

Race to the Top Assessment Program Executive Summary



U.S. Department of Education
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Race to the Top Assessment Program

BACKGROUND

Authorized under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), the Race to the Top Assessment Program provides funding to consortia of States to develop assessments that are valid, support and inform instruction, provide accurate information about what students know and can do, and measure student achievement against standards designed to ensure that all students gain the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college and the workplace. These assessments are intended to play a critical role in educational systems; provide administrators, educators, parents, and students with the data and information needed to continuously improve teaching and learning; and help meet the President's goal of restoring, by 2020, the nation's position as the world leader in college graduates.

Through the Race to the Top Assessment Program, the Department will award two categories of grants: (A) Comprehensive Assessment Systems grants, and (B) High School Course Assessment Programs grants.

KEY DATES

Technical Assistance Workshop: April 22, 2010 in Minneapolis, MN
Notice of Intent to Apply: April 29, 2010
Application Deadline: June 23, 2010
Awards: September 2010

CONTACT US

Website: www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment
Email Us: racetothetop.assessment@ed.gov
Telephone: 202-453-7246

OTHER INFORMATION

For further information on the Race to the Top Assessment Program, please see the Notice Inviting Applications (NIA) published in the *Federal Register* and available on the Department's website: www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment. This document contains excerpts from the NIA. However, the official version of the NIA is the one published in the *Federal Register*.

OTHER ASSESSMENTS

The Department recognizes that there are assessment needs—particularly for alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards and assessments of English language proficiency—that we do not attempt to address through this competition. We wish to note that we have plans to address these needs in other ways. For students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards are critical components of a complete assessment system. It is the Department's intent to support States in developing new alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards, in coordination with this Race to the Top Assessment competition, through a separate competition that will be administered by the Department's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; we intend to issue a notice inviting applications for this program later this year. For

English learners, new assessments of English language proficiency are also needed. The Department intends to set aside other funds in its FY 2011 budget to support State efforts to develop assessments of English language proficiency that are aligned with common, college- and career-ready standards in English language arts.

OVERVIEW: COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS GRANTS

Priorities

Absolute Priority: Comprehensive Assessment Systems Measuring Student Achievement Against Common College- and Career-Ready Standards

Competitive Preference Priority: Collaboration and Alignment with Higher Education

Selection Criteria

- (A)(1) Consortium Governance (up to 20 points)
- (A)(2) Theory of Action (up to 5 points)
- (A)(3) Assessment System Design (up to 55 points)
- (A)(4) Assessment System Development (up to 35 points)
- (A)(5) Research and Evaluation (up to 30 points)
- (A)(6) Professional Capacity and Outreach (up to 15 points)
- (A)(7) Technology Approach (up to 10 points)
- (A)(8) Project Management (up to 30 points)

OVERVIEW: HIGH SCHOOL COURSE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM GRANTS

Priorities

Absolute Priority: High School Course Assessment Programs

Competitive Preference Priority 1: Focus on Preparing Students for Study in STEM-Related Fields

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Focus on Career Readiness and Placement

Selection Criteria

- (B)(1) Consortium Governance (up to 30 points)
- (B)(2) Theory of Action (up to 5 points)
- (B)(3) Course Assessment Program Design and Development (up to 60 points)
- (B)(4) Research and Evaluation (up to 25 points)
- (B)(5) Course Assessment Program Implementation (up to 45 points)
- (B)(6) Project Management (up to 35 points)

CATEGORY A. COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS

Requirements

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are consortia of States.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible to receive an award under this category, an eligible applicant must—

1. Include a minimum of 15 States, of which at least 5 States must be governing States (as defined in the NIA);
2. Identify in its application a proposed project management partner and provide an assurance that the proposed project management partner is not partnered with any other eligible applicant applying for an award under this category; and
3. Submit assurances from each State in the consortium that, to remain in the consortium, the State will adopt a common set of college- and career-ready standards (as defined in the NIA) no later than December 31, 2011, and common achievement standards (as defined in the NIA) no later than the 2014-2015 school year.

