



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0961TX-1 for La Joya Independent School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>LaJoya ISD offers a succinct reform vision. In addressing the criterion, the school district addresses three of the four core educational assurance areas. The district plans to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Implement, with the assistance of The Intercultural Development Research Association, a research-based program that will target students' needs.</i> <i>Adapt the iZone, One School model to integrate technology throughout the community, and</i> <i>Provide teachers with support and additional opportunities so that they can provide the best possible instruction.</i> <p><i>Laudable efforts have been made to turn around the lowest achieving schools and to provide tailored learning experiences such as early college high schools and alternative schools.</i></p> <p><i>The school district does not fully address how it will adopt standards and assessments to prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to complete in the global economy. The statements offered are general and additional information would have been helpful.</i></p> <p><i>Overall, this places LaJoya in the bottom of the high range.</i></p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>LaJoya ISD's approach to implementing the project so that its expected outcomes have been met is adequate. The district plans to implement the project in three phases, with the first phase taking an estimated one-year to complete. It is doubtful that much meaningful progress can be made in closing the achievement gap and preparing students for college and beyond in the shortened time period.</i></p> <p><i>The applicant provides a list of schools that will participate, as well as provides the total number of students who will participate and indicated their income and need status.</i></p> <p><i>Overall, this places LaJoya in the middle range.</i></p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>LaJoya's plan to scale up and translate meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools is adequate. The Applicant provides a chart that connects inputs, outputs, outcomes and goals.</i></p> <p><i>Yet, the Applicant's logic model displays a disconnect between the model and the proposed timeline. This places the amount of meaningful reform and change that can be made and measured in question.</i></p> <p><i>Overall, this places the district in the middle range.</i></p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>Overall, the Applicant does not convincingly detail how its vision will result in improved student learning and performance.</i></p>		

The applicant outlines ambitious annual goals that, if met, will improve student performance and increase educational equity.

- *The applicant plans to double the rate of performance on summative assessments such as Reading Proficiency where the baseline data indicates a 41% proficiency rate with an end goal of 90% proficiency.*
- *The applicant plans to decrease the achievement gap from 25 to 0 in three years.*
- *The applicant proposes to increase the graduation rate from the baseline of 46% to 80%.*

However, the achievability of some of the goals is unclear. According to narrative, the students will not begin to be impacted by the reforms until the beginning of the project's second year. The focus on training teachers in the first year is commendable, however, it does allow for decreased program effectiveness. Because of this, the Applicant scores in the middle range.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	12
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>According to the information provided by LaJoya, it has made significant progress in advancing student learning and achievement. Four years ago it implemented a variety of reforms such as small learning communities and math achievement and readiness.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Graduation rates have increased by 13.9%.</i> • <i>Two schools, Palmview and Garza, saw significant gains in both math and reading performance.</i> <p><i>Yet despite significant efforts, the overall growth areas such as closing the achievement gap and college enrollment has been minimal.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reading performance increased by 0.2% over four years.</i> • <i>Math performance saw an increase of 4.7% over four years.</i> <p><i>Student performance data will be made available to all stakeholders on the district's website.</i></p> <p><i>Overall, this places the Applicant in the middle range.</i></p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>LaJoya ISD effectively demonstrates a high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments. The school has received the State Comptroller Leadership Circle Gold Award for two years in a row. Tables of salary information have been included.</i></p> <p><i>Overall, the Applicant scores in the high range.</i></p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The Applicant provides a narrative about the level of autonomy it believes to have. Because the State legislated and states that learner center instruction is supported by the state. The Applicant states that learner centered instruction in Texas is supported by legislation, and school districts have been given license to design their own instructional and student assessment processes that respect the spirit of personalized instruction.</i></p> <p><i>Yet the supporting evidence, text from an email from the Texas Education Agency Chief Grants Administrator Office for Grants and Fiscal Compliance, suggests that the relationship is unclear. Because of this, the Applicant scores in the lower end of the high range.</i></p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	4

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

As an LEA without collective bargaining representation, the Applicant surveyed its teachers, of which 88.1% of the respondents support the proposal. Aside from a web-based survey, the Applicant does not detail how students, families, teachers, and principals in the participating schools were engaged in the development of the proposal.

