Overview

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is accepting applications for Read and Lead Maryland, the Maryland (MD) Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant. This competitive funding opportunity is designed to enhance literacy outcomes for all students, particularly those from historically underserved populations. The Request for Application (RFA) offers Local Education Agencies (LEAs) the opportunity to submit proposals that align with their district's Comprehensive Literacy Plan (CLP) and the strategies outlined in MSDE's CLSD grant application to the U.S. Department of Education.

Proposed projects must align with the selected *Strategy Focus Areas* identified in the Grant Information Guide (GIG) and adhere to funding allocation requirements. Applicants are encouraged to submit data-driven, sustainable project plans that address their district's specific literacy needs**.**

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

After determining eligibility, referencing the Grant Information Guide, fully respond to all questions in the provided template. **The entirety of the application is due April 28, 2025 by 5:00 p.m.**

Applications must include the following components to receive consideration:

- Grant Application (below)
- District Comprehensive Literacy Plan (last submitted to the AIB in June 2024)
- Proposed Budget Spreadsheet
- Assurances (signed by all required district leaders)

Applications missing any required documents will be deemed incomplete and will not be considered for review.

Grant Application Contact Information

Please provide information on the primary contact for the grant application.

LEA(s) *(see GIG page 5 for more information)*	
Mailing Address	
Superintendent Name	
Superintendent Email	
Grant Coordinator Name	
Grant Coordinator Phone Number	
Grant Coordinator Email	
Federal Program Coordinator	
Federal Program Coordinator Email	
Additional Contact Information	

Literacy Needs Assessment
(40 Total Points)

Subgrantees will submit a comprehensive needs assessment that will include the below prompts as part of their application process. A "Comprehensive Literacy Needs Assessment Tool" has been developed to drive the creation of the needs assessment, but it is not required. The comprehensive needs assessment should demonstrate the following criteria:

1. **Collection and analysis of a variety of student and LEA data** such as: **(10 points)**

   - State Literacy Assessment (MCAP) (MANDATORY)

   - Local formative and summative assessments

   - Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA)

   - Data collected to satisfy the Ready to Read Act

   - Local screener and diagnostic data, as well as any data collected to track interventions and progress monitoring

   - Professional learning evaluation data

   - Relevant data demonstrating implementation of and needs related to professional learning

2. **Identification of Gaps**: **(10 points)**

   - Targets gaps by grade level, subgroup, and school(s), specifically focusing on "high-needs schools" with high populations of underserved student groups.

     - The term "high-need school' means (i) an elementary school or middle school in which not less than 50 percent of the enrolled students are children from low-income families; or (ii) a high school in which not less than 40 percent of the enrolled students are children from low-income families, which may be calculated using comparable data from the schools that feed into the high school.

3. **Assessment of current literacy programs and instructional practices**: **(10 points)**

   - Relies on previous analyses and feedback by the Maryland Initiative for Literacy and Equity (MILE), MSDE, or other trusted sources to assess current programs and practices and to articulate areas of need. Reports and feedback from trusted external sources may be included in the needs assessment narrative and reference these materials in the text to justify the conclusions of the needs assessment. Using the data collected above and the target gaps, consider the following:

     - What literacy programming is currently taking place?

     - What barriers exist?

     - What is the quality and alignment of instructional materials?

     - What is the availability, use, and quality of professional learning opportunities?

     - What systems and structures are put in place to support the programming?

     - What successful programs or initiatives could be expanded or replicated?

4. **Development of data narrative**: **(10 points)**

- Synthesizes findings from the needs assessment into a data-driven narrative that clearly articulates:

  - The district's current state of literacy performance

  - Specific literacy challenges and the root causes contributing to those challenges

  - Trends, patterns, and key data points that inform the district's goals and priorities that you will include in your project goals and outcomes

  - Explanation of determination of target gaps and selected program sites best and/or most urgent places to focus CLSD project

LITERACY NEEDS ASSESSMENT NARRATIVE

Insert your Literacy Needs Assessment in the box below. The format should be double spaced, size 12 font. This section of the application should include attachments such as data visualizations, assessment data, and/or literacy plans and feedback. Additionally, an **optional** "Comprehensive Literacy Needs Assessment Tool" is provided to help districts gather and organize information for their narrative.