Selected Program Requirements

An eligible applicant awarded a grant under this category must—

- Ensure that the summative assessment components of the assessment system in both mathematics and English language arts are fully implemented statewide by each State in the consortium no later than the 2014-2015 school year;
- Identify any current assessment or accountability requirements in Title I of the ESEA that would need to be waived in order for member States to fully implement the proposed assessment system for purposes of accountability under Title I;
- Work with the Department to develop a strategy to make student-level data¹ that result from the assessment system available on an ongoing basis for research, including for prospective linking, validity, and program improvement studies;
- Use technology to the maximum extent appropriate to develop, administer, and score assessments and report assessment results;
- Maximize the interoperability of assessments across technology platforms and the ability for States to switch their assessments from one technology platform to another by—
 - Developing all assessment items to an industry-recognized open-licensed interoperability standard that is approved by the Department during the grant period, without non-standard extensions or additions;² and
 - Producing all student-level data in a manner consistent with an industry-recognized open-licensed interoperability standard that is approved by the Department during the grant period;² and
- Unless otherwise protected by law or agreement as proprietary information, make any assessment content (*i.e.*, assessments and assessment items) developed with funds from this grant category freely available to

¹ Eligible applicants awarded a grant under this program must comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and 34 CFR Part 99, as well as State and local requirements regarding privacy

² We encourage grantees under this competition to work during the grant period with the Department and the entities that set interoperability standards to extend those standards in order to make them more functional for assessment materials

States, technology platform providers, and others that request it for purposes of administering assessments, provided they comply with consortium or State requirements for test or item security¹.

About the Awards:

Estimated Size of Awards

Category A. Comprehensive Assessment Systems: \$160,000,000

Estimated Number of Awards:

Category A. Comprehensive Assessment Systems: 1-2 awards.

Note: The Department is not bound by these estimates. The Department will determine the number of awards to be made based on the quality of applications received consistent with the selection criteria. It will also determine the size of an award made to an eligible applicant based on a review of the eligible applicant's budget. However, an eligible applicant may not submit Level 1 budget modules exceeding \$150 million in total. Applications requesting budget amounts that exceed this maximum amount will not be reviewed for funding. An eligible applicant awarded a Comprehensive Assessment Systems grant will receive funding for the Level 1 budget modules identified in its application, and may receive funding for one or more Level 2 budget modules identified in its application if those modules do not exceed the maximum amount of \$10 million each and funds are available. The Department will rank and fund separately applications under each grant category. The Department may use any unused funds designated for this competition to make awards in Phase 2 of the Race to the Top Fund Program.

Project Period

Up to 48 months

Priorities

Absolute Priority: Comprehensive Assessment Systems Measuring Student Achievement Against Common College- and Career-Ready Standards

Under this priority, the Department supports the development of new assessment systems that will be used by multiple States; are valid, reliable, and fair for their intended purposes and for all student subgroups; and measure student knowledge and skills against a common set of college- and career-ready standards in mathematics and English language arts. To meet this absolute priority, an eligible applicant must demonstrate in its application that it will develop and implement an assessment system that—

- (a) Measures student knowledge and skills against a common set of college- and career-ready standards (as defined in the NIA) in mathematics and English language arts in a way that—
 - (i) Covers the full range of those standards, including standards against which student achievement has traditionally been difficult to measure;
 - (ii) As appropriate, elicits complex student demonstrations or applications of knowledge and skills;
 - (iii) Provides an accurate measure of student achievement across the full performance continuum, including for high- and low-achieving students; and
 - (iv) Provides an accurate measure of student growth over a full academic year or course;
- (b) Consists of assessment components in mathematics and in English language arts that include, for each subject, one or more summative assessment components that—
 - (i) Are administered at least once during the academic year in grades 3 through 8 and at least once in high school; and

- (ii) Produce student achievement data and student growth data (both as defined in the NIA) that can be used to determine whether individual students are college- and career-ready (as defined in the NIA) or on track to being college- and career-ready (as defined in the NIA);
- (c) Assesses all students, including English learners (as defined in the NIA) and students with disabilities (as defined in the NIA); and
- (d) Produces data, including student achievement data and student growth data, that can be used to inform—
 - (i) Determinations of school effectiveness for purposes of accountability under Title I of the ESEA;
 - (ii) Determinations of individual principal and teacher effectiveness for purposes of evaluation;
 - (iii) Determinations of principal and teacher professional development and support needs; and
 - (iv) Teaching, learning, and program improvement.

Competitive Preference Priority: Collaboration and Alignment with Higher Education

The Department gives eligible applicants competitive preference points based on the extent to which they have promoted collaboration and alignment between member States' public elementary and secondary education systems and their public IHEs (as defined in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA)) or systems of those IHEs. Eligible applicants addressing this priority must provide, for each IHE or IHE system, a letter of intent that—

- (a) Commits the IHE or IHE system to participate with the consortium in the design and development of the consortium's final high school summative assessments in mathematics and English language arts in order to ensure that the assessments measure college readiness;
- (b) Commits the IHE or IHE system to implement policies, once the final high school summative assessments are implemented, that exempt from remedial courses and place into credit-bearing college courses any student who meets the consortium-adopted achievement standard (as defined in the NIA) for each assessment and any other placement requirement established by the IHE or IHE system; and
- (c) Is signed by the State's higher education executive officer (if the State has one) and the president or head of each participating IHE or IHE system.

