

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

RACE TO THE TOP ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

PUBLIC & EXPERT INPUT MEETINGS

Project and Consortium Management

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22 * * * * *

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 (10:04 a.m.)

3 MS. WEISS: Hi, everybody, we're about
4 to start in a couple more minutes, so grab your
5 last cup of something to drink in the back there
6 and come get settled. We're just getting our
7 projector brought back to life. It was
8 resuscitated recently so we'll be back with you in
9 a minute.

10 Okay, I think we're ready to get
11 started. We have -- you guys will get to see all
12 of our slides behind us. We will get to look down
13 at our pieces of paper. Our monitor is on the
14 fritz for the moment.

15 So, good morning. Welcome. Thank you
16 so much for joining us today. My name's Joanne
17 Weiss and I'm the director of the Race to the Top
18 Program at the Department of Ed. And I want to
19 welcome all of you here this morning for what is
20 now feeling like old home week as we're on, what
21 meeting? I think, number eight, of a series of
22 meetings that many of you have been traipsing

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1 around the country to be with us on and we really
2 appreciate that.

3 The meetings today and tomorrow cover
4 some very important management topics that were in
5 our original notice, but as we were getting
6 feedback and input from the experts that we had in
7 our first panels, it became more and more obvious
8 to us that the way these consortia were organized,
9 the kinds of things that consortia thought through
10 at the front end of the process, and the kinds of
11 the questions that we, in our notice, asked in
12 order to help facilitate the right kinds of
13 conversations and allow our reviewers to figure
14 out which consortia had the highest chance of
15 really successfully executing against the agenda.
16 We just needed some focused conversation on that,
17 so we've adduced meetings today and tomorrow about
18 procurement because that's -- that and the
19 consortia management question are quite
20 intertwined, obviously, but those two questions
21 are things that we felt we needed additional input
22 on.

1 So, that's the topic of the meetings
2 today and tomorrow.

3 For those of you who have not been with
4 us at other meetings, let me just give you sort of
5 some quick framing overview of what these meetings
6 are about and what we're trying to accomplish with
7 this program.

8 So, as you probably have all gathered,
9 this is not a meeting about the \$4 billion Race to
10 the Top program, this is a meeting about the \$350
11 million Race to the Top assessment program. Mary
12 Ann Schneider from Rhode Island, who's also a
13 member of NECAP, was supposed to be here with us
14 today talking about NECAP's experience, and she is
15 a \$4 billion Race to the Top casualty. We really
16 thank her. She made a valiant effort to be here
17 with us today and at the last minute just said you
18 know what, you have a deadline next Tuesday, I
19 can't come. So, we totally get that.

20 But the timing for this particular
21 notice is that we are hoping to have it out in
22 March so that consortia have about three months to

1 put together their applications for the program
2 and grants will be awarded as with all of the
3 other grants, by the end of September.

4 The assessment program is really
5 designed to support states in delivering a system
6 of more effective and instructionally useful
7 assessments than perhaps we have before us today.
8 We want to make sure that we provide information
9 that's a more accurate reflection of what students
10 really know and are able to do, and that takes
11 three different forms. First of all, we're
12 concerned about student achievement against
13 standards. Second of all, we're concerned about
14 student growth. And third, we're concerned about
15 whether students are on track to graduate from
16 college (inaudible). For those of you who were at
17 our technology meeting, you know that this is the
18 same kind of thing we experienced there.

19 Okay, and the third piece of data that's
20 critical that we produce as a result of these
21 assessments is whether students are on track to
22 graduating high school ready for college and

1 careers.

2 The second big goal we have is that
3 these assessments reflect and support good
4 instructional practice. And the third kind of
5 goes without saying except that I think too often
6 we've made it an afterthought instead of saying it
7 at the front end, that the assessments have to
8 serve all students well including English language
9 learners and students with disabilities. So, in
10 this competition we're particularly concerned
11 about what the issues are that need to be included
12 up front, what kind of expertise we need up front,
13 so that we design the assessments from the
14 beginning with all of these students in mind
15 rather than trying to tack on at the back end
16 accommodations for different populations.

