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Race to the Top Program Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions

Addendum 7

May 5, 2010

D-1c. What is the schedule for the Phase 2 competition?

Phase 2 applications are due June 1, 2010. We anticipate that States invited to participate in Tier 2 will be notified on or around July 26, 2010. Finalists will present their applications in Washington, D.C. the week of August 9, 2010. Winners will be announced in late August or early September.

D-4a. When will the Department post the Phase 2 applications on its Web site?

As in Phase 1, the Department will post the Phase 2 applications on its Web site as soon as it has redacted any personally identifiable information included in the applications. In order to post the applications more quickly, the Department will first review, redact information from, and post the narratives, followed by the appendices.

D-10. In its application for Phase 2, may a State simply refer reviewers to information that was in its Phase 1 application?

No. Phase 2 reviewers will not review or consider a State's Phase 1 application in their review. In Phase 2, reviewers will only read the State's Phase 2 application. Therefore, any information that a State wants reviewers to consider must be included in its Phase 2 application.

D-11. If a State applied in Phase 1 and re-applies in Phase 2, will the same reviewers who did the Phase 1 review be assigned to that State's Phase 2 review?

No. The peer reviewers assigned to a State in Phase 1 will not be re-assigned to that State for the Phase 2 review. Reviewers judge applications on their merits, not on the degree to which States have made changes between the phases. To ensure that "fresh eyes" are reviewing every application, no reviewer from a particular Phase 1 review panel will be re-assigned to that State's panel for Phase 2.

F-1a. If a State intends to submit an amendment to its application regarding the adoption of common standards, what should it include in its original application and how should it submit the amendment?

As specified in the notice inviting applications, in response to criterion (B)(1)(ii), Phase 2 applicants may submit additional information on their adoption of common standards after the application deadline of June 1, 2010, but no later than August 2, 2010. This is the sole exception to the general rule that States may not submit amendments or updates to their application after the application deadline. States should follow these guidelines:

- If the State has adopted a common set of K-12 standards by the time of application, it should provide evidence of that adoption in its application.
- If the State has not adopted a common set of K-12 standards by the time of application, but intends to do so prior to August 2, 2010, the State should:
 - In its application, describe its plan to adopt a common set of K-12 standards and note its intent to submit an amendment.
 - Once it has adopted common standards, submit an amendment to its application providing evidence of the adoption. The Department must receive the amendment (by mail or hand-delivery) by 4:30:00 p.m., Washington D.C. time, on August 2, 2010. Detailed submission instructions are on page 99 of the Phase 2 application package. Note that the State may *not* re-submit its entire application; it may only submit a brief amendment.
 - If the State’s plan changes and it will not be submitting an amendment, it should notify the Department by email, at racetothetop@ed.gov.
- If the State has not adopted a common set of K-12 standards by the time of application, but intends to do so later in 2010, it should describe its “high-quality plan” for doing so in its application (*see* criterion (B)(1)(ii)).

The Department has not specified the exact type of evidence that States should submit to document their adoption of common standards. It is up to the State to provide evidence that makes it clear to reviewers that the State has in fact adopted a common set of K-12 standards. For example, a State could submit a copy of the resolution adopting common standards from its State legislature or board of education, as appropriate for the State.

K-16a. If a State’s MOU(s) include conditional commitments by LEAs to implement certain plans, how should the State present that information in its application?

The guidance below clarifies and reiterates the guidance provided during Phase 1 (see FAQ K-16). Its purpose is to ensure that applicants provide clear and accurate information for reviewers as they evaluate the strength of LEAs’ commitment to their State’s plan. The points associated with this criterion remain the same as in the Phase 1 competition. The detailed tables provided as evidence for criterion (A)(1) are intended to assist reviewers in evaluating the extent to which a State’s participating LEAs are strongly committed to implementing the State’s plan. The tables are *not* “score-cards” where certain percentages translate into specific numbers of points.

Under criterion (A)(1)(ii), reviewers are to consider three factors in determining how many of the 45 available points an application should receive for this criterion. Reviewers focus on the extent to which participating LEAs are strongly committed to the State’s plans and to effective implementation of reform in the four education areas by considering these factors:

- a) Terms and conditions in the MOU that reflect strong commitment by the participating LEAs to the State’s plans;
- b) Scope-of-work descriptions in the MOU that require participating LEAs to implement all or significant portions of the State’s Race to the Top plans; and
- c) Signatures on the MOU from as many as possible of the LEA superintendent, the president of the local school board, and the local teachers’ union leader demonstrating the extent of leadership support within participating LEAs.

To inform this judgment, peer reviewers rely on the State’s application narrative, the MOU provided as an attachment to the application, and the data in the tables associated with this criterion.

