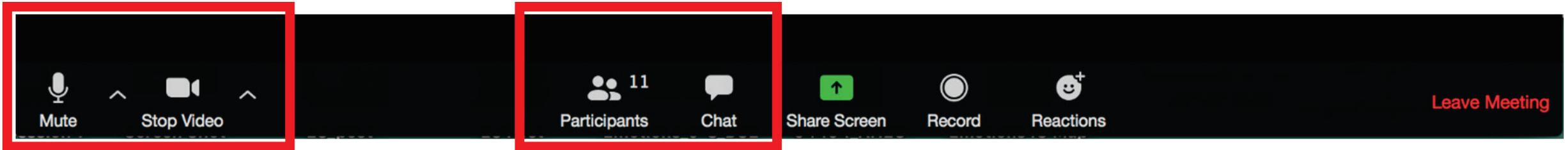


Illinois Braiding and Blending Community of Practice

December 2, 2021

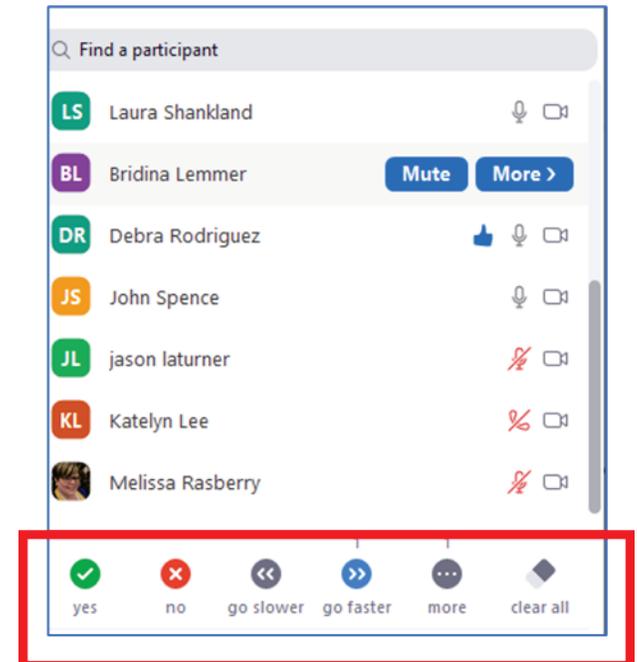
Illinois State Board of Education
Region 9 Comprehensive Center

Using the Zoom Platform



- Use the black bar on your screen to control your audio and video, and to view the participant list and chat.
 - When you join, your audio will be muted. Please remain muted when you're not speaking.
 - We welcome you to turn on your camera and join us via video.
- Use the “Raise Hand” button on your participant feedback bar to volunteer to speak; the presenter will call on you.
- Use the chat to message Crystal Darby or Shoshana Rabinovsky for tech support.

Participant List



Virtual Meeting/Conference Recording Notice

The American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) allows for the recording of audio, visuals, participants, and other information sent, verbalized, or utilized during business related meetings. By joining a meeting, you automatically consent to such recordings. Any participant who prefers to participate via audio only should disable their video camera so only their audio will be captured. Video and/or audio recordings of any AIR session shall not be transmitted to an external third party without the permission of AIR.