17 The purposes of this assessment,
18 admittedly we have a little bit of an elephant in
19 the room with this assessment because we're in a
20 position with the assessment where it has to
21 comply with the current ESEA, with the current No
22 Child Left Behind regulations, and we'll talk in a

1 minute about -- a little more about what that
2 means, but we also know that during the timeframe
3 in which this assessment is going to be developed
4 and then released, there will be a new set of
5 reauthorized ESEA laws in place and we of course
6 don't yet know what those look like.

7 So, at the highest level, all that we're
8 going to be able to give as guidance to consortia
9 is that these assessments need to be usable to
10 inform teaching, learning, and program
11 improvement, to help inform determinations of
12 school effectiveness, so school accountability, to
13 help inform determinations of principal and
14 teacher effectiveness for the purposes of
15 evaluation and support, and for student and
16 parents, determinations of individual student
17 college and career readiness.

18 So, with that, there are, of course,
19 other requirements that come along with the
20 current law for us. The first is that we need to
21 be able to deal at least with reading, language
22 arts, and mathematics, and at least annually in

1 grades 3 through 8 and once in high school.

2 We are talking here primarily about
3 summative assessments. That doesn't mean that we
4 won't have a formative component. That's one of
5 the design issues that's to be decided and that
6 we've gotten a lot of input on over the last
7 couple of months, but by summative assessments, we
8 have not meant that it was once at the end of the
9 year, nor have we necessarily meant that it was
10 only given once during the year, nor have we
11 necessarily meant there's only one test. So, it
12 might indeed be a system of assessments that are
13 given periodically throughout the year and
14 aggregated to be summative. So, combinations like
15 that are definitely on the table of the kinds of
16 things that we're thinking of. We are thinking,
17 though, that this would replace rather than add to
18 the current assessments that are in place. And of
19 course, validity, reliability, fairness are key
20 concerns that we're probably not going to spend
21 much time talking about today, but that were big
22 topics of discussion over the last couple of

1 months.

2 So a word before we get started about
3 why we had these meetings at all. The typical
4 process that the department would use to come up
5 with a notice like this would be that we would go
6 away, figure out what our policy goals were, draft
7 a notice, put it out for a 30-day public comment
8 period, get the public's input on the notice,
9 revise it, and put it out. In the process of
10 starting that process, it became obvious to us
11 that this was a really different kind of
12 competition and that in order to even draft the
13 notice right from the start, we needed a much
14 broader and deeper set of expertise than we had in
15 order to make sure that we were doing this right.
16 So we came up with a different process than is our
17 traditional process that put the input at the
18 front end rather than at the back end. So we
19 crafted a series of what will in the end be 10
20 meetings around the country. All of these
21 meetings have been opened to the public, although
22 the folks sitting at the table are all from

1 states, and we've asked states to be our special
2 sort of invited guests for reasons that we'll talk
3 about in a second. But -- so, for reasons that
4 we'll talk about in a second there's sort of a
5 special role that states play in these convenings.
6 But our goal was to get input at the front end
7 from a variety of experts and from the public that
8 would help provide input to us in the department
9 so that we could go off and craft this notice.

10 We then don't have time for a whole
11 public comment period, because that's a very
12 time-consuming part of the process. We instead
13 want to make sure that the consortia have as much
14 time as possible to get together and put their
15 applications together so we're going to do this in
16 lieu of public comment. We'll put the notice out
17 in March and the consortium will be able to start
18 putting their applications together.

19 So the goals that we had then were,
20 first of all, at a high level, to start painting a
21 different vision of what the next generation of
22 assessments could and should look like. I think

1 we're also anchored in what we do today that the
2 first thing we needed to do was make sure that
3 through the experts we'd invited, we were painting
4 a different picture of what assessments could do
5 for us and what the world would look like if we
6 had assessments that teachers and kids and parents
7 all found useful and informative and more anxious
8 to give.

9 The second thing is, though, that we
10 needed very concrete input and guidance to the
11 department to help us formulate the notice.

