



Connections for Classrooms

Digital Learning Device Rural Grant Program

A Grant for High-Need Districts to Purchase Devices for Digital Learning

Grant Program Procedures Document

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1.0 Executive Summary

Connections for Classrooms (CFC) originated in 2014 as a \$36.7 million grant program joining multiple state agencies around the common goal of ensuring Georgia schools and classrooms have the high-speed broadband access required for digital and blended learning. Follow-up rounds of funding were provided in April 2015 and July 2015.

A new, competitive round of funding (“Digital Learning Device Rural Grant Program” or DLDRGP) is opening in July 2016 as a continuation of the Connections for Classrooms program. Approximately \$5 million are available to local educational agencies (LEAs) across Georgia to further increase accessibility of advanced technologies to K-12 students. Awarded funds are eligible for use through December 31, 2018.

As a competitive grant, an application process will evaluate proposals to leverage funds to achieve the goal of providing broadband access and related technologies to Georgia students. The funds are designed for use to assist LEAs purchase end user devices to allow students have increased use of advanced broadband technologies.

Connections for Classrooms – The Digital Learning Device Rural Grant Program is managed by the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (GOSA), and this document provides guidelines to LEA representatives for applying to the program and securing reimbursement funds should an award be made.

Additional information on the grant may be found online at GOSA’s website (<https://gosa.georgia.gov/2016-cfc-program-information>), and questions may be directed to the grant program manager, Steve Korwan (skorwan@georgia.gov, 404-463-2399).

Thank you for your interest in this grant program!

1.1 Definitions and References

2014 Connections for Classrooms – A \$36.7 million dollar state-sponsored grant program that originated in 2014 with the purpose of building and enhancing broadband systems in the state’s K-12 schools. This program included funds managed by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (GOSA).

Applicant – An entity that submits a new application for the Connections for Classrooms – Digital Learning Device Rural Grant Program (DLDRGP).

Award Recipient / Recipient – An Applicant that has been approved for full or partial funding of a request made in the Digital Learning Device Rural Grant Program.

Connections for Classrooms – DLDRGP – A fourth phase of grant funding under the Connections for Classrooms grant, which provides up to an additional \$5 million to Georgia educators to fund end user devices for the purpose of increasing the student accessibility of the advanced broadband systems in the state’s K-12 schools.

Connections for Classrooms – DLDRGP Website / CFC Website – A publicly accessible online area containing information related to the DLDRGP program, found at <http://gosa.georgia.gov/2016-cfc-program-information>.

End-User Devices – Portable personal computing devices such as tablets, laptop computers, or other mobile devices used for instruction that also comply with Georgia Milestones minimum standards. [Specifications available here.](#)

Local Educational Agency / LEA – A public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within the State of Georgia for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of the State (*Adapted from the U.S. Department of Education*).

2.0 Program Overview

2.1 Program Intent

Despite the periodic availability of state and federal funding programs for education-based technology, some schools and LEAs are not able to access these funds because they often require supporting or matching dollars that the school or LEA does not have allocated to this purpose. The Connections for Classrooms – DLDRGP intends to help schools and LEAs secure funds by providing its dollars to help cover the cost of end-user devices.

This round intends to continue progress toward the goal to fund economically self-sustainable broadband facilities that:

- Serve LEAs around the State of Georgia,
- Leverage technology to transform our educational system by providing students, parents, and educators more flexibility over the time, place, path, and pace of learning,
- Increase statewide broadband capacity to schools, ensuring that Georgia’s schools are able to utilize 21st century technology in classrooms, and
- Increase LEAs ability to expand wireless connectivity and device availability within schools, allowing them to fully leverage increased broadband capacity.

2.2 Eligibility and Funding Considerations

An LEA is eligible to apply for DLDRGP funding if it meets the following criteria:

1. Is located in one of 71 Tier 1 counties using the Georgia Department of Community Affairs’ annual job tax credit tiers. These counties represent the counties with the highest unemployment rate, lowest per capita income, and highest percentage of residents whose incomes are below the poverty level in the state. In addition to being the counties with high student need, the economic conditions make it less likely that these districts are able to bridge the device gap with BYOD policies and local purchases. [For more information on the tiers, click here.](#)
2. Serves less than 25 students per square mile. These LEAs must spend proportionally more funds per pupil since they serve a more dispersed population and do not have the economies of scale of larger districts. In addition, students are more likely to spend more time on buses and have more limited opportunities for dual enrollment, making digital learning more important.

