



## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Ms. Hosanna Mahaley  
State Superintendent for Education  
Office of the State Superintendent of Education  
810 First Street, NE, 9th Floor  
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Commissioner Mahaley:

During the week of September 10, 2012, a team from the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Office of School Turnaround (OST) reviewed the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) administration of Title I, section 1003(g) (School Improvement Grants (SIG)) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended. As part of its review, the ED team interviewed staff at the State educational agency (SEA) and two local educational agencies (LEAs). The ED team also conducted site visits to two schools implementing the SIG intervention models, where they visited classes and interviewed school leadership, teachers, parents, and students. Enclosed you will find ED's final monitoring report based upon this review.

The primary purpose of monitoring is to ensure that the SEA carries out the SIG program consistent with the final requirements. Additionally, ED is using its monitoring review to observe how LEAs and schools are implementing the selected intervention models and identify areas where technical assistance may be needed to support effective program implementation.

In line with these aims, the enclosed monitoring report is organized in three sections: (1) *Summary and Observation*, (2) *Technical Assistance Recommendations*, and (3) *Monitoring Findings*. The *Summary and Observations* section describes the SIG implementation occurring in the schools and districts visited, initial indicators of success, and any outstanding challenges relating to implementation. The *Technical Assistance Recommendations* section contains strategies and resources for addressing technical assistance needs identified during ED's visit. Finally, the *Monitoring Findings* section identifies any compliance issues within the six indicator areas reviewed and corrective actions that the SEA is required to take.

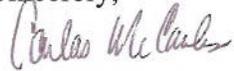
OSSE does not have any compliance issues. However, ED staff did make several technical assistance recommendations. We encourage you to employ these strategies to further support the effective implementation of the SIG program. ED staff will follow up with your staff over the next few months to see how OSSE is working to address these issues and make use of this technical assistance.

Please be aware that the observations reported, issues identified, and findings made in the enclosed report are based on written documentation or information provided to ED by SEA, LEA, or school staff during interviews. They also reflect the status of compliance in the District of Columbia at the time and locations of ED's onsite review.

The ED team would like to thank Dr. LeeTosha Henry and her staff for their hard work and the assistance they provided prior to and during the review in gathering materials and providing access to information in a timely manner.

We look forward to working further with your staff to improve the quality of the SIG program in the District of Columbia.

Sincerely,



Carlos McCauley  
Group Director  
Office of School Turnaround

Enclosure

cc: State SIG Coordinator

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**Targeted Monitoring Review of**  
**School Improvement Grants (SIG) under section 1003(g) of the**  
**Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965**  
**September 11-13, 2012**

**BACKGROUND**

<b>FY 2009 SIG Schools</b>		
<b>Tier</b>	<b>Number of SIG-eligible Schools</b>	<b>Number of SIG Schools Funded</b>
Tier I	128	8
Tier II	0	0
Tier III	0	0

<b>FY 2009 SIG Intervention Models</b>	
<b>Models</b>	<b>Number of SIG Schools Implementing the Model</b>
Turnaround	3
Transformation	3
Restart	2
Closure	0

<b>FY 2010 SIG Schools</b>		
<b>Tier</b>	<b>Number of SIG-eligible Schools</b>	<b>Number of SIG Schools Funded</b>
Tier I	129	6
Tier II	0	0
Tier III	0	0

<b>FY 2010 SIG Intervention Models</b>	
<b>Models</b>	<b>Number of SIG Schools Implementing the Model</b>
Turnaround	3
Transformation	2
Restart	1
Closure	0

**MONITORING TRIP INFORMATION**

<b>Monitoring Visits and Award Amounts</b>	
<b>LEA Visited</b>	District of Columbia Public Schools
<b>School Visited</b>	Stanton Elementary School
<b>Model Implemented</b>	Restart
<b>FY 2009 Funding Awarded (over three years)</b>	LEA Award (for 7 SIG schools): \$ 10,030,439.52 <i>School-level funding: \$1,279,599</i>
<b>FY 2010 Funding Awarded (for one year)</b>	LEA Award (for 6 SIG school): \$6,013,224 <i>School-level funding: \$3,690,401</i>
<b>LEA Visited</b>	Options Public Charter School
<b>School Visited</b>	Options
<b>Model Implemented</b>	Turnaround

