



**Mohammed Choudhury**  
State Superintendent of Schools

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**TO:** Members of the State Board of Education  
**FROM:** Mohammed Choudhury  
**DATE:** August 24, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** Expert Review Team

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**PURPOSE:**

To review the plan to deploy the expert review team in schools as required by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

**BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:**

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to establish, administer, and supervise an expert review team program. The purpose of the expert review team program is to analyze the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future in schools, determine the underlying causes for student performance problems, evaluate behavioral health services provided in schools, and develop recommendations to address identified issues. The expert review team must be deployed to at least 10% of public schools in at least three different school systems each year beginning July 1, 2023. In the 2022-2023 school year, MSDE must send an expert review team to a school or group of schools in which students demonstrate learning loss resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

MSDE developed a draft plan that describes the selection, assembly, and deployment of the expert review team as required by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation. The plan reviews the composition, selection, and training of the expert review team. Additionally, the plan includes the timeline for implementation and funding considerations.

**ACTION:**

For information only. No action required.

**ATTACHMENT:**

Attachment I – Blueprint for Maryland's Future: Expert Review Team PowerPoint  
Attachment II – Blueprint for Maryland's Future: Expert Review Team Draft Plan



# Blueprint for Maryland's Future: Expert Review Team Program

Maryland State Board of Education  
August 24, 2021

# Purpose of the Expert Review Team Program



- Analyze the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future in schools,
- Determine the underlying causes for student performance problems,
- Evaluate behavioral health services provided in schools, and
- Develop recommendations, measures, and strategies to address identified issues.

- Maryland State Department of Education must establish, administer, and supervise an expert review team program.
- Expert Review Team must be deployed to
  - at least 10% of public schools (145 schools) in at least three different school systems each year beginning July 1, 2023.
  - Schools in which students demonstrate learning loss resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic in the 2022-2023 school year.
- MSDE must submit a plan to the Accountability and Implementation Board to deploy the expert review team.

# Expert Review Team Program Draft Plan Overview



- Selection
  - Composition
  - Selection Process
- Training
- Deployment
- Implementation Timeline
- Reporting
- Funding
- Aligning Review Teams



## Blueprint for Maryland's Future: Expert Review Team Program



Draft Report for the  
Accountability and Implementation Board

July 2021

# Composition of Expert Review Team



## Blueprint Requirements

- Teachers represented by a teachers' organization
- School leaders
- Others with expertise in the purpose and duties of the expert review teams
- Teams must represent the racial, ethnic, linguistic, and gender diversity of public school students

## MSDE Proposed Team for Each School Reviewed

- Two teachers with experience in the grade band, content, or type of school being reviewed
- One school leader with experience in the type of school being reviewed
- Two experts from entities with expertise in effective school improvement practices
- One behavior health expert from the Maryland School Mental Health Response Program Team

# Expert Review Team Selection Process



- Team members will be selected based on their experience, expertise, and geographic, racial, ethnic, and gender diversity
- Team members will be recommended from:
  - Maryland State Education Association,
  - Baltimore Teachers Union,
  - Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals,
  - Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals,
  - Maryland Promising Principals' Academy Alumni,
  - Maryland School Mental Health Response Program Team,
  - Organizations with expertise in effective school improvement practices,
  - And others.
- All applicants will be reviewed and selected by a team from MSDE

# Expert Review Team Members will Participate in Training on the Following Topics:



1. Maintaining confidentiality.
2. Using the reporting system to capture evidence, report outcomes, and develop recommendations.
3. Collecting objective, un-biased, and factual evidence to support findings and recommendations.
4. Reviewing school data and use it to inform recommendations.
5. Preparing for school visits and adhering to expectations during school visits.
6. Engaging in instructional walks within a school.
7. Observing instructional practices, classroom environment, student work, student engagement, and student behavior.
8. Calibrating observations.
9. Conducting interviews with teachers, students, parents, school administrators, central office staff, and other stakeholders.
10. Developing achievable recommendations grounded in evidence of effectiveness.
11. Building consensus for findings and recommendations.
12. Engaging in debriefs to discuss initial findings with school level and school system staff.
13. Collaborating with school level and central office staff to develop recommendations for improvement.
14. Completing reporting requirements to summarize outcomes and consolidate recommendations.
15. Engaging in post-visit protocols.

