



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Iowa Application #2760



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	44
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	2
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	40
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	2
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: The State plans to use RttT to implement the Iowa Core. While it may be reasonable for the State to explore how RttT can support current reform efforts, the State's RttT and Iowa Core plan seem interchangeable. This sends the message that the State is only interested in RttT to the extent it advances Iowa Core. Iowa Core is a thoughtful, progressive, and ambitious agenda, but it falls short as a comprehensive and coherent reform agenda that clearly articulates goals for implementing reforms in the four education areas described in the ARRA. Iowa Core focuses on content, instruction, and assessment, and it does not address turning around the state's persistently lowest performing schools, for example. The State ensures participating LEAs are strongly committed to its plan and effective implementation by 1) aligning the plan with Iowa Core, an initiative LEAs are currently working to implement, and 2) mandating Participating LEAs agree to "everything in the MOU." The State's MOU addresses every reform element, except turning around the lowest performing schools. The State also adds additional provisions to its scope-of-work descriptions, so participating LEAs RttT implementation goals match their Iowa Core implementation goals. The plan is supported by 98% of participating LEA Superintendents, every President of an applicable Local School Board, and significant number of unions. The State may have a difficult time translating the efforts of its Participating LEAs into broad statewide impact due to low participation rates. The 221 participating LEAs serve less than 50% of students in poverty and less than 50% of all K-12 students. The State also does not include a plan for pursuing ambitious yet achievable goals, overall and by subgroup, for (a) Increasing student achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics; (b) Decreasing achievement gaps between subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics; (c) Increasing high school graduation rates; and (d) Increasing college enrollment and increasing the number of students who complete at least a year's worth of college credit.</p>		
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	21
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	12
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	9
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: The State does not provide strong leadership for implementing its statewide education reform plans. The State expects to hire a Director of Race to the Top; however, the plan does not explain who the Director will report to, his/her seniority within IDE, or portfolio of responsibility. The State's Scaling-Up Statewide Implementation Logic Model, created by "organizational consultants at [a] think tank," provides a smart model for implementing RttT. The narrative, however, only describes the role of</p>		

Regional Implementation Teams, and even here the descriptions are vague and elementary. For example, the State explains that Regional Implementation Teams will “devote at least 25% of [their] time to scaling up activities” and “attend weekly meetings to plan next steps...” Also, the State does not explain how it will integrate its Statewide Implementation Logic Model into IDE’s current systems, which is critical since the model is new and specific to its RttT plan.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	20
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	4
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	16
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: The State has invested significant resources in its teachers, strengthening its induction program, exploring innovative compensation models, etc. The State, through Iowa Core, has demonstrated a serious dedication to improving assessments and standards. The State has recently “redoubled” its commitment to developing a robust data system. It is unclear how the state has tackled turning around low-performing schools. The State’s budget does not align with its targeted reform efforts. The State’s students perform above the national average on NAEP, yet they have not experienced a significant increase in NAEP scores over the past few years. While the State acknowledges this reality, its plan does not explain the actions (or lack thereof) leading to the leveling off of NAEP scores. The gap between free/reduced lunch eligible students and their peers, Hispanic students and their peers, and African American students and their peers has not decreased significantly. The State is forward about its challenges and offers explanations for the gap. The State’s graduation rate has decreased slightly compared to previous years. This drop does not reflect an “actual” drop in graduation rates; instead, it reflects a more accurate counting of high school graduates - made possible by the State improving its data system. The State’s decision to transition to a competency based model is compelling; however, the plan does not clearly explain how the State will support its LEAs through this transition.</p>		
Total	125	85

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	25
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	5
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: LEAs have begun implementing the Iowa Core, and Iowa, like 47 other states, is a Common Core Standards Initiative partner. This is evidence the State is working toward jointly developing and adopting a common set of K-12 standards that are supported by evidence that they are internationally benchmarked and build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation. The State’s timeline for implementation is vague and the milestones are sparse. The State includes four milestones, but only two happen in the future: 1) “release[ing] a draft to the public” in January 2010 and 2) finalizing and releasing Common Core Standards to the public in August 2010. The plan does not detail the actions the State is taking (or will take) during the seven months between releasing and finalizing the standards. Further, the narrative does not explain how the Common Core Standards Initiative fits into the work LEAs are doing implementing Iowa Core. The plan also lacks a narrative explaining how Common Core Standards will be implemented in a well planned way after approval. The State does not clearly describe the legal process for adopting standards.</p>		
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10

<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: The State will expand its own assessment development work to ensure statewide assessments cover all of the skills and concepts in Iowa Core. The State will also develop and implement common, high-quality assessments aligned with the consortium's common set of K-12 standards through partnerships with MOSAIC and the Consortium on Developing Balanced and Comprehensive Assessments of the Common Core Standards. Given that state's participation in several consortia, the consortium with the highest participation rate was used to determine if the State participates in a consortium with a significant number of other States. 26 states participate in the Consortium on Developing Balanced and Comprehensive Assessments of the Common Core Standards.</p>		
<p>(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>15</p>
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: The State through their efforts implementing Iowa Core has started transitioning LEAs to enhanced standards. High schools are required to submit their plan for implementing Iowa Core by July 1, 2010. With the State's Common Core Standards scheduled for adoption a month later in August, LEAs may need to revise their implementation plans. The State smartly includes a plan for providing additional supports to districts, in case revisions are needed. The State, however, does not explain how it will reduce the risk of redundancy and duplicitous activity implementing its standards and assessments via Iowa Core and those through its partnership with consortia. The State also discusses LEAs performing an initial analysis of their professional development needs. This baseline data should ensure educators receive the professional development that is appropriate and relevant to their needs. The State and its partner, MOSAIC, include a high quality framework describing the statewide summative and local assessment principles. The State's implementation timeline is sufficient as well as its performance goals for LEAs.</p>		
<p>Total</p>	<p>70</p>	<p>50</p>

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
<p>(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>18</p>
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: The State has fully implemented nine elements of the America COMPETES Act.</p>		
<p>(C)(2) Accessing and using State data</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>4</p>
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: The State is committed to building a longitudinal data system. Through the State's investment of \$2.9 million and receipt of an \$8.8 million SLDS grant, the State is well-positioned to achieve its goals to fully develop the America COMPETES Act elements. With the funding, the State proposes a tiered system that allows key stakeholders to access the data according to their needs and role. The plan, however, does not offer a detailed approach to ensuring data informs decision making. The State does seem to be thinking about the issue and exploring solutions, such as ways to use its Teacher Quality Partnership data platform. The State is also setting aside funds to independently evaluate the traffic its data site receives and the quality of its reporting.</p>		
<p>(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>13</p>
<p>(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: The State's plan for increasing the acquisition, adoption, and use of local instructional improvement systems among teachers and principals focuses on providing professional development. The State's professional development plan, however, is unclear. The plan does not address: who will receive</p>		

professional development, how frequent professional development will be provided, how the State plans to align and synchronize development, so educators are building a cohesive set of skills. The State's discussion regarding creating a culture of data is masterful and illustrates the State's desire to create a sustainable plan for implementation. The State will rely on its "robust, research-based professional development system" to provide support and training to teachers, principals, and administrators on using its local instructional improvement system. This is smart as it allows the State to leverage existing resources and skills. The State, however, does not describe how it will increase the number of LEAs using its local instructional improvement system. The State's timeline for making data accessible to researchers fails to articulate a clear plan for how and when the data will be accessible to researchers. The plan does not, for example, clarify if researchers currently have access to EdInsight and the State is strengthening its protocols or if the data system will be available to researchers at a later date. If the latter is the case, the plan does not explain when that date will be.