<b>FY 2009 Funding Awarded (over three years)</b>	LEA Award : \$1,484,126.00 <i>School-level funding: \$1,484,126</i>
<b>FY 2010 Funding Awarded (for one year)</b>	LEA Award (for 1 SIG school): \$541,226 <i>School-level funding: \$541,226</i>
<b>SEA Visited</b>	Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)
<b>FY 2009 SEA SIG Award</b>	\$1,921,930 (plus \$10,578,338 in ARRA funding)
<b>FY 2009 LEA SIG Awards</b>	\$ 11,514,565.52 (for 8 SIG schools in 2 LEAs)
<b>FY 2010 SEA SIG Award</b>	\$1,792,591 (plus \$2,644,584.50 - 25% FY2009 carryover)
<b>FY 2010 LEA SIG Awards</b>	\$ 6,013,224 (for 6 SIG schools in 1 LEAs)
<b>Staff Interviewed</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>State Superintendent of Education Staff</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Options Public Charter School Staff</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Option:</b> Principal, School Leadership Team, Teachers, Parents, Students, and Classroom Visits</li> <li>➤ <b>District of Columbia Public Schools Staff</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Stanton Elementary School Staff:</b> Principal, School Leadership Team, Teachers, Parents, Students, and Classroom Visits</li> </ul>	
<b>U.S. Department of Education Staff</b>	
<b>Team Leader</b>	Carlos McCauley
<b>Staff Onsite</b>	Chuenée Boston and David Yi

## OVERVIEW OF MONITORING REPORT

The following report is based on the U.S. Department of Education’s (ED) onsite monitoring visit to Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) from September 11 – 13, 2012 and review of documentation provided by the State educational agency (SEA), local educational agencies (LEAs), and schools. The report consists of three sections: *Summary and Observations*, *Technical Assistance Recommendations*, and *Monitoring Findings*. The *Summary and Observations* section describes the implementation of the SIG program by the SEA, LEAs, and schools visited; initial indicators of success; and any outstanding challenges being faced in implementation. This section focuses on how the SEA, LEAs, and schools visited are implementing the SIG program with respect to the following five areas: school climate, staffing, teaching and learning, use of data, and technical assistance. The *Technical Assistance Recommendations* section identifies strategies and resources for addressing technical assistance needs. The *Monitoring Findings* section identifies areas where the SEA is not in compliance with the final requirements of the SIG program and indicates required actions that the SEA must take to resolve the findings.

Please note that the observations and descriptions included in this report reflect the specific context of the limited number of classrooms visited and interviews conducted at a small number of schools and LEAs within the State. As such, they offer a snapshot of what was occurring at the LEA and school levels, and are not meant to represent a school’s, LEA’s, or State’s entire

SIG program. Nor are we approving or endorsing any particular practices or approaches by citing them.

## **SUMMARY AND OBSERVATIONS**

### **School Climate**

#### **Stanton Elementary School (Stanton)**

During the 2010-11 school year, the District of Columbia Public School (DCPS) conducted a needs analysis of Stanton Elementary School. The needs assessment indicated that there was a lack of collaboration between Stanton’s special education and general education teachers and inconsistent adherence and enforcement of the school-wide discipline policy. Furthermore, the assessment indicated there was little to no parental and community involvement and many parents surveyed did not feel welcomed at the school. In interviews, student, parents, and teachers explained that the school historically had a negative reputation of having unruly behavior and disengaged students. Moreover, teachers stated that the school felt very chaotic and out of control, student misbehavior depleted instructional time, and negative behaviors were tolerated.