# Deploying Expert Review Teams: School Selection



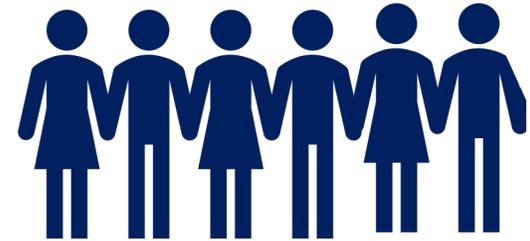
1. Schools determined to be the lowest performing in the state;
2. Schools determined to be the highest performing in the state;
3. Schools identified by the Accountability and Implementation Board;
4. Schools that request an expert review team visit;
5. Schools where students continue to demonstrate learning loss that began in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic; and
6. Schools selected by a randomized process.

The lowest and highest performing schools will be determined by student performance on state assessments. Identification of schools will also be based on data collected by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act and American Rescue Plan.

# Deploying Expert Review Teams

- 145 schools in three different school systems must participate in the expert review process each year
- 60 total expert review team members will form 10 teams of 6
- Approximately 15 schools will be visited by each team of 6

## Expert Review Team 1



# Proposed Structure for On-Site School Visits



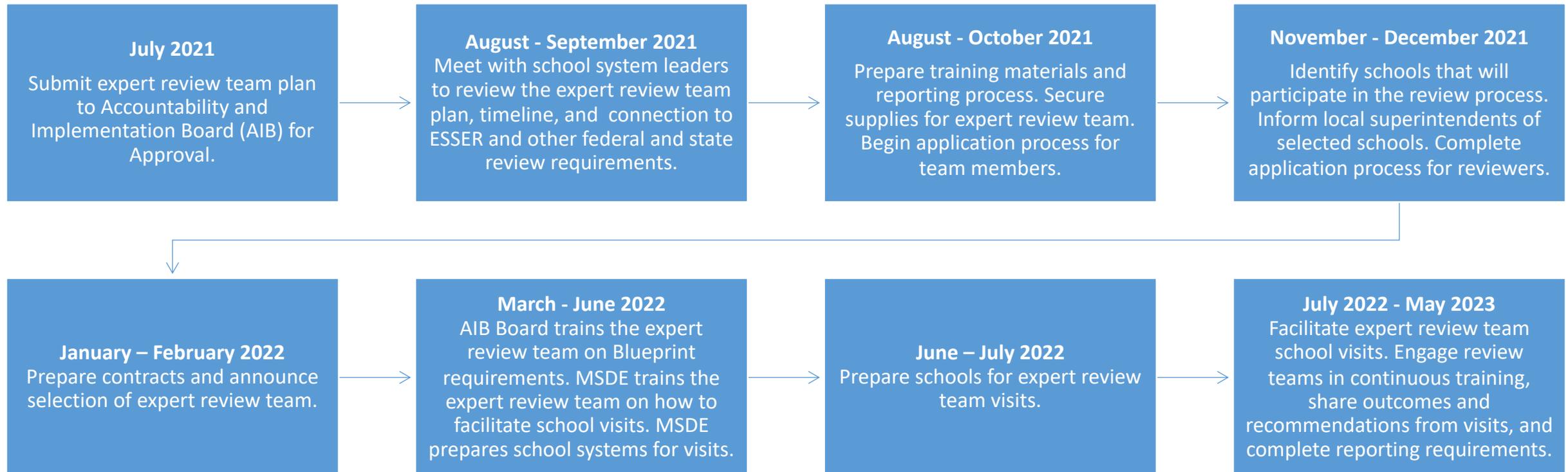
- A team of six will visit a school
  - Three team members will observe classroom instruction
  - Three team members will facilitate interviews
- Internal team debrief to identify initial findings
- Debrief with school leadership and central office staff to discuss initial findings
- On-site school visits will occur over the course of one – two days

# Overview of the On-Site Review Process



- **Prior to On-Site Visit (2 Weeks)**
  - Central office staff and school leadership meet with review team members to prepare for the visit.
  - On-site visit schedule and agenda are established and shared.
  - Any additional information or documents for the visit are shared.
- **During Visit (2 Days)**
  - Classrooms are randomly selected by the review team to observe for at least 20 minutes per class.
  - Instructional observations and evidence collection will follow a researched-based protocol.
  - Interviews are conducted on-site according to a researched-based protocol with defined questions.
  - Expert review team engages in a verbal debrief with central office staff and school leaders to discuss initial findings and next steps.
- **After Visit (~4 weeks)**
  - Draft report is developed based on findings and includes recommendations (2 weeks).
  - Draft report is shared with school and school system leaders to provide the opportunity to make factual corrections and provide comments. Comments will be included in the appendix of the final report (1 week).
  - Report is finalized (1 week).
  - Final report is submitted to the school, school system, and Accountability and Implementation Board. Final report is posted on MSDE's website.