Insert Literacy Needs Assessment Narrative here.

Program Site(s) Selection (20 Total Points)

Indicate the specific school name(s) and grade levels that will be served. Using the data collected from the needs assessment, write a brief description explaining why that specific school was identified.

PROGRAM SITE SELECTION

LEA, Feeder System, and/or Specific Schools	Grade Band(s) Requested	Criteria for Selection
Example: *Jefferson Heights Elementary School with a specific target on grades PK 4, 3, 4, & 5*	☒ Birth-Age 5 ☒ K-5 ☐ 6-8 ☐ 9-12	***Example****: Jefferson Heights Elementary, a high-need school where 60% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, struggles with low early literacy proficiency, with only 35% of third graders reading at grade level. The school serves PK 3-Grade 5. The district's needs assessment highlights gaps at Jefferson Heights ES among multilingual learners and students with disabilities, a poorly executed MTSS framework, and a need for professional learning in structured literacy due to evidence of inconsistent use of evidence-based practices.*
	☐ Birth-Age 5 ☐ K-5 ☐ 6-8 ☐ 9-12	
	☐ Birth-Age 5 ☐ K-5 ☐ 6-8 ☐ 9-12	
	☐ Birth-Age 5 ☐ K-5 ☐ 6-8 ☐ 9-12	

Project Goals and Outcomes (30 Total Points)

Subgrantees will develop project goals and outcomes for their project that will address the following criteria:

1. **Develop SMART Goals: (10 points)**

   - Create SMART goals to clearly define your project's focus and scope:

     - (S)pecific: Goals should be clear, detailed, and focused, leaving no room for ambiguity. They should address who, what, where, and why to provide clarity on the intended outcome.

     - (M)easureable: Goals should include criteria or benchmarks to track progress and determine success. This involves specifying how you will measure outcomes and what tools or data will be used.

     - (A)chievable: Goals should be realistic and attainable within the given timeframe, resources, and constraints. While goals should stretch your capabilities, they should remain feasible given your district's capacity.

     - (R)elevant: Goals should align with the overarching purpose of the grant, district priorities, and identified needs from your literacy assessment. They should directly contribute to improving student outcomes and addressing gaps in literacy performance.

     - (T)ime bound: Goals should include a specific deadline or timeframe to ensure accountability and maintain focus, and to demonstrate feasibility of achieving project goals within the grant timeline. Setting clear deadlines helps track progress and prioritize activities.

2. **Define metrics and tools for measuring success: (10 points)**

   - For each goal, specify how success will be measured and the tools or data sources that will be used

PROJECT GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Insert your goals and outcomes in the box below. The format should be double spaced, size 12 font. Additionally, an **optional** "SMART Goals Toolkit" is provided to help districts gather and organize information to complete the chart below.

Read and Lead Program Strategy	Evidence-based Activity	Target Population	SMART Goal that includes the metrics and tools that will measure success
☐ Literacy Coaching ☐ MTSS ☐ Supporting MLs ☐ Professional Learning Models ☐ HQIM ☐ Partnerships with IHEs ☐ Expanding Gifted and Talented Programming			

Comprehensive Project Plan
(30 Total Points)

Develop a comprehensive project plan that includes the following prompts:

1. **Establish a timeline to map out key activities, milestones, metrics, and deadlines across the entire grant period: (10 points)**

   - Incorporate phases that divide the project into implementation stages such as planning, professional learning, implementation, and evaluation.

   - Include checkpoints that allow you to set regular progress review dates to evaluate implementation and make adjustments.

   - Capture dates and projected metrics for key implementation points, as outlined in your SMART goals.

2. **Identify roles and responsibilities: (10 points)**

   - Create a team structure that defines the key roles needed for project implementation.

   - Assign responsibilities for specific tasks to ensure accountability and streamline execution.

3. **Include an evaluation and monitoring plan: (10 points)**

   - Identify the performance indicators or metrics identified in your SMART goals that will measure progress and define success, such as:

     - Student literacy proficiency rates

     - Teacher participation in professional learning

     - Fidelity of program implementation

     - Tools or processes the district will use for data collection

     - Evaluations of the implementation that can be used at Semi-Annual Leadership Meetings

4. **Establish a plan for sustainability by embedding goals that will support in making your project sustainable long term.: (PRIORITY PREFERENCE POINTS)**

   - Design professional learning with ongoing coaching, follow-up sessions, and resources to reinforce new skills and practices over time.