As part of their school’s comprehensive reform plan, administrators and staff created a Behavior Management System and employed the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) framework. The new school-wide procedures and routines have been helpful in changing the entire culture of the school. Teachers, students, and parents stated that there is now consistency with how rules are enforced and how “good” behavior is rewarded. This has dramatically decreased the amount of negative behaviors and disruptions in the classroom. In addition, the school started an Opened Path Academy which comprise of two classes with low student to teacher ratios. Students with the most behavioral challenges are placed in those classes with the ability to exit as their behavior improves. According to interviews, students, teachers, and parents all agreed that the climate at the school has changed dramatically and is one of order and calm compared to previous years. Many attributed the positive change to the change in leadership and staff, and the informal reward system for students.

In addition, Stanton Elementary School contracted with an external provider to strengthen school-home partnerships. The organization deployed a home visit strategy and trained school staff. Home visits focus on building relationships by giving teachers a greater understanding of families’ goals for their children. This has been a successful model at the school. Parents and staff reported that conversations with teachers are now more about instruction compared to previous years. Furthermore, parents feel a part of their students learning.

#### **Options Middle/High School (Options)**

Options is an alternative charter school. Options is the oldest charter school in the District of Columbia and is focused on working with at-risk students with high needs. The school currently has a student population of over 400 students, of which 300 have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). According to interviews, two-percent of the students are on a certificate track.

Staff stated that prior to the implementation of the turnaround model the school’s aim “was to be more therapeutic rather than focused on instruction.” Through the SIG funds, the administration’s goal was to emphasize behavior and instruction. To accomplish this, Options began to provide more instructional support to teachers on curriculum and content-based instruction through professional development. The school leadership team reviewed the school schedule to ensure every other Wednesday would be designated a half day for professional development. The school also hired content specialists in English, Science, Math, Special Education, and Data to work closely with teachers and provide them support in the classroom. The school purchased additional instructional programs to offer additional differentiated learning opportunities for students.

In addition, the school worked to expand counseling, mental health, and behavioral staff positions to provide increased counseling and academic support in the classroom. The administration emphasized greater collaboration between teachers and the mental health support staff. A three tiered Response to Intervention (RTI) model aligned with student academic and behavioral data has been adopted to address both student learning and the emotional needs of students. Students are placed in tiers based on the level of support and interventions required. The most intensive interventions are reserved for students placed in tier III. The school plans to continue to use RTI and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports to motivate and encourage student improvement.

Student, parents, and teachers reported that the school’s climate and reputation has improved dramatically since the beginning of SIG implementation. Many attributed the positive change to the change in leadership and staff and the increased focus on instruction. Staff reported that increasing the focus on instruction and student achievement has helped decrease disruptions in the classroom and improved student behavior. Additionally more students are talking about going to college and in the school 2011-2012 school year 100 percent of the students graduated.

Options has also undertaken efforts to improve family and community engagement, but teachers and leadership acknowledge that this area is particularly challenging. The parents who attended the interview stated that they noticed an increase in communication from the school. However, parents interviewed stated that due to other obligations most parents had not attended school events.

### **Teachers and Leaders**

#### **Stanton Elementary School (Stanton)**

At the end of the 2009-10 school year, Stanton was closed and Scholar Academies, a school management organization, was hired to manage the school. The school was renamed Scholars Academy Stanton Elementary and was re-opened in the 2010-11 school year with new leadership, staff, and instructional program teams. These changes occurred prior to receiving SIG funds. The new principal was hired for the 2011-12 school year. She had success leading a school turnaround at another school with similar demographics. An assistant principal was hired for the 2011-12 school year to focus on operations and discipline, allowing the principal to focus more on academics. In addition, a business manager was hired.

The majority of the teaching staff was replaced after the 2010-11 school year. The principal acknowledged that there were many open positions to fill for the 2011-12 school year. All teachers recruited at the school were required to interview and conduct mock lesson plans. In an attempt to increase staff morale and retention, the school leadership stated that they created teacher-leadership pathways, the Path to School Leadership program, in the 2011-12 school year.

