MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Minnesota Regional Low Incidence Projects

The purpose of the Regional Low Incidence (RLI) Projects is to improve the equity and quality of services to students with low incidence (LI) disabilities in all regions of the state.

Low incidence disabilities are those disabilities where the student count constitutes less than 10 percent of students receiving special education services. Low incidence areas include blind/visually impaired (BVI), deaf/hard of hearing (DHH), deafblind (DB), developmental cognitive disability-severe/profound (DCD-SP), physical impairment (PI), traumatic brain injury (TBI) and severe/multiple impairments (SMI). The low incidence projects also provide support in the categorical areas of other health disabilities (OHD) and autism spectrum disorders (ASD) for those children in these two categorical areas with significant need, developmental adaptive physical education (DAPE) and assistive technology (AT).

History of LI Projects

In 1980, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) initiated regional projects to increase the availability of indirect services (consultation and assessment) to better meet the needs of students with low incidence disabilities. In 1985, Regional Special Education Project Supervisors (RSEPs) were added to the project. This role evolved to the Regional Low Incidence Facilitator (RLIF). RLIFs are responsible for regional planning, project activity implementation, staff development and collaboration with other RLIFs and MDE to forward actions supporting equitable access to education for students with low incidence disabilities.

Funding for the RLI Projects is from the Minnesota Department of Education, Division of Special Education from IDEA, Part B discretionary funds of the Division. These funds are allocated in two areas. Finance (FIN) Code 421 is specific to the LI Projects. The funding formula is historical and is determined by a base funding formula. Funds are aligned to geographic disparity and geographic sparsity. Finance code 432 or Regional Comprehensive System of Professional Development (RCSPD) is determined through a formula with a base planning amount, an allocation based on child count and funding aligned to professional development to meet specific categorical area needs (e.g. American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter mentoring.)

Requirements for RLI Projects

MDE determines the requirements for submission of the RLI Project. For Fiscal Year (FY) 2019, requirements are to submit an annual executive summary, work plan and budget in a format required by MDE to receive annual funding.

Each RLI project will annually complete a work plan based on stakeholder input. Stakeholders will include regional special education directors, personnel in low incidence disability areas and related service providers Stakeholders can include parents and others.

Work plans will:

1) Be data-based.
2) Include measurable outcomes.
3) Include goals and activities based on regional need as determined in collaboration with stakeholders.
4) Include activities based on priorities communicated by MDE.

The work plan, an executive summary and budget will be submitted to MDE by June 30 of each fiscal year (FY). MDE retains the right to not fund a project or projects, based on availability of funding or submission of a plan not fully approved by MDE.

Each RLI project will provide evaluative data twice per year on progress leading to achievement of goals. Mid-year data will be provided by the end of February of each fiscal year (FY) and by July 30 of each FY.

Staffing Requirements

RLIFs are hired by and supervised by a local educational entity with consensus among special education directors in the educational region determining the fiscal host. RLIFs are required to have current licensure in special education. A special education director's license is preferred. Each RLI project will employ an RLIF at a minimum .5 full time equivalent (FTE) based on a local administrative contract. An RLIF is charged with carrying out, at a minimum, the activities listed below:

1. Submit an annual plan for approval to MDE in a format to be determined by MDE. Plan will include measurable goals for region and state activities, an executive summary and budget aligning to goals. Goals are to be developed based on priorities established by MDE, by the Regional Low Incidence Facilitators in collaboration with MDE and by priorities determined at the local level, as determined by local survey and planning groups in the region.
2. Monitor budgets and expenditures to ensure alignment with grant goals and federal and state protocol.
3. Plan, implement, monitor and report outcomes of activities and budget alignment to MDE semi-annually.
4. Coordinate planning in a region for professional development for special educators
5. Coordinate regional communities of practice (COP) supporting educators in the areas of ASD, TBI, DCD, SMI, D/HH, B/VI, AT, OHD, PI. These regional COP meetings can be combined for specific topics (e.g. DB).
6. Support the participation of regional representatives to statewide COPs.
7. Coordinate with and support ongoing professional development for special education directors in the region to support appropriate services to students with LI disabilities.
8. Coordinate with state and state-wide specialists in LI areas to ensure access to information on critical initiatives to support educational access for students with LI disabilities
9. Coordinate with other RLIFs and MDE to plan, implement, report on and evaluate initiatives
10. Plan and facilitate RCSPD initiatives for teachers of all students receiving special education services.