Total	47	35
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	10
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: The State does not have providers operating alternative routes to teacher certification independent of IHEs; the State does have providers operating alternative routes to principal certification independent of IHEs. The State's principal program includes all five elements, and its teacher program includes four of the five elements listed in the definition. The main alternative route to certification in use for teachers is the Teacher Intern Program, which three universities and the Board of Regents utilize or plan to utilize. According to the narrative, the Teacher Intern Program does not produce a significant number of teachers. The State's principal certification program, which operates through a private-public partnership in one region, is producing similar results. The State sufficiently describes a process for monitoring, evaluating, and identifying areas of teacher and principal shortage and for preparing educators to fill these areas. The State, however, is in a unique position. It produces more teachers and principals than it has positions available.</p>		
(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	36
(i) Measuring student growth	5	3
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	10
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	9
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	14
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: The State has a clear goal of measuring student growth, and the plan describes the State's desired outcomes, such as developing multiple, authentic measures for student achievement. The State's plan, as described in Section (B)(3), does not include a clear path for getting there. The plan lacks an appropriate level of specificity, such as the inclusion of meaningful annual targets. The State does not have a roadmap for designing and implementing a rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation system for teachers and principals that uses student achievement as a significant factor. While the State does address developing a model for determining highly effective teachers and engaging educators, the plan seems to do two things: push evaluation development to local districts and wait until "valid and reliable measures of student achievement and growth are developed" before investing resources. Per statute, teachers and principals must be evaluated annually, but since evaluation standards are locally driven the inclusion of student growth, constructiveness of feedback, and timeliness of feedback will vary. Teacher and principal evaluations are directly and explicitly linked to a professional development</p>		

plan. Also, the State's plan to invest resources in training evaluators is strong and will help ensure educators receive targeted, constructive, and actionable feedback, if evaluations include meaningful student achievement data and accurately reflect the competency of the educator. The State has been a leader in the pay-for-performance space, and their decision to expand their performance pay programs and use lessons learned from the pilots demonstrate a commitment to uncovering promising practices for compensating, promoting, and retaining teachers and principals. The State does not provide a high-quality plan to improve its process for evaluating and/or removing ineffective tenured and untenured teachers and principals after they have had ample opportunities to improve. In fact, the State does not commit to removing its ineffective teachers or leaders.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	24
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	15
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	9

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments:

According to the State's Teacher Equity Plan, few schools are high-poverty and/or high-minority. The schools that fit the high-poverty high-minority profile do not have staffing challenges due to their geographic location. The State does track teacher distribution and anticipates developing the definitions of "highly effective" and "effective" in the near term. These two activities should allow the State to know the quality of a school's teaching corps, thus ensuring poor and/or minority students are taught by some of the most effective teachers in the state. The State's goal for increasing the number of highly effective teachers and leaders in schools as well as decreasing the number of ineffective teachers is aggressive. And through the Teacher Quality Partnership grant, if awarded, the State should be well-positioned to meet its performance targets.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	10
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(D)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The State currently has a unique identifier for students, teachers and schools and will link this data to teachers and principals when conducting annual evaluations. While the ability to link student, teacher, and school data conceivably allows the State to link student achievement and student growth with in-State programs, the State plans to develop a more robust data system that links teachers and principals to multiple, authentic measures of student achievement and student growth. This decision to strengthen its data system should ensure the State has the ability to accurately evaluate the effectiveness of teachers and principals and, by extension, to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs. The State's timeline for building this capacity and making the data publicly available is conservative. The State's plan for expanding preparation and credentialing options and programs that are successful at producing effective teachers and principals is weak. The State plans to "encourage" successful programs, yet it does not discourage ineffective programs. Further, the plan does not describe what incentive or benefit the State will offer effective programs to expanding their services.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	18
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(D)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The State describes the Iowa Professional Development Model, a comprehensive professional development plan that should provide a solid foundation for professional development efforts across the state. This model provides a research-based field-tested strategy for developing educators towards increasing student achievement. The State's strategy of using different professional development models for new and seasoned educators and administrators is smart and ensures each group gets a tailored professional development solution that meets their needs. The State's success with its Assessment from Learning program and decision to scale up activities should lead to better teachers, more effective instruction, and increases in student achievement.

Total	138	98
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	5
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: The State has the legal authority to intervene directly in LEAs with one or more of the State's persistently lowest-achieving schools. It is unclear if the State has the legal authority to intervene directly in its lowest-achieving schools</p>		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	33
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	28
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: The State includes a robust plan for turning around its lowest-performing schools. The plan illustrates the State's commitment via the Iowa Support System for Schools and Districts in Need of Assistance to improving education outcomes in poor performing schools and resourcing said schools with proven teams capable of turning them around. The State's decision to develop this section in tandem with its School Improvement Grant will ensure dollars are concentrated and maximized for impact. The Center for Collaborative Inquiry on Intensive School Support provides a clear and compelling plan for transforming schools, closing achievement gaps within schools, and overcoming racial disparity. This is smart and shows a level of sophistication within the State to use lessons learned from previous turnaround efforts to improve results among newly identified schools. The State's reservations about using the Department's turnaround models are informed and understandable as well as its decision to pilot the models during the upcoming academic year.</p>		
Total	50	38

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	5
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: Education saw a small increase in funding from FY2008 to FY2009. The State asserts its funding formula is "one of the most equitable in the nation," and it supports its claim by citing failed attempts by third-parties to successfully challenge the formula's equitability. While the formula does establish through Iowa Chapter Code 257 a per pupil funding amount that is consistent to all schools and provides additional funding that favors low-income schools, the presence of court challenges may reflect a dissatisfaction among certain stakeholders with the formula. Further, the narrative does not describe how its formula has lead to equitable funding (a) between high-need LEAs and other LEAs and (b) within LEAs, between high-poverty schools and other schools. The State's inability to describe the impact of its funding formula undermines its assertion that its formula is "one of the most equitable in the nation."</p>		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	13
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: The State does not have a charter school cap. The State has guidelines regarding how charter school authorizers approve, monitor, hold accountable, reauthorize, and close charter schools. The guidelines do not explicitly address whether authorizers require that student achievement be one significant</p>		

factor, among others, in authorization or renewal. Rather the guidelines describe holding charters accountable to the "education goals" in their charter, which presumably could include student achievement. The law is silent regarding the encouragement of charter schools that serve student populations that are similar to local district student populations. Regarding accountability, charter schools receive an assessment each year and it is shared with the legislature. It is unclear how these reports are used to drive reform within the school or inform practices regarding opening new school or reauthorizing current schools. The State's plan does not address: (iii) The State's charter schools receive (as set forth in Appendix B) equitable funding compared to traditional public schools, and a commensurate share of local, State, and Federal revenues; (iv) The State provides charter schools with funding for facilities (for leasing facilities, purchasing facilities, or making tenant improvements), assistance with facilities acquisition, access to public facilities, the ability to share in bonds and mill levies, or other supports; and the extent to which the State does not impose any facility-related requirements on charter schools that are stricter than those applied to traditional public schools; and (v) The State enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools (as defined in this notice) other than charter schools.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	0
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: The State does not answer (F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions.		
Total	55	18

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
Competitive Reviewer Comments: The State through is recently launched STEM Initiative and the Iowa Core places a meaningful and measurable emphasis on STEM towards offering a rigorous course of study in mathematics, the sciences, technology, and engineering; cooperating with STEM-capable community partners to prepare and assist teachers in integrating STEM content across grades and disciplines; and preparing more students for advanced study and careers in the STEM fields.		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: The State's application comprehensively and coherently address all of the four education reform areas specified in the ARRA as well as the State Success Factors Criteria. The State's application demonstrates it is taking a systemic approach to education reform.		
Total		0

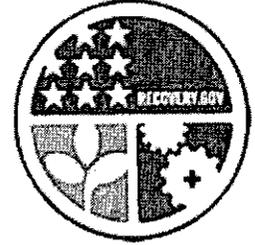
Grand Total	500	339
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Iowa Application #27601A



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	53
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	40
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	8
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Inspired by one of their schools who successfully created a unique learning environment by developing a student lead virtual reality lab where students take charge of their learning, Iowa has embraced a statewide reform agenda. Iowa is focused on a statewide plan for the improvement of teaching, leading, and learning embodied in legislation referred to as the "IOWA CORE". Through a collaborative effort of the department of education, the school board, the governor, the legislature, and stakeholders across the state, Iowa has made a commitment to invest in high quality education and concentrate their effort in the implementation of the Iowa Core. In collaboration with LEAs, business and community leaders, higher education, and parents, Iowa has defined and articulated the steps they will take to bring about the necessary statewide systemic change and implement the four reform areas outlined in ARRA. The Iowa Core centers on creating a student-based approach that supports high expectations for all students and defines how LEAs must proceed by establishing a framework for accreditation, programs, teaching and leadership, core content standards and performance standards. The Iowa Core has set the groundwork for reform that provides for a comprehensive and sequential systematic approach to their plan for instructional improvement and reform agenda. 61 % of Iowa's LEAs agreed to participate and sign the MOU which included some provisions that go beyond the scope of the minimum requirements. This represents 53 % of schools, 47% of K-12 students and 42 % of students in poverty. Signature of an authorized LEA representative was not included. Associations representing both administrators and teachers have given their support on behalf of Iowa's plan. Letters of support were included. While Iowa did not address separately section (A)(1)(iii) however there is a clear indication throughout their plan which include goals to increase student achievement, decrease achievement gaps and increase college enrollment. Iowa has invested in research-based initiatives focused on teacher and leadership development with programs that provide interventions for struggling students and supports to subgroups. The support structure will include Centers for Collaborative Inquiry designed to address Competency-Based Education Systems; Balanced Assessment Systems; Responsive Data Platforms; Teacher and Administrator Evaluation and Support; and Intensive School Support. In the long term, to build statewide capacity, teams will expand support to all school districts.</p>		
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	26
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	16
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