And although letters of support from stakeholders have been included, they fail to indicate how they were involved in the decision-making process. Because of this, the applicant scores in the lower end of the middle range.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

Seven core components provide the basis of the project's operations. LaJoya ISD offers a comprehensive list of needs and gaps as well as list of goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties. Overall, the Applicant scores high in this area.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	20

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

LaJoya ISD offers an ambitious plan for improving the existing learning environment.

- Content knowledge will be emphasized as a means to an end, with the hopes of producing deeper engagement of thinking as opposed to traditional high school standards which focus on basic understanding of knowledge and skills.*
- A rubric will be used to assess the culture of college readiness in the identified schools.*
- Students will be allowed to define their needs and interests and career goals. Academic depth will be gained through dual credit and advanced placement courses.*
- Parents will be offered professional development to familiarize them with the college process in hopes that it will help them help their children navigate the college process.*

The first four components of the Applicant's GEMS approach serves as the cornerstone for student improvement and academic achievement. This holistic approach serves to raise student achievement to state and national levels.

- Partnerships with national agencies will support this effort.*
- Technology will be integrated to improve instruction and learning as well as use real-life and real-time problems.*

Overall, the Applicant describes a comprehensive plan as well as a list of scheduled activities. The Applicant scores in the high range for this criterion.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	20
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

LaJoya ISD places a strong emphasis on teaching and learning.

- The district is committed to strengthening teacher quality and capacity through increased professional development and classroom instruction.*
- Math and science teachers will receive specialized instruction and engage in a cohort of teachers from participating middle and high schools in an effort to deepen their content and pedagogical practice.*
- Teachers will also be assigned a mentor to support quality and equity in the classroom.*
- Parents and the larger community will be actively recruited in order to support graduation and college success.*
- School leadership teams will undergo a five-day Leadership Academy which will focus on the role of administrators in promoting, supporting, and advocating for the personalization of instruction and the need for differentiated instruction. This experience will also provide extensive technology training in an effort to facilitate the collection and sharing of data to make programmatic and classroom decisions.*
- The district will use its teacher evaluation system, which integrates personalizing instruction strategies and is used to inform the school's professional development efforts and additional resources that may be available to support teacher quality.*

This plan is comprehensive and exhaustive in description and scope. The applicant outlines and effective and well-rounded plan to achieve the goals in this area.

The Applicant scores in the high range for this criterion.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	12
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>LaJoya ISD provides an impressive narrative about the individual schools' autonomy and how it will improve student outcomes.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• Campus support teams will meet monthly at the central office.</i> <i>• The Organized Health and Diagnostic Development Corporation will assist the Applicant with improving the health/culture of the target schools.</i> <i>• Compass Learning will be used to assist students with earning credit.</i> <i>• The early college high schools will give students the opportunity to receive personalized instruction in an effort to demonstrate mastery of skills.</i> <p><i>Aside from the narrative, the Applicant does not provide supporting evidence for its claims.</i></p> <p><i>Overall, the Applicant scores in the lower end of the high range.</i></p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>LaJoya ISD provides some information that it will take steps to ensure that all students have access to necessary content and resources.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• The district will use its website, meetings, and newsletters to disseminate information.</i> <i>• Information will be designed in a way that will allow students and parents to download it an open data format.</i> <p><i>Overall, the Applicant will take the appropriate measures to ensure that all stakeholders will be supported by the district's infrastructure; however, it is unclear how the use of iPads will provide technical support to students. And under subsection d, the applicant merely restates the application verbiage.</i></p> <p><i>The Applicant scores in the middle range for the criterion.</i></p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>LaJoya ISD outlines a comprehensive strategy for obtaining regular feedback on progress toward project goals. Its multi-tiered approach, the foundation for this project, will provide project staff with benchmark information, teacher effectiveness, and stakeholder engagement.</i></p> <p><i>Overall, the outlined strategies are appropriate for the project and the Applicant scores high in this criterion.</i></p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>LaJoya ISD will attempt to communicate with and engage internal and external stakeholders in a variety of channels such as releasing annual reports and contracting the Intercultural Development Research Association as its external evaluator; however, the focus is placed more on evaluation instead of communication--the central point of the criterion.</i></p>		

Overall, the outlined strategies are appropriate for the project and the Applicant scores high in this criterion.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

LaJoya ISD provides an exhaustive chart of performance measures. Each performance measure includes baseline data as well as target goals for each initiative. Sub groups are highlighted, giving additional attention to achievement gap data.