AIR Inclusive Meeting Guidelines

Hosting and Participating in Meetings



ENGAGE EVERYONE



BE HEARD AND SEEN



ACKNOWLEDGE SPEAKER



MAXIMIZE MICROPHONES



MINIMIZE NOISE



MAXIMIZE VISUAL DISPLAYS

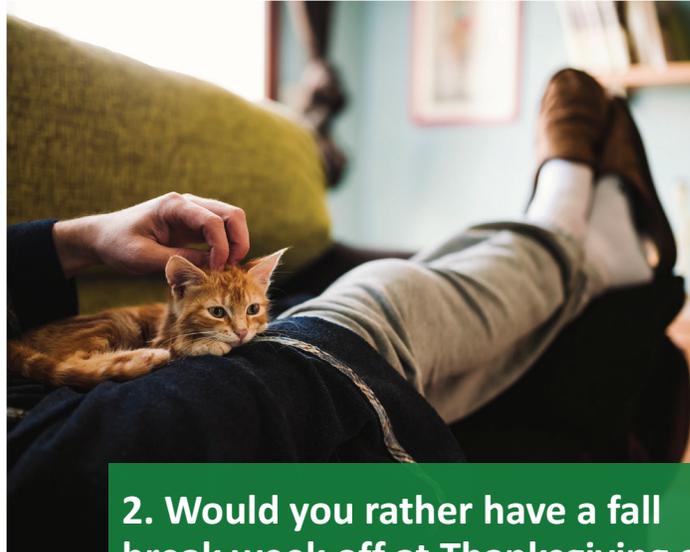
Icebreaker

In the chat box please write:

- » Your district and role.
- » Response to one, two, or all three of the questions by number!



1. What is a simple Thanksgiving holiday tradition you like?



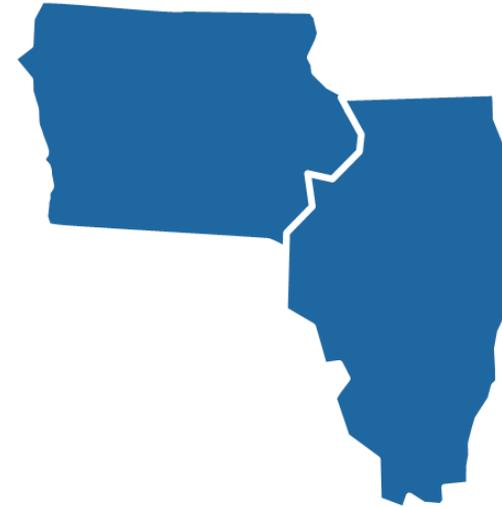
2. Would you rather have a fall break week off at Thanksgiving or the last week of the year off?



3. What is the weirdest Thanksgiving meal combination you have ever had?

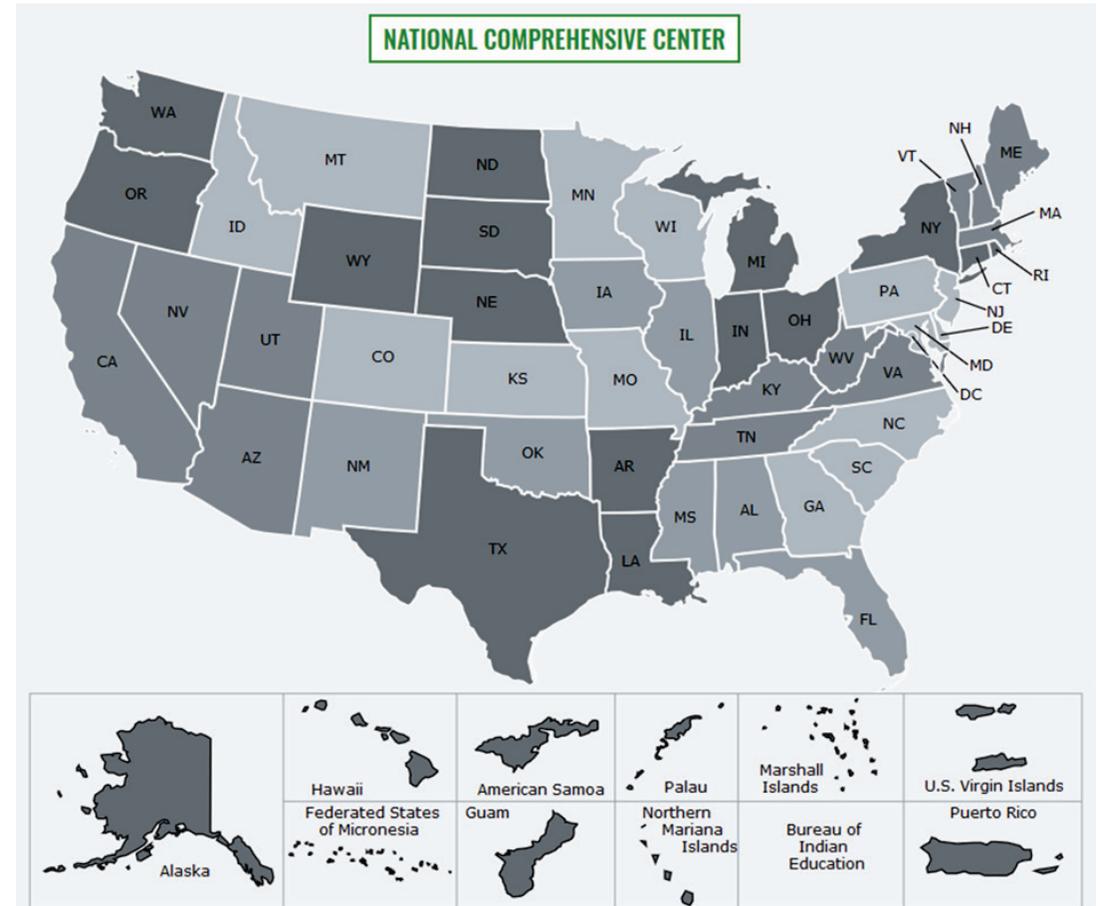
What Is the Region 9 Comprehensive Center?