11. Plan, implement and support indirect educational services by qualified professionals for students in LI disability areas, including support services (e.g. ASL interpreters, AT practitioners, braillists, audiologists, etc.)
12. Coordinate initiatives to reduce teacher shortages in special education, with a specific focus on recruitment and retention of fully licensed teachers in low incidence areas
13. Meet regularly with other RLIFs and MDE representatives to plan, coordinate, evaluate and collaborate on strategies to support educators of students with LI disabilities and determine effectiveness of strategies.

Direct vs. Indirect Services

The RLI Projects support provision of indirect services for students with LI disabilities. Services from the RLI projects are not to supplant required special education services. The LI projects must not be used as an alternative to providing direct services when a student requires direct services for access to a free, appropriate public education, as per the student's IEP.

MDE Funding

MDE will make discretionary funds available as possible. These funds can be combined with other funds at the regional level to support aligned initiatives. MDE will work with each region separately and all regions collectively to:

1. Develop a strategic plan for delivery of LI disability services.
2. Plan, develop, implement and evaluate initiatives for:

    a. Recruitment and retention of special educators and related service providers for students with low incidence disabilities.
    b. Common professional development needs across all regions.
    c. Common staff development needs across categorical areas.
    d. Use of evidence based practices to support access to education in the most integrated setting.
    e. Evaluation of initiatives of the LI projects individually and collectively.

3. Conduct fiscal and programmatic audits.

Activities that include a working lunch and/or Participant Support Costs

Certain expenditures of Federal funds require prior approval under the cost principles of the Office of Management and Budget Uniform Guidance. These expenditures include Participant Support Costs (PSCs), which are defined as **direct costs for items such as stipends or subsistence allowances, travel allowances, and registration fees paid to or on behalf of participants or trainees (but not employees of the state educational agency (SEA), in connection with conferences or training projects (2 CFR §200.75).**

Applications and work plans including these types of activities will require additional documentation. The questions listed below *do not need to be completed here. These prompts will be included in the template for application*. Documentation will be required as follows:

1) **Do you anticipate providing a working lunch for participants at any conference or training project?** The necessity of a working lunch is a rare occurrence. Please note that the cost of food can also be supported through registration fees – as long as those fees are independent of regional low incidence funds.

☐ Yes

☐ No

- Please verify the requirements for a working lunch:

  ☐ Eight hour or longer meeting, with the adjourn time listed on the agenda

  ☐ Activity during lunch will be included in the agenda

  ☐ Each agenda will include goals/outcomes for the day

2) **If yes, please provide a rationale for providing a working lunch for attendees for each activity:** (For example, the training is taking place in a rural area where it would be more difficult for participants to get lunch on their own.) An agenda for the conference or training project may be needed from you upon request.

3) **Do you anticipate incurring other PSC costs for FY20?** *Please keep all agendas on file.*

☐ Yes

☐ No

4) **For what activities will you be incurring PSC costs?**

☐ Training Projects (these do not include meetings for working groups, community of practice, etc.)

☐ Conferences

5) Please enter the specific costs for each activity: (*Only PSC activities need to be included in this table*)

	List of Activities (Please include the date of the activity)	PSC Needed (Travel – airfare and/or car mileage, Per diem, Lodging, Sub pay, Registration, Rental)	Host (MDE, Grantee advisory group, Grant or Contract)	Number of participants needing support	Total Cost of PSC
Activity 1					
Activity 2					
Activity 3					
Activity 4					

6) Please provide additional specific information on the conference or training project, including the costs associated. *(For example, provide information on the specific grant or contract from which these costs are drawn)*