

Presentation Transcript

Maintenance of Financial Support (MFS) Toolkit: How to use the Data Collection Reporting Tool (DCRT)

Introduction

0:00

Welcome. The Center for IDEA Fiscal Reporting, or CIFR, created a toolkit to help states with understanding and meeting IDEA's Maintenance of State Financial Support, or MFS, requirements. This training covers the Data Collection and Reporting Tool (DCRT), one piece of the MFS Toolkit. This training will provide you with a tour of the tool and show you how to use it. It will: describe the need for the DCRT, give you a quick overview of the tool, show you how to enter your state's data into the tool, and illustrate the summary table and chart built into the tool. You can pause and restart this video at any time. You can skip forward and back to specific sections as needed.

Need for the DCRT

00:47

States are facing budget shortfalls and increased demands on their educational systems. Nevertheless, they must ensure and document that they are maintaining their state financial support for special education and related services. Failing this MFS requirement can lead to a reduction of a state's Part B, Section 611 grant.

State educational agencies, or SEAs, have designed their own methods and templates for collecting MFS data from their own SEA departments and divisions, as well as from other state agencies. However, many states report that their existing systems are insufficient to truly meet federal requirements. Challenges reported by states include the lack of understanding of MFS requirements and concerns about the authority and feasibility of collecting data on funds made available for special education and related services by other state agencies. States have also expressed the need for an electronic tool that can be readily used by staff and that will provide consistency from year to year — especially given issues related to staff turnover.

We have designed the DCRT to help states address these needs. This Data Collection and Reporting Tool will help states ensure that they are meeting the federal reporting requirements and maintaining sufficient documentation of the MFS calculation. It will also improve accuracy and increase consistency in the collection and reporting of state MFS data.

We will explain how to download the toolkit shortly, but first let's take an overview of what's in the DCRT.

DCRT Overview

2:22

The DCRT is an Excel-based tool. On the next few slides, we'll show you some key features. The DCRT Excel file includes 12 tabs: three introductory tabs, seven data entry tabs, and two summary tabs. Instructions for using the DCRT are included as the third tab in the tool. In addition, a printable version of the instructions is available in PDF.

As you will see, you can use the tool to record and track state funds that must be included in your MFS calculation. This includes funds made available to your SEA offices and divisions. It also includes funds made available to other state agencies. The data from the input worksheets are automatically linked to a summary table and chart, which are the final two tabs in the Excel file. The summary table and chart display MFS amounts in a variety of ways. The table on the left is the summary table, which displays MFS amounts in total, broken out by SEA and/or other state agencies, and broken out by individual agency. The chart on the right, which is found in the final tab of the Excel file, illustrates the breakout of MFS amounts by SEA and other state agencies.

The tool includes worksheets to be used for reporting over each of five consecutive fiscal years. You'll probably want to start with your current year's MFS calculations, and then keep using the tool for the next four years so you have a continuing record of your MFS calculations. In this way, the data that are collected and reported annually allow for funding to be compared from year to year.

This is the direct URL to access the site: <http://cifr.wested.org/resources/mfs/mfs-toolkit/>. Or you can go to the CIFR website at <http://cifr.wested.org/>, then click on the *Resources* tab, and select *Maintenance of State Financial Support*. From there, click on the *MFS toolkit* and scroll down to access the DCRT.

To get the most out of this part of the training, you may want to have the tool open and follow along in your own version of the tool. You can download all of the related files in one zip file by clicking the first download button, or you can download each part of the DCRT by clicking on the *download* button next to each component.

Feel free to pause this video while you download and open the tool.

Please note that, for this presentation, we are using sample, made-up data. Again, feel free to follow along and enter data in your own version of the tool.

How to Use the DCRT

Getting Started

5:05

You should begin at the *Getting Started* worksheet, which is the fourth tab in the Excel file. In cell B4, enter the state fiscal year that you want to designate as Year 1 in this workbook. 2016 is already entered for your convenience, but can be changed.

In cell B7, enter the state fiscal year in which your state most recently met MFS using the total calculation. This must be prior to the year designated as Year 1 in cell B4. 2015 is entered for your convenience, but can be changed.

In cell B8, enter the corresponding total amount of state financial support made available in the state fiscal year in which the state last met MFS, which you entered in cell B7. The amount entered must be equal to or greater than 0.