12 And the third goal we had was, again
13 back to the role of the states, to help prepare
14 the states and to help provide guidance and input
15 to states to help them develop the highest quality
16 proposals that would have the greatest likelihood
17 of impact.

18 So, those are the high-level reasons
19 that we convened these meetings. Let me talk for
20 a minute then about what the agenda for today is
21 going to look like and I'll tell you then a little
22 bit more about today's specific questions and

1 we'll get on with it.

2 The meetings today after this sort of
3 stage setting activity that I'm doing, we're going
4 to go around the room and have the experts give
5 presentations in response to the questions that
6 were in our notice, questions I'll review with you
7 in a minute. Each expert will have about 20
8 minutes to present and then we'll have 10 minutes
9 for follow-up clarifying questions that we'll all
10 be asking each other up here. And then this
11 afternoon we'll have a couple more presentations,
12 and then the bulk of the afternoon will be spent
13 in a roundtable discussion up here so that we can
14 really get deeper into some of the questions and
15 issues.

16 All of you were given index cards when
17 you came in. You're invited to participate in the
18 conversation by filling out index cards and
19 handing them in either at the registration table
20 out front or any of our folks can grab them from
21 you and we'll take them up here and put them into
22 the conversation this afternoon as we go. And

1 then at the very end of the day we'll have an hour
2 reserved for public comment by people who signed
3 up ahead of time and presumably all those of you
4 in the room know who you are.

5 Because we have one fewer expert than we
6 had planned for today, we will lengthen our
7 conversations a little bit, but we might start
8 public comment early so any of you who are signed
9 up for public comment, don't go away because we
10 might start you a little bit early.

11 We're doing pretty rigorous timekeeping
12 up here so you'll see us referring to our yellow
13 and green and red lights up here, so just so you
14 know, we want to make sure that everybody's voice
15 is really heard and so we'll be doing that. We're
16 asking people please put your cell phones on
17 vibrate and want to let you know that today's
18 session, like all our sessions, is being
19 transcribed and the transcription will be posted
20 within a few days on our website.

21 We're also still accepting public
22 written input and here's the address that you can

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1 send that input to. All of this written input is
2 also put up on our website and read by our team
3 and considered as part of the input to our
4 process.

5 So, with that, I want to take a minute
6 to just thank the states who've traveled here
7 today and who are on the phone with us. We are
8 broadcasting this via webinar and there's a bunch
9 of states who, for obvious reasons, couldn't be
10 here, but wanted to listen in, so thank you all
11 for attending. We really appreciate your support
12 and your attention to this. You realize that
13 we're in this sort of strange situation where
14 because you're applicants, we can't have you up
15 here on stage with us, which might have been our
16 first choice so that you could really directly ask
17 questions, but we will try to represent your
18 interests and make sure that the experts are
19 paying close attention to that as well.

20 So let me just go around the table
21 really quickly and ask each of you to introduce
22 yourselves and let me start with you, Tammy, just

1 quick -- and be sure -- pull up microphones and
2 talk into them because the webinar folks won't be
3 able to hear you.

4 MS. BATTAGLINO: Sure. I'm Tammy
5 Battaglino, a partner at the Parthenon Group and
6 co-lead in our firm's Education Center of
7 Excellence. We work with public and private
8 sector institutions.

9 MR. TUCKER: Marc Tucker, president of
10 the National Center on Education and the Economy.

11 MR. BOALS: Tim Boals, executive
12 director of the WIDA Consortium. That's
13 World-class Instructional Design and Assessment.

14 MR. AUGUSTE: Byron Auguste. I'm a
15 director at McKinsey & Company. I lead our social
16 sector globally, which includes our education
17 practice, and I work quite a bit in education at
18 the local, state, and federal level.

