

Guidance on the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP)



U.S. Department of Education

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RURAL EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM GUIDANCE

This document provides guidance on all parts of the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP): the Small Rural School Achievement Program (SRSA), including REAP-Flex, and the Rural and Low-Income School Program (RLIS). The focus of this document is implementation of educational programs under REAP. The intended audience for this guidance is administrators of local educational agencies that may use or receive funds under this program, and State educational agency personnel who provide oversight and technical assistance under this program.

Readers should first review the introduction to the program, and then proceed to the section that addresses the program under which they use or receive funds. For information regarding eligibility for these programs, the statutory funding formulas, accessing SRSA funds, and a discussion on REAP-Flex and the Transferability provisions under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, please review the appendices at the end of this guidance.

GUIDANCE ON THE RURAL EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

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I. INTRODUCTION

I-A-1. What is the purpose of the Rural Education Achievement Program?

The Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) is designed to assist rural school districts in using Federal resources more effectively to improve the quality of instruction and student academic achievement. It consists of two separate programs – the Small, Rural School Achievement (SRSA) program and the Rural and Low-Income Schools (RLIS) program.

The SRSA program provides eligible local educational agencies (LEAs) with greater flexibility in using the formula grant funds that they receive under certain State-administered Federal programs. (*See* “REAP-Flex” discussion in Parts II-A and II-B of this guidance.) It also authorizes formula grant awards directly to these LEAs to support a wide range of local activities that support student achievement. (*See* SRSA grant program discussion in Parts II-A, II-C, and II-D.)

The RLIS program authorizes formula grant awards to State educational agencies (SEAs), which in turn make subgrants to eligible LEAs either competitively or by formula. LEAs may use RLIS funds to support a broad array of local activities to support student achievement. (*See* RLIS program discussion in Part III.)

An LEA that is eligible to participate in the SRSA program may not receive funding under the RLIS program. (*See* item III-A-2 in this guidance).

I-A-2. What is the legislative authority for REAP?

REAP is authorized under Part B of Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

III. Rural and Low-Income Schools Program

III-A. Introduction and Eligibility

III-A-1. What is the Rural and Low-Income Schools program?

The Rural and Low-Income Schools (RLIS) program is an initiative that provides grant funds to rural LEAs that serve concentrations of children from low-income families. Under the RLIS program, the US Department of Education awards funds by formula to SEAs, which in turn make subgrants to LEAs either by formula or competitively.¹ (*See* III-B-4.) An LEA may use RLIS funds to support a range of authorized activities in order to assist the LEA in meeting its State’s definition of adequate yearly progress.

III-A-2. What LEAs are eligible to receive funds under the RLIS program?

An LEA is *eligible* for an allocation under the RLIS program if –

- (1) 20 percent or more of the children age 5 to 17 served by the LEA are from families with incomes below the poverty line;
- (2) all schools served by the LEA have a school locale code of 6, 7, or 8 (assigned by the US Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics; see Appendix A for discussion of these locale codes); *and*
- (3) the LEA is *not* eligible to participate in the SRSA program. (The eligibility requirements of the SRSA program are stated in II-A-3.)

Not all LEAs that are eligible for an RLIS award will necessarily receive a grant, especially in States in which the SEA chooses to award RLIS subgrants on a competitive basis.

Additional guidance on LEA eligibility under the RLIS program and on State application requirements is provided in Appendix E.

¹ If an SEA elects not to participate in the RLIS program, the Department awards RLIS funds directly to eligible LEAs in that State. (LEAs that receive direct grants under the RLIS program are referred to as “specially qualified agencies” in the legislation.) However, all States are currently participating in the RLIS program, and eligible LEAs are awarded subgrants through their SEA rather than through direct grants from the Department.

III-B. ALLOCATION OF RLIS FUNDS TO STATES AND LEAs

III-B-1. How does the US Department of Education allocate RLIS funds to States?

The US Department of Education allocates RLIS funds to States by formula. The amount of funding a State receives is based on its proportionate share of children in average daily attendance in all LEAs eligible to participate in the RLIS program. (As noted in footnote 2, every State with an eligible LEA is participating in the RLIS program.)

III-B-2. Are the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the outlying areas eligible for RLIS funds?

Yes. The US Department of Education reserves for the BIA one-half of 1 percent of the amount of RLIS funds that Congress appropriates each year; the US Department of Education reserves an equal amount for the outlying areas: American Samoa, Guam, Northern Marianas, and the Virgin Islands.

III-B-3. May a State reserve a portion of its RLIS allocation for administrative expenses or to provide technical assistance?

Yes. A State may reserve up to 5 percent of its allocation under the RLIS program for administrative costs and to provide technical assistance to LEAs eligible to receive program funds.

III-B-4. How does an SEA award RLIS funds to eligible LEAs?

An SEA may award RLIS subgrants to eligible LEAs (*see* III-A-2) either by formula or competitively.