Overall, the Applicant outlines an effective means of measure and monitoring performance. The criterion is rated high.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

LaJoya ISD outlines an effective plan to evaluate the project's effectiveness. Ongoing data-gathering procedures such as the UC Berkeley Checklist, student interest surveys, and archival records will provide program staff with needed information.

Overall, the Applicant outlines an effective means of evaluating effectiveness of investments. The criterion is rated high.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

LaJoya ISD outlines a comprehensive budget that is reasonable and sufficient to support the project for the duration of the grant. In-kind matching funds will help to fund the project with donations exceeding \$1 million. However, the Applicant does not indicate which investments are one-time costs. According to the budget table, it appears as if all budget categories will be allotted some funds throughout the grant period.

Overall, the Applicant outlines a reasonable and sufficient budget. The criterion is rated high.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	8
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

LaJoya ISD outlines an adequate budget that is reasonable and sufficient to sustain the proposed project beyond the funding period such as seeking in-kind donations from several sources.

The district will not sustain grant positions after the initial funding period, yet the Applicant explains that goals, such as STEM configurations, effective instructions, and administration best practices, will continue. Yet, more explanation about how this will take place is needed.

And though the Applicant

Overall, the Applicant outlines an effective means of sustaining the project. The criterion is rated high.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	7

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

LaJoya ISD states that it plans to partner with several local organizations but only provides the name of two organizations: UT Pan America and the Intercultural Development Research Association.

Ten population-desired results for students in the district were identified. The results focus both on academic and personal growth. The population groups include all students, such as ELL students, as well as parents, principals, and counselors.

La Joya ISD will provide, through its website, data on aggregate student achievement, graduation rates, college readiness, college enrollment, by grade, school, and school district. Data will be posted each year upon receipt of data from the Texas Education Agency. The district will share its progress with stakeholders on a quarterly basis. Data will be disaggregated by student population such as students with disabilities, ELL, low income, and other characteristics.

The Applicant will collect, annually, information on community and family needs and share with social service agencies and will collaborate with them to provide the necessary services to ensure that children live the most functional environment that support their development to adults. The Applicant will also create a family and parent center that provides parents with advice and resources to address their needs. In addition, parents will have opportunities to participate in the site-based decision making bodies at each of the campuses.

La Joya ISD will concurrently scale up by implementing a personalizing instruction model at the elementary level. The Applicant plans to implement a personalized instruction model, within eight years, across the entire district.

The Applicant also identifies achievable performance measures. For example, LaJoya seeks to improve the percent of effective teachers from 22 (baseline) to 65 (post grant).

Because the Applicant does not provide detailed information about how the two organizations will provide services which meet this criterion, the Applicant scores in the middle range.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Overall, the Applicant addresses the criteria to an adequate degree.

LaJoya ISD will implement, with the assistance of The Intercultural Development Research Association, a research-based program that will target students' needs. It will adapt the iZone, One School model to integrate technology throughout the community, and provide teachers with support and additional opportunities so that they can provide the best possible instruction.

The applicant outlines ambitious annual goals that, if met, will improve student performance and increase educational equity, such as its plans to double the rate of performance on summative assessments such as Reading Proficiency where the baseline data indicates a 41% proficiency rate with an end goal of 90% proficiency.

The Applicant has also made significant progress in advancing student learning and achievement. Four years ago it implemented a variety of reforms such as small learning communities and math achievement and readiness. Its graduation rates have increased by 13.9%. And two schools, Palmview and Garza, saw significant gains in both math and reading performance.

Because of this, the Applicant meets the criteria.

Total	210	172
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0961TX-2 for La Joya Independent School District