The three State Schools are also eligible. In addition, state charter schools that are located in a Tier 1 County and have an attendance zone in which all LEAs are eligible for the grant are also eligible. [For a list and map of eligible LEAs, click here.](#)

GOSA used the following process to determine the DLDRGP LEA eligible funding amounts:

1. GOSA calculated each LEA’s maximum funding eligibility for DLDRGP funding using the LEA’s student population as reported in their March 2016 FTE count. This figure was then multiplied by \$75 per student.

Please refer to the Eligibility spreadsheet (“Maximum Eligible Funds by LEA”) at this link to determine your funding eligibility: <http://gosa.georgia.gov/2016-cfc-program-information>

2.4 Applicable Award Expenditures

DLDRGP funds are intended for the exclusive use towards end-user devices as defined in Section 1.1 of this document. Any funds not used to support the purchase of end-user devices will be rescinded.

2.5 Important Dates

LEAs that plan to participate in Round 3 should note the following key dates:

- **July 21, 2016:** GOSA will publish a grant notice on <http://gosa.georgia.gov/2016-cfc-program-information> and will open the online application for the DLDRGP.
- **September 7, 2016:** 2:00-3:00 PM. Webinar on Grant Application Process and Q&A. Details will be posted on grant program website.
- **October 25, 2016:** The application window closes as of 5:00 PM ET on this day.
- **January 2017:** Award announcements will be made.
- **February 24, 2017:** The last date to submit the LEA's Notice of Intent to GOSA for Connections for Classrooms – DLDRGP funding. Notices of Intent will not be accepted after this date, and funds will be reallocated for other purposes.
- **December 31, 2018:** The last day to submit a request for reimbursement of expenses related to DLDRGP awards.

These dates may be revised by GOSA as deemed necessary. If these dates are revised, GOSA will post a notice on the link identified above.

3.0 Applying for the Digital Learning Device Rural Grant Program

3.1 Application Overview

The DLDRGP is a competitive grant that requires LEAs to submit an application to obtain funding. The award of funds is based on the quality of the grant proposal and the compliance of the proposal with the grant requirements, which are outlined in the Rubric included in Appendix A. Applications will be reviewed and scored by a team of external reviewers. The scores, in conjunction with the balance of available and requested funds, will determine funding decisions.

The application process and the requested data elements are described in this section. The DLDRGP Rubric is found in Appendix A located in this document.

3.2 Application Process

The DLDRGP application process is described fully in this section. It is recommended that the DLDRGP Planning document is downloaded and, once complete, its information may be copied into the online application.

3.2.1 Application Planning

The first step to planning your application is to download the DLDRGP Planning document titled “Application Planning Document” found at <http://gosa.georgia.gov/2016-cfc-program-information>. The document includes each of the informational elements requested in the application. It is a convenient way to collect the necessary information so that the online application can be easily completed in one session.

3.2.2 Accessing the Online Application

[The online application is available at this link](#). When you reach this location from your Internet browser, you will see the first step in the application process.

4.0 Grant Awards

In January 2017, the primary point of contact for each Connections for Classrooms application will receive email notification of the outcome of the LEA's grant application. The evaluation of grant applications will result in one of several outcomes:

Granted in full. An application where the full requested amount is approved for funding.

Granted in part. An application where an amount lesser than the requested amount is approved for funding.

Not granted. An application where none of the requested amount is approved for funding.

Funds are reserved but not under contract until an agreement is executed between GOSA and the LEA. GOSA reserves the right to rescind funding if its intended use is for purposes other than the required purchase of end-user devices as outlined in this document.

Questions regarding the grant amounts or the competitive scoring should be directed to Steve Korwan, CFC program manager at skorwan@georgia.gov.