All letters of intent must provide the total number of direct matriculation students (as defined in the NIA) in the partner IHE or IHE system in the 2008-2009 school year. An eligible applicant must also provide the total number of direct matriculation students (as defined in the NIA) in public IHEs in the consortium's member States.

The Department will award up to 20 competitive preference points based on the strength of commitment demonstrated in the letters of intent and on the percentage of direct matriculation students in public IHEs in the member States who are direct matriculation students in the partner IHEs or IHE systems. To receive full competitive preference points under this priority, eligible applicants must provide letters of intent that demonstrate strong commitment from each partner IHE or IHE system and that represent at least 30 percent of direct matriculation students in public IHEs in member States. No points will be awarded for letters of intent that represent fewer than 10 percent of direct matriculation students in public IHEs in member States.

Selection Criteria

(A)(1) Consortium Governance (up to 20 points)

The extent to which the consortium's proposed governance structure will enable the successful design, development, and implementation of the proposed assessment system. In determining the extent to which the consortium's proposed governance structure will enable the successful design, development, and implementation of the proposed assessment system, we will consider—

- (a) The consortium’s vision, goals, role, and key deliverables (*e.g.*, assessment components, scoring and moderation system, professional development activities), and the consistency of these with the consortium’s theory of action;
- (b) The consortium’s structure and operations, including—
 - (i) The organizational structure of the consortium and the differentiated roles that a member State may hold (*e.g.*, lead State, governing State (as defined in the NIA), advisory State);
 - (ii) For each differentiated role, the rights and responsibilities (including the level of commitment to adopting and implementing the assessment system) associated with the role;
 - (iii) The consortium’s method and process (*e.g.*, consensus, majority) for making different types of decisions (*e.g.*, policy, operational);
 - (iv) The protocols by which the consortium will operate, including the protocols for member States to change roles or leave the consortium and for new member States to join the consortium;
 - (v) The consortium’s plan, including the process and timeline, for setting key policies and definitions for the proposed assessment system, including a common set of college- and career-ready standards (as defined in the NIA), a common set of performance level descriptors (as defined in the NIA), a common set of achievement standards (as defined in the NIA), common assessment administration procedures, common item release and test security policies, a common definition of “English learner,” and a common set of policies and procedures for accommodations (as defined in the NIA) and student participation; and
 - (vi) The consortium’s plan for managing funds received under this grant category;
- (c) The terms and conditions of the Memoranda of Understanding or other binding agreements executed by each member State, including—
 - (i) The consistency of the terms and conditions with the consortium’s governance structure and the State’s role in the consortium; and
 - (ii) The State’s commitment to and plan for identifying any existing barriers in State law, statute, regulation, or policy to implementing the proposed assessment system and to addressing any such barriers prior to full implementation of the summative assessment components of the system; and
- (d) The consortium’s procurement process, and evidence of each member State’s commitment to that process.

(A)(2) Theory of Action (up to 5 points)

The extent to which the eligible applicant’s theory of action is logical, coherent, and credible, and will result in improved student academic outcomes. In determining the extent to which the theory of action has these attributes, we will consider the description of, and rationale for—

- (a) Each component of the proposed assessment system and the relationship of the component to other components in the system;
- (b) How the assessment results produced by each component will be used;
- (c) How the assessments and assessment results will be incorporated into a coherent educational system (*i.e.*, a system that includes standards, assessments, curriculum, instruction, and professional development); and
- (d) How the educational system as a whole will improve student achievement and college- and career-readiness (as defined in the NIA).

(A)(3) Assessment System Design (up to 55 points)

The extent to which the design of the eligible applicant’s proposed assessment system is innovative, feasible, and consistent with the theory of action. In determining the extent to which the design has these attributes, we will consider—

- (a) The number and types of components (*e.g.*, through-course summative assessments (as defined in the NIA), end-of-year summative assessments, formative assessments, interim assessments) in mathematics and in English language arts in the assessment system;
- (b) For the assessment system as a whole—