If an SEA awards RLIS subgrants to eligible LEAs by formula, the SEA must allocate the funds on the basis of (1) the number of children in average daily attendance in eligible LEAs within the State; *or* (2) an alternative formula that, prior to making the subgrants, the SEA demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Secretary of Education will enable the SEA to better target RLIS funds to eligible LEAs that serve the highest concentrations of children from families with incomes below the poverty line.

III-C. LOCAL USES OF RLIS FUNDS

III-C-1. For what purposes may an LEA use its RLIS funds?

An LEA may use RLIS funds for:

- (1) Teacher recruitment and retention, including the use of signing bonuses and other financial incentives;
- (2) Teacher professional development, including programs that train teachers to use technology to improve teaching and to train teachers of students with special needs;
- (3) Educational technology, including software and hardware, that meets the requirements of Part D of Title II;
- (4) Parental involvement activities;
- (5) Activities authorized under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities State Grants program;
- (6) Activities authorized under Part A of Title I (Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged); and
- (7) Activities authorized under Title III (Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students).

III-C-2. Under Part A of Title I, an LEA is required to spend an amount equal to 20% of its Title I, Part A allocation to provide transportation for public school choice or to support supplemental educational services for students in schools identified under Section 1116 as being in need of improvement, corrective action, restructuring. May an LEA use its RLIS grant funds to meet this requirement?

Yes.

III-C-3. May an LEA use its RLIS funds to hire teachers?

Yes. The hiring of highly qualified teachers is an allowable local activity under III-C-1. In hiring highly qualified teachers.

III-C-4 May an LEA use its RLIS funds to support schoolwide programs?

Yes. However, this is an authorized local activity under Title I, Part A, only to the extent that the participating school has met the statutory components for implementing schoolwide programs. (See Sec. 1114 (b) of ESEA).

III-C-5 May an LEA use its RLIS funds to purchase computers, software or other technology equipment?

Yes. Purchasing computers, software or other technology equipment is an allowable activity under Title II, Part D, as long as the purpose of this activity is to integrate technology effectively into curriculum and instruction in order to improve student academic achievement.

III-C-6 Must an LEA use RLIS funds only to supplement, and not supplant, other Federal, State, and local education funds?

Yes. An LEA must use SRSA grant funds be used only to supplement, and not supplant, other education funds.

III-C-7 In using RLIS funds, does an LEA have to provide for the equitable participation of private school students and teachers?

No. The equitable participation requirements in Part E of Title IX of the ESEA do not apply to funds allocated under the RLIS grant program. (*See* section 9501(b)(1) of the ESEA.)

III-C-8. How long does an LEA have to use its RLIS grant funds?

An LEA may obligate RLIS grant funds during the federal fiscal year for which the funds were appropriated and during the succeeding federal fiscal year. For example, FY 2002 RLIS funds were awarded for the initial period of July 1, 2002 through September 30, 2003. An LEA may carry over to the succeeding fiscal year any funds not obligated by September 30, 2003. Those fiscal year 2002 funds remain available for obligation through September 30, 2004. (The regulations at 34 CFR 76.707 provide examples of when an “obligation” occurs for various types of activities.) An LEA may liquidate an obligation for three months after the close of the obligation period.

III-D. Accountability and Reporting Requirements

III-D-1. What assessment requirements apply to LEAs participating in the RLIS program?

LEAs participating in REAP must administer an assessment that is consistent with the assessment requirements in Sec. 1111 (b)(3) of the ESEA. Thus, an LEA that participates in REAP-Flex or receives funding under the SRSA grant program may use the assessment system that the State uses to fulfill Title I requirements to meet the REAP accountability requirements.

III-D-2. What responsibilities does an SEA have regarding an LEA's continuing participation in the RLIS program?

An SEA must review the annual assessment data provided by each LEA under the RLIS program and, after the third year of an LEA's participation in the program, determine whether the LEA meets the State's definition of adequate yearly progress (AYP). SEAs may allow an LEA that failed to make AYP to continue to receive RLIS funds only if the LEA uses the funds to carry out the improvement requirements of section 1116 of the ESEA. That section discusses the actions that LEAs must take with regard to schools that fail to make AYP.

III-D-3. May an eligible LEA that fails to meet its State's definition of AYP after three years continue to receive RLIS funds?

Yes. An LEA that fails to meet its State's definition of AYP after three years may continue to receive RLIS funds but only if the LEA agrees to use the funds to carry out the requirements of section 1116 of the ESEA.

III-D-4. What information are SEAs required to report to the US Department of Education under the RLIS program?

Each SEA that receives an RLIS grant must annually submit to the US Department of Education a report that describes –

- (1) the method the SEA used to award funds to eligible LEAs;
- (2) how LEAs and schools used RLIS funds; and
- (3) the degree of progress made by the State toward meeting the goals and objectives described in its application.