- » Provides capacity-building services to state, district, and school leaders in Illinois and Iowa.
- » Operated by the American Institutes for Research through a U.S. Department of Education grant.
- » Three focus areas:
 - > **Support** the region in making measurable progress toward key education priorities.
 - > **Connect** partners with expertise and evidence-based resources.
 - > **Elevate** success stories from across the region.



We Are Part of the Comprehensive Center Network

- 19 regional centers and a national center that provide capacity-building services.
- Goal of improving educational outcomes and instructional quality for all students.
- Funded by 5-year grants from the U.S. Department of Education.
- Current grant cycle began in fall 2019.



Agenda

Agenda

- » 10:00 a.m. **Welcome and Introductions**
 - > ISBE, Region 9 CC Team
 - > Purpose and Objectives
- » 10:10 a.m. **Review of Previous Session**
- » 10:15 a.m. **Pre-Work Discussion**
- » 10:30 a.m. **Braiding and Blending**
- » 10:45 a.m. **Breakout Rooms**
- » 11:10 a.m. **Whole Group Sharing**
- » 11:25 a.m. **Closing and Adjourn**

Purpose

ISBE is hosting a community of practice (CoP) for district leadership to

- » **Partner with other districts and local staff** to collaboratively navigate braiding and blending of federal and local funds.
- » Identify **strategic considerations for mitigating common challenges** that may arise in braiding and blending federal and local funds.
- » **Identify tools and resources** to support successful implementation of braiding and blending funds.
- » **Contribute to a research-based resource** that can be shared with school and district leaders across Illinois and the nation.

2.2.3 Create an efficient and effective reporting system in collaboration with the field that encourages and fosters braiding and blending (i.e., integrated resource allocation system) and is supported by aligned agency mindsets and practices.

By end of the 2020-21 school year

Agency staff will be trained to understand and work with districts on blending and braiding.

By end of the 2021-22 school year

Up to 10 pilot districts will be selected and trained and will utilize blending and braiding.

By end of the 2022-23 school year

ISBE will increase by two the number of federal funds braided at the state level to maximize its resources to serve LEAs and will distribute all discretionary grants according to equity-based criteria.