- (i) How the assessment system will measure student knowledge and skills against the full range of the college- and career-ready standards, including the standards against which student achievement has traditionally been difficult to measure; and provide an accurate measure of student achievement, including for high- and low-performing students, and an accurate measure of student growth over a full academic year or course;
- (ii) How the assessment system will produce the required student performance data (*i.e.*, student achievement data and student growth data (both as defined in the NIA) that can be used to determine whether individual students are college- and career-ready (as defined in the NIA) or on track to being college- and career-ready (as defined in the NIA));
- (iii) How the assessment system will be accessible to all students, including English learners and students with disabilities, and include appropriate accommodations (as defined in the NIA) for students with disabilities and English learners; and
- (iv) How and when during the academic year different types of student data will be available to inform and guide instruction, interventions, and professional development; and
- (c) For each component in mathematics and in English language arts in the assessment system—
 - (i) The types of data produced by the component, including student achievement data (as defined in the NIA), student growth data (as defined in the NIA), and other data;
 - (ii) The uses of the data produced by the component, including determining whether individual students are college- and career-ready (as defined in the NIA) or on track to being college- and career-ready (as defined in the NIA); determining whether individual students are making adequate student growth (as defined in the NIA); informing determinations of school effectiveness for the purposes of accountability under Title I of the ESEA; informing determinations of individual principal and teacher effectiveness for the purposes of evaluation; informing determinations of principal and teacher development and support needs; informing teaching, learning, and program improvement; and other uses;
 - (iii) The frequency and timing of administration of the component, and the rationale for these;
 - (iv) The number and types of items (*e.g.*, performance tasks, selected responses, brief or extended constructed responses) and the distribution of item types within the component, including the extent to which the items will be varied and elicit complex student demonstrations or applications of knowledge and skills (descriptions should include a concrete example of each item type proposed); and the rationale for using these item types and their distributions;
 - (v) The component’s administration mode (*e.g.*, paper-and-pencil, computer-based, or other electronic device), and the rationale for the mode;
 - (vi) The methods for scoring student performance on the component, the estimated turnaround times for scoring, and the rationale for these; and
 - (vii) The reports produced based on the component, and for each report, its intended use, target audience (*e.g.*, students, parents, teachers, administrators, policymakers), and the key data it presents.

(A)(4) Assessment System Development (up to 35 points)

The extent to which the eligible applicant’s plan for developing the proposed assessment system will ensure that the assessment system is ready for wide-scale administration in a manner that is timely, cost-effective, and consistent with the proposed design and incorporates a process for ongoing feedback and improvement. In determining the extent to which the development plan has these attributes, we will consider—

- (a) The approaches for developing assessment items (*e.g.*, evidence centered design, universal design for learning) and the rationale for using those approaches; the development phases and processes to be implemented consistent with the approaches; and the types of personnel involved in each development phase and process (*e.g.*, practitioners, content experts, assessment experts, experts in assessing English learners, experts in assessing students with disabilities, psychometricians, cognitive scientists, IHE representatives, career and technical education experts);
- (b) The approach and strategy for designing and developing accommodations (as defined in the NIA), accommodation policies, and methods for standardizing the use of those accommodations for—
 - (i) English learners; and

- (ii) Students with disabilities;
- (c) The approach and strategy for ensuring scalable, accurate, and consistent scoring of items, including the approach and moderation system (as defined in the NIA) for any human-scored items that are part of the summative assessment components and the extent to which teachers are trained and involved in the scoring of assessments;
- (d) The approach and strategy for developing the reporting system; and
- (e) The overall approach to quality control; and the strategy for field testing assessment items, accommodations, scoring systems, and reporting systems, including, with respect to assessment items and accommodations, the use of representative sampling of all types of student populations, taking into particular account high- and low-performing students and different types of English learners and students with disabilities.

(A)(5) Research and Evaluation (up to 30 points)

The extent to which the eligible applicant’s research and evaluation plan will ensure that the assessments developed are valid, reliable, and fair for their intended purposes and for all student subgroups. In determining the extent to which the research and evaluation plan has these attributes, we will consider—

- (a) The plan for identifying and employing psychometric techniques suitable to verify, as appropriate to each assessment component, its construct, consequential, and predictive validity; external validity; reliability; fairness; precision across the full performance continuum; and comparability within and across grade levels; and
- (b) The plan for determining whether the assessments are being implemented as designed and the theory of action is being realized, including whether the intended effects on individuals and institutions are being achieved.

(A)(6) Professional Capacity and Outreach (up to 15 points)

The extent to which the eligible applicant’s plan for implementing the proposed assessment system is feasible, cost-effective, and consistent with the theory of action. In determining the extent to which the implementation plan has these attributes, we will consider—

- (a) The plan for supporting teachers and administrators in implementing the assessment system and for developing, in an ongoing manner, the professional capacity to use the assessments and results to inform and improve instructional practice; and
- (b) The strategy and plan for informing the public and key stakeholders (including legislators and policymakers) in each member State about the assessment system and for building support for the system from the public and those stakeholders.

