

U.S. Department of Education: Race to the Top Overview

August 2009



About Race to the Top

- \$4.35B competitive grant to encourage and reward states implementing comprehensive reforms across four key areas:
 - Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace
 - Recruiting, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals
 - Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices
 - Turning around the lowest-performing schools
- With an overarching goal of:
 - Driving substantial gains in student achievement
 - Improving high school graduation rates
 - Narrowing achievement gaps

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We have a perfect storm for education reform. We have a President and a First Lady who believe passionately in the power of education to open doors--and whose own lives of studious learning and hard work are testaments to the fact that education is ultimately the great equalizer in America, no matter what your zip code. And, for the first time, we have the resources at the federal level to drive reform. The \$4.35 billion dollar Race to the Top program is an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the federal government to create incentives for far-reaching improvement in our nation's schools. Under these guidelines, states seeking funds will be pressed to implement four core, interconnected reforms, sometimes called the four assurances – these reforms include:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace
- Recruiting, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals
- Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices
- Turning around the lowest-performing schools

About Race to the Top

- Two approaches to reform:
 - Creating conditions for innovation and reform (legal/regulatory)
 - Enabling comprehensive approaches to continuous improvement (practice)
- States are encouraged to:
 - Design a unified state effort around ambitious reforms
 - Support districts' reform efforts: identify effective practices, replicate and disseminate those practices, then hold districts accountable for outcomes
 - Align ARRA and other funds to have the most dramatic impact

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Race to the Top takes two approaches to reform:

- First, it encourages states to create legal and policy conditions that are conducive to innovation and reform. (In the Race to the Top notice, these are called the “State Reform Conditions Criteria.”)
- Second, it encourages the design and implementation of practices at the classroom, school, district and state levels that are continuously improved based on feedback and data. (These are called the “Reform Plan Criteria.”)

As states prepare their applications, they are encouraged to think about 3 things:

- Coming together in broad coalitions to develop a unified effort around an ambitious reform agenda.
- Becoming experts at supporting districts' reform efforts. This means getting good at identifying effective practices in districts, replicating and disseminating those statewide – across district boundaries, and then holding districts accountable for outcomes.
- Finally, we encourage states to align all funds – ARRA funds as well as all sources of education funding – around these reforms so that states' efforts are focused and coherent and positioned for the most dramatic impact.

Competition Structure

- Race to the Top State Competition: ~\$4B
- Incentives and supports states taking a systematic approach to education reform; winning states will comprehensively address all four reform areas
- States are the applicants and they apply individually (not as part of consortia)
- At least 50% of funds must flow through states to participating LEAs (including public charter schools identified as LEAs) based on Title I formula
- Non-binding budget ranges as guidance

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Now for the nuts and bolts:

- First, Race to the Top will award approximately \$4B in grants to states. This competition requires a systemic approach to reform, so winning states will have plans that comprehensively address all four reform areas – this isn't a "pick and choose" menu.
- Next, states are the applicants, and states apply individually (not as consortia). We know there has been a lot of confusion about this, and we want to ensure that this is clear to everyone.
- When a state wins, it must pass at least 50% of the funds through to participating LEAs via the Title I formula. However, these funds are used by LEAs in a manner consistent with the state's proposal (they are not used in Title I prescribed ways). The other 50% can be used by states and/or passed through to districts, again in a manner consistent with the state's proposal.
- To be eligible to participate in a state's Race to the Top proposal, districts must explicitly agree to implementing the plans in the proposal. We propose that states and participating LEAs (including charter LEAs) sign memoranda of understanding outlining their roles and agreements.
- Finally, budgets... We plan to include budget guidance in our final application notice. The budget ranges we propose would be based roughly on a state's student population, but this would be nonbinding guidance. That is, states would be encouraged to develop budgets that matched the needs they outlined in their specific proposals.

Competition Structure

- States will have two opportunities to apply (same or similar application)
 - Phase 1: States that are ready to apply now, may do so in late 2009.
 - Phase 2: States that need more time have until spring 2010.
- States that apply in Phase 1 but are not awarded grants may reapply for funding in Phase 2 (together with States that are applying for the first time in Phase 2).
- Phase 1 grantees will receive full-sized awards and hence do not apply for additional funding in Phase 2.
- Note: At a later date, we may announce a Race to the Top Standards and Assessments Competition: ~\$350M

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Now let's turn to timeline, which you'll see on this slide and the next.