Iowa outlined a scaling-up statewide implementation logic model with regional implementation teams charged with implementation, organization, change and system transformation activities. This structure is designed to support building capacity, to serve as a link between policy and practice, to ensure that information is used to create an increasingly hospitable environment for successful implementation and sustainability of reform initiatives. Iowa has been taking a systematic approach to build its internal capacity for statewide improvement of teaching and learning by establishing a partnership with Area Education Agencies. This organizational structure has a series of teams to address state to regional to district and schools and is responsible for providing training, technical assistance, professional development, mentoring, coaching, and facilitation in all areas of reform. The development of the Iowa Core prepared the way for all relevant stakeholders to come together and to share an urgency to continue pursuing academic excellence in collaborative efforts toward innovation, improvement, and reform. Iowa's legislature, the governor, and the state board have enacted laws and legislations that support the enhancement of education data systems, the development of the Iowa Core Curriculum, and the Teacher and Administrator Quality legislation. The involvement and support from the Parent Teacher Association, the Teachers Association, and the Administrators Association will help Iowa transform education and create a system that produces students ready for college and career. Iowa has been working in a systematic approach incrementally allocating resources from state funding, entitlement grants and other grants received from partnerships with various foundations. Iowa seeks to accelerate their reform agenda if they receive this award. However Iowa will proceed with local funding to develop the Common Core Standards and the Balanced Assessment plans and through their present organizational structure continue to provide supports to LEAs in the implementation of the Iowa Core. Iowa did not specifically address repurposing or reallocation of present funds but throughout the application referenced their commitment to continuing their reform efforts and the implementation of the Iowa Core.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	21
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	16

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:
 With the enactment of the Student Achievement and Teacher Quality Act, Iowa has established teaching standards, has created a required mentoring and induction program, mandates high quality professional development, and developed a comprehensive teacher evaluation system and training for evaluators of teachers. Annually, the department of education reports on the progress of student achievement scores and improvements in the evaluation of teachers. Standards and assessment with criteria that defines expectations, comprehensive school improvement plans, professional development linked to teacher effectiveness and improving data systems are all part of Iowa's ongoing efforts to create a system focused on student performance and growth. Results on assessments show Iowa to be above the national average with no significant improvement when comparing their results over a period of time. Iowa uses 7 state indicators for measuring student success that range from assessment scores at benchmarked grades for specific academic areas, and dropout and graduation rates. The results for subgroups involving minority students and students in poverty as determined by students identified to receive free and reduced lunch have been lower than the results for all other students with no significant change though some modest reduction in the achievement gap has been made. Evidence presented show limited progress for subgroups and the achievement gap has not decreased. Iowa is moving forward recognizing that there is a need to improve outcomes for all students. To address this, Iowa is implementing a number of projects which involve direct services to students, a strategic instructional approach, and professional development. Initiatives designed to support schools and increase student achievement for each student subgroup will also focus on decreasing the achievement gap and increasing the graduation rates. However data analysis between the State assessment results and NAEP results show a discrepancy and there was no clear indication on how Iowa has addressed this with districts and schools and what has been done to decrease the achievement of subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics.

Total	125	100
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B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	20
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	15
(ii) Adopting standards	20	5
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Iowa is among 48 states that have made a commitment to participate in a consortium of States and is working towards the development, adoption and implementation of Common Core State Standards which will be internationally benchmarked and include college and career-readiness standards. A copy of MOU was not submitted. Iowa has played a leadership role in the Common Core State Standards Initiative and is actively involved with the Council of Chief State School Officers, a partner in this initiative. Iowa has outlined a plan describing the process, steps taken so far and timelines indicating that the final document will be released by August 2010, however there is no clear indication as to when the standards will be adopted and there is no mention of adoption within the timelines provided in plan. Iowa's strong commitment and progress toward adopting and implementing common standards is underway since the development of the Iowa Core. In order to develop the Iowa Core the state created teams and committees of relevant stakeholders and charged them with defining and identifying the essential content and skills of a world-class curriculum. It was signed into law in 2008 and outlines timelines for full implementation requiring that each district develops a plan for complying with this mandate. The Iowa Core calls for leadership, schools, and the community to work towards the improvement of teaching and learning with an aligned system of content, instruction, and assessment in an integrated approach that enhances teacher effectiveness and improves achievement of students, preparing them for the world of work and lifelong learning. This foundation will pave the way for the Common Core State Standards Initiative.</p>		
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Iowa has worked in partnership with the University of Iowa on numerous testing projects with the voluntary participation of virtually all of Iowa's public and private schools. Iowa is committed to improving the quality of its assessments and has signed onto a multi-state consortium with 25 other states with the goal of developing a balanced assessment system of formative and benchmarked assessment and are also a part of a Balanced Assessment Consortium consisting of 26 states. As part of the Iowa Core, Iowa has a comprehensive plan to develop multiple, authentic measures of student achievement and growth that will help in planning professional development, instruction, evaluation, and other systemic decisions.</p>		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	15
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Iowa is prepared to begin the process of working collaboratively with the participating districts and institutions of higher education and has established a comprehensive plan with activities and timelines for implementation. Districts are in the process of developing a plan for the implementation of the Iowa Core, which subsequently will be expanded to address the Common Core Standards and assessments. Districts will receive support and technical assistance to enable them to integrate the Common Core Standards and the Balanced Assessment system. Leading this initiative will be the Center for Collaborative Inquiry on Balanced Assessment. Districts have already committed to this initiative as part of the Memorandum of Understanding they signed. Additionally, districts are required</p>		

to address standards and assessment in their school improvement plans as part of a state mandate in the Iowa Core law. Districts will receive support from the Center for Collaborative Inquiry as they refine their Iowa Core implementation plans and begin to transition to the internationally benchmarked Common Core States Standards and high-quality assessments. Teachers will be guided through this transition as part of their professional development. As part of the goals established by the Iowa State Board of Education, the Iowa Department of Education is commissioned with preparing students to become successful participants in a global community. The Iowa DOE plans are guided by the needs of students, the needs of a changing workforce, and the need to remain globally competitive. Plans include aligning with; college and work expectations, rigorous academic content and application, evidence and/or research-based practices, and internationally benchmarked standards and assessments. Iowa has established principles that guide the work of developing and implementing standards and assessments that are linked to teaching and learning taking into account the needs of teachers and administrators, the importance of involving key stakeholders and the use of data systems to make informed instructional decisions with the ultimate goal of preparing students for college and career. Greater emphasis on how Iowa will provide for high-need students to help level the playing field and ensure all students are successful, and include how they will address acquiring or implementing high-quality instructional materials.

Total	70	45
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C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	18
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: Iowa recognizes that data systems that are comprehensive, reliable, accessible, and user friendly are essential to supporting a culture of continuous improvement. Iowa currently has a statewide longitudinal data system with 9 of the elements required through the "America COMPETES Act". Iowa has completed elements # 1,5,6,7,8,10,12 Iowa has element but is still in process of completion # 4,9 Iowa did not address elements # 2,3,11		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: Iowa has invested in developing a data warehouse and has developed a plan with goals, activities and responsible parties to build a data system with greater interconnectivity and greater ability for data analysis. Currently the system stores student-level data that can be retrieved and used for local decision making. As part of the state's improvement efforts, the data system has been developed to store vital information that can be used by the education community, allow for data analysis, ensure reliability, consistency and quality, and empower data-driven decision making for education stakeholders.		
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	18
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: Iowa is looking to help LEAs have a high-quality data system that will facilitate the use of data for making instructional decisions and for linking the student performance data and the data on teacher practice. Iowa will determine what data to collect, how to analyze and how to use data when making instructional decisions. In collaboration with participating LEAs, Iowa has a plan to further acquire, and develop its current instructional improvement data system's reliability and capabilities to collect and integrate critical components needed by teachers, principals, and administrators when analyzing programs and instructional practices. Iowa's plan includes goals, activities and timelines. LEAs, Area Education Agencies and other external experts will work with the Center for Collaborative Inquiry who will facilitate, support and help teachers and administrators in the use of student performance data and		

data on teacher practice for making instructional decisions. Through technical support and professional development, educators will gain a broader understanding of how to effectively analyze, use data to inform practice, and connect data to student growth and performance. Iowa's plan includes a timeline for the implementation and completion of the "America COMPETES Act" and the interoperability of the instructional improvement data system and the statewide longitudinal data system making data available and accessible to researchers and other relevant stakeholders along with expanded capabilities for evaluating the effectiveness of instructional practices and student performance.