   - Ensure professional learning connects to broader educational priorities and is embedded within existing initiatives for coherence and sustainability.

   - Evaluate educators' understanding, confidence, and willingness to change, then tailor support to their specific needs.

   - Use progress indicators and structured feedback loops to track adoption, identify barriers, and refine strategies as needed.

- Identify systemic challenges that may hinder progress and advocate for policies, structures, and resources that sustain professional learning.

- Encourage peer collaboration, coaching, and shared reflection to strengthen implementation and sustain momentum.

- Apply research-based models, such as the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), to understand educators' concerns, guide change efforts, and measure impact.

- Use Coburn's Dimensions of Scale to consider how you will move beyond numbers to deep, lasting change.

COMPREHENSIVE PROJECT PLAN

Insert your Comprehensive Project Plan in the box below. The format should be double spaced, size 12 font.

Insert Comprehensive Project Plan here.

Comprehensive Budget and Budget Narrative (20 Total Points)

Develop a comprehensive budget and a budget narrative that include the following criteria:

1. **Create a budget: (10 points)**

   Outline the costs associated with each project component. Ensure that your budget:

   - Includes all budget items that support a specific goal, objective, or activity outlined in your project plan.

   - Identifies budget items into the following categories:

     - Personnel

     - Fringe Benefits

     - Travel (Must include one-day in-state travel for annual Read and Lead Convening for all grant leaders)

     - Equipment

     - Supplies

     - Contractual/Vendors

     - Other

     - Indirect costs

   - Contains considerations for the time frame when allocating funds, such as adjusting spending by year, recognizing that the timeframe for grant activities will vary by year.

     - **Year 1:** Since this will only be 4 months long, focus on planning activities, hiring staff, purchasing initial materials, and conducting foundational training. Allocate a smaller portion of the overall budget for this year.

     - **Year 2:** This will likely be the most implementation-heavy year, with significant funds allocated toward professional learning, instructional materials, and direct interventions.

     - **Year 3:** Focus on refining, evaluating, and sustaining the initiative, with funds allocated for monitoring, additional training, and scaling successful practices.

2. **Develop a budget narrative: (10 points)**

   Write a budget narrative that:

   - Explains each line item of the budget, detailing how it supports the project's goals and outcomes

   - Provides clear calculations for each expense

   - Accounts for yearly variations

COMPREHENSIVE BUDGET

Provide a view only link to your budget.

Insert link to completed Comprehensive Budget Template here.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

Insert your budget narrative in the box below. The format should be double spaced, size 12 font.

Insert Budget Narrative here.

How to Submit Your Application

- Once you have completed your district's Grant Application Template (this document), ensure that all documents that will be submitted (**except your Budget Spreadsheet**) are saved as PDF documents.

- The following documents are required to complete your application:

  - Grant Application (this document)

  - District Comprehensive Literacy Plan (last submitted to the AIB in June 2024)

  - Proposed Budget Spreadsheet

  - Assurances (signed by all required district leaders)

- **You will upload your Grant Application Template and all other application requirements to the Read and Lead Grant Submission Form.**

- The Grant Submission Form must be submitted by 5pm on April 28th, 2025.

Scoring Rubric

The application scoring rubric will be used to evaluate applications for the Read and Lead Maryland Grant. Applications will be reviewed by a grant selection committee. The committee will use this rubric to guide its deliberations.

SCORING DEFINITIONS

- **Exemplary (9 - 10 points)** – The response is clear, well-developed, and strongly aligned with grant priorities. It provides comprehensive evidence, specific data, and a detailed implementation plan.

- **Proficient (7 - 8 points)** – The response is complete and aligned with grant priorities but lacks some specificity or minor details. Data and implementation plans are adequate.

- **Developing (5 - 6 points)** – The response meets basic requirements but lacks depth, specificity, or alignment with the grant's strategic focus. Implementation and impact are not clearly defined.

- **Needs Improvement (0 - 4 points)** – The response is incomplete, lacks alignment with the grant's objectives, or fails to provide supporting evidence.