### **District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)**

The SIG program was housed in DCPS's Office of School Innovation. In 2011, the Office of School Innovation merged with the Office of School Performance and Restructuring. SIG moved to the new office. All of staff members that worked on SIG in year one had since left. There are two new SIG staff members. The Office of School Innovation hired a staff member that specifically works with "partnership schools". "Partnership schools" are schools that are managed by an external organization (i.e. Scholar Academies leading Stanton Elementary School).

### **Options Middle/High School (Options)**

The charter board replaced the principal as part of the implementation of the turnaround model. The original principal was replaced with the current principal during the middle of the first year of implementation. Options also hired a Director of Instruction, Special Education Coordinator, and an Assistant Principal.

Half of the existing school-based staff was replaced as part of the intervention model and the school set a target to maintain a staff that is 100% highly qualified. The LEA and school leadership focused their efforts to recruit teachers "that are the right fit." As a result, they recruited outside of the Washington, DC area. Most of their new hires were from Philadelphia and New York. Teacher retention at the school has improved dramatically. This improvement in retention has strengthened the school's co-teaching model.

### **Options Public Charter School**

At the district level, five positions were created: Chief Academic Officer (CAO), two content specialist, media specialist, data specialist. The Chief Academic Officer has been appointed to the LEA to oversee Turnaround activities and report to the Executive Director. The content specialists provide high-quality, job-embedded professional development, with mentoring and coaching for all of our classroom teachers to institutionalize effective instructional practices. The Data Coach oversees benchmark testing, review student data, advise the CAO of identified barriers to learning, and assists teachers in effectively interpreting and using data to modify instruction.

### **Instructional Strategies and Time**

#### **Stanton Elementary School (Stanton)**

Improving English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency and increasing math engagement were two of the priority goals set by Stanton. According to the needs assessment, twelve percent of students were proficient in reading in 2010. This is a seven percent decrease from 2009. Eight percent of students were proficient in math 2010. This is an eleven percent decrease from 2009. For school year 2009-10, Stanton Elementary School did not meet AYP in reading and math.

In order to address the need of improving ELA and math proficiency, Stanton adopted new curriculums. It also provided tools to teachers to facilitate differentiated instruction by emphasizing ongoing progress-monitoring. The school provides extensive professional development on how to implement the curriculum and use resources during the school year. Additionally, Stanton extended the school day by 30 minutes.

Stanton teachers and administrators expressed very positive reactions to the changes in the literacy and math curriculum, professional development, and restructured schedule. This has allowed teachers to fully integrate differentiated grouping into their instruction.

Teachers reported that the professional development at Stanton is focused on instruction, data analysis, and teacher collaboration. Moreover, the professional development is embedded within the school week and teachers remarked that they find it very relevant and practical. School administration stated that they spent a lot of time planning all professional development opportunities to ensure that it is structured within the school day and that the topics addressed are aligned with the school's overall goals for improvement.

Teachers and faculty reported that they have seen tremendous growth in students' proficiency as a result of the additional time. Many teachers cited that the increased learning time has been useful to provide additional small group intervention support to the students. Furthermore, the afterschool program is aligned with the academic needs of the students.

#### **Options Middle/High School (Options)**

Options' instructional philosophy was to meet students where they are academically, setting high expectations, and actively engaging them in their own learning. Teachers provide a rigorous, comprehensive program of content, skills, and activities, in order to help students learn and think critically and objectively. The majority of SIG funds are focused on improving instructional supports and building a Department of Curriculum and Instruction. According to the school's application, year one was focused on culture change for all stakeholders and student behavior. Year two is focused on data driven instruction, professional development and all academic programs. Year three is focused on rigorous standard-based curriculum aligned with teacher involvement.