Community of Practice Structure

- » Prewrite activity
- » Review of previous session content
- » Subject matter expert presentation
- » Small group breakout discussion
- » Community sharing
- » Resources and follow-up communications

CoP Series

- » November 4, 2021, 10:00 a.m. CT
The Comprehensive Needs Assessment
- » **December 2, 2021, 10:00 a.m. CT**
**Introduction to Braiding and Blending
Funding**
- » January 6, 2022, 10:00 a.m. CT
Developing Best Practices for Resource
Allocation
- » January 26, 2022, 10:00 a.m. CT
How to Report Braiding and Blending

Expectations and Norms



This is an off-the-record conversation; please no social media posting or tweeting about conversations.



Use cameras to help create a sense of community.



Work to help develop community by attending sessions.



Be present and actively contribute.



Complete prework assignments.



Share ideas and resources.



Respect diversity of opinion and perspective.



All team members are asked to take part.

Objectives

- » Participants should expect to
 - > **Learn** steps for effective braiding and blending of funds beginning with the Comprehensive Needs Assessment.
 - > **Hear from peers** about experiences with braiding and blending funding.
 - > **Identify actionable** steps to plan for braiding and blending funds.



Previous Session Reflection: Comprehensive Needs Assessment

- » Review data collection systems.
 - > Review the current Comprehensive Needs Assessment.
 - What is missing?
 - Have you looked at assessment scores?
 - Have you looked at at-risk populations (that is, how are you prioritizing most vulnerable student populations)?
 - What is the data telling you?



Pework Conversation: WestEd Webinar



- Given your district, what ideas from the webinar resonated with you?
- Based on the student populations discussed, what were some of the subgroups you identified that could benefit from braiding and blending?

Braiding and Blending

Wayne Ball

Senior TA Consultant

Success Elements



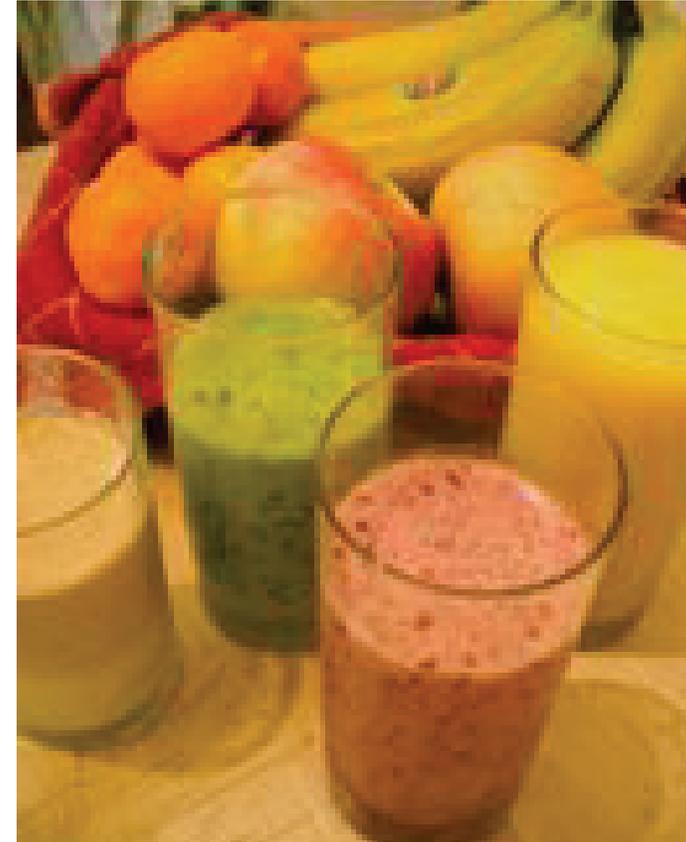
What Is Braiding?