- As you know, we released the proposed priorities on July 24, and there is a 30-day comment period that closes at the end of August. We will then review the comments, make any changes, and issue the final application package later this fall.
- Using this same (or a similar) application, states will have two opportunities to apply. States that are ready to apply now, may do so later this year – they'll have 60 days to finalize their proposals from the time we release the final notice. States that need more time to get ready will have until spring 2010 to apply.
- States that apply in Phase 1 but are not awarded grants may reapply for funding in Phase 2 (together with those states that are applying for the first time in Phase 2).
- Phase 1 winners will receive full-sized awards, and so do not apply for additional funding in Phase 2.
- Phase 1 winners will be announced in the first half of 2010.
- Phase 2 winners will be announced by September 2010.

We intend to have a separate competition targeted at supporting consortia of states in their development of new, high-quality assessments that measure progress against the new standards. As we have more information on this, we will share it.

Competition Preliminary Timeline

Race to the Top – Phase 1

July 29, 2009	Released <i>Notice of Proposed Priorities, Requirements, Definitions, and Selection Criteria</i> for public comment
August 28, 2009	Public comment period closes
Fall 2009	“Notice inviting applications” available
2 Months Later	Applications from States due
First Half 2010	Winners announced for Phase 1 Feedback provided to applicants who do not win

Race to the Top – Phase 2

Spring 2010	Application deadline for Phase 2
September 2010	Winners announced for Phase 2

Reading the Notice

Five types of requirements, priorities and criteria:

- **Eligibility requirements** – must meet in order to apply
- **Absolute priorities** – must address in application
- **Selection criteria** – accomplishments and plans that earn points
- **Competitive priorities** – areas that earn “extra credit” or act as “tie breakers”
- **Invitational priorities** – areas the Secretary is interested in, but that don’t earn explicit points

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Working draft. For discussion only.

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For those of you less familiar with how the Department’s proposals are structured, here is a quick overview of how to make sense of the Race to the Top notice. There are 5 parts to the notice:

- Eligibility requirements are the things that a state must meet in order to apply. As you know, we are proposing two of these. First, states must have approved applications for both phases of State Fiscal Stabilization funding. Second, states must not have any legal barriers to linking student data to teachers and principals for the purposes of evaluation.
- Next, there are absolute priorities. These are the things that a state must address in its application. We have one absolute priority: states have to comprehensively address each of the four reform areas.
- Next come selection criteria – these are the things that earn points from our panel of reviewers. We have 19 selection criteria; they are organized by reform area and there’s an “overall” category. These make up the bulk of the document.
- Finally, we have competitive priorities and invitational priorities. Competitive priorities earn “extra credit” or act as “tie breakers” – we have one competitive priority and it concerns STEM.
- Invitational priorities signal things the Department is interested in, but these don’t earn explicit points. We have 3 of these in the proposal.

[You’ll find overviews of these requirements, priorities, and criteria in the Appendix – please see the Notice for the full text of each.]

About Selection Criteria

A reward for past accomplishments and an incentive for future action – judged by panels of peer reviewers:

- **State Reform Conditions Criteria:**
 - Reward States that have demonstrated the will and capacity to improve education by creating statutory, regulatory, and other conditions conducive to reform and innovation
 - States judged by their accomplishments prior to the application deadline
- **Reform Plan Criteria:**
 - The comprehensive reform strategies that States propose to develop and implement, together with their participating LEAs, across and within each of the four education reform areas
 - States judged by the quality of their plans and by the extent to which they have set targets that are ambitious yet achievable

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One more bit of information that might help you make sense of the Race to the Top notice. In Race to the Top, we have two types of Selection Criteria for which States earn points (note that applications are judged, and points are awarded, by panels of peer reviewers). Within each reform area, there are State Reform Conditions criteria and Reform Plan criteria.

•State Reform Conditions criteria are designed to reward States that have demonstrated the will and capacity to improve education by creating statutory, regulatory, and other conditions conducive to reform and innovation. States are judged by their accomplishments prior to the application deadline, not by their intentions to change in the future.

•Reform Plan criteria are where states describe the comprehensive reform strategies that they propose to develop and implement, together with their participating districts, across and within each of the four education reform areas. Here, states judged by the quality of their plans and by the extent to which they have set performance targets that are ambitious yet achievable.

Race to the Top Resources

- **Comments:** To submit comments on our *Notice of Proposed Priorities, Requirements, Definitions, and Selection Criteria*, go to www.regulations.gov or send your comments via postal mail, commercial delivery, or hand delivery.
- **Homepage:** At www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop, you will find the *Notice of Proposed Priorities, Requirements, Definitions, and Selection Criteria*, the executive summary of the Notice, relevant speeches, the statute, and a link to the specific page on www.regulations.gov where you can submit a comment.
- **For Further Information:** Contact the Department by telephone: 202-205-3775 or email: racetothetop@ed.gov. Please note that we will not accept comments by e-mail; comments must be submitted via [regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), please call the Federal Relay Service (FRS), toll free, at 1-800-877-8339.