Due to the high number of special education students, the leadership team has adopted a co-teacher model. Each class has one content teacher and one special education teacher. In addition, Options implemented a teacher and principal evaluation system to include measures that indicate when teachers are "highly effective" in meeting academic targets. Based on the results and other indicators, teachers receive financial rewards for teachers who have a positive impact on student achievement.

In addition, the school leadership team developed multiple pathways for students to graduate. They developed a credit recovery program and worked on multiple incentives to improve student attendance. They have also developed multiple vocational partnerships with outside organizations, added a night classes, pay students to attend school, and charter a bus to pick up the students. School leadership reported that a number of students who have previously dropped

out are now reengaged in school and that the individualized plans for struggling students have helped identify and implement targeted interventions.

Increased learning time was achieved in two ways. First, the leadership team reduced transition time and eliminated activity based periods that were not specifically used for academic purposes. Second, they increased behavior and counseling supports to improve classroom management. In addition, more time for tutoring, PSAT/SAT prep courses, and common planning time is built in for departments and co-teachers collaboration time. Teachers and faculty report that the implementation of the block schedules to allow for increased learning time have been valuable. The teachers feel more support from content specialists.

### **Use of Data**

#### **Stanton Elementary School (Stanton)**

Stanton emphasized the importance of regularly collecting and analyzing student data in order to improve the overall instruction of teachers and academic proficiency of students. Stanton has a data coordinator who manages the collection and dissemination of academic and behavior data. In addition, the teachers regularly collect benchmark assessment data on students in both reading and math. The data collected are discussed during professional development sessions, used to inform behavioral and academic interventions, and differentiated instruction for students. Furthermore, parents and students work with teachers to create student goals at the beginning of the school year. Teachers share students' progress of meeting those goals to parents throughout the school year during home visits and conferences.

#### **Options Middle/High School (Options)**

Options has collected extensive school-level data such as discipline incidents, suspensions, and student achievement. The school conducts quarterly benchmarks, pre-and post-level assessments, and administered an IQ test to all of its students. The school hired a data specialist to assist with the analysis of this data. The data specialist also assist teachers disaggregate the data and make informed instructional decisions for their students. Teachers and administration expressed in interviews that data collection and analysis have now become an integral part of the school. Data is now used to make informed decisions on instruction, differentiated grouping, student and teacher interventions, and professional development for teachers.

#### **District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)**

DCPS's data warehouse collects data on the leading indicators and produce monthly data reports. Principals receive comprehensive school-level data reports and have access to DCPS's data warehouse. DCPS plans to use data inform technical assistance and monitoring decisions.

#### **Options Public Charter School**

Options Public Charter School works with school administration to collect information on leading indicators. The district superintendent on-site works to provide the school with timely and comprehensive data. The LEA has a data protocol of how to collect and analyze instructional and benchmark data. The data is provided to the school on a regular basis. The LEA hopes to provide more targeted support for school-level data analysis during the upcoming school year.

#### **Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)**

The Office of Data Management collects the majority of SIG data and submits it the Department through ED Facts. OSSE will be collecting data using IndiStar for all its priority, focus, and SIG schools. OSSE received training for Indistar and will have eight coaches working with schools on using the system. OSSE's main focus is to have a continual feedback loop with schools and districts on the progress of implementation of intervention models.

### **Technical Assistance**

#### **District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)**

DCPS provides principals with support regarding the amendment process, fiscal issues, and the use of their allotted funding in a timely manner. Scholars Academy stated that DCPS has been very helpful in navigating the financial procurement and management process; however it is still difficult to get funds and financial approvals in a timely manner.

DCPS visits SIG schools three times a year for technical assistance and monitoring. DCPS uses a performance management data tool, with “partnership schools”, to measure how the school is progressing and produce quarterly reports to track the schools' progress. This tool is not available for other SIG schools. It will be used with non-partnership schools in the future. In addition, DCPS has divided the district into 11 clusters that are each led by a DCPS staff member that usually are former instructional coaches or assistant principals. Each staff member works with 8-10 schools that are receiving federal grants.

