

2023 Howard County Public Schools
Blueprint Implementation Plan
Recommendation for Approval

Local Education Agency	Howard County Public Schools
Date of Approval	

The Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) staff has completed its review of Howard 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 Howard’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.

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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

Howard County'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 ([one](#)) ([two](#))—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.

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Areas of Strength and Opportunity	- Howard has model programs to advance teacher preparation in the state. This includes its partnership with Bowie State to create an alternative pathway to teacher certification with 21st Century Practicum, with a focus on culturally responsive pedagogy, and the partnership with Towson to create the LEAP program that includes prep for National Board Certification (NBC). Sustaining and expanding these programs, as they are being monitored for success, should be a priority in the district and across the state. - Howard has substantially expanded its teacher academy to most high schools and Grow Your Own programs in the district. - Howard's work with English Language Learner (ELL) students and families is strong across the Blueprint areas, including pre-K enrollment and strengthening ELL programming and communication with families; overall communication with families is notably varied and substantial. - Howard has strong supports for NBC teachers and to provide credentials to qualify teachers to create dual enrollment on site at high schools. - Howard's CCR strategy will allow students to remain for a 5th year in high school if needed to become CCR ready and/or complete a post-CCR pathway. This is notable - several districts are considering this strategy - and warrants further analysis and potential consideration. - Howard's strategy of bringing Howard Community College staff to high schools to help enroll students in dual enrollment courses shows promise for increasing access to underserved populations. - Howard has an 8th grade career exploration course and is allowing students to start academy programs in order to build in time for an apprentice year. - Howard has good programs to ensure equity of access and success in the AP pathway. - AIB and CTE Committee staff have reviewed and approved Howard County's career counseling MOU. The specific feedback provided to Howard throughout the review process is available through the MOU feedback form linked above.
Areas for Further Growth and Improvement	- There is a lack of community engagement in developing this plan; LEA acknowledged this and plans to engage the community and partners as it moves forward. - Like most LEAs, the plan does not discuss how schools in Howard will be reorganized to better support students using the new career ladder roles. 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. - Howard has not updated its math strategy since 2016, and is now doing this to align with the Blueprint. However, it is not clear that the strategy being updated, which includes more than 20 tools and materials used across the district, fits together into a coherent approach to math.

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- The plan does not address how Howard will expand/enhance what is already in place in the district (credit recovery programs, afterschool and summer academic support) to create robust CCR support options and pathways as called for in the Blueprint.
 - Howard has significant AP, Dual enrollment and CTE programming in place; it is not clear how the district is rethinking their programs to organize them into clear pathways for students and to expand and strengthen them.