- » Coordinated financial assistance from several sources to meet one purpose.
- » Each fund source maintains its own reporting requirements.
- » Each individual funding source maintains its identity.
- » IDEA including IDEA CEIS, Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Act, ESSER, Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funds

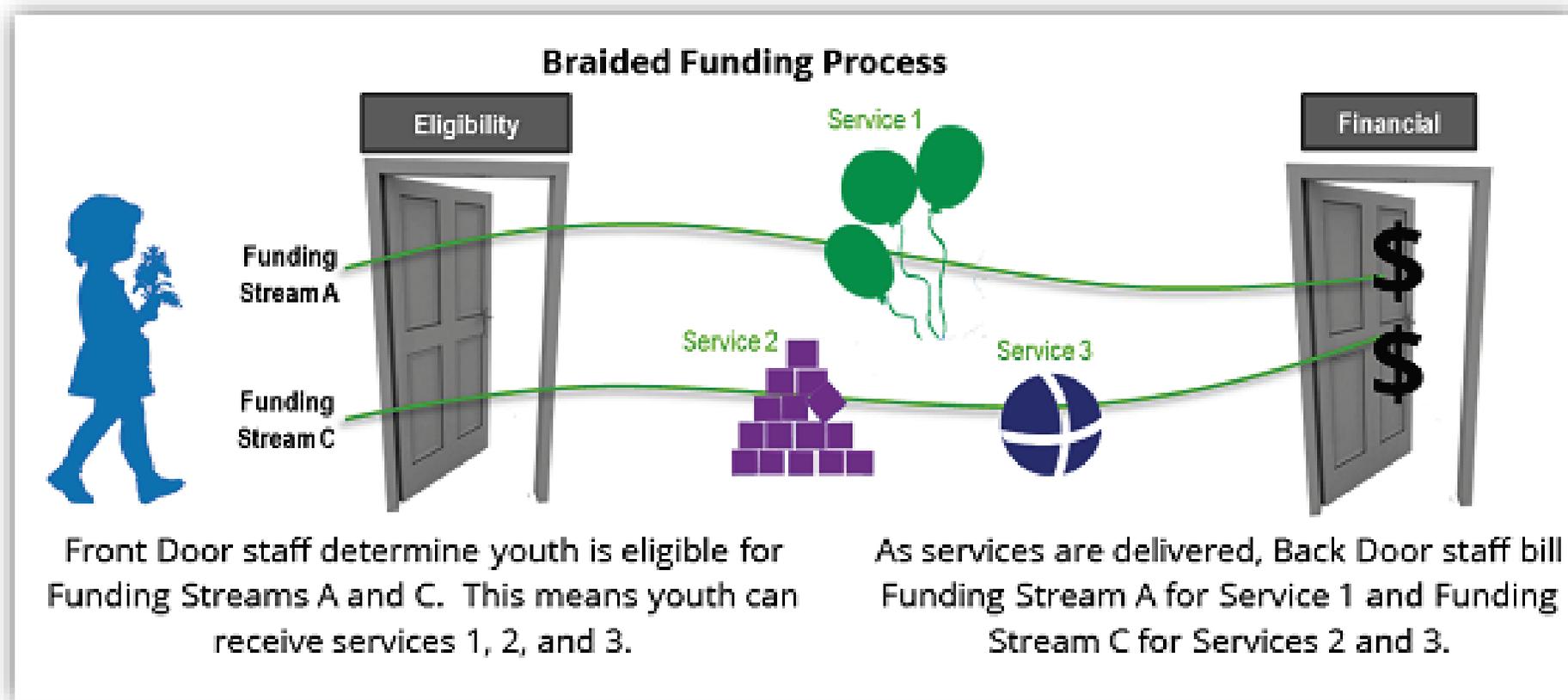


What is Blending?