Total

47

41

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	14
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Iowa Code authorizes rules through the Board of Examiners and currently there are rules for the licensure of teachers and principals through alternate routes to certification. Iowa meets 4 of the 5 elements for teachers and 5 of the 5 elements for principals. There are 4 approved programs for teachers and 1 for principals with plans for expansion to meet the present demand. Programs are limited to institutions of higher education. A shortage in available teacher candidates exists in STEM, ESL and special education. Iowa offers incentives for prospective candidates in these areas. Areas where a shortage may exist are established annually by the department of education. Iowa has to significantly expand the alternative routes for aspiring principals.</p>		
(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	53
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	15
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	10
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	23
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Iowa's plan is focused on creating an educational system where each student acquires the necessary skills to graduate from high school ready to enter college and the workforce. Iowa recognizes that to improve student performance it must address the effectiveness of teachers and principals. Iowa's plan looks to expand the quality of how to measure student achievement and growth by developing multiple authentic measures of student achievement and linking teacher and principal performance to individual student outcomes. Iowa will use collective inquiry to gather and analyze information about the methods used in districts, schools and classrooms to measure students' learning and performance as mandated by the Iowa Core. Iowa's plan is comprehensive and includes goals, activities, timelines and person(s) responsible along with the necessary training and supports. The Balanced Assessment system will allow Iowa to develop an assessment program that uses multiple authentic measures to address individual student achievement and student growth. The Teacher Quality Partnership, Assessment for Learning, and the Iowa Core initiative include helping teachers use formative assessments, use data to determine where students are in individual tasks, lessons, or projects, and develop capacity to link multiple authentic measures of student achievement and student growth to teachers and principals. Iowa's process for the evaluation of teachers and principals begins with mentoring, coaching and setting clear targets for professional growth. Iowa will follow the regulations on evaluation of teachers and principals which outlines process, frequency, standards and performance measures, and will continue to work with teachers and principals to further develop a comprehensive evaluation system that supports their practice and fosters a culture of continuous learning. Iowa has pay-for-performance and career ladder initiative. Additionally, the plan requires that all evaluators who engage in teacher</p>		

and principal appraisals participate in a required intensive evaluator training course in order to evaluate an educator. Iowa has detailed a plan with sequential steps to ensure they are able to reach their goal of improving teacher and principal effectiveness and student achievement and performance. Iowa did not fully address how they will actually remove principals who are not performing. Iowa indicates that they "may be removed" but there is no clear direction as to how they shall remove a principal who is not performing.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	20
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	10
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	10

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments:

According to the present enrollment distribution based on the formula used to determine % of minority enrollment in a given school, Iowa's schools are considered schools with low-minority enrollment. Schools with minority students are sparse and located in areas with little measurable difference in equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals. While Iowa has a plan with goals, activities, timelines and responsible parties that will work with districts with poor and minority students to analyze data, devise strategies, and monitor the distribution of highly effective teachers and principals. However it is not clearly defined as to how they will accomplish their plan and how it will be tracked over time and how they will ensure instruction in all areas including the areas where shortages have been identified is delivered by effective teachers. Iowa has a pay-for-performance and career ladder pilots that will facilitate reform efforts. Iowa has legislation that includes funding allocations that provide incentives to ensure that districts throughout the state are able to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers including teachers in hard-to-staff subjects.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	9
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(D)(4) Reviewer Comments:

As part of the instructional improvement system and the statewide longitudinal data system, Iowa is capable of identifying schools, teachers and students and will link data to teachers and principals. Iowa is moving towards a competency-based system that will be further linked to the evaluation of teachers and principals with multiple forms of evidence of student learning and student growth. The system will be connected to an individual teacher's and principal's professional development plans tied to school and district achievement goals. The plan has been developed with goals, activities, timelines and person(s) responsible and will work to maintain a transparent, fair process. Iowa will work with teacher and principal preparation programs and other relevant stakeholders to develop protocols, identify measures, pilot and prepare to publicly report the data. Iowa will work with preparation programs to build capacity for expansion of successful programs, and improve less successful programs to ensure the prospective teachers and principals are gaining the skills and attributes for effectiveness. Iowa did not clearly establish how they will identify and provide other preparation and credentialing options and programs with a rationale and timeline for expansion of options.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	15
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(D)(5) Reviewer Comments:

In collaboration with LEAs and relevant stakeholders, Iowa has developed a plan called The Iowa Professional Development Model which uses an action research cycle to address all areas of an educator's growth and development with a focus on how to impact student learning and performance. The plan ensures that educators receive the needed supports at each stage of their career. In addition, Iowa has a professional development program called "Assessment for Learning" which, through the use of formative assessments, the teacher and student can determine learning targets. Students are able to self-assess and teachers are able to adjust teaching. As part of the instructional improvement data system, Iowa will use data to inform instructional decisions and create a learning environment that allows for continuous improvement. In order to address the needs of administrators, Iowa has a Principals Academy and a Superintendent Network which provide professional development,

mentoring and supports to administrators. Iowa's plan did not mention differentiation for diverse learners, providing common time for teachers and principals to collaborate, and how it will measure, assess and improve program effectiveness to ensure that it may further advance professional growth and advance learning for all students.

Total	138	111
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	5
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: Recently the State Legislature enacted legislation granting the state the authority to intervene in LEAs and implement interventions in an LEA with 1 or more schools identified as a persistently lowest-achieving schools. Reference to intervening directly in schools was not evident. It was not clear if they have the authority to intervene directly in schools.		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	40
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	35
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: The state plans to identify the persistently lowest-achieving schools and make a list available to the public beginning in 2010. Iowa is in the process of developing additional supports for persistently lowest-achieving schools and will continue to utilize the Center for Collaborative Inquiry on Intensive School Supports to support LEAs with schools with significant achievement gaps. Schools are required to develop a two-year school improvement plan which includes an audit phase, diagnosis phase, implementation phase, and evaluation phase. Iowa follows a six step process for each phase. Iowa has developed a systematic process to identify, determine and address the factors contributing to a school's low performance. Iowa also looks at the involvement of the principal, teachers and parents, analyzes each area of concern such as achievement gap, graduation rate, the performance of students by subgroup, curriculum, assessment and instructional practices. Since its inception, this school improvement process has resulted in improved student achievement in 36 schools. Each LEA will be required to select one or the four school intervention models and will work with a team of support personnel as they implement the school improvement plan. Iowa has a plan with goals, timelines, activities and person(s) responsible. Iowa's goals and timelines are based on their past experiences that support their comprehensive proven approach designed to address the lowest-achieving schools and their plan to expand the supports schools need to meet success. Iowa plans to build upon this process.		
Total	50	45

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The percentage of the total revenues available to the State was greater for FY 2009. Iowa funding formula as established through Iowa Code provides for equitable funding and includes provisions to		

ensure that additional funds are available to populations in need and for which programming costs are higher than for general student population.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools

40

14

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

As of 2010 the state's charter school law removed the cap and limits on the number of charter schools that are allowed to operate and establish up to a specific number of innovation zones. Iowa has established regulations on the approval, monitoring, accountability, reauthorization and closing of charter schools and establishes expectations on creating learning environments that are different and innovative and specifies measures of student outcomes. While Iowa can close or not renew an ineffective charter, Iowa did not provide data on closing or non renewal of charter schools. Reference and evidence to equitability in funding, data on number of applications/denials, high-need populations were not addressed. Funding for facilities as compared to traditional public schools was not addressed. No mention of a provision about whether or not the State enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools other than charter schools was made.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions

5

0

(F)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Demonstrating other significant reform conditions was not addressed.

