



## Here's How

Local Sustainability Strategies

### Coordinating Your District's Funding

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## Coordinating Funds to Sustain Your Reading Model

In order to sustain a schoolwide reading model like Reading First, it is critical that district leaders coordinate local, state, and federal funds so the emphasis on all students reading at

### Funding and Sustaining Your Reading Model

Many important elements of a school-wide reading model such as reading culture and reading leadership have no added costs associated with them. However, there clearly are some elements of a schoolwide reading model that do require resources (curriculum, assessments, professional development). The National Center for Reading First Technical Assistance developed a chart that shows the elements of Reading First with associated costs and sources of support<sup>1</sup>.

Schools wanting to sustain their evidence-based reading

model should identify the elements of the program that require funding, the associated costs, and other funds that can be used to continue the element (s). Vinton, Ohio school administrators, in a presentation at the National Reading First Conference in 2007, identified the following three step process for sustaining their Reading First initiative (1)*What components of Reading First are we trying to sustain?*, (2) *How do we plan to sustain these components?*, and (3)*What resources do we have that can provide funding to sustain these components?*

The Vinton school district is an

example of how the administration identified all the elements of the program in their district and determined other resources to fund the program. They used a funding worksheet<sup>2</sup> to promote a cross-program discussion and recorded their decisions in a brief plan<sup>3</sup>.

### Sources of Funding

Consider all the sources that are available: local education funds, state funds, and federal funds. The aim is to identify the intent and purpose of each funding stream available to you and then coordinate them to cover costs of the critical elements of your schoolwide reading model. This coordination requires less categorical use of the funds and more collaboration among administrators who supervise these programs. Some of the federal education programs that might be used to support a schoolwide reading model include NCLB Title I, Title II, and Title III. You will find that most funds available to you are currently obligated. You should consider reviewing your current priorities and make some hard decisions about what investments will help sustain your success. This can only be done with involvement of all district leaders and commitment first and foremost to your district's mission, vision and strategic plan, which should identify your evidence-based reading program as a primary improvement strategy.

### Requesting State Guidance

Some states are providing guidance in the use of their state and federal funds in an effort to support schools that want to sustain their Reading First efforts.

For example, North Dakota's state superintendent provided guidance in a letter to the school superintendents<sup>4</sup> as early as January, 2006. Such guidance is useful, but districts should push further by asking questions and letting their SEAs know what they need.

Coordination of funding should be modeled at the state level and SEAs should make specific suggestions for use of federal funds in the local consolidated application that would support continuation of effective schoolwide reading models. If such information is not forthcoming, ask for time on an agenda of a regular meeting where the state convenes district to make requests, brainstorm strategies and share what has worked.

*Sustainability is the ability of a program to operate on its core beliefs and values (its reading culture) and use them to guide essential and inevitable program adaptations over time while maintaining improved outcomes.*

*Adapted from Century and Levy, 2002*

*“[the keys to coordination are] frequent communication and cooperation between fund managers and program directors, and clear system goals and targets based on reliable data.”*

A director of federal programs for a Reading First district

## What is the process for coordinating funds?

Take a first step in coordinating funding by reviewing the [sample funding matrix](#), which provides an overview of federal funding sources and allowable areas/topics for each source. Customize the matrix by adding any state or local funds at your disposal. Then identify the amount of the funds that are available by stream and how the funds are currently spent.

Next, convene a meeting of district leadership including the superintendent, program and curriculum supervisors, and the district business manager. Review the information you have pulled together in regard to the district strategic plan. Ask the business manager to provide information on any district rules or procedures that must be taken into account. Promote open and honest dialogue on whether the

district is willing to make the hard decisions needed to coordinate resources. You cannot proceed without this buy-in and commitment.

In order to synchronize with your district’s consolidated application for federal and state funds, you will need to time your district discussions and activities according to the application due date, such as seen in the sample timeline.

Finally, remember that coordinating funding and implementing the resulting plan requires on-going communication. When asked how funds are coordinated to implement research-based programs in her district, a director of federal programs in a Reading First district, reported, *“Senior staff planning sessions are held on a regular basis. Yearly plans are made and adjusted according to available funding and identified needs.”*

<b>Sample Timeline: Coordination of District Funding</b>	
<i>February—March</i>	<i>Estimated allocations for federal and state programs released by state agency.</i>
<i>March</i>	<i>Begin planning process.</i>
<i>April</i>	<i>Principals review preliminary student data and determine needs for upcoming school year.</i>  <i>District leadership team analyzes student performance data and determines district goals for upcoming school year.</i>  <i>Draft budget built based on local funds. Special state and federal allocations included, but not finalized until after planning completed.</i>
<i>May</i>	<i>Principals determine priorities for next school year based on campus data and district goals.</i>  <i>Central office managers, responsible for federal funds, meet with principals to discuss campus needs and assist in identification of federal funds to be considered for funding of personnel, professional development, and materials.</i>
<i>June</i>	<i>Final student performance data available and is analyzed for revisions to priorities.</i>  <i>Principals develop campus plans based on priorities and state and federal allocations.</i>  <i>Budget finalized. Special state and federal allocations included based on district and campus plans.</i>