# Proposed Timeline



# Funding Expert Review Team



Funding will be used to:

1. Hire MSDE staff members to lead the expert review team program. Staff members will prepare training materials, develop reports, collect data, schedule school visits, coordinate training of expert review team members, and coordinate cross-agency support of the review team.
2. Purchase equipment and supplies for the expert review team program.
3. Pay for background checks for expert review team members.
4. Secure space and facilitate training sessions.
5. Pay for travel and hotels for the expert review team.
6. Pay stipends to members of the expert review team.

# Next Steps



- ✓ Secure resources to facilitate the Expert Review Team
- ✓ Prepare training materials
- ✓ Review data to begin school identification
- ✓ Begin to build the bench of expert reviewers
- ✓ Implement the expert review team program



# Blueprint for Maryland's Future: Expert Review Team Program



Draft Report for the  
Accountability and Implementation Board

July 2021

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## Table of Contents

Expert Review Team Program Requirements.....	3
Selecting Members of the Expert Review Team.....	3
Composition of Expert Review Team.....	3
Selection Process .....	4
Training the Expert Review Team.....	4
Deploying the Expert Review Team.....	5
Overview of the Review Process .....	5
Timeline for Implementation.....	6
Reporting Requirements.....	6
Funding the Expert Review Team Program .....	7
Aligning Review Teams Across the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) .....	7
Summary.....	8

## Expert Review Team Program Requirements

The [Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Implementation](#) legislation requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to establish, administer, and supervise an expert review team program. The purpose of the expert review team program is to analyze the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future in schools, determine the underlying causes for student performance problems, evaluate behavioral health services provided in schools, and develop recommendations to address identified issues. The expert review team must be deployed to at least 10% of public schools (145 schools) in at least three different school systems each year beginning July 1, 2023. In the 2022-2023 school year, the [Blueprint for Maryland's Future – Revisions](#) requires MSDE to send an expert review team to a school or group of schools in which students demonstrate learning loss resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

This report details the plan for selection, assembly, and deployment of the expert review team as required by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation. The review requirements detailed in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation are similar to review requirements for the federal American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund. As a result, MSDE will consolidate school review requirements defined by the Blueprint and ESSER into one comprehensive review program. The comprehensive approach will allow MSDE to effectively utilize resources, streamline recommendations and reports, and strengthen support to school systems. The plan presented in this report aligns with the review plan described in the American Rescue Plan ESSER application submitted to the US Department of Education in July 2021.

## Selecting Members of the Expert Review Team

The [Blueprint for Maryland's Future- Implementation](#) legislation defines the composition of the expert review team. The team must consist of teachers who are represented by a teacher collective bargaining unit, school leaders, and others who have expertise in the purpose and duties of the expert review team program. Team members must reflect the geographic, racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of the Maryland public school student population.

### Composition of Expert Review Team

The expert review process will be implemented in 145 schools in three different school systems each year. Each expert review team will consist of the following members:

- Two teachers with experience in the grade band, content areas, or type of school being reviewed and experience in improving student performance for the identified grade band or content area.
- One school leader (principal or assistant principal) with experience in the grade band or type of school being reviewed and experience in improving school performance.
- Two representatives from organizations with expertise and experience in improving school performance.
- One behavioral health expert from the Maryland School Mental Health Response Program Team.

A total of 60 expert reviewers will be selected to participate on the expert review team. There will be ten teams with six expert reviewers on each team. Expert reviewers will represent Eastern, Southern, Western, and Central Maryland and reflect the diversity of Maryland public school students.

### Selection Process

Expert review team members will be selected based on their experience, expertise, and geographic, racial, ethnic, and gender diversity. Team members will be recommended from the following:

- Maryland State Education Association,
- Baltimore Teachers Union,
- Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals,
- Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals,
- Maryland Promising Principals' Academy Alumni,
- Maryland School Mental Health Response Program Team,
- Organizations with Expertise in Effective School Improvement Practices, and
- Others.

Recommendation forms will be sent to each identified group in the bulleted list. The recommendation form will collect information regarding experience, expertise, geographic location, race, ethnicity, and gender for each recommended applicant. Submitted recommendations will be reviewed and interviewed by a team from MSDE. Expert review team members will be selected based on qualifications, experience in the grade band or content areas in identified schools, and expertise in improving student outcomes. All expert review team members will be required to pass a background check and adhere to a code of conduct.

### Training the Expert Review Team

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation requires the Accountability and Implementation Board to train the expert review team on the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The training must include the rationale for the Blueprint and information on the way similar systems work in top-performing school systems around the world.