Total

55

24

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
Competitive Reviewer Comments: Iowa has addressed STEM through a series of programs designed to meet the needs of all students. In partnership with higher education, Iowa focuses on creating a PK-12 project-based learning curriculum and recruiting prospective teaching candidates and supporting existing teachers. Iowa works collaboratively with business, industry, agencies, and other community members to develop programs, secure funding and develop rigorous course content while addressing the learner differences and gender equity. Iowa's mission is to inspire students at each level to explore and develop interest and skills in a STEM area that will lead to well-rounded life capabilities as they graduate high school and enter college or the workforce.		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: Through the Iowa Core, Iowa established a foundation for their reform efforts. Iowa presents a comprehensive and coherent plan that addresses the 4 reform areas in ARRA. The states and participating LEAs in partnership with relevant stakeholders have started to address school improvement and to create a student centered learning environment with appropriate supports for teachers, administrators and students. Iowa has designed a statewide implementation model to support education innovations, build capacity, and facilitate organization change. Iowa is taking a		

systemic approach to reform with the ultimate goal of creating a system that prepares and equips students with the skills and attributes needed to enter college and the workforce.

Total		0
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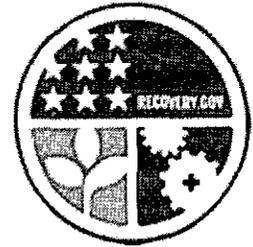
Grand Total	500	381
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Iowa Application #2760IA-1



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	46
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	38
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	3

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(i) The application suggests that the State is in a particularly strong position through the enactment of the Iowa Core initiative to leverage Race to the Top funds across a broad, statewide reform agenda. Several aspects of the narrative raise a high level of possibility for success. For example, establishment of the Center for Collaborative Inquiry on Balanced Assessments might indicate a new generation of rich assessment strategies to build upon the prior work of the ITBS in earlier decades. Further, the emphasis on competency-based education as a re-tooling of the overall approach by the state to education reform is innovative and potentially promising. In addition to these two examples, the application clearly articulates the State's focus upon the four critical areas of this competition and presents a coherent agenda integrated into the Iowa Core framework as well as being informed by past lessons learned. The story describing the creation of a virtual reality lab in a rural part of the State greatly enhanced the insightful approach intended by the overall reform agenda. (ii) The Terms and Conditions of the State's MOU meet the requirements of the criterion. However, the State's MOU has incorporated weaker language with regard to recourse than is suggested by the guidelines which suggest a possible diminution of the State's commitment to insist on compliance by the LEAs. In addition, the criterion specifically requires that compensation be linked to evaluation and this has been removed from the MOU with language referencing the existing pay-for-performance pilots along with a statement indicating the State does not have an appropriate mechanism to connect compensation to evaluation. The application also does not suggest a future commitment by the State to incorporate developing such a mechanism into its reform agenda. The scope of work descriptions exceed the minimum guidelines of the competition and indicate a robust level of expectation by the State of each participating LEA. The signatures presented for participating LEAs reflect a significant level of participation therefore meeting the extent of support required by the criterion. (iii) The narrative fails to speak specifically to the State's agenda for increasing high school graduation rates, increasing college enrollment, increasing the number of students who complete at least a year's worth of college credit that is applicable to a degree within two years of enrollment in an institution of higher education. The State does not link its developing data story to anticipated strategies that would directly impact the areas required in the criterion. There are aspects within the narrative that might imply that a future focus would be a logical progression but the criterion requires evidence and this is completely lacking. The percentage of the State's high-poverty student population as represented by the participating LEAs is 41% --not a robust number to achieve statewide improvement. The narrative and lack of evidence therein also fail to address the State's intentions for increasing student achievement in reading/language arts, lacks any evidence that the State's years of assessment are suggesting new and improved strategies and what those might be, and absolutely does not emphasize any priority for

closing the achievement gap. When evaluating the required criterion against the language provided in the narrative, as well as a review of the appendices, the application falls short of meeting this element.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	13
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	7
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	6

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(i) (a) The narrative within the application consistently points to a description of the problem in terms of scalable reform and the challenges the State has faced in placing too much stress on the system to change. But the application fails to paint a persuasive picture of how this grasp of the problem will transition into the necessary infrastructure to build strong statewide capacity to implement, successfully scale up, then sustain the State's agenda. At one point, the narrative awkwardly states that an implementation team will be "staffed with too many overqualified people." It is difficult to understand what is meant by this and frequent statements of this nature weaken the overall argument intended by the application to meet this criterion. The description of the Centers for Collaborative Inquiry present the prospect for addressing and clarifying many of these gaps but then only speak generally to the points while failing to provide a sufficient level of detail in order to evaluate the State's capacity for scalable success. For example, the application asserts that the Center will engage in "state of the art research", a broad term, without offering any description of the areas of research envisioned. Also, the narrative indicates that the Center will be staffed with "several different types of expertise" but does not explain what these are. The application presents a plan to share staffing for the Center by a mix from IDE and AEA staff without mentioning a staffing plan or how many will come from each of the agencies. As a general comment, the application in this section lacks the depth of detail that is necessary to fully evaluate what is expected by the criterion in terms of evidence of ensuring the capacity to implement a robust reform agenda. (b) The narrative addresses several ways in which the State intends to replicate or "fan out" promising practices but does not articulate its plans for evaluating these practices in terms of ongoing effectiveness or how they would be stopped should they prove to be ineffective. The application is also silent on the other specific elements required in the criterion with regard to widely disseminating and replicating the effective practices statewide, holding participating LEAs accountable for progress and performance, and how the State intends to intervene if necessary. (c) The narrative is quite thin in describing a coherent, detailed plan for providing effective and efficient operations and processes for implementing its Race to the Top grant. It is not at all clear how the State proposes to undertake effective budget reporting and monitoring, performance measure tracking and reporting, and making fund disbursements. The application is silent on this matter. Successful statewide reform requires thoughtful organization as evidenced through detail which is not presented as the criterion requires. (d) The budget section indicates a supplemental funding component from the IDE which is presumed to be a State contribution above the funds available from Race to the Top. However, the narrative does not present the links clearly nor does it articulate how other federal dollars are intended to be redirected or reallocated to support the reform objectives. (e) The application is quite clear in its narrative and budget with regard to the State's intended uses of Race to the Top funds. However, no mention is made with regard to sustaining these reforms beyond the grant period. (ii) The application narrative and the many letters of support in the appendices indicate broad support from all critical stakeholders in Iowa for the State's reform agenda and their support of expanded efforts should the State be successful in this competition. One obvious gap, however, is the lack of participation by the State's largest urban school system in Des Moines. It is difficult to achieve full statewide participation absent inclusion of such a prominent school system. Beyond the letters of support from the State Teachers and Principals Associations, it is not clear from the narrative how the State intends to involve teachers and principals in a systemic reform. The leader of the State teacher's union makes mention of the lack of broad support from a large proportion of local unions in his letter of support but the narrative does not articulate any intention for executing additional participation once the grant is won. More evidence along the lines of specifically how the State would integrate the

support of the many stakeholders who have written their support of the application would have strengthened the application.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	18
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	2
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	16
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>(i) The application successfully articulates its demonstrated commitment to three of the core education reform areas that are a part of ARRA but does not effectively present evidence of the State's progress in these areas nor does the application speak at all to how the ARRA funds or other Federal and State funds have been targeted to these core areas. The application is particularly weak in any description of the State's focus or accomplished results with regard to turning around low-achieving schools. (ii) The criterion requires evidence of improved student outcomes overall and by student subgroup since at least 2003 and asks the applicant to explain connections between the data and the actions that have contributed to three specific metrics. The data provided show little real progress for student achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics in the NAEP scores. The achievement gap among sub-groups has not decreased over the years with regard to NAEP. The State test data for sub-groups does indicate modest improvement in all but one area. Overall, the gaps persist without any remarkable improvement. The State's success as it relates to the high school graduation rate is commendable both in the result and in the tracking system that has been in place long enough to allow for a full four-year cohort to be measured.</p>		
Total	125	77

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	25
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	5
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>(i) The State evidences a strong commitment to a common set of K-12 standards through its Project Lead Team and Work Teams and is supported substantially by the State's participation in the 48-state consortium, Common Core Standards, which are internationally benchmarked and focus upon readiness to work. The application meets this criterion fully. (ii) The application provides a brief timeline to indicate its plans for meeting an August 2010 publication of the Common Core Standards, however the narrative is completely silent on describing how the standards will be presented to the LEAs, implemented, and by what timeline, as is required by the criterion. The criterion asks for evidence of the State's commitment to adopting a common set of standards by August 2010. The application simply reports that the Common Core Standards are to be released to the public by that time and offers no explanation at all as to the well-planned implementation of these standards after adoption.</p>		
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	8
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>(i) The application leads off this section by pointing out the State's admirable commitment to systematically using student assessment data to improve instruction since 1935. Unfortunately, in spite of this long-held commitment, the data story does not support remarkable improvement in student performance particularly in important sub-groups. The application points out the limitations in the</p>		

present system but then fails to provide a robust narrative indicating the State's strategy to overcome these challenges. The State does provide evidence as required in the criterion for participation in several consortia of states, one with 26 participating states and the other with 25. These consortia are focused on developing and implementing high-quality assessments.