DCPS stated that it plans to implement a revamped monitoring and technical assistance process to its SIG schools during the 2012-13 school year.

#### **Options Public Charter School**

Options Public Charter School is housed in the school building and has weekly meetings with school administration about school-based issues. The LEA has created a data dashboard for school staff to use. In addition, the LEA provided leadership and communication training for school leadership.

#### **Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)**

OSSE holds monthly meetings with SIG principals to talk about challenges and successes, focus on instructional strategies, and allow principals to network. In addition, OSSE visits SIG schools throughout the school year on-site including two formal monitoring visits where it observes classrooms, conducts interviews, and surveys with staff. After the visits, OSSE provides schools with support in areas that they are weak in including sending staff from the Office of Curriculum and Instruction to model professional development or instructional strategies. In addition, OSSE has systems and processes in place so that they can align initiatives and monitoring and technical assistance efforts.

In interviews, LEA and school staff reported that they received feedback and technical assistance from OSSE on a regular basis. Staff also indicated that they have direct access to OSSE staff and have found them very helpful in answering all questions. Furthermore, DCPS reports that the relationship between OSSE and them has improved. DCPS stated that it would like more technical assistance from OSSE on the grant approval and renewal process



## **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Issue 1:** The DCPS applied for SIG funds on behalf of its SIG-eligible schools without informing the schools. School administration and staff at SIG-awarded schools were informed of the SIG process only after DCPS had been already been granted SIG awards by OSSE. School administration and staff did not take part in creating an application or budget.

### **Technical Assistance Strategies:**

- In preparation for future SIG competitions, OSSE should work with DCPS to ensure that SIG-eligible schools are notified that the LEA will be applying for SIG funds on the school's behalf, and if appropriate, ensure that the school administration has an opportunity to work with DCPS to take part in creating the application. (Responsibility: OSSE)

**Issue 2:** Due to high staff turnover at the OSSE and DCPS (program and fiscal offices) and inadequate record keeping, OSSE did not have institutional knowledge to document the processes that took place.

### **Technical Assistance Strategies:**

- OSSE should contact the Comprehensive Center on Building State Capacity and Productivity to assist with the identification and/or development of strategies on building knowledge management systems that are most suitable for OSSE and/or DCPS. (Responsibility: OSSE)

**Issue 3:** DCPS is implementing new monitoring and technical assistance protocols during the upcoming school year and requested support for development and rollout strategies.

### **Technical Assistance Strategies:**

- OSSE should support DCPS to make sure it has the capacity to implement the new monitoring and technical assistance protocols and should monitor DCPS to ensure that the protocols are being implemented with fidelity. (Responsibility: OSSE)
- Connect OSSE and DCPS with other school districts that have strong technical assistance and monitoring protocols for its SIG schools. (Responsibility: ED)

**MONITORING FINDINGS**

**Summary of Monitoring Indicators**

<b>Critical Element</b>	<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>1. Application Process</b>	The SEA ensures that its application process was carried out consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Sections I and II of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))]	N/A	N/A
<b>2. Implementation</b>	The SEA ensures that the SIG intervention models are being implemented consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Sections I and II of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))]	N/A	N/A
<b>3. Fiscal</b>	The SEA ensures LEAs and schools are using funds consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Section II of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010)) ; §1114 of the ESEA; and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-87]	N/A	N/A
<b>4. Technical Assistance</b>	The SEA ensures that technical assistance is provided to its LEAs consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Section II of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))]	N/A	N/A
<b>5. Monitoring</b>	The SEA ensures that monitoring of LEAs and schools is being conducted consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Section II of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))]	N/A	N/A

<b>6. Data Collection</b>	The SEA ensures that data are being collected consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Sections II and III of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))]	N/A	N/A
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• **Monitoring Area: School Improvement Grant** •

There were no findings to report.