4.1 Award Setup

To accept a DLDRGP grant award, a certifying representative of the district must submit a Notice of Intent to accept funding no later than February 24, 2017. Notices of Intent should be sent to Steve Korwan at skorwan@georgia.gov and should contain the following information related to the grant request:

- The name of the Local Educational Agency (LEA)
- The LEA Number
- The LEA Contact
- The LEA Contact Phone
- The LEA Contact Email
- The dollar amount the LEA intends to request from their Connections for Classrooms – DLDRGP award
- This procedure reserves funds in advance for the LEA, thus **Notices of Intent will not be accepted after this date.** Any reserved funds for which the requirements outlined in this section are not met will be rescinded.

A Connections for Classrooms administrator will reply to each Notice of Intent submission to confirm its receipt.

In order to enter into a contract for a DLDRGP grant award, a certifying representative of the district must submit the following documents:

- Copies of the Purchase Orders for the end-user devices

A Contractual Agreement will be sent to the Awardee for signature after these items have been received and reviewed by the program manager.

4.2 Grant Recipient Registration

Requests for Reimbursements are processed through the FluidReview workflow system. LEAs that applied for the 2014 or 2015 Connections for Classrooms program, whether awarded or not, have already registered with this system and will see the request for reimbursement feature on the main screen when they authenticate. LEAs that did not apply for the 2014 or 2015 grant program must register with FluidReview in order to access

the request for reimbursement form. A registration link will be provided to these award recipients at the time that awards are made.

4.3 Request for Reimbursement

Connections for Classrooms is a reimbursement-based grant program. Requests for reimbursement may be submitted after the procurement of the end-user devices has been made and paid for by the recipient. Expense and payment reference documentation should be included with each reimbursement request to support the requested funding amounts. Payment requests may be made no more than once every calendar month and can be submitted online at the Connections for Classrooms grant management website located at <http://cfc.fluidreview.com>.

ⓘ Reimbursement requests must be made prior to December 31, 2018.
Requests made after that time will not be considered.

To submit a reimbursement request, an LEA representative should visit the FluidReview portal at <http://cfc.fluidreview.com> and complete the following:

1. Select the option “DLDRGP Reimbursement Request Form.”
2. Complete the first page of information with the reimbursement contact, the reimbursement request and the banking information. Be sure to enter the amount being requested. See the image below labeled “Reimbursement Request, Page 1.”
 - The Grant Project # can be found in the Grant Award materials.
 - The Reimbursement Request # indicates which sequenced DLDRGP reimbursement request this is for your LEA.

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Reimbursement Request, Page 1

LEA Name: <input type="text" value="Carroll County"/>	LEA ID: <input type="text" value="622"/>
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Reimbursement Request Contact (To assist with questions or follow-up) Name <input type="text"/> Phone <input type="text"/> Email <input type="text"/>	Reimbursement Request Information * See how to identify the Routing Number and Bank Account Number Grant Project # <input type="text"/> Reimbursement Request # <input type="text"/> Final Reimbursement Request? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No Routing Number <input type="text"/> Bank Account Number <input type="text"/> Amount Requested <input type="text"/>
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Save & Continue Editing | Next

3. Proceed using the [Next] button to complete the second page of information with documentation related to the reimbursement request. See the image below labeled “Reimbursement Request, Page 2.”

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Reimbursement Request, Page 2

Complete this process for requests for reimbursement for items granted from the **Digital Learning Device Rural Grant Program (DLDRGP)** under the Connections for Classrooms program.

Supporting Documentation

Please provide the documents that support the reimbursement request, including receipts, payment records, etc. Each piece of documentation must be uploaded separately.

Upload 2

Upload 3

Upload 4

Upload 5

Approving Authority

I certify that the data above is correct and that this request is in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Connections for Classrooms grant.

Authorized Representative



Title

Click here when you have completed your reimbursement request form:

4. Upload documents that support the reimbursement request, including receipts, payment records, etc. To do so, click the button [Choose File], which opens a window where you can choose a file from your computer's local hard drive.
5. Indicate the approving authority.
6. Select [Save & Exit] to complete the request. You will return to the FluidReview portal main screen.
7. **Important:** To complete the reimbursement request you must click the option DLDRGP Submit Reimbursement Request Form from the FluidReview portal main screen. See the image below labeled "Reimbursement Request, Submit."