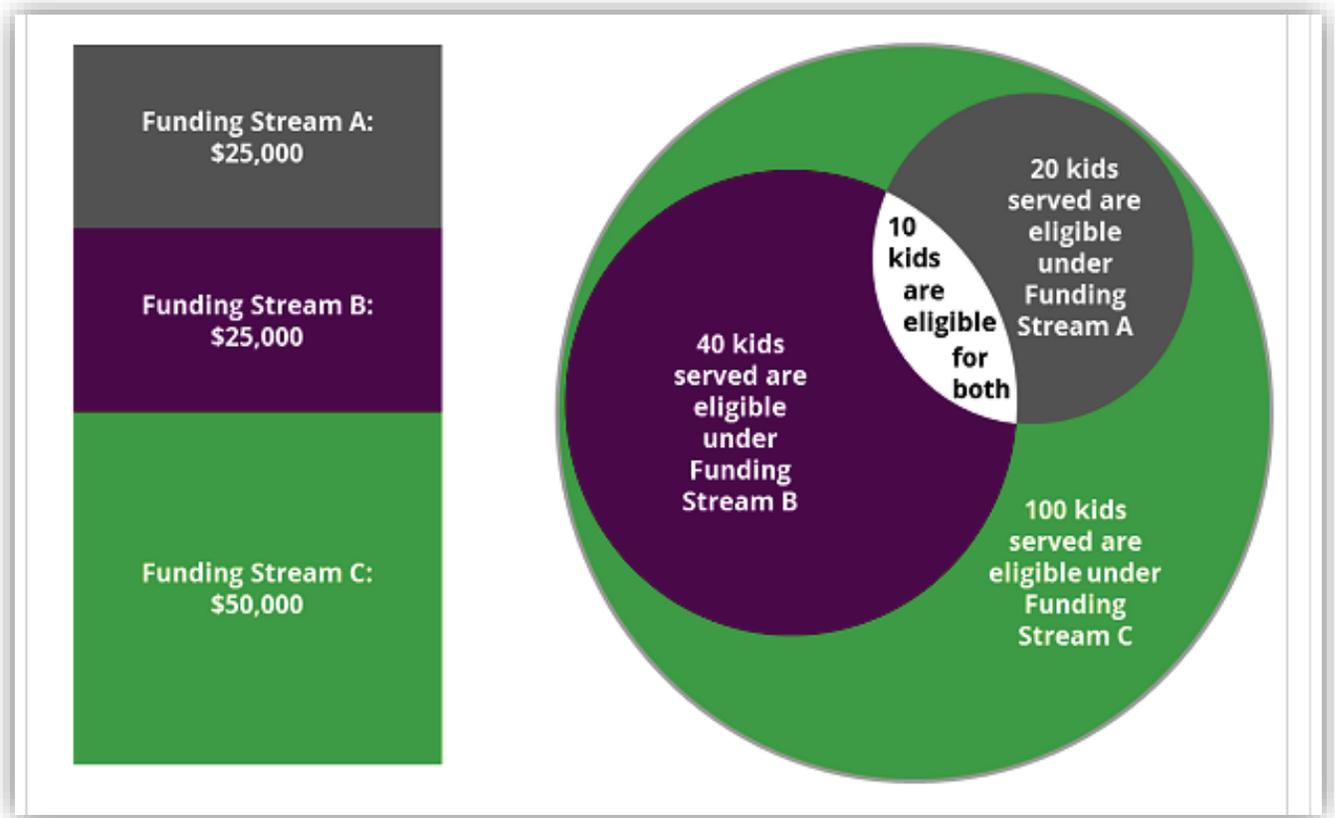
- » Financial assistance combined into one stream, to meet one purpose.
- » Has a single set of reporting requirements.
- » Each individual funding source loses its original identity.
- » Elementary and Secondary Education Act,(ESEA) Title I, II, III, & IV
- » Individuals with Disability Education ACT (IDEA) may be consolidated in Schoolwide program, 15% Coordinated Early Intervention Services (CEIS) funds



Braiding Funds to Maximize Efficiency



Blending Funds to Maximize Efficiency



An Overview of Blending and Braiding



Plan

- Assess the needs of your district using tools, such as the CDP.
- Identify the cost and components of activities.



Resource/Cost Allocation Method

- Identify federal grants.
- Determine if costs are necessary or reasonable.



