

MINUTES

DATE: June 13, 2024

9:00 a.m.

LOCATION: Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Members Present

Merideth Dodd, Stephanie Dominique, Pamela Evans, Marilyn Harris, Lauren Hodge, Carrie Matthews, Cris Munoz, Ellie Ross, Sharon Sanchez

Members Absent

Lisette Allen, Maria Anzualda, Laura Colangelo, Melody Collier, Brenda Faz-Villarreal, Mia Hall, Alexis Neumann

Texas Education Agency (TEA) Staff Present

Lindsay Denman, Didi Garcia, LaNetra Guess, Jaime Huerta, Gerardo Ramirez, Victoria Rivera, Vivian Smyrl

Call to Order

Jaime Huerta reviewed the virtual meeting norms and officially announced that Lauren Hodge will be the committee chair. At 9:03 a.m. Lauren Hodge called the meeting to order.

Welcome

Welcome and Roll Call

Lauren Hodge, TI COP Committee Chair, welcomed all. For roll call, Ms. Hodge instructed members to type their name and what LEA or organization they are affiliated with using the chat feature on zoom. Mr. Huerta shared this was Chris Munoz' last meeting. Cris Munoz shared his roles have changed and will no longer serve on the committee.

Mr. Huerta shared the roles of the Title I Committee of Practitioners (COP) went through a comprehensive monitoring meeting when USDE conducted their on-site audit visit in May. He shared the roles of the committee is important not only to TEA but also at the federal level as well.

Committee Discussion Items

Title I School Improvement Grant Updates

Lindsay Denman – Division Director shared TEA is updating their approach to the Title I School Improvement (SI) Grant. She explained timelines of the previous years' School Improvement grants would cause LEAs to receive access to the grants a year down the road, which is a lot of time to burn without making impact. The revamped School Improvement timeline will allow LEAs to make impacts faster.

To access the application faster, the School Improvement grant will be embedded into the LASO (Learning Acceleration Support Opportunities) grant application. This transition will allow LEAs to access the grant application four to seven months earlier. It also ensures districts are not waiting throughout the year for multiple grants to open. She shared districts would apply between October and December. The capacity building would start in the spring, which is about 9 months ahead of time than prior years.

Ms. Denman reviewed the 10 grant opportunities that will be embedded in the LASO grant. These opportunities are organized by the three learning acceleration strategies which are curriculum & instruction, more time, and innovative school models. Of the 10 grant opportunities, the Instructional Leadership grant and the School Action Fund receive their source of funds through Title I. She also shared if

a campus is not identified as needing Targeted Support, then they would not be able to apply for the Instructional Leadership and School Action Fund grants.

Finally, major milestones of the LASO 3 grant were shared which included when the application will open and when webinar opportunities will occur. Ms. Denman also explained this grant will be transitioning out of a competitive grant and phasing into a formula grant.

Proposed Redesign of the Program Monitoring Process conducted by the Federal Program Compliance Division

Jaime Huerta – Division Director shared his team recently added a new team member, Victoria Rivera. Ms. Rivera introduced herself to the committee.

Mr. Huerta exclaimed TEA is looking to redesign the program monitoring process for 2024-2025. His division recently hosted a statewide training to solicit feedback on the proposed process.

Mr. Huerta shared the rationale for change. He exclaimed the current process for program random validations was developed during the pandemic to minimize the burden on LEAs. Moreover, the process had LEAs selected year after year and some LEAs were not selected at all. Additionally, the process used to select LEAs randomly validated presented parameters that made it difficult to select a representative sample.

The total LEAs who participated in random validators over a 4-year period was shared. Mr. Huerta shared of the 1,173 LEAs who applied to receive Title I, Part A funds, over a 4-year period, 234 LEAs were randomly validated, which equates to about 20% of the LEAs. TEA wants a system where most LEAs are selected.

Mr. Huerta shared a comparison of the current process and the proposed process. He explained the redesign is exclusive to the programs administered by the Federal Program Compliance (FPC) division. He clarified this process does not include federal programs administered outside of his division, such as the Title I School Improvement grant.

Mr. Huerta informed the committee the proposed programs that will be included in the program monitoring process for 2024-2025 conducted by his division. He also reviewed how LEAs will be selected to participate, based on the programs the LEA applied for. Requirements selected was also shared with the committee. For 2024-2025, LEAs would only be selected to submit documentation for 1 requirement for all the programs they applied for.