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Reimbursement Request, Submit

 Digital Learning Device Rural Grant Program Reimbursement Request Form	--	INCOMPLETE	Continue
 Submit DLDRGP Reimbursement Request Form	--	INCOMPLETE	

To support timely reimbursements, please make sure to submit proper documentation with each reimbursement request. Questions regarding DLDRGP expense reimbursements should be directed to Steve Korwan at skorwan@georgia.gov or 404-463-2399.

Reimbursement requests are handled as quickly as possible from the time they are submitted. The process for funding reimbursements is as follows:

- The LEA makes a reimbursement request using the steps outlined above.
- The request is reviewed and validated by grant administrators.
- The LEA contact is sent an email message if the reimbursement request requires follow-up information to validate and approve the request.
- Once all necessary information is received and verified, the request is approved.
- Funds are then wired via ACH transfer to the LEA's bank.

Reimbursement payments are transferred directly into a designated banking account and are coordinated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the OneGeorgia Authority.

Appendix A – DLDRGP Scoring Rubric

Applications for the DLDRGP will be evaluated for their ability to achieve the objectives of the Connections for Classrooms program. A team of independent reviewers will evaluate applications using the DLDRGP Scoring Rubric included in this appendix. The total points possible are 100.

Scoring Rubric Points Possible by Application Section	
Section 1: Applicant Information	0
Section 2: Grant Funding Request Amounts	0
Section 3: Description of Current Device Inventory and Statement of Need	15
Section 4: Device Selection/Deployment/Maintenance Plans	20
Section 5: Assurance of Network Preparedness for Effective Device Usage	15
Section 6: Digital Learning Plans	35
Section 7: Instructional Staff Readiness Plans	15
Section 8: Binding Authority and Assurances	0
TOTAL	100

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Section 3: Description of Current Device Inventory and Statement of Need (15 points)		
Evaluation	Description	Points
Exemplary	The LEA has a clear need for devices and has exhausted other funding options. The applicant clearly describes the schools' current inventory of devices (laptops, tablets, or other mobile devices) that meet minimum Georgia Milestones requirements and are used in instruction. It includes clear descriptions of prior device investment, the leveraging of available local options (SPLOST, BYOD, Title funds, QBE funds, other funds, and local partnerships), and why these other options are not enough. The description aligns with the data submitted in the GaDOE's annual technology inventory.	15
Satisfactory	The LEA has a clear need for devices and has exhausted some other funding options. The applicant clearly describes the schools' current inventory of devices (laptops, tablets, or other mobile devices) that meet minimum Georgia Milestones requirements and are used in instruction. The application includes sufficient descriptions of prior device investment, the leveraging of available local options (SPLOST, BYOD, Title funds, QBE funds, other funds, and local partnerships), and why these other options are not enough. However, the application lacks some details or it may be unclear whether all other funding options have been exhausted or fully considered. The description aligns with the data submitted in the GaDOE's annual technology inventory.	10
Poor	The LEA has a need for devices, but the need is not clearly articulated and other funding options have not been exhausted. The applicant's description of the schools' current inventory of devices (laptops, tablets, or other mobile devices) that meet minimum Georgia Milestones requirements and are used in instruction has inconsistencies or lacks details. In addition, the application's descriptions of prior device investment, the leveraging of available local options (SPLOST, BYOD, Title funds, QBE funds, other funds, and local partnerships), and why these other options are not enough do not provide compelling evidence of local investment or commitment and the exhausting of other funding options. The description does not align with or is not complete enough to determine alignment with the data submitted in the GaDOE's annual technology inventory.	5
Unsatisfactory	The LEA's need for devices is unclear and other funding options have not been exhausted. The applicant's description of the schools' current inventory of devices is missing or very incomplete. In addition, the application's descriptions of prior device investment, the leveraging of available local options, and why these other options are insufficient are missing or demonstrate a lack of local commitment. The description does not align with or is not complete enough to determine alignment with the data submitted in the GaDOE's annual technology inventory.	0