19 MR. COHEN: I'm Mike Cohen. I'm the
20 president of Achieve.

21 MS. WEISS: Joanne Weiss, director of
22 the Race to the Top Fund at the Department of Ed.

1 MR. MILLER: Tony Miller, Deputy
2 Secretary, Department of Education.

3 MS. WURTZEL: Judy Wurtzel, Deputy
4 Assistant Secretary for Planning, Evaluation, and
5 Policy Development.

6 MS. WEISS: Thank you. Okay, so let me
7 just quickly go through what the questions are.
8 They fill up a couple slides here. You don't need
9 to memorize them because our experts are going to
10 be talking about them for the next couple of hours
11 to you, but the first set of questions were really
12 around organization of a consortium to achieve
13 success. And the big picture questions there were
14 around governance, around the decision making
15 process, and then around how you might
16 differentiate and think about different roles,
17 responsibilities and workloads, roles for third
18 parties, so just the sort of big picture,
19 management and organization questions.

20 The second question was: What are the
21 characteristics that members of the consortium
22 should have in common in order for the consortium

1 to be successful in a project like this?

2 The third set of questions were: How
3 would we ask consortia to demonstrate that they
4 have the capacity and the structure and the
5 potential to really implement the proposed plan?
6 So, what's the evidence, what are the questions,
7 what's the evidence that we should ask consortia
8 for?

9 And the last thing is, a lot of the
10 people up here have run consortia and have a lot
11 of lessons learned, and we want to really make
12 sure in the end that we're benefitting deeply from
13 those. So, what could go wrong? What are the
14 unintended consequences? And how can we think
15 about mitigating those problems?

16 So, with that, I'm going to turn it over
17 to our first speaker, who is Mike Cohen from
18 Achieve.

19 MR. COHEN: Thank you, Joanne. Can
20 people hear me? Good.

21 What I'm going to talk to you about is
22 what we have learned through our work at the

1 American Diploma Project Assessment Consortia,
2 which for those of you who don't know about it,
3 it's a group of states that work together with us
4 in the context of the American Diploma Project to
5 develop initially and in the course examine
6 Algebra II and we've subsequently developed on in
7 Algebra I as well. And I thought the best way to
8 capture what we learned from that that would be
9 useful both to the Department and to states that
10 are thinking about the next consortia they want to
11 be part of, is to start by just giving you a basic
12 overview of what we did and how we did it in this
13 consortia, and then try to draw lessons from that
14 that are tied to the three big questions that the
15 department has asked around organization and
16 governance about essentially what are the
17 characteristics of a consortia that could -- that
18 the Department ought to look for as you're making
19 funding decisions.

20 And as I interpreted the last question,
21 which was sort of what could go wrong, which could
22 be a long discussion, but I thought about, really,

1 what have we seen as this has played out over a
2 number of years that you ought to be keeping --
3 you know, paying attention to in the early stages
4 so that you increase the odds of success over
5 time? So that's what I'm going to try to walk
6 through with you.

7 I'll also say that you should view the
8 lessons and the information that I share as the
9 sort of chapter headings for issues you may want
10 to pursue in the discussion stage. So I'm not
11 going to get into anything in a whole lot of
12 detail, but I do think that there's -- that we'll
13 set up issues that may be of interest to some of
14 you that we can pursue.

15 So, for a very quick background on the
16 consortia, and a couple points that are important
17 here -- I won't read through everything in the
18 slide. In fact, I won't read through it at all,
19 but let me tell you what's important here is this
20 assessment consortia was an outgrowth of a network
21 of states that was formed for a particular set of
22 policy actions that were focused around changing

1 That was the origin of this effort, and
2 what's important was that it was rooted in a
3 policy agenda that states shared, it was not just
4 about a test. We did agree on the purposes of the
5 test.

6 And the other thing that was important
7 from this is at that very first discussion, as
8 people were exploring the idea of developing a
9 common assessment, somebody asked, well, if we
10 develop a common test, who will set the cut
11 scores? And I have to confess, I, at that point
12 in time, could still remember my experience in the
13 department around national standards and national
14 testing issues, still felt the pain from it. And
15 the first words out of my mouth were, well, you're
16 each sovereign states. We wouldn't dream of --
17 and I didn't get the sentence out before a chorus
18 of state officials said, oh, please don't make us
19 set the cut score ourselves. All the pressures
20 would drive it down. Would Achieve do it?

21 So, foolishly, I said yes, but that
22 turned out to be a very critical decision and it