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments

20

14

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The application presents a generally thoughtful approach for how the State plans to support the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments utilizing broad support from LEAs as well as other critical stakeholders. The State's plan relies heavily upon its participation in Core Standards for the development of enhanced standards that will be integrated into the existing work provided by Iowa Core and MOSAIC for an array of high-quality assessments. The application demonstrates a strong focus including formative, interim/benchmark and summative assessments. In sum, the application meets the criterion for presenting a high-quality plan. Included in the plan are several solid examples that elaborate the State's intentions for disseminating support throughout participating LEAs as the transition takes place. The application is weak in several areas where a general statement is made that "support" will be provided for various activities without presenting any detail of what this support will be or against what timetable this support will be made available. A specific example of this is in the reference to the Center for Collaborative Inquiry on Competency-Based Education and how the Center's collaborative relationship will work with institutions of higher education to determine how the State's new assessment systems can provide higher education with the information they need for college entrance decisions. This is an admirable goal but absent any explanation of how the State or the Center might develop a plan to achieve it diminishes the evidence of commitment. Similarly, the application makes frequent reference to providing support to districts as they develop the K-8 Iowa Core implementation plans without taking the next step and presenting examples of what this support might look like. All of which makes it difficult to fully evaluate the evidence in the narrative against the specifics required by the criterion.

Total

70

47

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	18
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: The application provides adequate details to support the existence of a statewide longitudinal data system with evidence of nine of the twelve elements embedded in the America COMPETES Act.		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: The application provides a well-written and coherent explanation of how the state currently provides data to critical users and evidence of a very high-quality plan to expand access to its developing data systems going forward. The State's specific focus on completing the remaining America COMPETES Act elements in concert with an emphasis on strengthening the interoperability among the data systems suggests an appropriate path toward leveraging the data story into improved student achievement.		
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	5
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: The application in this section fails to meet the required elements of this criterion in that the narrative is not compelling nor conclusive with regard to the State's plan for achieving these elements. The		

narrative lacks a robust coherence and re-states what the criterion calls for without offering any evidence for a measurable plan or strategy for implementation. The provided timeline in this section is vague and offers no rationale for why the State believes that four years will be necessary to complete the three remaining America COMPETES Act elements nor how the state would monitor the progress of these efforts across such a long timespan. (i) The application provides evidence of the State's intentions for collaborating with participating LEAs and AEAs in improving the quality and accessibility of local instructional improvement systems as required by the criterion. However, the State also admits there are challenges with the current systems and presents a plan for a top-down, State-driven solution without indicating any support for bottom-up, LEA-driven decisions to choose their own local instructional improvement systems. The State offers no evidence of how it would develop a support system to enable better local decisions and then how to integrate those decisions into the larger statewide longitudinal data system or other data warehouses. The narrative and supporting evidence does not make a strong case -- or any case -- for how the State will increase the acquisition or adoption of these systems at the local level. (ii) The application describes an intention to collaborate with LEAs and AEAs to offer professional development for the effective use of available and developing data systems without presenting any evidence of how this will be done. More significant, the application is silent on the State's plans to link data to support continuous instructional improvement. (iii) The application simply offers a limited statement to suggest generally how the Regional Educational Laboratory will provide protocols and training for handling data requests from researchers. This fails to meet the requirement of the criterion to provide a high-quality plan, with evidence of thoughtful detail for how the plan will be executed, against which an evaluation can be made as to the likelihood of its effectiveness.

Total	47	28
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	12
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
(i) The criterion specifically requires evidence of legal, statutory or regulatory provisions that allow alternative routes to certification for teachers and principals, particularly routes that allow for providers in addition to institutions of higher education. State law does not permit providers who operate independently of IHEs with regard to teacher certification but does provide for principal certification through programs that are independent of IHEs. (ii) The application provides evidence that alternative routes to certification are in use as required by the criterion. (iii) The State has provided evidence of a quality plan and process for monitoring, evaluating and identifying areas of teacher and principal shortage.		
(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	33
(i) Measuring student growth	5	4
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	9
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	8
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	12
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
(i) The criterion requires evidence of clear approaches to measuring individual student growth. The application briefly asserts the State's repetitively-stated commitment to develop a suite of new assessments. The narrative does not speak at all to individual student measurement for all students nor is a high-quality plan in evidence along with any mention of ambitious yet achievable annual targets. (ii) It is not clear from the application that student growth is a significant factor of the State's		

multiple rating categories. The application does provide evidence, although weak evidence, for the State's plans to design and implement rigorous, transparent and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals. The emphasis seems to be on fair and transparent but less on rigor as the criterion requires. The plan does contemplate and provide evidence of participation from teachers and principals in its design. (iii) The State does provide evidence of a high-quality plan to sustain and improve annual evaluations of teachers and principals and to ensure timely and constructive feedback. (iv) The narrative in this section makes very weak and only occasional references for how evaluations will be linked to each of the four areas addressed by this criterion. Overall, the narrative and evidence lacks robustness, is not coherent and greatly lacks specific evidence within each of the four required areas. Further, the performance targets indicated are not ambitious at all. The plan is reasonable in its plan for developing teachers and principals, including relevant coaching, induction, support and PD. The pilot project to examine an approach for a pay-for-performance program is strong evidence of the State's effort to reform teacher and principal compensation though the nature of a pilot limits visibility as to what the State's real commitment will be in this regard. The plan for linking rigorous standards to decisions regarding tenure are not addressed. The narrative only provides details as to how the tenure process works. Removal language in the narrative does not amplify how the decisions will be significantly linked to rigorous standards, transparent, and fair procedures. The emphasis seems to be on the fact that teachers "may" be removed "after ample opportunities to improve and have been unable to do so despite remediation."

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	13
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	4
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	9

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments:
 (i) While the application emphasizes the fact that Iowa benefits from having a relatively small population of high-poverty and/or high-minority concentrated among its schools, the narrative does not adequately address how the State plans to meet this requirement in its plan. For example, the narrative makes statements that "it will then work to ensure that students in high-minority and high-poverty schools have equitable access to highly effective teachers and principals..." but then fails to say how it will do so. Further, the application indicates that the IDE will "monitor the distribution of highly effective teachers and principals" as a Key Goal but does not say how or when it will do so. Finally, the application indicates that a three year period is necessary before being able to determine the State's definitions of "effective" and "highly effective" teachers then goes further to link action steps in various areas to begin after this point. As the grant period is for four years, a three year window to wait for these definitions is not reasonably ambitious and greatly weakens the credibility of this application. (ii) The application demonstrates a high-quality plan to meet this criterion with a comprehensive approach detailed in the State's Project TQ(3) to address providing quality teacher and principal talent in rural areas. The State has incentives in place to encourage development of teachers in high-need areas and has clearly articulated its plans for integrating additional funding sources to support this ongoing work.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	10
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(D)(4) Reviewer Comments:
 (i) The application meets the requirements of the criterion by clearly articulating the State's existing platform for using its unique identifier for students, teachers and schools to the teacher and principal preparation programs. The application also asserts the State's intention to ultimately publicly report aggregate data for each program as the criterion requires. (ii) In this section, the narrative indicates that IDE will encourage the expansion of successful programs but offers no visibility as to the State's plans for how this will be done. An assertion alone without any indication of the methods or timeframe upon which the action will be executed is not sufficient evidence of a high-quality plan for participating LEAs. Further, the State's goal of publicly reporting data by program beginning in the Spring 2014,

without any justification for why the State expects such a long timeframe to accomplish this, does not suggest an ambitious reform agenda in this regard.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals

20

18

(D)(5) Reviewer Comments:

(i) The application is detailed and comprehensive in articulating a strong, thoughtful support system of a variety of approaches linked to teachers and principals. The State's emphasis in the area of professional development is strong and supported by evidence in the Iowa Professional Development Model. The State also envisions further enhancements to its support system for teachers and principals as part of its overall plan through the expansion of Assessment for Learning among other initiatives like the Teacher Work Sample Project, Iowa Leadership Academy, Principals Center and the Superintendent Network. In the aggregate, this is a very strong component of the application. (ii) The application meets the requirement of this criterion through its emphasis on continuously measuring and evaluating each of the State's professional development programs for teachers and principals.

