Accountability & Implementation Board
BLUEPRINT FOR MARYLAND'S FUTURE

2023 Harford County Public Schools LEA Blueprint Implementation Plan Recommendation for Approval

Local Education Agency	Harford County Public Schools
Date of Approval	

The Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) staff has completed its review of Harford County's Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan, including all revisions made in response to requests by the AIB and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). AIB staff has determined that the revised version of Harford's initial implementation plan meets the Criteria for Success and is recommending it to the Board for **approval**. **With the Board's approval of the plan, FY 2024 Blueprint funds automatically withheld pending AIB approval of the LEA's plan will be authorized for release by MSDE in accordance with the Blueprint law**.

Review Process

Each local education agency (LEA) was required to submit its Initial Blueprint Implementation Plan to the AIB and MSDE concurrently on March 15, 2023. Immediately following their submission, AIB staff reviewed them to determine if they met the minimum requirements established in the AIB's Initial Blueprint Comprehensive Plan, including responding to all questions in the template and staying within the 98 page maximum length (excluding the template). In April 2023, the AIB determined that all LEA plans met the minimum requirements and, in accordance with statute, FY 2023 Blueprint funds were authorized for release by MSDE.

MSDE and AIB staff then conducted separate evaluations of each of the 24 LEA plans to determine if they met the Criteria for Success. For AIB's review, AIB staff and consultants, as well as Career and Technical Education (CTE) Committee staff, served as reviewers of both LEA implementation plans and Career Counseling MOUs. Each reviewer was assigned to read pillar-specific sections of individual LEA plans and some reviewers read and evaluated entire implementation plans. Ultimately, every section of each LEA plan was evaluated by two different reviewers for AIB who consolidated their feedback to inform their final decision of whether each criterion in the Criteria for Success was met.

MSDE's review process is described in the memo hyperlinked below. MSDE provided up to two rounds of feedback with requests for revisions to LEAs before sending their recommended plans for approval in two groups to the AIB between May 16 and June 6, 2023. AIB staff reviewed the LEA revised plans and, if applicable, identified additional responses requiring revisions based on one or more of the following criteria:

- The response did not adequately or entirely address the associated criterion in the Criteria for Success;
- The response did not adequately or entirely address a requirement for implementation identified in the Initial Blueprint Comprehensive Implementation Plan; or
- The response did not adequately or entirely address a statutory requirement.

AIB staff requested revised responses from LEAs as applicable over two rounds of feedback provided between May 25 and June 20, 2023. AIB staff provided additional technical assistance including numerous office hour sessions to assist LEAs with their revisions. Each revised LEA response was re-evaluated against the appropriate criterion to determine if the revisions met the requirements. Once all revised responses were reviewed and determined to meet the requirements, the LEA's revised plan was ready to be recommended to the Board for approval.

In addition, AIB staff/ consultants and CTE Committee staff reviewed the Career Counseling MOUs that LEAs, local workforce development boards, and community colleges submitted with each LEA plan and subsequent versions. The review criteria included meeting the requirements in the Blueprint law and the guidance provided by AIB and MSDE. Staff provided feedback to each county and requested revisions to the MOUs as applicable on June 5, with rolling deadlines in June and July for submitting and re-submitting revised MOUs until they meet the requirements.

Plan Materials

Harford's plan submitted to the Board for approval includes the materials listed below:

- 2023 Blueprint Implementation Plan—the original plan submitted by the LEA in March 2023, including a draft Career Counseling MOU if available.
- AIB Feedback—the request(s) for revisions from AIB staff sent to the LEA and the LEA's revised response(s) based on this feedback.
- MSDE Memo and Feedback—the request(s) for revision from MSDE staff sent to the LEA and the LEA's revised response(s) based on this feedback. (NOTE: Some LEAs received two rounds of feedback. In this case, the feedback round is noted in the document's title.)
- Feedback on Career Counseling Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)—feedback provided to LEAs on the initial and revised versions of the Career Counseling MOU.
- Career Counseling MOU–most recent version of the LEA's MOU.

Once the Board has approved LEA plans, LEAs will submit their final 2023 implementation plans to AIB that reflect the approved revisions they submitted to both MSDE and AIB. This final version will be posted on the AIB website, including a Spanish translation version when available. Final Career Counseling MOUs will also be posted on the AIB website.

AIB Feedback

During the review process, AIB reviewers identified numerous areas of strength and opportunities for improvement in each LEA plan. A summary of the highlights are provided below. Additional feedback will be provided to LEAs as part of ongoing technical assistance to support LEAs as they implement their 2023 plans and develop their five-year plans for submission in 2024.

Areas of Strength and Opportunity	• As part of their Talent Pathways Grow Your Own project, Harford plans to create a model school to pilot innovative, equity focused programming and practices to scale across the LEA. This has the potential to offer a state model for replication. • Harford has organized its work to recruit and retain teachers well. It created a new position — Diversity Retention and Recruitment Specialist — to coordinate work, completed a needs assessment in this area to guide the work, and organized its work in three areas: encouraging young people to enter the profession, pathways for people in the profession to advance and then pathways in for career changers. • Harford has strong partnerships with IHEs (Towson and Notre Dame of Maryland Universities) on teacher prep, professional development, and a new BA program for CDA holders • Harford's has an updated literacy plan that creates a coherent framework for the district. There is a focused set of tools and materials used across the district and reading strategies are embedded in other content areas. • Harford is doing an equity audit of all instructional materials. • Harford has a significant dual enrollment program in place to build on, including offering credit sequences in CTE areas. • AIB and CTE Committee staff have reviewed and approved Harford County's career counseling MOU. The specific feedback provided to Harford throughout the review process is available through the MOU feedback form linked above.
Areas for Further Growth and Improvement	• Harford has developed a strong strategy to maximize capacity of schools to provide expanded pre-k programming but does not seem to have a clear strategy for expanding its network of private providers. • Harford's plans to develop the career ladder focus on National Board Certification and negotiation with the union over career ladder roles. The planning does not include strategic thinking about how schools would be reorganized to leverage differentiated roles to support improved student learning.The LEA will benefit from technical assistance and guidance to develop a career ladder that goes beyond a focus on National Board Certification/salary incentives and leverages teacher leadership to improve teaching and learning. • While Harford has a math plan, it needs to be updated to better align with the Blueprint and to complement its literacy program. • It is not clear in Harford's plan how support for students not on track to graduation will be linked with its CCR supports. The core goal of ensuring that students have the ELA and math skills to move on to the post CCR courses with success should be the priority.