Mr. Huerta reiterated the process is not operating in a “Gotcha Mentality.” This is a continuous improvement process. LEAs are given a chance to demonstrate compliance through the self-check items submitted through the current Compliance Report. If the LEA reports “In Compliance” then they should have documentation demonstrating compliance. If an LEA reports “Not In Compliance” on the self-check items, then TEA will not ask the LEA for documentation.

In 2023-2024, LEA’s submitted current-year documentation. For 2024-2025, TEA will be looking at prior-year documentation to verify data reported in the Compliance Report.

A question was asked on when this process will begin. Mr. Huerta answered the new cycle will begin in 2024-2025. If an LEA participated in the Random Validation (RV) process for 2023-2024, they will not be included in the RV process for 2024-2025, but they will be included in subsequent years.

Lauren Hodge asked in reference to the cycle and LEAs being selected, will they continue to be randomly selected or will it move towards Special Education's Model when LEAs know what year they are selected for monitoring?

Mr. Huerta shared it will be somewhat random but not. TEA needs a particular amount of LEAs selected to be validated. Some LEAs qualify to receive funds and other years they don't. It would be difficult to create a list of the LEAs selected for 5 years, because the list of LEAs is fluid with the parameters of did they qualify and apply for the funds.

The process timeline was shared. In 2023-2024, LEAs had 2 weeks to submit their documentation for each phase. For 2024-2025, because this is the inception year and the level of reviews will increase for each program, TEA is looking at giving LEAs 5 weeks to submit their documentation.

Mr. Huerta shared the proposed documentation submission process. LEAs will submit documentation in 2024-2025 via the Federal Program Compliance Division Program Monitoring Validations WorkApp System.

Steps LEAs will execute depending on their compliance status were shared. Mr. Huerta indicated his team is considering adding a status in the middle of met compliance and improvement needs.

Lauren Hodge asked if a district reports not in compliance, will they need to re-classify money for the previous year? Mr. Huerta clarified, regarding his division, they don't have LEAs who need to reclassify funds. However, for Title II, if documentation indicates it was a supplant, then there may be a consequence. Mr. Huerta also reminded the committee that the LEAs need to stay within the four corners of what needs to be submitted as their documentation. If an LEA submits its entire DIP, then TEA has to review it.

For resources, Mr. Huerta shared his team wants to break up the handbook into two resources. One handbook would be a more general program monitoring process handbook that includes general information about the process for all programs. Additionally, his team will create guidance documents that will only include information on the program-specific requirements.

Tentative next steps on the redesign process were reviewed. Mr. Huerta shared that the links to feedback forms for each topic of the redesign process will be shared following the meeting. He requested committee members and guests to submit their feedback by Wednesday, June 19, 2024.

Title I COP Call for Nominations

Jaime Huerta – Division Director referenced an email that was previously sent for an open call for nominations for members to be on the Title I Committee of Practitioners. He shared the stakeholder groups the committee is required to have according to statute. The committee must have at least two stakeholders for each group. Mr. Huerta shared he was soliciting nominations from specific regions across the state. Mr. Huerta explained the next steps for COP Membership. Based on feedback received from USDE's audit visit, Mr. Huerta's team wants to exhibit due diligence to ensure the committee representation is spot on.

Ed-Flex Renewal Status Update

Vivian Smyrl - Director explained TEA's current Ed-Flex status was based on a 5-year authorization received in 2019. TEA submitted an application for renewal in mid-May. USDE streamlined the process to request renewal. USDE asked for information regarding improved student performance for those LEAs who received waivers. TEA expects to hear the status of the Ed-Flex renewal by the end of June. TEA will be given a transition year if authority is denied. Ms. Smyrl shared student performance data between 2019 and 2022. Overall, the waivers allowed LEAs to bounce back from the pandemic and academic decline.

Committee Action Items

Dates for Title I COP Meetings in 2024-2025

Jaime Huerta – Division Director asked the committee if anyone had any conflicts with the proposed meeting dates for 2024-2025. **Lauren Hodge, Committee Chair**, asked for motion to approve the meeting dates as presented. A motion to approve the dates was made by **Pamela Evans** and a second by **Sharon Sanchez**. The motion to approve the meeting dates for 2024-2025 passed.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Lauren Hodge, Committee Chair, confirmed with the members that they had reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting which was held on April 11, 2024. A motion to approve the minutes meeting was made by **Pamela Evans** and a second by **Merideth Dodd**. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Adjourn

Lauren Hodge, Interim Committee Chair, adjourned the meeting at 10:22 a.m.