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Section 4: Device Selection/Deployment/Maintenance/Technical Support Plans (20 points)		
Evaluation	Description	Points
Exemplary	The LEA demonstrates clear and detailed planning for device procurement tailored to their needs outlined in Section 3 and subsequent deployment and management of the devices. All requested devices are compliant with Georgia Milestones requirements. The applicant clearly describes how the devices were selected or will be selected through procurement to best fit the LEA’s digital learning plans outlined in Section 6, including the steps that have been or will be taken to ensure competitive pricing. The plan also outlines clear chain of custody processes, maintenance during and between school years, how technical support will be provided during instructional time, and the expected device life. The budget information is complete and aligns with the requested total funds.	20
Satisfactory	The LEA demonstrates sufficient planning for device procurement tailored to their needs outlined in Section 3 as well as subsequent deployment and management of the devices. All requested devices are compliant with Georgia Milestones requirements. The applicant describes how the devices were selected or will be selected through procurement to best fit the LEA’s digital learning plans outlined in Section 6, including the steps that have been or will be taken to ensure competitive pricing. The plan also outlines clear chain of custody processes, maintenance during and between school years, how technical support will be provided during instructional time, and the expected device life. However, the description lacks details or has inconsistencies in some places. The budget information is complete and aligns with the requested total funds.	14
Poor	The LEA demonstrates incomplete planning for device procurement that does not align with needs outlined in Section 3 as well as subsequent deployment and management of the devices. Some of the requested devices may not be compliant with Georgia Milestones requirements. The applicant does not fully describe how the devices were selected or will be selected through procurement to best fit the LEA’s digital learning plans outlined in Section 6, and it may also lack a description of the steps that have been or will be taken to ensure competitive pricing. The plan lacks clarity in terms of the chain of custody processes, maintenance during and between school years, how technical support will be provided during instructional time, and the expected device life, casting doubt on whether devices would be managed appropriately. The budget information is not fully complete or does not align with the requested total funds.	8
Unsatisfactory	The LEA demonstrates little to no planning for device procurement, deployment and management of the devices. Some or all of the requested devices may not be compliant with Georgia Milestones requirements. The applicant includes little or no description of how the devices were selected or will be selected through procurement, steps taken to ensure competitive pricing, how students will be assigned devices, nor how devices will be maintained, nor how technical support will be provided. The budget information is incomplete and does not align with the requested total funds.	0

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Section 5: Assurance of Network Preparedness for Effective Device Usage (15 points)		
Evaluation	Description	Points
Exemplary	The LEA’s network preparations are detailed and clearly outline how it will accommodate requested devices. A certification document or letter from the vendor or another external party ensuring network preparedness has been included. The applicant clearly describes what steps have been taken or will be taken to ensure the schools’ networks are prepared to accommodate the additional devices for simultaneous usage, including sufficient bandwidth capacity, internal fiber/wiring, switch capacity, and wireless access point (WAP) deployment. If the applicant received a prior CFC grant award, the application clearly describes how a Digital Learning Device Rural Grant Program grant will complement that initial investment. If the applicant did not apply for prior CFC grant awards, the application clearly describes why the LEA did not apply for prior funds and how a Digital Learning Device Rural Grant Program grant will complement its current network efforts.	15
Satisfactory	The LEA’s network preparations are sufficiently prepared to accommodate requested devices. A certification document or letter from the vendor or another external party ensuring network preparedness has been included. The applicant describes what steps have been taken or will be taken to ensure the schools’ networks are prepared to accommodate the additional devices for simultaneous usage, including sufficient bandwidth capacity, internal fiber/wiring, switch capacity, and wireless access point (WAP) deployment. However, the summary lacks some details. If the applicant received a prior CFC grant award, the application describes how a Digital Learning Device Rural Grant Program grant will complement that initial investment. If the applicant did not apply for prior CFC grant awards, the application describes why the LEA did not apply for prior funds and how a Digital Learning Device Rural Grant Program grant will complement its current network efforts.	10
Poor	The LEA has made some network preparations, but the incomplete description casts doubt on its network readiness when devices are deployed. A certification document or letter from the vendor or another external party ensuring network preparedness was not included. The applicant includes a general discussion of what steps have been taken or will be taken to ensure the schools’ networks are prepared to accommodate the additional devices for simultaneous usage. However, the plan lacks significant details on several required components (bandwidth capacity, internal fiber/wiring, switch capacity, and wireless access point (WAP) deployment), indicating that the network may not be prepared to fully leverage the requested devices. If the applicant received a prior CFC grant award, there is some description, but it lacks details. If the applicant did not apply for prior CFC grant awards, the application has limited or no description of why the LEA did not apply for prior funds and a general description for how a Digital Learning Device Rural Grant Program grant will complement its current network efforts.	5
Unsatisfactory	The LEA’s network is not prepared to accommodate requested devices. A certification document or letter from the vendor or another external party ensuring network preparedness was not included. The applicant provides little or no description of what steps have been taken or will be taken to ensure the schools’ networks are prepared to accommodate the additional devices for simultaneous usage. There is limited or no description of how past Connections for Classrooms or other network efforts compliment this grant application.	0