MSDE will train the expert review team on the review process. The review process will include researched-based protocols, rubrics, and templates. MSDE training will include how to:

1. Maintain confidentiality.
2. Use the established reporting system to capture evidence, report outcomes, and develop recommendations.
3. Collect objective, un-biased, and factual evidence to support findings and recommendations.
4. Review school data and use it to inform recommendations.
5. Prepare for school visits and adhere to expectations during school visits.
6. Engage in instructional walks within a school.
7. Observe instructional practices, classroom environment, student work, student engagement, and student behavior.
8. Calibrate observations.
9. Conduct interviews with teachers, students, parents, school administrators, central office staff, and other stakeholders.

10. Develop achievable recommendations grounded in evidence of effectiveness.
11. Build consensus for findings and recommendations.
12. Engage in debriefs to discuss initial findings with school level and school system staff.
13. Collaborate with school level and central office staff to develop recommendations for improvement.
14. Complete reporting requirements to summarize outcomes and consolidate recommendations.
15. Engage in post-visit protocols.

### Deploying the Expert Review Team

There are 145 schools in three different school systems that must participate in the expert review process each year. As a result, each six member team will visit approximately 15 schools over a nine month timeframe. Expert review teams will be deployed to the following schools as defined in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation:

1. Schools determined to be the lowest performing in the state;
2. Schools determined to be the highest performing in the state;
3. Schools identified by the Accountability and Implementation Board;
4. Schools that request an expert review team visit;
5. Schools where students continue to demonstrate learning loss that began in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic; and
6. Schools selected by a randomized process.

The lowest and highest performing schools will be determined by student performance on state assessments. Identification of schools will also be based on data collected by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act and American Rescue Plan.

### Overview of the Review Process

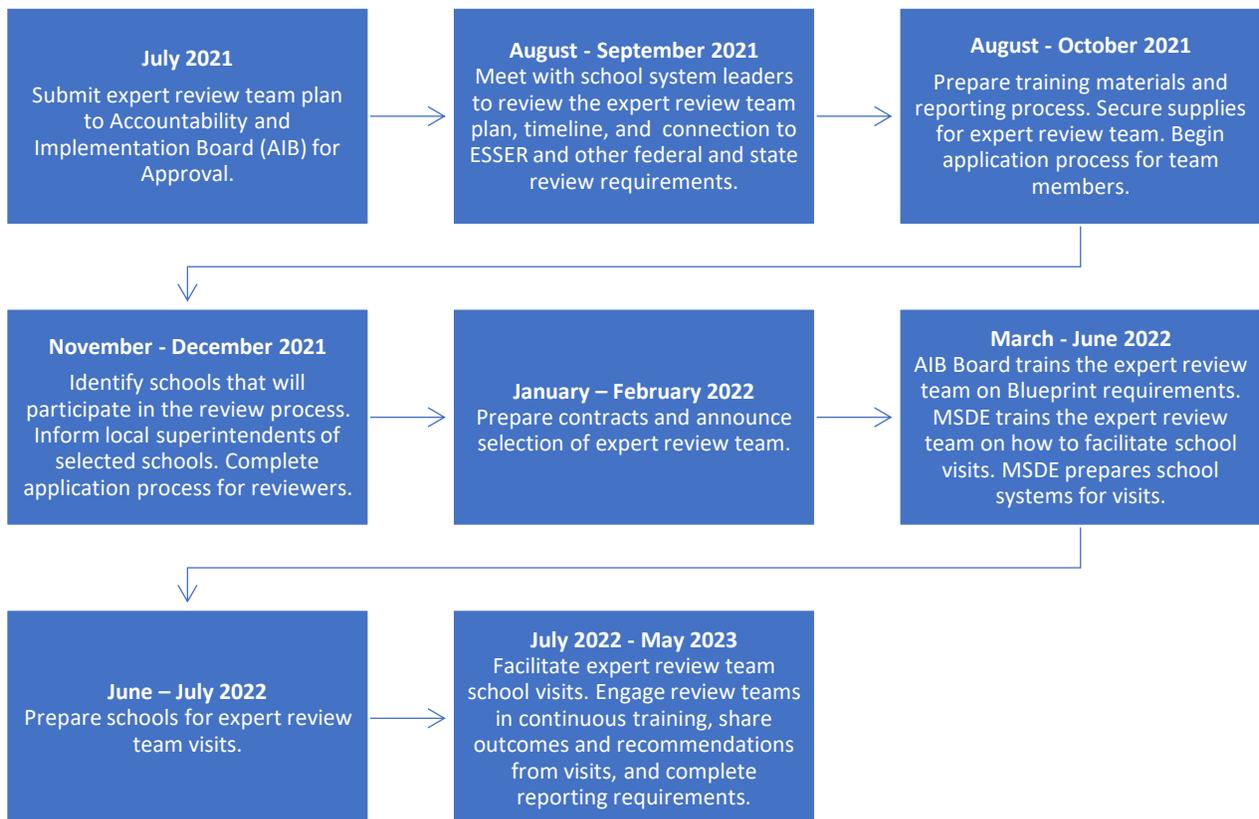
The review process consists of specific, research-based actions that will occur prior to the on-site visit, during the on-site visit, and after the on-site visit.