A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant, an independent school district in the state of Texas, is seeking funds to provide a program that addresses the four core educational assurances related to the funded grant. The vision stated by the applicant indicates that it wishes all students to be prepared for a four year college or technical college education through a personalizing instruction program. Each school will establish student and teacher data systems that measure teacher effectiveness and student achievement. In addition, the district will support 90 teachers in earning an MA degree. It will partner with the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) using their educational materials and strategies. The overall vision reflects a very positive effort to prepare students in this predominantly Latino school district with an opportunity to attend college, choose STEM career programs, and compete in a global economy. The applicant addresses Absolute Priority 1 as well as Absolute Priority 4.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant plans a three stage implementation process for its 17 schools and 14,014 students. It reports that 97.16% of the students are from low income families and that 64% of the students are high need students. Stage I involves planning the implementation of a personalized system of instruction and getting the district and personnel ready for full implementation. Stage II is full implementation. Stage III deals with institutionalizing the changes and planning for sustainability. In addition to the narrative, the applicant provides a graph of the implementation process as well as a detailed list of the schools, number of students, and educators participating in the implementation. The implementation process is complete and represents responsible planning.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides the logic model that it plans to use in its reform process. The logic model includes inputs, outputs, outcomes, and overarching goals. In addition, it includes basic assumptions as well as external factors which will influence the proposed changes. The model is comprehensive in that it includes stakeholders, programs to strengthen math and science, as well as personalized instruction for every student. It addresses teachers and principals, home school partnerships, and the use of technology. The applicant also identifies key test assessments that it will use to measure student achievement. The applicant provides a plan that includes goals, key activities, deliverables, and identifies key personnel. The plan would be enhanced with the addition of a timeline.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In this section, the applicant provides extensive information on how it will close the achievement gaps and deal with improvements in graduation rates and college enrollment figures. Included are both the outcomes as well as the methodology for measuring student growth and change. Both the quality of data as well as the level of detail provided indicates the likelihood that the district will achieve its outcomes. Using appropriate tests and data collection efforts, the district makes ambitious and attainable projections in reading, math, science, social studies and general growth in all subjects. The district addresses the overall student population as well as specific subgroups. The plan also includes how it will decrease the achievement gaps for all students as well as students in various sub-groups. In addition it will close the gap in graduation and will graduate 95% of all students in 2016. It proposes to raise college enrollment from 46% to 80% by 2016. Overall, these proposals are responsible and appropriate for this reform effort.</p>		

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	15
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides information about its school reform efforts to date. It has received financial assistance from both state and federal governments as well as from the Gates foundation. These efforts have included a range of programs and nontraditional delivery methods such as intense instruction in small group settings and dual enrollment classes. The applicant reports modest district improvement in math performance (4.7%) and reading performance (.2%). Its graduation rate has increased 13.9% and its two-year college enrollment has also improved (3.0%). These improvements reflect a substantial effort to make changes, impact student achievement, and create an environment for college going students. The applicant reports that the high school failed to meet its annual yearly progress report five years ago. Two middle schools also failed to meet its progress in prior years. The applicant's improvement plan for the schools included data-driven instruction, curriculum alignment, and continuous monitoring of instruction. In addition, the district increased learning time, improved parent and community involvement, and revamped its appraisal system. As a result, the high school improved math performance by 26.7% and reading performance by 13.9%. Similar improvement was seen at the middle schools as well as in a poorly performing elementary school. All data concerning students, staff, and school operations are made available to the public on the district's website. This information indicates that the district has substantial and significant reform activities.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant indicates that all financial data as well as personnel salary data are included on the district's website which it provides. Its accounting processes have won recognition for accuracy and transparency. The applicant provides in the proposal the various salary guides, hourly rates and other information concerning cost and personnel. The information is detailed and supported by additional material in the appendix.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant describes its relationship to the Texas Education Agency which is supported by legislation to govern the various school districts. The applicant is an independent school district under the state agency. The state agency has not received funds under the Race to the Top program. However, the district has received support from the state agency and its efforts to secure funding. In the past, both the state and district have been involved in efforts to personalize learning environments through such efforts as collaborative learning, active learning, peer-based learning, and similar programs.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	7
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant indicates that in a survey of teachers, 88 percent of those responding (N=861) supported the proposal. Just under 12% did not. In addition, the applicant provides letters of support in the appendix from the local congressperson and the University of Texas-Pan American. It is unclear if other organizations in the area are in support of the project. Included also is a letter from the mayor. The applicant does not identify any other local or state organizations or agencies in support of the project.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant describes a detailed process to analyze needs and gaps. It will identify priority centers and then gather data for analysis and identification of weaknesses or gaps. Using campus based committees, the applicant will analyze mixed – method data and will produce a study identifying specific areas of need. The assessment will support five basic goals which seek to accelerate student achievement, deepen student learning, achieve greater engagement of the community and parents, improve opportunities for college and postsecondary study , and increase access, equity and excellence for all students. The applicant will identify needs and gaps in programs and services for students, principals, teachers, parents, and the general community. Overall, the activities reflect a plan that is of high quality and appropriate.</p>		