This is a proposed notice – it is therefore subject to change based on the comments we receive.

Please submit all substantive questions, concerns, edits, comments, and suggestions online via the public comments process – we absolutely read, consider, and reply to everything we receive. You can link straight to the public comments page for Race to the Top by going to the Department’s Race to the Top webpage at www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop.

Appendix

Race to the Top *Proposed Requirements, Selection Criteria and Priorities*



Structure of the Notice

In order to apply, states must meet:

Application Requirements, e.g.:

- Signatures of key stakeholders
- Certification from state's attorney general re: descriptions of state laws
- State Reform Conditions requirements
- Reform Plan requirements

Program Requirements:

- Participate in evaluation
- Participate in technical assistance
- Freely share all outputs from the grant

Eligibility Requirements:

- Approved for State Fiscal Stabilization
- No legal barriers to linking student achievement data to teachers and principals for purposes of evaluation

Applications will be scored based on:

Priorities:

- Absolute: Comprehensive approach to four education reform areas
- Competitive: Extra points for emphasis on STEM
- Invitational: Expanding and adapting statewide longitudinal data systems
- Invitational: P-20 coordination and vertical alignment
- Invitational: School-level conditions for reform and innovation

Selection Criteria:

- Standards and assessments
- Data systems to support instruction
- Great teachers and leaders
- Turning around struggling schools
- Overall

Proposed Eligibility Requirements

A potential State applicant that does not meet both of these requirements will be ineligible to apply for a Race to the Top grant.

1. State's applications for funding under Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the **State Fiscal Stabilization program must be approved** by the Department:
 - For Phase 1 applicants: by December 31, 2009
 - For Phase 2 applicants: prior to the State submitting its Race to the Top Phase 2 application.
2. State must not have any legal, statutory, or regulatory barriers to **linking data** on student achievement or student growth to teachers and principals for the purpose of teacher and principal evaluation.

Proposed Absolute Priority

A State application must meet this priority.

1. The State's application must **comprehensively address each of the four education reform areas** so as to:
 - Demonstrate that the State and its participating LEAs are taking a systemic approach to education reform
 - Increase student achievement, reduce the achievement gap, and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers

Selection Criteria Framework

Selection Criteria are organized into five areas

- A. Standards and assessments
- B. Data systems to support instruction
- C. Great teachers and leaders
- D. Turning around struggling schools
- E. Overall

There are two types of criteria within each area

- State Reform Conditions Criteria: Conditions State has created to enable innovation and reform (mostly legal/regulatory) – rewards accomplishments not intentions
- Reform Plan Criteria: Plans State is proposing, with its participating LEAs, for implementing new practices – what States/LEAs will do with this funding

Proposed Selection Criteria

Standards & Assessments

State Reform Conditions Criteria

- A1 Developing and adopting common standards
- A2 Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments

Reform Plan Criteria

- A3 Supporting transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments

Proposed Selection Criteria

Data Systems to Support Instruction

State Reform Conditions Criteria

B1 Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system

Reform Plan Criteria

B2 Accessing and using State data

B3 Using data to improve instruction

Proposed Selection Criteria

Great Teachers and Leaders

State Reform Conditions Criteria

C1 Providing alternative pathways for aspiring teachers and principals

Reform Plan Criteria

C2 Differentiating teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance

C3 Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals

C4 Reporting the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs

C5 Providing effective support to teachers and principals

Proposed Selection Criteria

Turning around Struggling Schools

State Reform Conditions Criteria

D1 Intervening in the lowest-performing schools and LEAs

D2 Increasing the supply of high-quality charter schools

Reform Plan Criteria

D3 Turning around struggling schools

Proposed Selection Criteria

Overall Criteria

State Reform Conditions Criteria

E1 Demonstrating significant progress

E2 Making education funding a priority

E3 Enlisting statewide support and commitment

Reform Plans Criteria

E4 Raising achievement and closing gaps

E5 Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale, and sustain proposed plans

Proposed Competitive & Invitational Priorities

- **Competitive Preference Priority**

An application that meets this priority may be favored over an application of comparable merit that does not.

- Emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)

- **Proposed Invitational Priorities:**

We are interested in receiving applications that meet these priorities, but do not give such applications preference over others.

- Expansion and adaptation of statewide longitudinal data systems
- P-20 coordination and vertical alignment
- School-level conditions for reform and innovation