As you know, MFS can be met two ways — using the total or a per-pupil or per-capita amount. The DCRT allows users to see if MFS has been met using both methods.

In cell B9, enter the state fiscal year in which your state most recently met MFS using the per-pupil or per-capita calculation. This must be prior to the year designated as Year 1 in cell B4 and may or may not be the same as the year entered in cell B7. 2015 is entered for your convenience in cell B9, but can be changed.

In cell B10, enter the corresponding per-pupil amount of financial support made available in the state fiscal year in which the state last met MFS, which is the year you entered in cell B9. The amount entered must be equal to or greater than 0.

In cell B11, enter the number of children with an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) in the state fiscal year in which the state last met MFS using the per-pupil calculation — which is the year you entered in cell B9.

Contact Information

7:12

The next tab is the *Contact Information*. This is where you will enter contact information for the people who provided data from the SEA and from other state agencies. You should complete this tab before filling out the yearly input sheets because the lists of SEA Offices or Divisions and Other State Agencies that are created here will show up in a dropdown menu in the yearly input sheets. We'll start by looking at the top panel, which is for SEA Offices or Divisions.

In Column A, enter the name of the SEA office or division. You may have more than one contact per SEA office or division — for example, if one staff person leaves and another takes over, or if there is more than one source of funding that you are tracking and each has a different contact person. Use a different line for each contact, even if they are from the same SEA office or division.

In columns B through F, enter the basic contact information indicated by the column header: the name of the contact person providing the MFS information, their title, phone number, email address, and the year or years for which they provided MFS information. You will start with information for year one only, but, over time, you will add years two through five.

Notes, if there are any, can be entered in column G. This would include any relevant comments about the contact person or the SEA office or division. For example, if one person took over the contact role from another, you can note that here. Now, under Other State Agency Contact Information, we will see the same kind of information entered for a couple of other state agencies. The data you enter in column A under Other State Agency will create a list of Other State Agencies for the yearly input sheets. You may have more than one contact person per Other State Agency, especially after you have used the tool for multiple years. You should enter each contact person in a separate row. Be sure to fill in all the information for the Other State Agency contacts.

Here is a sample completed Contact Information sheet. The number of rows you use on your sheet within the SEA panel and within the Other State Agency panel will depend on your state's funding structure. You can insert new rows as needed.

Yearly Input

9:42

The next tab in the DCRT is the Year 1 input sheet. The yearly input worksheets track funds that your state made available to support special education and/or related services to children with disabilities pursuant to their IEPs. The input screen has been organized into two panels to track support amounts from the SEA and from other state agencies. Cells that are available for user input are shaded, while all uncolored cells are either table headings or auto-populated.

Each panel contains the input fields used to track and report the funds made available. The SEA Funds panel provides seven rows in which to report financial support, while the Other State Agency Funds panel provides ten rows. For each entry, you can include an identifier or budget code, a description, and the amount of state funds. The instructions include the steps to follow to complete the fields in these sections. We'll go through these steps now.

The drop-down menu displays the list of SEA offices or divisions from the *Contact Information* sheet. You may have more than one row for each SEA office or division. This may happen if you are tracking more than one line item from a particular SEA office or division.

Use column B to track financial support amounts by budget codes or other identifiers that are meaningful to your SEA office or division. Useful identifiers might be function or program codes from your state's fiscal chart of accounts, which could help facilitate reporting from the SEA's finance office. Identifiers could also include specific allowable activities or services.

In column C, enter a description of the type of activity or service related to the identifier or budget code.

In column D, enter the dollar amount of state financial support provided in the relevant state fiscal year.

In column E, add any relevant notes pertaining to the information in this row. The note may include more specific information about the line item, such as special appropriations or how the amount was calculated.

Now let's enter the information for a couple of other state agencies. Use the drop-down menu to select the Other State Agency in column A of the bottom panel. Again, you may have more than one row per Other State Agency. Enter the Identifier or Budget Code in column B, the Description in column C, and the Amount of State Funds in column D.

There are three likely scenarios for recording the Other State Agencies Funds in this panel. In the first scenario, the other state agency will provide you with one total amount to input, as shown in the example for the Department of Corrections. In the second scenario, the other state agency may provide funds broken out in several line items, as shown in the example for the Department of Mental Health. In the third scenario, the other state agency may report that they have no state funds made available for special education and related services in that year, as shown in the example for the Department of Children and Families. Even if an agency reports no state funding, it is a good idea to record this information in the DCRT for future reference.

