

Race to the Top General Information

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Send Comments to: racetothetopcomments@ed.gov with Race to the Top in subject line

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Further Information: www.ed.gov/recovery

Document Link: http://www.federalregister.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2009-17909_PI.pdf

Timeline: Phase I will open late 2009; Phase II will open late Spring 2010. Specific deadlines will be released in subsequent notices.

Purpose of Race to the Top

The Race to the Top program was authorized under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) and will provide \$4.3 billion in competitive grants to states through two rounds of applications. According to the RFA the grants are to "...reward States for having created the conditions for reform (as measured through the State Reform Conditions Criteria proposed in this notice) and for increasing student achievement. Race to the Top will also provide incentives for states to develop and implement comprehensive reform strategies that integrate across the four ARRA education reform areas and lead to improved student outcomes (as measured through the Reform Plan Criteria proposed herein)."

Funding

- Of the \$4.35 billion, the Department may announce "a separate RTT Standards and Assessment Competition for approximately \$350 million for the development of assessments by consortia of States."
- States that receive the RTT grant must use at least 50% of the award to provide subgrants to LEAS.

Key Application Information

Applicant

1. Governors must apply for RTT grants on behalf of their states. However, each state's application must be signed by its Governor, Chief State School Officer, and President of the State Board of Education.

Eligibility

1. States application for Phase I and Phase II of SFSF must be approved by the Department by the time awards are made for RTT Phase I.
2. State must have no legal, statutory, or regulatory barriers to linking student achievement or student growth to teachers for the purpose of teacher and principal evaluation.

Requirements

There are eight application requirements. More information can be found on pages 17 – 21 of the Federal Notice.

Priorities

The Secretary has proposed five (5) priorities for the Race to the Top Grant. Priorities are divided into absolute, competitive preference, and invitational priorities.

- a. **Priority 1** is designated as an **absolute priority** – applicant states **MUST** meet this priority to be considered.
- b. **Priority 2** is a **competitive preference priority** – an applicant state will receive additional points depending on the extent to which it meet this priority and/or an applicant will be selected above another state of comparable merit because it meets this priority.
- c. **Priorities 3 through 5** are **invitational priorities** – The Secretary is interested in this area but applicant states will not be given preference over other applicant states for meeting those priorities.
 - i. **(ABSOLUTE) Priority 1: Comprehensive Approach to the Four Reform Areas.** States must include in their applications a comprehensive plan around the four reform areas.
 - ii. **(Competitive) Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM.** State plans should address the need to: offer rigorous STEM courses; cooperate with external groups; and prepare more students for advance study in STEM.
 - iii. **(Invitational) Priority 3: Expansion and Adaptation of Statewide Longitudinal System.** The Secretary is interested in state applications that *include or integrate* data from special education, early childhood, HR, finance and other areas. The Secretary is also interested in applications that propose cross-state collaboration.
 - iv. **(Invitational) Priority 4: P-20 Coordination and Vertical Alignment.** The Secretary is interested in state applications that addresses how early childhood, K-12, higher education, and workforce organizations will coordinate to improve all parts of the education system and create a seamless P-20 route.
 - v. **(Invitational) Priority 5: School-Level Conditions for Reform and Innovation.** The Secretary is interested in applications where participating LEAs provide schools with flexibility and autonomy to act in a manner that is conducive to reform.

The Secretary reserves the right to change the designation of any of these priorities and/or to include “the substance of these priorities in the Department’s selection criteria, notice of final priorities, requirements, and definitions.” The notice does not preclude the Department from proposing additional priorities, requirements, definitions, or selection criteria.

Selection Criteria

1. States must address the State Reform Conditions Criteria (SRC) Criteria and Reform Plan (RP) Criteria for each of the four reform areas.
2. The Secretary has identified 19 selection criteria - 14 selection criteria across the four reform areas and 5 overall criteria:
 - Standards and Assessments: 3 criteria (2 SRC and 1 RP)
 - **Data Systems to Support Instruction: 3 criteria (1 SRC and 2 RP)**
 - Great Teachers and Leaders: 5 criteria (1 SRC and 4 RP)
 - Turning Around Struggling Schools: 3 criteria (2 SRC and 1 RP)

- Overall: 5 criteria (3 SRC and 2 RP)

Other

1. The Department may require the states selected for the grant award to enter into a written performance or cooperative agreement with the Department.