Report

- Verify consistency with your CDP.

Braiding Funds to Provide Professional Learning

Data

- » An LEA has identified through their Needs Assessment that 62% of their students with disabilities and 90% of their EL students are not meeting the state standard in ELA.

Activity

- » School A receives Title I, Part A funds, and chooses to implement grades 6–8 intervention services in reading for struggling students.
- » The school could use Title I, Part A funds to support implementation of all aspects of the initiative. If the school does not have enough Title I, Part A funds to pay for the entire cost of the initiative, the LEA in which it resides could choose to contribute funds it receives under the Learning Assistance Program (LAP) and/or under IDEA Part B, CEIS.
- » Title III funds could be used to provide professional learning to interventionists in effectively differentiating the intervention for English learners. The funds would keep their identity and services would be charged to the specific area as required.

Hybrid Blending

Currently, only **hybrid blending** (funds lose specific identity) of Title I, II, and IV is available in the ISBE grant process:

Transferability: **Between Title II and IV or Title II and IV into Title I.** The funds appear blended to the grant reviewer and grantee.

However, the funds maintain their original identity in reporting

Blending Funds for Improving School Climate

Data

- » An LEA annually conducts a School Climate Survey and was troubled by the results. A large percentage of parents did not complete the Family Survey, indicating a lack of engagement. Additionally, administrators noticed increases in discipline referrals, particularly among EL students.

Activity

- » School A decides on a range of strategies focused on improving school climate in an effort to bolster student achievement and well-being for the entire school community. As a Schoolwide building, the Title I, Part A set-aside for parental involvement allows the school to use funds to host more evening events when families are more likely free to attend, and the content reflects topics requested by parents.
- » In order to address the increase in discipline referrals, the LEA adopts a trauma-informed schools approach and uses Title IV, Part A to provide all staff with training and ongoing professional learning opportunities. In addition, Title III, Part A funds are used to provide teachers with cultural competence training so they can better understand cultural nuances to behavior.

Why Districts Braid and Blend Funds

- » Maximize impact of available funding.
- » Reduce duplication.
- » Promote better planning of how available funding sources can be used to improve results for all students, including students with disabilities.
- » Better serve students with complex needs by providing access to streamlined services rather than multiple separate programs.
- » Differentiate human and fiscal resources on student need, not just student eligibility.
- » Reduce arbitrary routines of fractioning of staff FTE based on funding streams rather than maximizing FTE to support students.



Steps to Effectively Braid and Blend

- Complete a CNA to identify student services and needs, to include learning loss and in-person instruction.
- Outline how efforts align to the intent and purpose of funds as well as how it provides those resources to schools and programs.
- Monitor for planned improvement outcomes.
- Measure effectiveness of resources.
- Report to SEA on alignment of how funds were spent on the program.

Barriers and Challenges to Braiding and Blending



Awareness and understanding of the process



Funding requirements



Connecting appropriate staff



Policy, regulatory and other restrictions



Analyze instructional practices



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-ND](#)

Guiding Principles for Braiding and Blending

- » Ensure continuity of all needed services (especially basic).
- » Focus on students who need it most across all federal programs.
- » Weigh equity considerations across all programs.
- » Don't wait to plan; start now.
- » Communication is critical.
 - > It's needed among school staff.
 - > It's also needed between fiscal and program staff.
 - > Engage families and community.
 - > Use your data; what is it telling you?