(A)(7) Technology Approach (up to 10 points)

The extent to which the eligible applicant is using technology effectively to improve the quality, accessibility, cost-effectiveness, and efficiency of the proposed assessment system. In determining the extent to which the eligible applicant is using technology effectively, we will consider—

- (a) The description of, and rationale for—
 - (i) The ways in which technology will be used in assessment design, development, administration, scoring, and reporting;
 - (ii) The types of technology to be used (including whether the technology is existing and commercially-available or is being newly developed); and
 - (iii) How other States or organizations can re-use in a cost effective manner any technology platforms and technology components developed under this grant; and
- (b) How technology-related implementation or deployment barriers will be addressed (*e.g.*, issues relating to local access to internet-based assessments).

(A)(8) Project Management (up to 30 points)

The extent to which the eligible applicant's project management plan will result in implementation of the proposed assessment system on time, within budget, and in a manner that is financially sustainable over time. In determining the extent to which the project management plan has these attributes, we will consider—

- (a) The quality, qualifications, and role of the project management partner, as evidenced by its mission, date of founding, size, experience (including past success in implementing similar projects), and key personnel assigned to this project (including their names, curricula vitae, roles, percent of time dedicated to this project, and experience in managing similar projects);
- (b) The project workplan and timeline, including, for each key deliverable (*e.g.*, assessment component, scoring and moderation system, professional development activities), the major milestones, deadlines, and entities responsible for execution; and the approach to identifying, managing, and mitigating risks associated with the project;
- (c) The extent to which the eligible applicant's budget—
 - (i) Clearly identifies Level 1 budget modules (as defined in the NIA) and any Level 2 budget modules (as defined in the NIA);
 - (ii) Is adequate to support the development of an assessment system that meets the requirements of the absolute priority; and
 - (iii) Includes costs that are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of the proposed project and the number of students to be served; and
- (d) For each member State, the estimated costs for the ongoing administration, maintenance, and enhancement of operational assessments in the proposed assessment system and a plan for how the State will fund the assessment system over time (including by allocating to the assessment system funds for existing State or local assessments that will be replaced by assessments in the system).

CATEGORY B. HIGH SCHOOL COURSE ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS

Requirements

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are consortia of States.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible to receive an award under this category, an eligible applicant must—

1. Include a minimum of 5 governing States (as defined in the NIA); and
2. Identify in its application a proposed project management partner and provide an assurance that the proposed project management partner is not partnered with any other eligible applicant applying for an award under this category.

Selected Program Requirements

An eligible applicant awarded a grant under this category must—

- Ensure that at least one course assessment developed under the high school course assessment program will be implemented in each State in the consortium no later than the 2013-2014 school year and that all assessments in the assessment program will be operational no later than the 2014-2015 school year;

About the Awards:

Estimated Size of Awards

Category B. High School Course Assessment Programs: \$30,000,000

Estimated Number of Awards:

Category B. High School Course Assessment Programs: 1 award

Note: The Department is not bound by these estimates. The Department will determine the number of awards to be made based on the quality of applications received consistent with the selection criteria. It will also determine the size of an award made to an eligible applicant based on a review of the eligible applicant's budget. However, an eligible applicant may not submit a budget exceeding \$30 million. Applications requesting budget amounts that exceed this maximum amount will not be reviewed for funding. The Department will rank and fund separately applications under each grant category. The Department may use any unused funds designated for this competition to make awards in Phase 2 of the Race to the Top Fund Program.

Project Period

Up to 48 months

Priorities

Absolute Priority: High School Course Assessment Programs

Under this priority, the Department supports the development of new or adapted assessments for high school courses that will be used by multiple States and are valid, reliable, and fair for their intended purposes

and students. To meet this absolute priority, an eligible applicant must demonstrate in its application that it will develop and implement a high school course assessment program that—

- (a) For each course in the assessment program—
 - (i) Measures student knowledge and skills against standards from a common set of college- and career-ready standards (as defined in the NIA) in subjects for which such a set of standards exists, or otherwise against State or other rigorous standards;
 - (ii) As appropriate, elicits complex student demonstrations or applications of knowledge and skills;
 - (iii) Produces student achievement data (as defined in the NIA) and student growth data (as defined in the NIA) over a full academic year or course that can be used to inform—
 - (A) Determinations of individual principal and teacher effectiveness and development and support needs; and
 - (B) Teaching, learning, and program improvement; and
 - (iv) Is designed to assess the broadest possible range of students, including English learners (as defined in the NIA) and students with disabilities (as defined in the NIA);
- (b) Includes assessments for multiple courses that will be implemented in each member State at a scale that will enable significant improvements in student achievement outcomes statewide; and
- (c) Includes a process for certifying the rigor of each assessment in the assessment program and for ensuring that assessments of courses covering similar content have common expectations for rigor.

