

SPOTLIGHT ON:**NEW HAMPSHIRE
TITLE IV-A IMPLEMENTATION**

TITLE IV, PART A STATE USE OF FUNDS: Providing Dedicated Office Hours With State Set-Aside Funds

The New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE) State coordinator (SC) recognized a need among local education agencies (LEAs) in the state for greater guidance and support in understanding the Title IV, Part A (Title IV-A) funding stream and in designing and implementing programming that meets Title IV-A requirements. To address this need, the NHDOE Title IV-A team leveraged state set-aside funds to implement regularly scheduled Virtual Office Hours. These virtual events consist of a brief, 5- to 10-minute training on Title IV-A, followed by an open forum for LEAs to ask specific questions and receive guidance tailored to their agency's program needs. The training and technical assistance provided during these Virtual Office Hours has helped LEAs develop a greater understanding of Title IV-A, its purpose, allowable uses of funds, and both Federal and NHDOE program requirements, resulting in LEAs being able to better carry out the program's ultimate goals.



ESTABLISHING VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS

To bolster LEAs' understanding of the Title IV-A program and to provide more individualized program supports, the NHDOE SC, Stan Freeda, set up weekly Zoom sessions as an opportunity for LEAs to ask questions and receive guidance. The practice began as a pilot program, with a welcome email and an initial schedule of six weekly meetings on Mondays at 10:00 a.m. The email offered an open invitation to all New Hampshire Title IV-A grant managers, who were also encouraged to share the email and meeting link with any of their other interested team members. Stan sent out weekly email reminders and, in those



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first few weeks, saw attendance of about 20 participants at each session, with some LEA representatives maintaining regular attendance for ongoing support. After a month of meetings, the SC distributed a survey to gauge the program’s impact and to understand whether additional sessions were needed. Findings indicated that participants valued the meetings and were interested in seeing the program continue, so Stan planned an additional 10 weeks of sessions.

Over time, the program has evolved to respond to participant needs and now includes two components with each virtual meeting — a short training opportunity followed by a question-and-answer (Q&A) session. Although no formal evaluation data have yet been collected, the SC has received positive feedback about the program from a variety of Title IV-A stakeholders in the state. Some participants attend every meeting, while others attend only when they have a specific question. The NHDOE SC is hopeful that the program is gaining traction and will continue to be a source of support to LEAs.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION TAKEAWAYS

NHDOE uses an array of innovative practices to support LEAs in their understanding of Title IV-A through these Virtual Office Hours. Outlined below are key strategies that have contributed to the success of the program and that can be employed to replicate the program in other states.

SUGGESTED PRACTICE

Be intentional about building safe spaces for open dialogue.

One potential barrier to state-local conversations around Title IV-A funding is the assumption that the role of the SC is solely one of accountability and oversight. This belief may limit LEAs from fully

sharing their ideas or constrain the types of questions they choose to ask. To overcome this potential barrier to participation, the NHDOE SC recommends making clear to participants that these sessions are a safe space by assuring them that Virtual Office Hours sessions are not recorded and that all questions and comments will remain confidential. “Everything is acceptable. There are no expectations on the participants, or for their questions. I just make myself available for whatever they want to ask me about or share with me,” said Stan.

The SC also notes that the program has benefited from the more personal aspect of video conference calls, helping build rapport beyond phone and email communications. “I think that hosting the Office Hours gives them the ability to see me and collaborate with me on program improvement, rather than just seeing me as a person who returns their grants for errors or issues.” These sessions have the potential to strengthen State education agency-LEA partnerships by promoting the role of the SC as someone working alongside LEAs to achieve common goals of expanding opportunities and supporting students.

SUGGESTED PRACTICE

Tailor programming to fit participant needs.

After an initial cycle of six meetings, the SC conducted a survey to assess ongoing interest and availability, finding that participants indeed wanted the sessions to continue. While a majority of respondents indicated a preference for maintaining the Monday morning sessions, survey results revealed a need for afternoon sessions, as well, as some LEAs reported having more uninterrupted time after students leave for the day. In response, NHDOE flexed scheduling to accommodate both preferences, hosting 10 additional weeks of

sessions on Mondays at 10:00 a.m. along with additional sessions that meet every other Wednesday at 3:00 p.m.

NHDOE also adapts session content to remain responsive to LEA needs, tailoring sessions to address both common questions that arise and individualized concerns. For example, after receiving multiple questions about monitoring processes during these sessions, the NHDOE created a specific virtual training on the subject. In addition to brief, topic-specific presentations, time is allotted during each session for participants to pose questions about their own programs, allowing for the SC to provide guidance tailored to each LEA's unique situation. This Q&A portion of each session helps LEAs gain insight into how best to shape and strengthen their own programs and activities to best support students while meeting Title IV-A requirements. NHDOE notes that this Q&A format also helps LEAs learn from one another, as participants get to hear answers to questions they may have.

SUGGESTED PRACTICE

Ground conversations in Title IV-A fundamentals.

The core goal of NHDOE's Virtual Office Hours is to increase LEA understanding of Title IV-A while providing individualized supports to LEAs. To achieve this goal, Stan responds to each participant's Virtual Office Hours question in two parts: he

first helps LEAs frame questions around an understanding of the Title IV-A statute and requirements, and he then follows up with a more specific answer to each question, using concrete examples to help participants better understand the intent and requirements of Title IV-A.

In responding to each question, the SC guides LEAs to think about their programming from a Title IV-A perspective, prompting further discussion about how an activity will meet student needs or how an LEA will evaluate program impact. Stan adds that with each question, "They get to hear and understand my point of view in terms of the focus on the intent of the Federal Title IV-A program." He then provides specific comments that address the LEA's question or concern directly, sharing guidance on whether an LEA's proposed activities constitute an allowable use of Title IV-A funds or on how an LEA can best shape its data collection plan to meet Title IV-A statutory requirements.

By grounding conversations in Title IV-A fundamentals, NHDOE increases the potential for each session to be a learning experience about the program, hopefully leading to LEAs being more engaged in the many ways they can use this funding stream to benefit their schools and communities.

Learn more about NHDOE's training and technical assistance on its [Office of ESEA Title Programs Web page](#).

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