

Race to the Top Program

Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions

Addendum 1

December 11, 2009

- F-3. The Statewide Summative Assessments program requirement specifies that “No funds awarded under this competition may be used to pay for costs related to statewide summative assessments.” Which activities are allowable, and which are not allowable, under this requirement?**

Note: In the November version of the Race to the Top Guidance/FAQs, question F-2 addresses a related issue. This answer further clarifies that guidance.

As noted in this question and in question F-2 in the November version of the Race to the Top Guidance/FAQs, payment of State summative assessment costs is not an allowable use of regular Race to the Top grants because the Department intends to hold a separate Race to the Top Assessment competition that will fund the development of common, summative assessments tied to common K–12 standards. The Department believes that consortia of States, by pooling resources and developing new statewide assessments to address these common K-12 standards, will be able to produce significantly better assessments at lower cost than any one State could produce alone. Because we do not believe that Race to the Top funds awarded under this competition should be used to replicate or revise States’ current assessment systems, States may not use these funds to pay for costs related to developing, administering or revising statewide summative assessments.

Having said this, the Department is not trying to prohibit States and LEAs from using Race to the Top funds for other uses of assessments. Indeed, we believe that assessments are critical tools for improving instruction. For example, a State’s plan may include other reasonable and necessary costs related to assessment solutions that support the transition to enhanced standards (criterion (B)(3)) or the administration of summative assessments that are not offered statewide but rather are used for a subset of schools or districts. States should exercise their best judgment in determining how, if at all, they will use Race to the Top funds for costs related to assessments (other than for developing or revising individual statewide summative assessments).

To reiterate, we do not intend for funds awarded under this competition to be used to reproduce, improve, or enhance States’ current summative assessment systems. In order to be competitive, States’ applications must include high-quality reform plans for improving student outcomes statewide, as well as budgets that match those plans. Thus it is wise to carefully plan the use of expensive resources in strategically focused and instructionally coherent ways that will be sustainable after the period of grant funding has ended.

- K-12. The Model MOU refers to Exhibit II, which is a final scope of work. Should participating LEAs include these final scopes of work in the agreements they submit to States before States apply for Race to the Top grants?**

No. States do not need to have their participating LEAs complete the final scope of work (*i.e.*, Exhibit II) until *after* a State is awarded a Race to the Top grant.

As discussed in the Participating LEA Scope of Work requirement, the agreements executed between participating LEAs and States must include a scope-of-work section. The scopes of work completed before States submit their Race to the Top applications will be preliminary (*i.e.*, Exhibit I). These preliminary scopes of work should describe the portions of the State's proposed reform plans that participating LEAs agree to implement.

As evidence for criterion (A)(1)(ii), States should complete the summary tables regarding specific portions of their agreements with LEAs, including the summary table for criterion (A)(1)(ii)(b) summarizing the preliminary scopes of work (see pages 18-22 of the Application). They should also include an example of the State's standard Participating LEA agreement, and description of variations used, if any. States should not include copies of each agreement in their application, though they should have these available in the event of an audit or Department monitoring.

If a State is awarded a Race to the Top grant, the participating LEAs will then have up to 90 days after the grant is awarded to the State to complete final scopes of work (*i.e.*, Exhibit II), which must contain detailed work plans that are consistent with the preliminary scope of work and with the State's approved grant application, and which should include participating LEAs' specific goals, activities, timelines, budgets, key personnel, and annual targets for key performance measures.

There is no suggested format for Exhibit II.