Application Component	Total Available Points
1. Requirements and Priorities	**None**
2. Literacy Needs Assessment	**__/40**
3. Program Site(s) Selection	**__/20**
4. Project Goals and Outcomes	**__/30**
5. Comprehensive Project Plan	**__/30**
6. Comprehensive Budget and Budget Narrative	**__/30**
7. BONUS: Preference Priorities	**BONUS __/16**
TOTAL AVAILABLE POINTS (Excluding Bonus Points)	**___/160**

Requirements and Priorities	Needs Improvement (0-4 points)	Developing (5-6 points)	Proficient (7-8 points)	Exemplary (9-10 points)	Total
1. The LEA meets the definition of high need	If not met, not eligible for grant			☐	
2. The LEA meets priority for underserved students	If not met, not eligible for grant			☐	
3. The LEA has included all components of their application: ☐ Grant Application Template ☐ District Comprehensive Literacy Plan ☐ Proposed Budget Spreadsheet ☐ Assurances (signed by all required district leaders)	If not met, not eligible for grant			☐	
Reviewer Comments:					

Literacy Needs Assessment	Needs Improvement (0-4 points)	Developing (5-6 points)	Proficient (7-8 points)	Exemplary (9-10 points)	Total
1. Collection and analysis of a variety of student and LEA data					__/10
2. Clearly identifies literacy achievement gaps by grade level, student subgroup, and high-needs schools					__/10
3. Evaluates current literacy programs and instructional practices, referencing external feedback and trusted literacy sources					__/10
4. Synthesizes findings into a clear data narrative that defines target gaps, challenges, and the rationale for selecting project sites					__/10
Reviewer Comments:					
				Total	/40

Program Site(s) Selection	Needs Improvement (0-4 points)	Developing (5-6 points)	Proficient (7-8 points)	Exemplary (9-10 points)	Total
1. Clearly identifies the school(s) and grade bands served, with a strong rationale based on the needs assessment					__/10
2. Selection of sites demonstrates a focus on underserved populations and high-needs schools					__/10
Reviewer Comments:					
				Total	/20

Project Goals and Outcomes	Needs Improvement (0-4 points)	Developing (5-6 points)	Proficient (7-8 points)	Exemplary (9-10 points)	Total
1. Goals are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound)					__/10
2. Metrics and data tools are well-defined and appropriate for measuring success					__/10
3. Goals directly address literacy gaps identified in the needs assessment					__/10
Reviewer Comments:					
				Total	/30

Comprehensive Project Plan	Needs Improvement (0-4 points)	Developing (5-6 points)	Proficient (7-8 points)	Exemplary (9-10 points)	Total
1. Identifies evidence-based instructional strategies aligned with district needs and the Read and Lead strategy focus areas					__/10
2. Provides a detailed timeline with key milestones, implementation phases, and progress checkpoints					__/10
3. Clearly defines roles and responsibilities for implementation, including leadership, coaching, and program oversight					__/10
4. Includes a monitoring and evaluation plan with defined performance indicators and accountability measures					__/10
Reviewer Comments:					
				Total	/40

Comprehensive Budget and Budget Narrative	Needs Improvement (0-4 points)	Developing (5-6 points)	Proficient (7-8 points)	Exemplary (9-10 points)	Total
1. Budget is well-structured and aligned with the project plan: Clearly connects all expenditures to specific goals, activities, and expected outcomes					__/10
2. Justification for spending is clear and reasonable: Each budget line is explained in the budget narrative, demonstrating how costs directly support literacy initiatives					__/10
3. Considers time frame and phased spending: Appropriately adjusts spending based on project needs in Years 1–3					__/10
Reviewer Comments:					
				Total	/30

PREFERENCE PRIORITY POINTS Sustainability Plan and LEA Collaboration	Needs Improvement (0-4 points)	Developing (5-6 points)	Proficient (7-8 points)	Exemplary (9-10 points)	Total
1. Outlines a clear strategy to sustain project initiatives beyond the grant period					__/7 **BONUS**
2. Application clearly shows how their district or feeder system contains 50% or more of their schools with specifically high percentages of underserved student populations.					__/3 **BONUS**
3. Application shows evidence of strong collaboration across different LEA offices such as ELA, Special Education, Multilingual Learners, MTSS, etc.					__/6 **BONUS**
Reviewer Comments:					
				Total	/16 **BONUS**