Total

138

86

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	5
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: The application is not clear, nor is the statute language provided in the appendix specific, with regard to evidence that the State can intervene directly in the lowest-achieving schools. The narrative does provide evidence of the State's ability to intervene with LEAs that are in improvement or corrective action status.		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	35
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	30
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (i) The State has a clear plan and specific metrics for annual publication of those schools identified as persistently lowest-achieving, both for Title-I eligible and non-Title I eligible, that meets the criterion. (ii) The application presents evidence that the State has recently enacted legislation to require LEAs to select one of the four turnaround strategies to address the issues within its lowest-achieving schools. The plans described for implementing these strategies going forward are thoughtful, coherent and credible. The application also speaks to the challenges of rural states where removal of 50% of the school staff in a turnaround would be detrimental to a small community. In addition, the application indicates that a waiver request has been made to allow the state additional discretion in determining when to remove a principal. While the State's concerns in these two areas is understandable, it is equally important that the State present evidence that school leadership will be removed when it is necessary as these turnaround strategies are implemented and to provide details as to the circumstances in which this would occur. The application provides evidence of a high-quality plan to support LEAs in their implementation of one of the four intervention models.		
Total	50	40

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
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(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	8
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (i) The application presents the required evidence of increased funding for public education from FY 08 to FY 09 and FY 10. (ii) The narrative is not specific as the criterion requires in explaining how the State's budget policies are organized to lead to equitable funding specifically between high-need LEAs and other LEAs as well as within LEAs between high-poverty schools and other schools. The appendix contains the statutory funding formula but does not address the specific requirements of this criterion.</p>		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	10
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (i) The application fully meets the criterion. (ii) While evidence is provided that the State has laws in place regarding how authorizers approve, monitor, hold accountable, reauthorize and close charter schools, the application does not sufficiently emphasize the importance of student achievement as a significant factor, as the criterion requires. The application is also completely silent in providing evidence with regard to the State's strategies for encouraging charter schools that serve student populations that are similar to local district student populations, especially relative to high-need students. The application provides no evidence for examples of a charter school that has been closed or been denied a renewal. (iii) The application is completely silent in addressing this criterion. (iv) The application ignores this criterion. (v) The application provides thin evidence of the State's enabling capacity for LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools other than charter schools. The statute provided in the appendix covers innovation schools as linked to charter schools but the narrative makes no attempt to address this criterion directly.</p>		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	0
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: The application does not address this criterion.</p>		
Total	55	18

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
<p>Competitive Reviewer Comments: The application meets the elements required of this criterion through evidence of the Iowa Mathematics and Science Education Partnership specifically in that the IMSEP is focused on rigor in the teaching of science and mathematics, increasing the number of students studying these disciplines, and encouraging improvements across the full range of the curriculum in collaboration with a broad array of stakeholders.</p>		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
<p>Absolute Reviewer Comments:</p>		

While the application is weak in a number of areas and even completely silent with regard to several of the criteria, the State's application does present a sufficiently comprehensive and coherent plan to address all of the four education reform areas specified in ARRA as well as the State Success Factors Criteria. The State is clearly undertaking a systemic approach to education reform. The number of participating LEAs is 61% of total LEAs in the State therefore indicating the capacity for statewide reform. The MOU is broad and encompassing with specific, detailed requirements on the part of LEAs as a condition of their participation. One challenge is that the recourse language in the MOU for noncompliance of LEAs is weaker than the guideline language. It will be important for the State to monitor LEA compliance carefully to ensure maximum success. A final comment. The application contains numerous typos, incomplete sentences, and several missing graphics. This greatly distracts from the overall quality of the application.

Total		0
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Grand Total	500	311
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Iowa Application #27601A-4



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	39
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	34
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	0
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: The narrative begins with a story, well-used and placed to paint the picture of reform in the state – starting with the way decision-makers, teachers, families and kids see education and how they experience it. This story is woven into an approach that offers pilot programs rooted in multiple measures of student achievement and the thoughtful use of these data. It cites both research and first-hand learning. This reform agenda is most comprehensive and coherent and establishes a credible path. Sixty-one percent or 221 of the state's LEAs are signed on for both the RTTT proposal and some additional commitments as defined by the state. Four of the signatures of the LEA superintendents are missing and it doesn't state why. Forty-six of the Teachers' Union Leaders are not signed on and, with the exception of 4, there is no explanation. In addition, the MOU language has been softened from the sample version in the application on recourse with LEAs, making it questionable that LEAs are "strongly committed." Section (iii) is addressed only in a chart that gives no indication of how this agenda will lead to statewide impact. The narrative is completely missing.</p>		
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	22
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	12
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: The proposal shows how education leaders learned from past challenges – it doesn't omit them, but says what happened, what they did about it, how that strengthened their capacities to deal with scaling up and what they would then do now. They have been building capacity, specifically around scaling-up, by learning how not to overwhelm already taxed systems. There is a theory of change (logic model) to explain how they see this working and a clear delineation of the leadership stance and the staff needed to support it. The Centers for Collaborative Inquiry and Regional Implementation Team Activities are strong indications of an infrastructure to support the reforms statewide. With all the clear narrative ensuring the capacity to implement, the budget and budget narrative don't sufficiently weave together the expressed intentions with the proposed budget. More detail is needed on how IA will meet its targets, including, where feasible, by coordinating, reallocating, or repurposing education funds from other Federal, State and local sources so they align with the State's RTT goals. The statement "... staffed with too many overqualified people" may be tongue-in-cheek, but should be explained. There is broad stakeholder support.</p>		

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	18
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	2
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	16
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: "The suite of programs" this section outlines "set the stage for the powerful work in Iowa focused on instructional improvement." The programs outlined are robust. They only partially, however, demonstrate how IA has made progress over the past several years in each of the four reform areas. The link between this progress and student outcomes isn't articulated. The NAEP and ESEA data show gains overall – more over the past 15-20 than in the past couple years. The narrative states this fact, but this section could be strengthened by letting the reader know how they make meaning of that. There are significant achievement gaps across racial and socio-economic groups and it is unclear that these have been addressed in the past. There are plans articulated moving forward for both the achievement gap and the graduation rate, but these would be enhanced by more narrative about how past plans worked or didn't work to impact student achievement.</p>		
Total	125	79

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	25
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	5
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: Iowa was an "early signor" and played a "leadership role" in developing Common Core Standards. The application states the state Board of Education will adopt the standards once they have been completed. Beyond indicating that the standards will be released to the public, there is no narrative about how the standards will be adopted and implemented in a well-planned way.</p>		
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: The application shows both how the state has historically collected and used assessment data and references multiple multi-state consortia in which IA is active, including The Consortium on Developing Balanced and Comprehensive Assessments of the Common Core Standards with 26 states, and MOSAIC with 25 states.</p>		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	17
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: The state has a high-quality plan that includes the link to standards, data, teacher practice and involvement, and continuous attention to and improvement of teaching and learning. The content of the assessments is also addressed – identifying their interest in focusing on "21st century skills in the multi-state consortia." What is missing in this section is sufficient detail about what this range of supports will look like.</p>		
Total	70	52

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	18
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: Nine of the twelve America COMPETES elements are in place and documented.		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: The state has a high-quality plan to make data accessible to key constituencies and to address missing America COMPETES elements. They have considered security issues and propose a way to address types of access for different groups. In addition to addressing the technical issues, including interoperability, IA addresses teacher quality and collaboration with a solid proposal for a new "Teacher Quality Partnership data platform."		
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	18
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: This section identifies current local systems and notes that they "are not consistently well-developed or integrated enough" for the use required at the school level. The state plan to provide this information and resources is robust and clear, including both technical and training components. Building a "culture of data" is a priority, moving professional development into a realm of knowing how to "use data to inform practice" and not simply how to access it. The state will be working with Iowa's Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) to make sure it is available to researchers. The time line appears to be ambitious and realistic.		
Total	47	41

