



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

December 2, 2011

Dear Chief State School Officer:

Thank you for your hard work in implementing the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program and undertaking rigorous school interventions in your lowest-achieving schools. With your help over the past two years, local educational agencies (LEAs) are beginning to turn around many of these schools, and we look forward over the next year to further progress, including demonstrated improvement in student outcomes from the first two SIG cohorts.

Now that most states have completed the fiscal year (FY) 2010 SIG award cycle, it's time to begin planning for the \$535 million Congress appropriated for SIG in FY 2011. We are simplifying the Federal SIG application process for these FY 2011 funds because most states will be using the funds solely to make continuation grants for awards made as part of their fiscal year 2010 SIG competitions.

As you are aware, State educational agencies (SEAs) had an estimated \$1.4 billion – \$546 million in FY 2010 SIG funds combined with approximately \$825 million in FY 2009 SIG carryover funds – to award to LEAs through their FY 2010 SIG competitions. To ensure that sufficient funds would be available for three years of implementation for schools that received FY 2009 carryover funds, SEAs were encouraged to apply for a waiver to extend the period of availability of FY 2009 carryover funds and to use those funds to fully fund three-year SIG awards to their LEAs. At the same time, to maximize the number of Tier I and Tier II schools that could be served, SEAs were encouraged to use the FY 2010 funds to award only the first year of the three-year SIG grants, with continuation awards in years two and three coming from subsequent SIG appropriations. Consequently, SEAs that followed this recommended funding approach will use their FY 2011 SIG allocations to make second-year continuation grants for LEAs that received only first-year awards with FY 2010 SIG funds and thus will not have any additional funding available to make new awards.

In recognition of this fact, and to reduce the burden on SEAs that used FY 2010 funds to pay for the first year of three-year SIG awards, the Department is **not** requiring an SEA that will use FY 2011 funds solely for continuation awards to submit a new SIG application. **Rather**, such an SEA is required to submit, through the enclosed document titled "Continuation Awards Only Application for FY 2011 SIG Program," only assurances that it will use its renewal process and not make new awards, as defined below, and a description of how it intends to use remaining funds from SIG grants that were not renewed.

An SEA that will make new awards is required to submit an application for FY 2011 SIG funds. A “new award” is defined as an award of SIG funds to an LEA for a school that the LEA was not previously approved to serve with SIG funds in the school year for which funds are being awarded – in this case, the 2012–2013 school year. New awards may be made with the FY 2011 funds or any remaining FY 2009 or FY 2010 funds not already committed to grants made in earlier competitions. An SEA that must submit an FY 2011 application is required to update its timeline, but may retain all other sections from its FY 2010 application, including its lists of Tier I, II, and III schools.

Again, I thank you for your commitment to turning around the lowest-achieving schools in your State. If you have any questions about this letter, the materials it describes, or any aspect of the FY 2011 SIG award cycle, please contact your State’s program officer or Carlas McCauley at carlas.mccauley@ed.gov or 202-260-0824.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason Snyder', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jason Snyder
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education