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	18
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant addresses this segment by identifying four objectives. They deal with the development of a college going culture, the personalization of instruction, the implementation of a math and science Academy at each high school, and the integration of technology to improve personalization of instruction. Each student will have an individual plan for graduation and a circle of support for success in college attainment. Much flexibility for delivering instructional services is seen in the array of instructional activities such as workshops, videoconferencing, demonstration lessons, webinars, online discussions, and reflection. IRDA will provide support for face-to-face and online coaching as well as mentoring sessions. Overall, the applicant provides many various opportunities for students to have high achievement. In this section, the applicant describes the activities focused on instructional services and activities. It indicates that it is using ongoing assessments to determine student engagement and to ensure students are mastering the subject areas. It is not always clear in this statement what these assessments will be. The applicant also has an objective to strengthen teacher quality and capacity. One aspect of this is the development of teachers through graduate study. It is unclear how feedback on this program will be collected and used in its continuation.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	17
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant continues the description of its proposed personalized instructional program with additional objectives dealing with staff personnel and leadership issues. It has established a number of mechanisms to support the school level activities. For example, staff has access to data on student progress and interests which it will use to tailor and customize instructional programs. This information enables the staff to make changes and incorporate other strategies to assist students. The campus support teams and campus staff will have a variety of classroom activity resources as well as technology driven support programs. In addition, using the School of One approach, teachers will be able to deliver specialized lesson plans to various groups, each of which will be progressing at their own rate. In addition, staff will all participate in a community of practice which will include an ongoing review, reflection, and consideration of activities being presented. The applicant will seek to improve effectiveness of administrators through Leadership Academies conducted during the summers. It will focus on current principals as well as teachers aspiring to be principals. The applicant also indicates that priority will be given to schools with high need students and will be staffed with the most highly effective teachers and principals. The applicant also provides an action plan and timeline which describes the activities at the district level, during the implementation stages, and for each objective. Overall, the information is specific and represents responsible planning. While there is substantial value in attaining an advanced degree, it is unclear why this approach was selected to enhance teacher effectiveness. Also, the applicant generally discusses the professional development of teachers and principals without explaining how evaluation processes identify specific needs.</p>		

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	12
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In discussing these objectives, the applicant indicates that the individual schools will serve as the hub for the partnerships and developing many of the activities. Each of the schools will be supported by a campus support team which will consist of representatives from all departments in the school. It points out that the activities will be developed with the support of parents, community, and educators. The applicant has also contracted with an organization to assist each campus in developing efforts to improve decision-making, empowering faculty, developing cohesiveness, insuring quality and improving autonomy. Using a survey, the organization will identify the needs of each campus and allow the administrative team and not the campus to develop programs to meet the needs. The applicant indicates that it will provide dual enrollment for college credit, state assessment preparation classes, and GED preparation for students wishing these opportunities. The applicant also indicates that it will provide flexible services for all students including those with disabilities and special needs. It is</p>		

unclear, however, how the district will organize itself in terms of staff responsibility at the district level. While the schools are the hub of activity, it is unclear if there is a single individual in the district who is in charge. It is also unclear how conflicts will be resolved. The role of the principal in the operation and decision making-process in relation to the function of the campus support teams is vague and needs clarification.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)

10

10

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicates that it will ensure that all participating students, parents, educators and other stakeholders will have access to the project through the use of the district website, quarterly bilingual meetings, newsletters, and campus parent meetings. All activities will be in both English and the home language. It will also ensure technical support through the iPad for each student, newsletters, and other bilingual media. The information technology office of the district will allow parents and students to export information in an open data format. They will have access to such programs as Brightstorm and Khan Academy. In addition, its interoperational data system will include human resource data, student information data, budget data, and instructional improvement system data.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a plan that is focused on student performance, language development and STEM achievement in math and science, professional development, integration of technology, and staff performance. The applicant will establish benchmarks and use quantitative and qualitative approaches to determine if they are meeting these outcomes. Activities will be built around assessing the implementation of the project, program outcomes, and the impact of the program. Techniques and strategies include archival reviews, surveys, on-site observations, interviews, case studies, and digital sources. This approach should provide regular feedback needed to make changes or alterations of the program.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)