The worksheet automatically calculates the total amount of SEA financial support in cell D11, the total amount of Other State Agency financial support in D25, and the total state financial support across all agencies in cell D27. This is the number you report to OSEP (Office of Special Education Programs).

There are five yearly input sheets, labeled Year 1 through Year 5. You may use the DCRT every year, completing a different input sheet each year. The remaining worksheets will auto-populate to show MFS amounts that have been aggregated in a variety of ways.

Table - Summary

13:51

The next to last tab is the *Table - Summary* sheet — a table that summarizes the MFS information and calculates multiple determinations for MFS. This table provides all the information you need about MFS in one place.

The sample shows five years of data. You will begin with only one year of data, but over time you may complete the entire five years of the workbook, and you will end up with something like this.

In row 5, you will find overall MFS amounts for each year in the spreadsheet. This total is repeated in row 20.

In row 9, enter the number of children with IEPs served with state funds for each year for which you are calculating MFS. Note that this is the only data entry required for the summary table.

Row 10 indicates MFS amounts per pupil for each year in the spreadsheet.

For each determination, the tool notes either “MFS Met” or “MFS Not Met.” For any case where MFS is not met, the cell will be red.

Rows 14, 15, and 16 display three types of MFS determinations for each fiscal year in the workbook.

Row 14 determines whether MFS was met using total amounts compared to the most recent year in which MFS was met using total amounts.

In row 15, MFS is determined using per-pupil amounts compared to the most recent year in which MFS was met using per-pupil amounts.

Your state meets MFS if either Row 14 or row 15 show “MFS Met.” You will find this final determination in row 16.

For each year in the spreadsheet, you will find the SEA MFS amount in row 18 and the Other State Agency amounts in row 19.

Rows 22 up to row 35 show amounts for each respective Other State Agency for each year in the spreadsheet. This list is drawn from the list of agencies originally entered on the *Contact Information* sheet and summed from the data entered on the yearly input sheets.

Total MFS Years (Chart)

16:06

The final tab in the DCRT is the *Chart - Total MFS Years 1 to 5*. This is a column chart displaying the overall MFS amounts by year, disaggregated by SEA and Other State Agencies.

As you have seen, the DCRT creates a five-year workbook that allows you to document your state's MFS calculations and the data supporting those calculations over time. When five years have passed, you can simply download the workbook again and begin a new five-year cycle, providing history and continuity.

Attachments

16:42

In addition to the Excel workbook, the DCRT includes additional documents that may be helpful to you in collecting and reporting your state's MFS data.

To facilitate the request for MFS information from other state agencies, we provide a sample letter, the *Other State Agency Letter*, which you can use to engage individuals responsible for reporting at these organizations. There are two other attachments you can download and use: a letter from the federal Rehabilitation Services Agencies, referred to as the *Letter to Morton*, addressing the inclusion of matching funds in the MFS calculation, and a worksheet for recording the state funds that the other state agency makes available for services to children with disabilities pursuant to their IEPs. You can give this form to other state agencies to collect data from them. You can then enter the information into the Other State Agency panel on the yearly input sheet. In a situation where actual amounts are unavailable, staff from the other state agency may need to make a reasonable approximation of their respective other state agency funds for MFS.

All of these files are available on the CIFR website as components of the DCRT. They are part of the zip file or can be downloaded separately.

The *Letter to Morton* includes both a scanned copy of the original letter on Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services letterhead and a version that is 508 accessible.

DCRT Assistance

18:17

CIFR's contingent of highly qualified technical assistance providers is available to assist states in using the DCRT. If your state is interested in receiving training or assistance in the use of the DCRT, you can contact your CIFR regional community of practice facilitators or contact us at the addresses shown (<http://cifr.wested.org/contact> and cifr_info@wested.org).

As more states use the DCRT, CIFR is committed to reviewing feedback and making changes that can improve the functionality and usefulness of the tool. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact us at the URL and email address shown here (<http://cifr.wested.org/contact> and cifr_info@wested.org.)

Summary

18:54

This training was created and produced by CIFR, a partnership among WestEd, American Institutes for Research, Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education, and Westat.

Thank you.