Competitive Preference Priority 1: Focus on Preparing Students for Study in STEM-Related Fields

The Department gives 10 competitive preference points to applications that include a high-quality plan to develop, within the grant period and with input from one or more four-year degree-granting IHEs, assessments for high school courses that comprise a rigorous course of study that is designed to prepare high school students for postsecondary study and careers in the STEM fields, including technology and engineering. Any such course of study may include cross-cutting or interdisciplinary STEM courses (*e.g.*, computer science, information technology, bioengineering) and be designed to address the needs of underrepresented groups.

An eligible applicant addressing this priority must, in addition to addressing the priority throughout the application narrative, provide a separate plan that describes—

- (a) The courses for which assessments will be developed;
- (b) How the courses comprise a rigorous course of study that is designed to prepare high school students for postsecondary study and careers in the STEM fields; and
- (c) How input from one or more four-year degree-granting IHEs will be obtained in developing assessments for the courses.

We will award points to eligible applicants addressing this priority on an “all or nothing” basis (*i.e.*, 10 points or zero points). An eligible applicant may not use the same course of study to address both this priority and Competitive Preference Priority 2 (Focus on Career Readiness and Placement).

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Focus on Career Readiness and Placement

The Department gives 10 competitive preference points to applications that include a high-quality plan to develop, within the grant period and with relevant business community participation and support, assessments for high school courses that comprise a rigorous course of study in career and technical education that is designed to prepare high school students for success on technical certification examinations or for postsecondary education or employment.

An eligible applicant addressing this priority must, in addition to addressing the priority throughout the application narrative, provide a separate plan that describes—

- (a) The courses for which assessments will be developed;
- (b) How the courses comprise a rigorous course of study in career and technical education that is designed to prepare high school students for success on technical certification examinations or for postsecondary education or employment; and
- (c) How relevant business community participation and support will be obtained in developing assessments for the courses.

We will award points to eligible applicants addressing this priority on an “all or nothing” basis (*i.e.*, 10 points or zero points). An eligible applicant may not use the same course of study to address both this priority and Competitive Preference Priority 1 (Focus on Preparing Students for Study and Careers in STEM-Related Fields).

Selection Criteria

(B)(1) Consortium Governance (up to 30 points)

The extent to which the consortium’s proposed governance structure will enable the successful design, development, and implementation of the proposed high school course assessment program. In determining the extent to which the consortium’s proposed governance structure will enable the successful design, development, and implementation of the proposed assessment program, we will consider—

- (a) The consortium’s vision, goals, role, and key deliverables (*e.g.*, assessments, scoring and moderation system, certification system, professional development activities), and the consistency of these with the consortium’s theory of action;
- (b) The consortium’s structure and operations, including—
 - (i) The organizational structure of the consortium and the differentiated roles that a member State may hold (*e.g.*, lead State, governing State (as defined in the NIA), advisory State);
 - (ii) For each differentiated role, the rights and responsibilities (including the level of commitment to adopting and implementing the assessment program) associated with the role;
 - (iii) The consortium’s method and process (*e.g.*, consensus, majority) for making different types of decisions (*e.g.*, policy, operational);
 - (iv) The protocols by which the consortium will operate, including the protocols for member States to change roles or leave the consortium and for new member States to join the consortium;
 - (v) The key policies and definitions to which all member States will adhere, the rationale for choosing these policies and definitions, and the consortium’s plan (including the process and timeline) for developing them; and
 - (vi) The consortium’s plan for managing funds received under this grant category;
- (c) The terms and conditions of the Memoranda of Understanding or other binding agreements executed by each member State, including the consistency of the terms and conditions with the consortium’s governance structure and the State’s role in the consortium; and
- (d) The consortium’s procurement process, and evidence of each member State’s commitment to that process.