5

2

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

In this section, the applicant indicates that its consultant and external evaluator will provide information about the development, implementation, and impact of the project to all stakeholders. It is unclear in this statement what specific strategies and techniques will be used by the applicant and its partners in maintaining ongoing communication with other stakeholders. The information is really focused on the evaluation process and does not address communications specifically.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)

5

3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides performance measures for all students in all grades, for students grades six through eight, and for students in grades nine through twelve. These measures will be part of the overall evaluation of the grant. While the applicant provides the performance measures, there is little discussion of the rationale for selecting the measures and why these measures will provide them with rigorous and timely information. In addition, there appears to be only nine performance measures for year one. In a somewhat confusing format, the applicant indicates a limited number of performance measures at various grade levels. In its evaluation plan, it has nine indicators for year one and various other indicators for years two through four. The project objectives are generally ambitious; e.g., double the number of effective teachers and principals. Based on the programs and services offered in the application, these goals are achievable.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The evaluation plan provided by the applicant focuses on the performance indicators, methodology, instruments to be used, and personnel who are responsible for completing the task. The information is appropriate for the project and will enable staff to monitor the activities and services being proposed. For example, the first year indicators, in which all nine elements are in place and schools show evidence they are occurring, is based on pre-and post observation surveys and archival review. In

charge is the campus project coordinator. Methodology and instruments are appropriate and will provide both quantitative and qualitative data for review and consideration in the overall operation of the project. Overall, the evaluation and assessments will provide stakeholders with an ongoing view of the activities and the costs to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The applicant provides a very detailed budget and the various allocations for personnel, travel, equipment, supplies and contractual agreements. Most of the line items contain appropriate information with specific data on cost, personnel, and time. Overall, the funds are sufficient to accomplish the project. Included in the budget is a line item for contractual services in the amount of \$250,000 annually for a single contractor. It is difficult to determine if these costs are reasonable without some explanation concerning staffing and services to be provided.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	6
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: The applicant states it will sustain critical aspects of the grant once the funding has ended. Its approach is to use in-kind matching funds and will focus on providing student services and activities developed during the project lifespan. It indicates it will not sustain positions supported by the grant. Using such resources as flexible scheduling and monitoring techniques, it will seek to provide personalized educational services. The statement is very general and does not provide specific information concerning the amounts of money which will be available and how it will be used. The plan itself is not highly developed in that it lacks objectives, specific activities, timelines, or personnel responsible to complete the activities.		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	5
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: The applicant indicates that it will partner with the University of Texas Pan American, the Intercultural Development Research Association, and other community-based organizations to deliver the programs and services proposed in the application. The applicant provides 10 population-level desired results. For example, its states that 90% of the students will meet state expectations in basic academic disciplines. Included also are such areas as extracurricular activities and social interaction. The partnerships will also focus on health and other psychosocial services for the students. It will collect information on a regular basis and share that information with all stakeholders. In addition, the applicant provides the performance measures it includes in the regular application. Overall, the applicant provides little information about how the partnerships will participate in the project and scale the model beyond the participating students. In most cases, the applicant simply states it will perform tasks, but does not add information explaining methodology or intended outcomes.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: The applicant provides a comprehensive set of services and activities addressing the four core educational resource shortages of the Race to the Top program. Its proposal clearly seeks to personalize educational programs for students, provide data for use in decision-making, develop effective teachers and principals, and turnaround low achieving schools. Building on a solid record of reform, the district is proposing a set of responsible approaches that will assist students to raise their achievement		

levels, help teachers and principals serve them more effectively, and build data systems to support the educational project.

Total	210	182
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	0
Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments: Applicant did not provide information in this part.		