If some (or all) of a State’s participating LEAs will need to modify collective bargaining agreements before they can commit to implementing certain parts of a State’s plan, then the State may draft its MOUs in a way that reflects the LEA’s conditional commitment to implementing specific plans, pending a successful conclusion to collective bargaining. In recognition of the fact that not all “conditional” clauses are the same, and that there may be other facts about the State’s context or proposals that bear on the likelihood of successful implementation, peer reviewers will look closely at the narrative and read the MOU terms and conditions in order to evaluate the strength of the LEAs’ commitments. Because the narrative portion of the application is where a State can best explain its context and plans (and, if relevant, include explanations of aspects of LEA MOUs that may be conditional), States are urged to use their narratives to clearly articulate to reviewers the nature of their participating LEAs’ commitment.

Our Phase 1 guidance in FAQ K-16 was that applicants should not include any conditional commitments in their tables, but that they could describe them in the narratives. However, as a part of our internal review of the Phase 1 competition process, we noted inconsistencies in some instances between the tables and narratives. As a result, we are clarifying that for the Phase 2 competition, the tables used as evidence for criterion (A)(1)(ii) *should* include any conditional commitments that are included in the LEA MOUs and the application narratives. Thus, for example, in a State with conditional commitments, the detailed table that is evidence for criterion (A)(1) (*see* page 22 of the application) should be completed as follows:

- Mark “Y” for “yes” if the LEA will be implementing the plan related to this criterion. Examples: Some plans (*e.g.*, on transitioning to enhanced standards) may not be the subject of collective bargaining; other plans may have implementation required by law and therefore are not conditioned on the outcome of a collective bargaining negotiation.
- Mark “C” for “conditional” if the LEA is interested in participating in the plan related to this criterion, subject to successful outcomes of future collective bargaining.
- Mark “N” for “no” if the LEA is declining to participate in the plan related to this criterion.

Here is an example of a completed table:

Detailed Table for (A)(1)

Participating LEAs	LEA Demographics			Signatures on MOUs			MOU Terms	Preliminary Scope of Work – Participation in each applicable Plan Criterion															
	# of Schools	# of K-12 Students	# of K-12 Students in Poverty	LEA Supt. (or equivalent)	President of local school board (if applicable)	President of Local Teachers Union (if applicable)		Uses Standard Terms & Conditions?	(B)(3)	(C)(3)(i)	(C)(3)(ii)	(C)(3)(iii)	(D)(2)(i)	(D)(2)(ii)	(D)(2)(iii)	(D)(2)(iv)(a)	(D)(2)(iv)(b)	(D)(2)(iv)(c)	(D)(2)(iv)(d)	(D)(3)(i)	(D)(3)(ii)	(D)(5)(i)	(D)(5)(ii)
McKinney USD	2	211	107	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	C	C	C	C	C	C	Y	Y	C
Clark USD	4	1093	646	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	C	C	C	C	C	C	Y	Y	N
Hess Charter	1	215	127	Y	Y	N/A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

On the summary table that is evidence for criterion (A)(1)(ii)(b), the State should summarize its LEA participation in each criterion by:

- Including the number and percentage of participating LEAs that indicated “Y,” unconditional participation in the plan related to that criterion.
- If desired, indicating parenthetically the number and percentage of participating LEAs that indicated “C,” conditional participation in the plan related to that criterion.

Here is an example of a completed table:

Summary Table for (A)(1)(ii)(b)

Elements of State Reform Plans	Number of LEAs Participating (#)	Percentage of Total Participating LEAs (%)
B. Standards and Assessments		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	50	100%
C. Data Systems to Support Instruction		
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction:		
(i) Use of local instructional improvement systems	0 (45 conditional)	0% (90% conditional)
(ii) Professional development on use of data	25 (25 conditional)	50% (50% conditional)

Please note that the inclusion of a conditional commitment clause in the MOU does not affect whether an LEA is considered a participating LEA.

K-20. Must States that are reapplying in Phase 2 obtain new letters of support from stakeholders?

Under criterion (A)(2)(ii), peer reviewers consider the strength of letters of support from stakeholders that a State submits as part of its application. A State that is reapplying in Phase 2 is not required to obtain new letters of support, and may submit its Phase 1 letters of support with its Phase 2 application as long as those letters still accurately represent the level of support by those stakeholders. However, if a State believes that some of its Phase 1 letters of support are not applicable to its Phase 2 application (*e.g.*, because the letters reference parts of its application that have changed substantially, the stakeholders no longer support the application or a part of it, or because the letters are clearly specific to the Phase 1 application), the State should not rely on the original letters of support from those stakeholders.

Again, note that peer reviewers who participated in Phase 1 will not be assigned to review Phase 2 applications from States whose applications they reviewed in Phase 1, so States should not assume that reviewers have any prior knowledge of their application (*see* FAQ D-11).

FAQ K-19 addresses the related issue of participating LEA MOUs for States reapplying in Phase 2.

L-7a. In preparing their applications to submit to the Department, how should States divide their applications into electronic files?

The Department strongly encourages States to submit their applications in two PDF files: the first containing the application narrative, and the second containing all appendices (including a Table of Contents for the appendices). Please be sure to clearly label the two files.