



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
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May 29, 2024

TO: District Superintendents, State and Charter School Leaders
FROM: Deputy Commissioner Kelvin Roldán
SUBJECT: **Preview of Key Updates to Multilingual Learner (MLL) Categorical Funding**

Memo Overview and Background:

This memo provides school system leaders with strategic updates that RIDE will make to how LEA's may use their Multilingual Learner (MLL) categorical funding in FY25 and beyond to provide an excellent education for their MLL students. This memo serves as a preview of these updates, with the official application to be released this summer once funding has been officially approved.

Rhode Island has seen the largest growth of MLL students in the nation over the past decade, with twice as many MLL students enrolled in SY23-24 compared to SY13-14. This growth has been seen across the entire state, with some communities outside of the urban core seeing 300%+ increases in MLL students.

Given the growing student population, RIDE created the [Blueprint for Multilingual Learner Success](#) and its accompanying [Strategic Plan](#) to help provide LEAs a clear roadmap to improve services and outcomes for MLLs. RIDE has also consistently advocated for more MLL categorical funding for LEAs, with recommendations to increase MLL categorical funding by \$16.6M to \$36.1M total, and the funding weight from 15% to 25% of core instruction expenses included in the Governor's FY25 proposed budget.

As we seek to increase overall MLL categorical funding, we are also seeking to increase the impact of these funds for LEAs to better serve MLL students. **Informed directly by feedback from LEA leaders, RIDE is making the following updates to the MLL categorical funding in an effort to provide expanded flexibility for LEAs, strategically align MLL improvement efforts with ongoing district improvement efforts, and enhance fiscal and operational efficiency for these funds.** RIDE is previewing these updates in this memo, with full technical details to be released in the application this summer once funding has officially been approved.

Update #1: Increased MLL Categorical Expenditure Flexibility

RIDE will be significantly expanding LEA's allowable uses of MLL categorical funding to enable LEAs to best dynamically meet the unique needs of their students. Previously, MLL categorical funding was restricted to only teacher training, teacher and administrator credentialing and expansion of dual language programs. LEAs will now be able to use MLL categorical funding to supplement some of the required LEA local funded categories and broaden the MLL categorical expenditure to an array of costs to ensure they meet state and federal requirements for providing MLL services to students.

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In addition to the prior set of allowable expenses, the expanded allowable expenditures include, but are not limited to:

- Ongoing salaries for MLL educators and administrators
- Inclusion of MLL paraprofessionals as an allowable expense
- Curriculum development, purchasing, and professional development
- Substitute salaries while educators engage in MLL professional development
- MLL instructional materials and supplies
- MLL educator and administrator pipeline development programs
- Student academic language intervention services aligned to Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)
- Student support services, such as wraparound (i.e., MTSS identified) services for MLL students or services to increase MLL student attendance
- Family and student engagement activities
- Instructional technology to support MLL students
- Expand translation and interpretation services that are supplemental to existing resources
- Professional learning for any staff member to better serve MLL students

In addition to the expanded flexibility on top of the original spending criteria, RIDE also continues to encourage LEAs to consider leveraging these funds for the creation and expansion of Bilingual/Dual Language programs.

LEAs may plan now for the use of other federal funds (e.g. Title II, Title IV-A, etc.) to support the changes that will be introduced in the new MLL State Regulations later this year. **As an important reminder, LEAs must ensure the use of these funds directly impacts this student population and do not supplant other funds used to meet State and Federal requirements.**

The RIDE MLL Team will be available to answer questions and provide support as the annual Consolidated Resource Plan (CRP) process unfolds this spring and LEAs plan for the use of other federal funds to support improvements prior to enactment of new State MLL Regulations.

Update #2: Aligned Improvement and Engagement Efforts

RIDE will strengthen alignment between LEAs' MLL improvement strategies and their respective strategic plans, enhancing planning coherence and efficiency for LEAs. In prior years, RIDE required that LEAs develop an MLL improvement strategy within the context of the MLL categorical application and engage stakeholders as part of these efforts. However, given the roll out of the LEA strategic planning system, to promote greater efficiency and alignment, RIDE will now seek to integrate an LEA's MLL improvement strategy within the broader context of an LEA's strategic plan and improvement efforts.

When completing the categorical application for FY 2025, LEAs will be asked how their plan for MLL categorical funds, with its expanded uses, will align to the LEA Strategic Plan and/or School Improvement Plans. This will include identifying how the holistic use of MLL categorical funds will increase English Language Proficiency (ELP) performance and other academic outcomes for MLL students, aligned to the goals within an LEA's strategic plan and improvement efforts.

Furthermore, prior MLL categorical applications required LEAs to conduct a separate stakeholder engagement effort specifically for the use of MLL categorical funding. Rather than treating the MLL student population as separate, LEAs will now be asked about plans to intentionally integrate MLL stakeholders into the LEA's broader and existing strategic plan engagement efforts.

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Update #3: Enhanced Fiscal Efficiency

RIDE will enhance the fiscal efficiency of the MLL categorical program, enabling LEAs and RIDE to better track and expend MLL categorical funds. To help realize this enhanced fiscal efficiency, RIDE will make the following fiscal updates within the upcoming categorical application:

- Written Assurance Threshold: The threshold for which LEAs may simply provide a written assurance attesting that their use of categorical funds will comport to program requirements (rather than submitting a full application) will increase from \$9,999 to \$99,999.
- UCOA Codes: Within the fiscal application, RIDE will provide an expanded list of UCOA codes within the application that specifically align to the expanded flexibilities in update #1, providing LEAs a clear fiscal roadmap to take advantage of these flexibilities.
- AcceleGrants: RIDE will begin to migrate the fiscal budgeting process for the MLL categorical program from a paper-based application to being hosted within AcceleGrants during the 2024-2025 school year, consistent with other RIDE categorical programs and grants.

Thank you for all of your efforts to serve Rhode Island's fastest growing student population. RIDE hopes these updates in strategic alignment, fiscal efficiency, and expanded flexibility enable LEAs to leverage these funds to better provide high-quality, research-based services for MLL students. RIDE anticipates releasing the full application with all technical details this summer. If you have any questions regarding these updated flexibilities, please e-mail David.Sienko@ride.ri.gov.