(B)(2) Theory of Action (up to 5 points)

The extent to which the eligible applicant’s theory of action is logical, coherent, and credible, and will result in improved academic outcomes for high school students across the States in the consortium. In determining the extent to which the theory of action has these attributes, we will consider the description of and rationale for—

- (a) How the proposed high school course assessment program will be incorporated into a coherent high school educational system (*i.e.*, a system that includes standards, assessments, curriculum, instruction, and professional development);
- (b) How the assessment program's rigor will be demonstrated and maintained over time;
- (c) How the assessment program will cover diverse course offerings that provide a variety of pathways to students; and
- (d) How the assessment program will be implemented at a scale that, across the States in the consortium, increases access to rigorous courses for students who have not typically had such access, and broadly improves student achievement and college and career readiness (as defined in the NIA).

(B)(3) Course Assessment Program Design and Development (up to 60 points)

The extent to which the design and development of the eligible applicant's proposed high school assessment program is feasible, scalable, and consistent with the theory of action. In determining the extent to which the design has these attributes, we will consider—

- (a) The high school courses for which the consortium will implement assessments; the rationale for selecting those courses, including a need to increase access to rigorous courses for students who have not typically had such access; and the processes by which new high school course assessments will be added to the assessment program over time and existing course assessments will be updated and refreshed;
- (b) How the assessments will measure student knowledge and skills against standards from a common set of college- and career-ready standards (as defined in the NIA) in subjects for which such a set of standards exists, or otherwise against State or other rigorous standards;
- (c) How the consortium will certify the rigor of each assessment in the assessment program, whether the assessment is new or adapted; and how the consortium will maintain consistent and high levels of rigor over time; and
- (d) The general design and development approach for course assessments, including—
 - (i) The number and types of components (*e.g.*, mid-term tests, through-course summative assessments (as defined in the NIA), end-of-course assessments) in a high school course assessment;
 - (ii) The extent to which, and, where applicable, the approach for ensuring that, assessment items will be varied and elicit complex student demonstrations or applications of knowledge and skills;
 - (iii) How the assessments will produce student achievement data (as defined in the NIA) and student growth data (as defined in the NIA);
 - (iv) The approach and strategy for ensuring scalable, accurate, and consistent scoring of assessments, and the extent to which teachers are trained and involved in the scoring of assessments; and
 - (v) How the course assessments will be accessible to the broadest possible range of students, including English learners and students with disabilities, and include appropriate accommodations (as defined in the NIA) for students with disabilities and English learners.

(B)(4) Research and Evaluation (up to 25 points)

The extent to which the eligible applicant's research and evaluation plan will ensure that the assessments developed are valid, reliable, and fair for their intended purposes and for all students. In determining the extent to which the research and evaluation plan has these attributes, we will consider—

- (a) The plan for verifying validity, reliability, and fairness; and
- (b) The plan for determining whether the assessments are being implemented as designed and the theory of action is being realized, including whether the intended effects on students and schools are being achieved.

(B)(5) Course Assessment Program Implementation (up to 45 points)

The extent to which the eligible applicant's plan for implementing the proposed high school course assessment program will result in increased student enrollment in courses in the assessment program (and therefore improved student academic outcomes) in each member State. In determining the extent to which the implementation plan has these attributes, we will consider—

- (a) The approach to be used in each member State for promoting participation in the high school course assessment program by high schools, by teachers, and by students (*e.g.*, voluntary participation, mandatory participation, incentive programs); the plan for implementing the approach, including goals, major activities, timelines, and entities responsible for execution; and the expected participation levels in each member State and across the consortium overall, including—
- (i) The number and percentage of high schools expected to implement at least one of the assessments in the high school course assessment program in each of five consecutive years beginning with the 2013-2014 school year;
 - (ii) For each assessment in the assessment program, the number and percentage of high schools expected to implement the assessment in each of five consecutive years beginning with the 2013-2014 school year; and
 - (iii) The unduplicated number and percentage of high school students expected to take at least one assessment in the assessment program in each of five consecutive years beginning with the 2013-2014 school year; and
- (b) The plan for supporting teachers and administrators in implementing the high school course assessment program and for developing, in an ongoing manner, the professional capacity to use the assessments and results to inform and improve instructional practice.

(B)(6) Project Management (up to 35 points)

The extent to which the eligible applicant's project management plan will result in implementation of the proposed high school course assessment program on time, within budget, and in a manner that is financially sustainable over time. In determining the extent to which the project management plan has these attributes, we will consider—

- (a) The quality, qualifications, and role of the project management partner, as evidenced by its mission, date of founding, size, experience (including past success in implementing similar projects), and key personnel assigned to this project (including their names, curricula vitae, roles, percent of time dedicated to this project, and experience in managing similar projects);
- (b) The project workplan and timeline, including, for each key deliverable (*e.g.*, assessments, scoring and moderation system, certification system, professional development activities), the major milestones, deadlines, and entities responsible for execution;
- (c) The extent to which the eligible applicant's budget—
 - (i) Is adequate to support the development of a high school assessment program that meets the requirements of the absolute priority;
 - (ii) Includes costs that are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of the proposed project and the number of students to be served; and
- (d) For each member State, the estimated costs for the ongoing administration, maintenance, and enhancement of operational assessments in the proposed assessment program and a plan for how the State will fund the assessment program over time (including by allocating to the assessment program funds for existing State or local assessments that will be replaced by assessments in the program).