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0961TX-3 for La Joya Independent School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> La Joya demonstrates a clear vision with the students at the center of this vision. La Joya's vision demonstrates the desire for all students to graduate, college and career ready as well as only having highly qualified teachers in the classroom. La Joya has a clear approach to reach this vision resulting in maximum points for this category. La Joya shared a three step process to fully implement this program which provides a clear picture of the implementation of their vision. La Joya addressed all four core educational areas resulting in all points in this category. 		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> La Joya identified all students at the secondary level to participate in this grant. La Joya provided statistics to support the need to include these students. La Joya shared 97% of their students are from low-income families and that is why such a large population of students will benefit from this grant. 50% of the community members are illiterate in this district thus demonstrating a greater need to implement this program. La Joya showed the number of educators who will be participating in this grant. La Joya meets all criteria in this category resulting in a score of 10. 		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> La Joya provided a clear Logic Model to demonstrate the change this reform will make. There is input from many 		

community stakeholders, administrators, teachers, students and parents which identifies the need to make all parties aware and responsible for this reform.

- La Joya provided clear outputs, impact and goals for this reform while explain the external factors to obtain these goals.
- La Joya receives a 10 in this category for providing the above mentioned data to demonstrate meaningful changes and reform in their district.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	10
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

- La Joya provided charts with percentages for summative assessments with projected goals.
- La Joya has an aggressive goal to decrease achievement gaps to meet state requirements.
- La Joya has an ambitious goal to increase graduation rates
- La Joya has an ambitious goal for college enrollment which is a direct link to the increases graduation rate which shows how committed the district is to student success.
- La Joya receives all points in this category. The high expectations and goals La Joya has set forth show a commitment to student success based on this reform.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	13

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- La Joya has a clear track record of success based on the information provided. Although in some areas, success is minimal, gains are being met.
- La Joya demonstrates an increase in graduation rates showing a commitment to the success of students.
- La Joya embraces a transparent approach to making student performance data available to students, educators and parents.
- La Joya uses several means of communication such as the district web site, newsletters, parent conferences, flyers, memos, meetings and community events to share this information.
- La Joya receives a 13 in this category for their aggressive ways to communicate data. As La Joya communicates their data, they did not provide ways to improve participation, instruction and services which is an important way to continue success with this reform.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- La Joya provided the necessary personnel salaries to receive a 5 in this category. This information is also available on their district website. This shows their commitment to being transparent in their reform.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

- Texas, allows each school district to create personalized learning environments for their students. La Joya, under the leadership of the commissioner of Education, follows all set criteria.
- La Joya acknowledged their compliance with all measurements within the reform as will as with the federal requirement thus resulting in a 10 in this category.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	7
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

- La Joya receives a 7 in this category for correctly showing 88% of teachers are in agreement with this reform. They provided letters of support from stakeholders which identifies a vested interest in the program through the community. However, La Joya did not show how students or parents were engaged in the development of this plan. They did provide two letters of support from the Student of the Round Table and Parent of the Round Table but this does not address the entire student and parent population in their district.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

5

5

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

- La Joya performed an internal review of their current systems and data to determine which schools had the greatest need and focus for this reform which shows evidence of analysis of their current system.
- La Joya identified the importance of STEM careers Joya identified the need to have high quality teachers with a personalized approach to learning
- La Joya identified offering a wide opportunity for students to enroll and graduate in college with a STEM related degree
- La Joya identified increased access for students to supports to gain a larger understanding of education.
- Because of the above mentioned bullets, La Joya receives a five in this category by showing a commitment to implementing a personalized learning environment for students resulting in closing gaps and meeting needs of all learners.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	18

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- La Joya receives an 18 in this category for providing a clear approach to meeting student needs and creating a high quality plan to encourage college and career readiness. La Joya provided proof at the district level and in the classroom which shows a commitment to instill these beliefs in students to succeed in school.
- La Joya provided evidence of instilling a culture of college readiness and has a working relationship with parents to instill this belief. An example of this plan is to have colleges visit middle and high schools and provide college readiness workshops for parents.
- La Joya has acknowledged academics comes before any sports team.
- La Joya has committed to creating instructional plans to meet the needs of every student, especially high-needs students with input from parents which shows a commitment to success.
- La Joya provided a technology plan to ensure students are trained and given support to manage their learning.
- La Joya does not address timely and regular feedback to students only states periodic personalized feedback. This is not specific enough to receive full points in this category.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

18

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- La Joya provides a clear plan to meet the needs in this category. From professional development for teachers to leaders will be provided to have an all hands on deck approach to seeing this reform be successful.
- La Joya provided a clear timeline of implementation of these events.
- La Joya acknowledged and included the community and families in the growth and development in this reform.
- La Joya has committed to ongoing and frequent progress monitoring to adjust learning needs and success.
- LaJoya has committed to allow educators to have access to data on student progress, provide assessment and curriculum resources available, create personalized learning environments and use a teacher evaluation system which allows for personalized student growth. This professional development will allow the school to monitor student progress and tailor instructional practices to student needs.
- La Joya has committed to provide teachers with professional development in Math and Science with 8 hours of math undergraduate coursework for teachers in middle school and an equivalent of 18 hours of master degree level training for teachers at the high school level. This will ensure highly qualified teachers for advanced placement courses. In addition, La Joya has provided a plan for additional professional development and leadership training for teachers and administrators.