1. Prior to On-Site Visit (2 Weeks)
  - Central office staff and school leadership meet with review team members to prepare for the visit.
  - On-site visit schedule and agenda are established and shared.
  - Any additional information or documents for the visit are shared.
2. During Visit (2 Days)
  - Classrooms are randomly selected by the review team to observe for at least 20 minutes per class.
  - Instructional observations and evidence collection will follow a researched-based protocol.
  - Interviews are conducted on-site according to a researched-based protocol with defined questions.
  - Expert review team engages in a verbal debrief with central office staff and school leaders to discuss initial findings and next steps.
3. After Visit (~4 weeks)
  - Draft report is developed based on findings and includes recommendations (2 weeks).

- Draft report is shared with school and school system leaders to provide the opportunity to make factual corrections and provide comments. Comments will be included in the appendix of the final report (1 week).
- Report is finalized (1 week).
- Final report is submitted to the school, school system, and Accountability and Implementation Board. Final report is posted on MSDE’s website.

## Timeline for Implementation

The graphic below provides a draft timeline for the establishment of the expert review team and facilitation of reviews. The expert review team must be deployed to at least 10% of public schools (145 schools) in at least three different school systems each year beginning July 1, 2023. For the 2022-2023 school year, the [Blueprint for Maryland’s Future – Revisions](#) requires MSDE to send an expert review team to a school or group of schools in which students continue to demonstrate learning loss that began in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. The timeline outlines the 2022-2023 process for schools with students that continue to demonstrate learning loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Reporting Requirements

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future legislation requires the expert review team to submit a report to MSDE after a school visit. MSDE will create a template for reporting and train the expert review team on

how to develop reports. Reports will be due to MSDE one week after a school visit. Reports will be shared with the school system and school. Support will be provided to school systems as necessary to address recommendations. Effective practices and outcomes from reviews will be shared publicly.

According to the Blueprint legislation, reports and recommendations developed from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2025, are advisory only and may be used by a school or school system to inform school programs and management. On July 1, 2025, reports produced by the expert review team will be used to recommend release of funding to school systems.

## Funding the Expert Review Team Program

Implementation of the expert review team program is contingent upon the availability of funds. [House Bill 588 – Budget Bill](#) (page 155) and [House Bill 940 – Gaming Regulation of Fantasy Gaming Competitions and Implementation of Sports Wagering](#) (page 48) allocates \$1,300,000 in fiscal year 2022 to support the expert review team. Funding will be used for the following:

1. Hire MSDE staff members to lead the expert review team program. Staff members will prepare training materials, develop reports, collect data, schedule school visits, coordinate training of expert review team members, and coordinate cross-agency support of the review team.
2. Purchase equipment and supplies for the expert review team program.
3. Pay for background checks for expert review team members.
4. Secure space and facilitate training sessions.
5. Pay for travel and hotels for the expert review team.
6. Pay stipends to members of the expert review team.

## Aligning Review Teams Across the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)

School systems currently participate in extensive on-site and virtual reviews each year led by MSDE to fulfill federal and state requirements. An aligned review process is essential to minimize disruption to instruction within school buildings. MSDE currently has a Cross-functional School Improvement Team that meets regularly to review data and align and leverage resources to support school improvement. The following Divisions within MSDE are represented on the Cross-functional School Improvement Team:

- Division of Career and College Readiness and Office of Leadership Development and School Improvement\*
- Division of Curriculum, Instructional Improvement, and Professional Learning\*
- Office of Research and Strategic Data Use
- Division of Early Childhood
- Division of Early Intervention and Special Education
- Division of Student Support, Academic Enrichment & Educational Policy
- Division of Assessment, Accountability, and Information Technology
- Other Divisions as Necessary

\*Cross-functional School Improvement Team Leaders

The Cross-functional School Improvement Team will be used to review resources and protocols; coordinate on-site reviews; collect and analyze data; review recommendations; and align support

directly to schools and school systems. The expert review team program will be supported by the Cross-functional School Improvement Team.

### Summary

This report details the plan for selection, assembly, and deployment of the expert review team as required by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation. This plan is expected to be implemented in August 2021, pending plan approval by the Accountability and Implementation Board and appropriation of funds.