DEFINITIONS

Accommodations means changes in the administration of an assessment, including but not limited to changes in assessment setting, scheduling, timing, presentation format, response mode, and combinations of these changes, that do not change the construct intended to be measured by the assessment or the meaning of the resulting scores. Accommodations must be used for equity in assessment and not provide advantage to students eligible to receive them.

Achievement standard means the level of student achievement on summative assessments that indicates that (a) for the final high school summative assessments in mathematics or English language arts, a student is college- and career-ready (as defined in the NIA); or (b) for summative assessments in mathematics or English language arts at a grade level other than the final high school summative assessments, a student is on track to being college- and career-ready (as defined in the NIA). An achievement standard must be determined using empirical evidence over time.

College- and career-ready (or readiness) means, with respect to a student, that the student is prepared for success, without remediation, in credit-bearing entry-level courses in an IHE (as defined in section 101(a) of the HEA), as demonstrated by an assessment score that meets or exceeds the achievement standard (as defined in the NIA) for the final high school summative assessment in mathematics or English language arts.

Common set of college- and career-ready standards means a set of academic content standards for grades K-12 that (a) define what a student must know and be able to do at each grade level; (b) if mastered, would ensure that the student is college- and career-ready (as defined in the NIA) by the time of high school graduation; and (c) are substantially identical across all States in a consortium. A State may supplement the common set of college- and career-ready standards with additional content standards, provided that the additional standards do not comprise more than 15 percent of the State's total standards for that content area.

Direct matriculation student means a student who entered college as a freshman within two years of graduating from high school.

English learner means a student who is an English learner as that term is defined by the consortium. The consortium must define the term in a manner that is uniform across member States and consistent with section 9101(25) of the ESEA.

Governing State means a State that (a) is a member of only one consortium applying for a grant in the competition category, (b) has an active role in policy decision-making for the consortium, and (c) is committed to using the assessment system or program developed by the consortium.

Level 1 budget module means a budget module for which an eligible applicant is seeking funds under the Comprehensive Assessment Systems grant category that (a) is necessary to delivering operational summative assessments in both mathematics and English language arts no later than school year 2014-2015, or (b) is otherwise necessary to the eligible applicant's proposed project and consistent with the eligible applicant's theory of action.

Level 2 budget module means any budget module for which an eligible applicant is seeking funds under the Comprehensive Assessment Systems grant category other than a Level 1 budget module. An eligible applicant must prioritize Level 2 budget modules in the order of importance to the implementation of the proposed project.

Moderation system means a system for ensuring that human scoring of complex item types, such as extended responses or performance tasks, is accurate, consistent across schools and States, and fair to all students.

On track to being college- and career-ready³ means, with respect to a student, that the student is performing at or above grade level such that the student will be college- and career-ready (as defined in the NIA) by the time of high school graduation, as demonstrated by an assessment score that meets or exceeds the achievement standard (as defined in the NIA) for the student’s grade level on a summative assessment in mathematics or English language arts.

Performance level descriptor means a statement or description of a set of knowledge and skills exemplifying a level of performance associated with a standard.

Student achievement data means data regarding an individual student’s mastery of tested content standards. Student achievement data from summative assessment components must be reported in a way that can be reliably aggregated across multiple students at the subgroup, classroom, school, LEA, and State levels.

Student growth data means data regarding the change in student achievement data (as defined in the NIA) between two or more points in time. Student growth data from summative assessment components must be reported in a way that can be reliably aggregated across multiple students at the subgroup, classroom, school, LEA, and State levels and over a full academic year or course.

Student with a disability means, for purposes of this competition, a student who has been identified as a student with a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, as amended (IDEA), except for a student with a disability who is eligible to participate in alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards consistent with 34 CFR 200.6(a)(2).

Through-course summative assessment means an assessment system component or set of assessment system components that is administered periodically during the academic year. A student’s results from through-course summative assessments must be combined to produce the student’s total summative assessment score for that academic year.

³ The term on track to being college- and career-ready is used in place of the term “proficiency” that is used in section 1111(b)(3) of the ESEA.