Definitions

The Secretary has defined key terms that are used repeatedly across the four reform areas. The terms that are of interest with regard to data systems are as follows: alternative certification program; effective principal; effective teacher; formative assessment; graduation rate; highly effective principal; highly effective teacher; high-need LEA; high poverty school; high quality assessment; interim assessment; rapid time; student achievement; student growth; and America COMPETES Act elements.

Of particular note is the definition of *rapid time* SEA- and LEA-level data reporting. Rapid time reporting will mean, in most cases, that within 72 hours of assessment or data gathering in classrooms, schools, and LEAs the information must be made available to “inform current lessons, instruction, and related supports.” This definition has implications for Action 5.

Reform Area: Data Systems to Support Instruction

One of the four areas of reform outlined in Race to the Top is *Data Systems to Support Instruction*. The Secretary set forth three criteria for this reform area – one SRC criterion and two RP criteria. The SRC Criterion is closely aligned with the DQC’s 10 Essential Elements and DQC State Action 1. The RP Criteria are significantly aligned with the DQC’s 10 State Actions for Effective Data Use.

State Reform Condition Criterion

- (B) (1) *Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system.* The evidence required includes a description of the extent to which a state’s data system includes the elements outlined in the America COMPETES Act. *This criterion is aligned with DQC State Action 1 and the DQC’s 10 Essential Elements.*

Reform Plan Criteria

- (B) (2) *Accessing and Using Data.* States are asked to detail a “high-quality” plan to “[...]ensure that data from the State’s statewide longitudinal data system are accessible to, and are used to inform and engage, as appropriate, different types of stakeholders (e.g., parents, students, teachers, principals, LEA leaders, community members, unions, researchers, and policymakers). *This criterion is aligned with DQC State Actions 5, 6, and 7.*

- (B)(3) *Using data to improve instruction.* States must outline their plan to “[...]increase the use of instructional improvement system [...] that provide teachers, principals, and administrators with the information they need to inform and improve their instructional practices, decision-making, and overall effectiveness.” States should also outline how they plan to make these data available and accessible to researchers so “that they have detailed information to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional materials, strategies, and approaches for educating different types of students.” *This criterion is aligned with DQC State Actions 5, 6, 7, and 8.*

Other Data Related Criteria

The importance of comprehensive statewide data systems is emphasized throughout the requirements for Race for the Top. Below is a summary of other key references to data systems.

1. The third reform area is “Great Teachers and Leaders” and the details of the Reform Plan Criteria rely heavily on a strong data system that links teachers with student performance data (*DQC element 5*).
 - a. (C)(2) Differentiating teacher and principal effectiveness relies on the ability to measure student growth.
 - b. (C)(3) Equitable distribution of teachers.
 - c. (C)(4) Reporting on effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation program will assess the extent to which a state is able to link student’s achievement data to the student’s teacher and principals which is then linked back to the educators credentialing program. *This criterion is aligned with DQC State Action 9.*
 - d. (C)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals: states should detail in their plan a way “[...]to use rapid-time [...] student data and guide the support provided to teachers and principals (e.g., professional development, time for common planning and collaboration) provided to teachers and principals[...].” *This criterion is aligned with DQC State Action 9.*
2. In addition to the criteria stipulated for the four reform areas, the Secretary outlines an “Overall Selection Criteria”. The primary Reform Plan Criteria (E)(4) requires states to indicate the extent to which they have set targets and plans to: (1) raise student achievement overall and by subgroups; (2) close achievement gaps between subgroups; and (3) increase graduation rates overall and by subgroups. This criterion relies on the fact that states collect student enrollment and demographic data (*DQC Element 2*) as well as student-level graduation and dropout data (*DQC Element 8*).