- La Joya does not address a principal evaluation system to ensure the leadership training is working, resulting in a loss of points.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La Joya has committed to identifying which groups will be affected by this reform and will meet once a month at the central office to provide summaries of all schools. • La Joya has committed to empower school leadership with training and flexibility to implement and change this reform as they see necessary. They will use qualitative and quantitative data to make these decisions. They have also contracted an outside firm to assist in this implementation. • La Joya did not provide evidence to support giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on mastery resulting in a loss of points. • La Joya will utilize Compass Learning to allow students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple ways thus allowing for a personalized individual approach to learning. • La Joya demonstrated multiple ways to meet the needs of students with disabilities as well as ELL students. This shows a commitment to encourage success to students who otherwise might have given up in school. 		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La Joya demonstrates a plan for all students and parents to have technical support however do not provide enough support to meet the needs of implementing the use of technology. • La Joya does meet the needs of providing the necessary information into the data system. • All students will be able to access this data system through iPads. This information system will allow parents to access this information at any time. • Instructional videos will be aligned with textbooks to provide additional support for students. • La Joya commits to provide student information, human resource data budget and instructional improvement through the secure data system. 		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La Joya does provide a comprehensive plan to monitor improvements and provide feedback. • La Joya does not provide information on sharing their RTTD investments resulting in a loss of points. 		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La Joya has committed to monitor improvement of this plan; however, they do not discuss how they will communicate this with internal and external stakeholders resulting in a loss of points. 		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:		

- La Joya clearly identifies 12 performance measures with rationale
- La Joya provided the necessary charts to measure data to reflect performance data
- La Joya lost a point in this category for not properly identifying how they will make improvements to these goals over a period of time. Having a plan for continuous improvement is important to the success of this grant.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

- La Joya receives a 5 in this category for providing pro active measures to assess the grant activities. By using pre and post surveys, student observations, teacher reflection logs, focus groups, training workshop effectiveness the district should have a grasp on the effectiveness of the grant. La Joya provided a four year plan to evaluate the effectiveness of this reform.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	4

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- La Joya provides an explanation of their budget for each year of the grant. There will be equipment bought each year however there is not maintenance of this equipment or explanation why more technology is being bought. There is also a statement that \$108,661 in supplies will be bought for classroom instruction as bonuses for campuses who received recognized status. I do not know what type of supplies and that is a lot of money to be unaccounted for resulting in a loss of points.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)

10

5

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- La Joya does not provide a clear plan to sustain the goals of the project after the term of the project. Personnel will no longer be provided and it is the hope that teachers continue to implement these changes. Without support I do not see how this can be attained resulting in a loss of points.
- La Joya does not mention support from local or State government resulting in a loss of points.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	5

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

- La Joya applied for competitive preference priority however they did not include both educational results and educational outcomes resulting in a loss of points.
- La Joya does not provide a clear plan of collecting data and analyzing data to fulfill number three in this category resulting in a loss of points.
- La Joya does not provide evidence for number 5 of this category resulting in a loss of points.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

- La Joya meets Absolute Priority 1 by providing individualized learning plans for students, providing high quality professional development and partnering with community organizations. La Joya has a clear vision and plan to decrease achievement gaps between sub groups and provide all students the opportunity to be college and career ready.
- La Joya has a committed plan to involve parents and community stakeholders as well as implement the use of technology in the classroom. By having highly qualified teachers and identifying the need to increase professional development in Math and Science, students will be better prepared for post graduate work.
- La Joya shows a commitment to individualized learning plans for students and the ability and need to change these plans as students show progress in classes.
- La Joya shows a desire to close achievement gaps and recognizes the importance to do so in setting clear achievable goals over the next four years.

Total	210	175
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