This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

Continuing the Conversation

Breakout room discussions

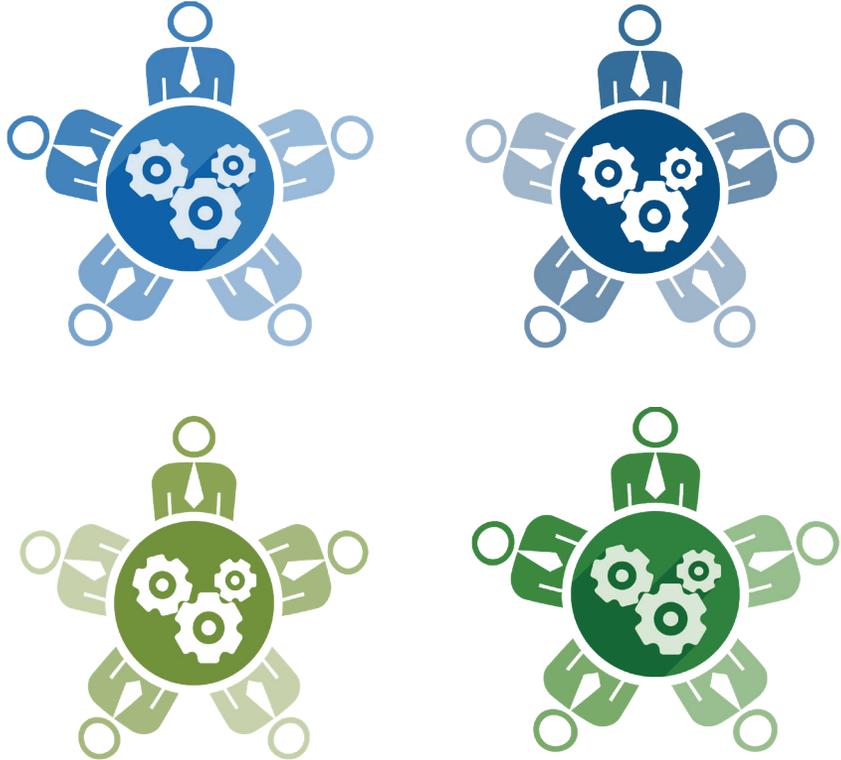
Breakout Room Procedures

- » Each group will have a facilitator and note taker.
- » Group members will select roles for
 - > Timekeeper
 - > Reporter
- » The group will use the time allotted to discuss the breakout room questions.

Continuing the Conversation

- Participants will have an opportunity to reflect on the webinar by sharing key takeaways.
- Based on your needs assessment, what subgroup have you identified that could benefit from braiding and blending funding?
 - > What would that process look like in your district?
 - > Who are the stakeholders you need to involve in the conversation?
 - > What challenges are you anticipating?
 - > What are your next steps in this process?
- What additional information do you need to begin the braiding and blending process?

Debrief Discussion: Whole Group



Session Reflections

1. What is one key takeaway you got from today's conversation?
2. What is one step you plan to take to prepare to determine braiding and blending funding decisions?
3. What additional questions or comments do you have?

Next Steps

- » Next session: January 6, 2022
- » Prewrite assignment
- » Sign up for the Region 9 CC newsletter
- » National center resources
- » Follow-up email with resources
- » End-of-session survey



Thank You!

End-of-Session Survey

Web:

region9cc.org

Twitter:

[@region9cc](https://twitter.com/region9cc)

Newsletter:

[region9cc.org/
content/newsletter](http://region9cc.org/content/newsletter)



Beth Howard-Brown

Principal TA Consultant
bhoward-brown@air.org



Kevin Junk

TA Consultant
kjunk@air.org



Tara Zuber

Researcher
tzuber@air.org



Cheryl Harris

Senior TA Consultant
charris@air.org



Wayne Ball

Senior TA Consultant
wball@air.org



Crystal Darby

Administrative Specialist
cdarby@air.org

This material is in the public domain. While permission to reprint is not necessary, publication should be cited. This material is prepared by the Region 9 Comprehensive Center under Award #S283B190010 for the Office of Program and Grantee Support Services (PGSS) within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) of the U.S. Department of Education and is administered by the American Institutes for Research®. The content of the presentation does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the PGSS or OESE or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Notice of Trademark: “American Institutes for Research” and “AIR” are registered trademarks. All other brand, product, or company names are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners.