

Presentation Transcript

Maintenance of State Financial Support (MFS) Toolkit: How to use the Funding Flow Ideograph Tool (FFIT)

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 Funding Flow Ideograph Tool, one piece of the MFS Toolkit.

The Funding Flow Ideograph Tool is designed to help state staff describe the requirements for MFS to various stakeholders.

This training will: Provide an overview of the tool and how it can be used with the MFS Quick Reference Guide and show you how to create a customized *funding flow ideograph* for your state.

FFIT Overview

0:41

CIFR's MFS toolkit was created in response to increased attention on states' fiscal accountability and the complexities faced by state educational agencies, or SEAs, related to special education fiscal requirements. Working with states, CIFR identified a need for tools that facilitate capacity-building for a variety of state stakeholders.

The Funding Flow Ideograph Tool, or FFIT, will help you create a graphic depiction of how state funding for special education flows within your state.

We recommend using the FFIT together with the Quick Reference Guide, one of the other tools in the MFS toolkit. Together, the FFIT and Quick Reference Guide will help you explain MFS and how it works in your state to staff in other program offices, staff in other state departments, and state legislators and legislative budget staff.

How to Use the FFIT

1:38

Let's talk about how to use the FFIT. Think about the audiences for the Quick Reference Guide and the FFIT. Who in your state needs to know about the basics of MFS and the

funds involved? You may wish to share this information with the following audiences: colleagues within the SEA's elementary and secondary education or career and technical education departments who have responsibilities for students with disabilities and from whom you will be requesting data for MFS reporting; your state board of education, as it sets priorities for funding; staff of the legislative committee responsible for allocating funds for special education; your state special education advisory panel, in preparation for reviewing the IDEA Part B application, where you report MFS amounts; and other audiences, as appropriate.

The graphics created with this tool will help you describe how special education is funded and which funds must be included to meet MFS requirements.

By providing a visual of how funds flow, the FFIT can facilitate a discussion of how special education and related services are funded from various sources, including direct state appropriations, and which agencies and service providers receive these funds.

The FFIT is designed to be customized for your state and is easy to change as circumstances may change.

Let's take a look at a sample funding flow ideograph, created using our tool.

Special education funding begins with the state's legislative process, when the state allocates funding to the SEA and other state agencies for the provision of special education and related services to eligible children with disabilities, pursuant to their individualized education programs, or IEPs.

The bulk of these funds are made available to the SEA, which, in turn, provides funds to the local educational agencies, or LEAS, and, in many states, to regional structures such as area cooperatives, educational service agencies, or other similar agencies.

Funds may also be made available, either directly from the legislature or through the SEA to state schools for the deaf and blind or other agencies that serve low-incidence disability populations.

Additionally, funds may be made available to other state agencies, such as departments of health, mental health, transportation, corrections, social services, vocational rehabilitation, or other agencies that provide services directly to children with disabilities, pursuant to their IEPs.

Sometimes the agencies receiving funds provide services directly, sometimes they flow funds to yet another group of service providers, and sometimes they flow funds between themselves before they reach the service providers.

States differ in how funds flow and in how services are provided. Therefore, the FFIT is flexible in how it can be easily customized and constructed to fit each state's particular setup.

Downloading the Tool

4:51

To get the most out of this part of the training, you may want to download a copy of the FFIT prior to continuing this video.

You can download the FFIT from CIFR's website using this URL <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 to the Funding Flow Ideograph Tool.

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

You can pause and restart this video at any time and move back and forth between the video and the tool. You can also skip forward and backward to specific sections of this presentation as needed.

How to Customize the FFIT

5:37

Now that you have a vision of the completed product, let's look at how to customize the FFIT for your state.

The tool consists of three PowerPoint slides: a starting template, a palette of icons and arrows, and a list of labels.

You will copy and paste the icons, flow arrows, and labels onto the template to create an ideograph that is customized for your state. Instructions included in the tool make it very simple and straightforward to create the graphic and make a print or digital version to share with your audiences.

Let me show you how easy it is to create a graphic for your state.

First, we'll bring up the template with the state legislature and SEA icons already on it and with the arrow pointing from the state legislature to the SEA. This represents the appropriations of state funds to your SEA to be used for special education and related services for children with disabilities, pursuant to their IEPs. This is probably the base for

your state's MFS calculations. You may want to re-label this icon as Department of Education or whatever the name of the education agency is in your state.

For this example, we are going to rename the SEA to be the Sample State Department of Education.

Let's also use the box at the top to re-title our chart. The new title will read "Sample State Funding Flow for Special Education and Related Services." Each label in the tool can be edited to ensure the tool meets each state's unique structure.

Now, let's put in the LEAs right away since states typically flow a large majority of funds directly to them to deliver IEP services.

To do that, we'll go to the icon palette, another slide in the tool. From the palette, let's select an icon that can represent LEAs. We will copy it and then paste it in to the Service Providers section of the template.

Next, we'll go back to the icon palette, to copy an arrow to show the flow of funds. Select and copy the arrow; then paste it into the template.

Now, we need a label. Let's go to the Label Sheet, choose the appropriate label from the Service Providers column, highlight, and copy it. We'll go back to our template and paste it under the icon.

If this label is not familiar language to the audience that will be using the graphic, you could change it to school districts or another familiar term.

Sometimes the state legislature makes other direct appropriations that fund special education and related services pursuant to IEPs.

Let's say that your state has a State School for the Deaf and Blind where some children with disabilities are served, and that your legislature makes a line-item appropriation to that school.

We'll go back to the icon palette, select an icon to represent that state school; copy it; then return to the template and paste it in the bottom tier of the template.

Let's label it, too. Go to the sheet with labels. There's one for "State School for the Blind" and also one for the "State School for the Deaf" — let's select "State School for the Blind," copy it, and paste it into our graphic, and then edit the label so it says, "State School for the Deaf and Blind."

We also need an arrow, copied from the icon palette, to show the direct allocation from the legislature. The arrows in the palette can be stretched and rotated to show various funding flows.

Now, think about other state agencies that receive legislative appropriations for services that are provided to students with IEPs.

These might be: the Department of Health, which provides nursing and vocational and rehabilitation services; the Department of Social Services, which provides early education programs and transportation services for some of these children; and the Bureau of Corrections, which provides IEP services for youth in detention programs.

We'll paste in icons and create labels for those three state agencies and those services; then add the arrows for the funding flowing between the state agencies and the service providers.

This is starting to look like a complete picture.

But, we just remembered that the SEA also funds some early education programs outside of the LEAs to provide services for students with disabilities prescribed by their IEPs. The Department of Education also directly funds transportation agencies to serve certain students with IEPs. We already have the icons for the early education programs and transportation service agencies in our graphic, we just need to put in the extra arrows showing that these agencies receive funding from the Department of Education as well as from other state agencies.

That's it! We've just diagrammed the flow of funds that need to be included in this state's MFS calculation. Of course, this doesn't represent your state. The point is for you to use these tools to make a diagram that does represent MFS in your state. The Instructions for the FFIT (which are included when you download this tool from the CIFR website) include examples that can help you think about all the pieces and possible patterns of funding to include on your ideograph.

Summary

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Once you have created your ideograph, you can combine it with the Quick Reference Guide as a great pair of handouts for presentations to partners and stakeholders who need to understand how MFS works in your state.

CIFR also recommends providing information from the Quick Reference Guide and the funding flow ideograph to other state agency staff when requesting MFS data from them

for section five of the annual application for IDEA funds. CIFR's Data Collection and Reporting Tool goes into much more detail on collecting and reporting those data.

CIFR's contingent of highly qualified technical assistance providers is available to assist states in using the FFIT and the other tools in the MFS Toolkit.

CIFR TA professionals will assist states by providing MFS training to state stakeholders using the Quick Reference Guide and FFIT and helping to personalize the FFIT to reflect a state's unique system. If your state is interested in receiving training in the use of these tools, contact CIFR staff or submit a request on our website.

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!