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Section 6: Digital Learning Plans (35 points)		
Evaluation	Description	Points
Exemplary	The applicant clearly describes its strategy to change instruction to implement digital learning as a result of receiving this grant, specifically facilitating learning with technology that gives students some control over time, place, path, and/or pace. Applicant provides a clear link to improved student outcomes. Applicant clearly describes what this grant will enable that is not possible under the LEA's current device inventory.	35
Satisfactory	The applicant clearly describes its strategy to change instruction to implement digital learning as a result of receiving this grant, specifically facilitating learning with technology that gives students some control over time, place, path, and/or pace. However, the applicant either does not provide a clear link to improved student outcomes or does not clearly describe what this grant will enable that is not possible under the LEA's current infrastructure.	25
Poor	The applicant does not clearly describe its strategy to change instruction to implement digital learning as a result of receiving this grant, specifically facilitating learning with technology that gives students some control over time, place, path, and/or pace. These terms may be described in the narrative but in general terms that lack of clarity on how instruction will actually be changed. While the applicant may mention student outcomes, the narrative seems to focus mostly on the device integration rather than how that integration will change instruction and increase student outcomes.	15
Unsatisfactory	The applicant does not demonstrate how this grant will facilitate learning with technology that gives students some control over time, place, path, and/or pace. The narrative lacks details or focuses strictly on the device integration rather than how that integration will change instruction and increase student outcomes. Any discussion of students is not clearly linked to improved outcomes.	5

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Section 7: Instructional Staff Readiness Plans (15 points)		
Evaluation	Description	Points
Exemplary	The LEA demonstrates clear capacity to ensure that instructional staff members are able to successfully integrate requested devices into their instruction and allow students to have a measure of control over the time, path, place, and/or pace of learning. The plan clearly articulates how the LEA will diagnose and address instructional staff learning needs. The plan has specific and attainable measures to gauge success of the support provided.	15
Satisfactory	The LEA demonstrates sufficient capacity to ensure that instructional staff members are able to successfully integrate requested devices into their instruction and allow students to have a measure of control over the time, path, place, and/or pace of learning. The plan articulates how the LEA will diagnose and address instructional staff learning needs, but some details on diagnosing need or follow-up based upon needs are either lacking or unclear. The plan includes attainable measures to gauge success of the support provided, but they may lack some specificity.	10
Poor	The LEA does not clearly demonstrate that instructional staff members will be able to integrate requested devices into their instruction and allow students to have a measure of control over the time, path, place, and/or pace of learning. It does not clearly describe how the LEA will diagnose and address instructional staff learning needs. Or, the plan generically describes LEA-wide professional development efforts that may diagnose and address learning needs but that are not directly related to technology integration and digital learning. The plan includes measures to gauge success of the support provided, but they lack specificity or are not measurable.	5
Unsatisfactory	The LEA does not appear prepared to ensure that instructional staff members will be able to integrate requested devices into their instruction and allow students to have a measure of control over the time, path, place, and/or pace of learning. Significant details are missing or incomplete. Or, the plan generically describes LEA-wide professional development efforts that do not clearly diagnose and address learning needs and are not directly related to technology integration and digital learning. The plan does not include measures of success of the support provided.	0

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