (2018). Tennessee Education Research Alliance. https://gallery.mailchimp.com/b28b453ee164f9a2e2b5057e1/files/6afbcdd4-71af-4fee-9951-e5dfa5ff0922/TERA_EvidenceGuide_180420_Full.pdf
- The school turnaround field guide. (2010). Wallace Foundation. https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/The-School- Turnaround-Field-Guide.pdf

District Application Completion in ePlan

Cover Page

Enter the district contact information and the ATSI or Priority/CSI schools that will be supported with the grant, including the allocation for each school.

Program Details for Federal Grants

The Program Details section includes the following prompts for districts to address in ePlan to ensure compliance with federal regulations and requirements outlined in ESSA. The district will respond to the following prompts in ePlan:

1. Describe how the district supports schools in the development and implementation of school plans.[8]

2. Describe the process the district will utilize to monitor schools supported school improvement funds for implementation of school plans to improve student outcomes and actions that will be taken if the plan does not prove to be effective.[9]

3. Describe the process, including procurement policies, the district will use to recruit, screen, select, and evaluate the effectiveness of external partners that are funded by this grant.[10]

4. Describe how the district will align Federal, State and local resources to supplement the strategies supported with school improvement funds.[11] Include the activity to be supported and the funding source. (EX. Title I, Title II, ESSER, Site Base, state funds, Local funds, Philanthropic)

5. Describe the process the district uses to identify and address resource inequities at schools in need of improvement to ensure improvement of student outcomes.[12] Include information on the process followed by the district to periodically review resource allocation to support school improvement.

6. Describe how the district will modify practices and policies, as appropriate, to provide full and effective implementation of improvement plans.[13] Include ways the district will offer operational flexibility to allow for the full and effective implementation of improvement plans.

7. Describe the process the district will use to maintain the turnaround efforts funded with school improvement funds once the grant has ended.

District Strategy Implementation Amount

Districts must specify the amount of funding that will be allocated to implement district-level strategies that address the needs of Priority/CSI schools. This amount must not exceed 20% of the total grant allocation.

District-level use of ATSI grant funds is prohibited because the grant is specifically designed to address the unique, school-level needs of the student group(s) that led to the ATSI designation.

Methodology Information

Districts must develop and submit for approval to the department a detailed description outlining the methodology used to allocate 80% of SSIG/TAG funds to Priority/CSI schools.

Please note: Upon approval of the methodology, spending cannot commence until a detailed budget has been entered into ePlan and approved by the department.

Fiscal Oversight and Accountability

Districts are required to outline the internal procedures they will implement to ensure compliance with federal requirements of allowability under the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR).

Assurances

Districts will confirm their acceptance of the grant contract by adhering to the outlined assurances.

Related Documents

The following documents must be uploaded to the related documents section:

- School-level Grant Applications
- District-level Grant Applications (if implementing district strategies for SSIG and TAG)

Budget Requirements

Programs and activities supported by school improvement grant funds must:
- be supplemental in nature and directly aligned with the intent and purpose of the grant
- be reasonable, allowable and necessary

General Budget Requirements:

- Refer to the Budget Narrative Guidance document when entering budget narrative information.
- Budget narratives should be specific enough to determine the allowability and reasonableness of expenditures but should not include additional information beyond the requirements listed in the Budget Narrative Guidance document.

- Rationales and justifications for expenditures should not be included in budget narratives, as this information is included in grant applications and district/school plans.
- Expenses must align with the intent and purpose of the grant and should be directly tied to student achievement.
- All grant-funded activities must be directly related to a need identified in a comprehensive needs assessment and root cause analysis.
- Be specific when providing examples or itemizing; the phrase "but not limited to" should not be included in narratives.
- Once the initial budget has been approved, any revisions to the application must be approved by the department prior to implementation or purchase.

Budget Resources
- [Standardized System of Accounting and Reporting](#)
- [Using School Improvement Grant Funds for Food](#)
- [Using Federal Education Funds for Student Incentives and Rewards](#)
- [ESSA Highly Qualified Requirements](#)
- [Using Funds for Conferences and Meetings](#)
- [DST Conference Travel Guidance](#)
- [DST Retention Bonus Guidance](#)

Budget Revisions

A budget revision is necessary when changes to an existing budget are needed. Revision windows can be found on the cover page of each grant. If a budget revision is needed outside of the specified windows, an extension request form must be signed by the director of schools and submitted to the Assistant Commissioner of School Turnaround for approval.

Suggestions for Successful Applications

- All activities must be allowable, reasonable, and necessary.
- Be clear in what you are requesting. There must be an alignment and/or connection between the district/school turnaround plans and the proposed strategies and action steps.
- Please note that ATSI, SSIG and TAG funds are intended for school turnaround, resulting in dramatic, significant improvement in student outcomes.
- Refer to the Budget Narrative Guidance document. This resource includes information on allowable and unallowable uses of school improvement funds.
- Verify the links to supporting research to ensure they are functioning properly. Links should not be to a Google Drive or a website login page.
- Upload the grant applications as PDFs rather than Word documents.

Endnotes

- [1]Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), § 1003(b)(1)(A) and (b)(2)(A)(i).
- [2]Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), § 1003(f)(1)(2)(3).
- [3] Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), § 1111(d)(1)(B)(iii).
- [4] Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), § 1111(d)(1)(B)(ii).
- [5] Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), § 1111(d)(1)(B)(v).
- [6]Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), § 1003(b)(1)(A).
- [7]Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), § 1003(b)(2)(A)(ii).
- [8]Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), § 1003(e)(1)(B).
- [9]Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), § 1003(e)(1)(C) and § 1111(d)(2)(B)(iv) and (v).
- [10]Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), § 1003(e)(1)(D).
- [11]Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), § 1003(e)(1)(E).
- [12]Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), § 1111(d)(1)(B)(iv).
- [13]Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), § 1003(e)(1)(F)