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	14
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: IA has three main options for teachers – university-based teacher intern programs meet four of five criteria, IDPREP meets three and Troops to Teachers meets three. For principals, the Iowa Principal Leadership Academy (IPLA) meets all criteria. If the state had (1) more providers operating independently of IHEs and (2) more principals enrolled in IPLA or other administrator certification programs, this score could be higher. Looking at certification for principals that is selective, as required in the definition under (b), and not only for those who already have a masters' degree, may be one route to expanding the pool. The applications states that IA has not experienced overall shortages, but has shortages in particular content areas and rural locations. Ways to track and assess those data over time aren't specified and would strengthen this section. They are seeking to increase teachers and administrators of color to reflect student enrollment.		
(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	53
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	13
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	10

(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	25
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: IA continues to strive for multiple, authentic measures of student achievement and shows a plan in (B) (3) to get there. It is reinforced, but not repeated in (D)(2)(i.) The application offers a thoughtful theory of action that has teacher and administrator capacity linked well to system capacity – each component part must be strong and interconnected. Statewide teaching standards for school leaders will be augmented with measures of student achievement and growth “such that the system remains rigorous, transparent, fair and useful.” Again, there is attention here to the technical change as well as the readiness, needs and strengths of the whole system to implement them effectively. What is missing from (ii) is clarity around how they will use student achievement as a significant factor. Evaluation for teachers and principals is annual, and for both, is developmental and assesses skills. The data are used for both support and to make employment decisions (after year 3). The state plan includes steps to hear from stakeholders on improving feedback and to integrate measures of student achievement and growth. Evaluations will be used in making decisions about PD, additional compensation (2007 pilot study awaiting evaluation), and tenure/certification or, when needed, removal. There are two concerns about decisions to be made concerning a principal or teacher who needs to be removed. The first question is whether the procedures are streamlined, transparent and fair. The second is that the state is going to follow through on the decisions to remove teachers. The language in the application says that teachers “may be removed,” thereby not showing clear commitment to this possibility.</p>		
(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	21
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	13
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	8
<p>(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: The application indicates that its plan hinges on having the data to distinguish effective from ineffective teachers and then to ensure that effective teachers are in high-poverty, high-minority schools. This section would be strengthened by the indication of a plan to track these trends over time, given changing demographics, especially in urban areas, and to be responsive and not reactive when they happen. For hard-to-staff subjects, IA offers loan forgiveness and is developing the “Project TQ(3),” to identify and support talent to get into teaching and administrative roles. This section would be strengthened by a rationale for the number of participants and the sequence over time.</p>		
(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	8
<p>(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: This section details a network of teacher/principal preparation programs and identifies their strengths and areas of development, especially being able to link to multiple, authentic measures of student achievement. (D)(4)(ii) would be strengthened by a rationale for the proposed time line to link student achievement to these programs and to expand successful preparation and credentialing options.</p>		
(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	20
<p>(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: The theory of action articulated in sections prior is aligned with approaches identified here to support teachers and principals. These activities include: Iowa Professional Development Model (IPDM), an action research model; a State-funded mentoring and induction program; Assessment for Learning and the Iowa Leadership Academy for superintendents and principals. There is a clear reliance on and belief in the expertise of teachers and principals and their leadership is supported and sought. The State plan is strong, expanding on what works and uses technology and face-to-face teaching and coaching well.</p>		
Total	138	116

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	5
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: The state has legal authority to intervene in LEAs in improvement or corrective action. It is unclear that they can intervene in schools. This should be clarified to raise this score.</p>		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	34
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	4
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	30
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: Appendix E shows a clear model for the identification of low-achieving schools in both categories. The proposal outlines a thoughtful, holistic plan for the lowest-achieving schools. It offers support for both the lowest achieving schools and the LEAs with achievement gaps building on support systems in place for schools and districts in need of assistance (SINA and DINA) since 2003. Of those schools identified as low-achieving since 2003, the proposal states in one place that 36 have made it off the list and in the chart at the end of the section, that 27 have made significant enough gains to be removed from the list. This difference in reporting is addressed at the end of the section, but it would be helpful to understand better what sounds like a revolving door on and off the list for some schools and how the 36 were named separately. In addition, given that there were 136 schools on the list in 2008 (appendix E, pp 19-20) this section would be strengthened by addressing the status/expectations of the other 100 schools and why so many more have been identified each year since the program started. There are multiple supports/actions for schools in persistent low-achieving status and a clear intervention model has been identified with the caveat that districts "were not prepared to commit to adopting one of the four intervention models." It cites concerns about giving principals sufficient time to develop and links its concern to other rural states, saying that this model doesn't work for their conditions. The state requests "delayed implementation" of the intervention models and a waiver from the provision requiring principal removal, with the conditions that schools with relatively new principals will only adopt RTTT intervention models if they have not shown improvement after two years. This supports the shared values of the state and its local partners. More detail on how the state sees other appropriate ways to both uphold RTTT expectations and to integrate with the needs and values of the state, would raise the score for (E)(2)(ii.) There is specific and thoughtful attention paid to the connection of racial equity issues and reform, especially for low-achieving schools, as the state increasingly deals with racial achievement gaps.</p>		
Total	50	39

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	7
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The percentage of total revenues from 08 to 09 increased. The application states that the school funding formula "is one of the most equitable in the nation." While there are no data provided on the impact of this equalization formula, court cases test its equity have all failed, so there is some evidence for its effectiveness. Points were not granted for all of (ii) because the application does not indicate whether this formula ensures that there is equitable funding between high-need LEAs and other LEAs and within LEAs, between high-poverty schools and other schools as well.</p>		

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	12
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: As of January 15, there is no cap, nor any restrictions on charter schools. The application details the history and explains the low number of operating charters well - there was a cap of 10 and then 20 (2008) statewide so there are only seven in operation currently. F2(ii) is partially addressed under the description of (i). The parts missing concern the requirement of student achievement as a significant factor, the encouragement of charter schools that serve student populations that are similar to local district populations and the closure or non-renewal of ineffective charter schools. F2 (iii) to (v) are omitted from this section with no mention of them or why they are not included. This significantly reduces the score for this section and leaves unanswered questions around ensuring successful conditions for charters and other innovative schools.</p>		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	0
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: There is no narrative here.</p>		
Total	55	19

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

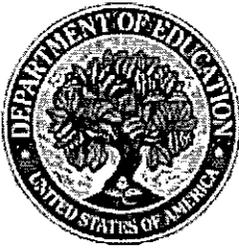
	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
<p>Competitive Reviewer Comments: The STEM approach outlined here, and supported by narrative in other sections, is coherent and forward thinking, moving education outside the classroom and including critical partners in business, universities, learning centers and community colleges, among others. There are numerous projects underway and in development.</p>		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
<p>Absolute Reviewer Comments: Iowa presents a clear, thoughtful, researched strategy for reform grounded in a nuanced understanding of root-causes. They address all four education reform areas as well as State Success Factors Criteria. Their theory of action is woven into the range of interventions articulated throughout the application. In addition, learning is evident and is well communicated -- learning from failures as well as successes. Overall, the application honestly identifies its adaptive challenges - based in shifting its values, habits and beliefs around education and how to make it powerful for adults and students - and offers approaches to include stakeholders in addressing their challenges. It respects the wisdom and knowledge of those who make schools work - or not work. It also offers some clear technical "fixes" to issues. In some places (identified in those sections,) there is a need to tie this learning into the state's intended outcomes for students and to explain why progress may not have resulted - yet - to changes the state has effected. The data doesn't always follow from the reforms that sound like they should already have impact. There are also sections that have been completely omitted. In several areas, such as translating LEA participation into statewide impact, the three sub-points under charters</p>		

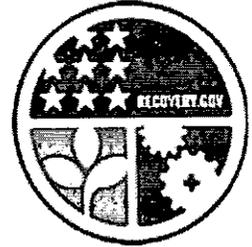
and the other conditions for reform, there is no narrative without any explanation. In otherwise strong sections this raised still unanswered questions and lowered scores.

Total		0
Grand Total	500	361



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1



Iowa Application #2760IA-5

A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	45
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	40
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	0
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>i. The application is unified around a set of priorities that address the four ARRA areas and are necessary to implement a "competency-based" system in the state where learning is organized around what an individual student knows and can do rather than seat time. The state presents a comprehensive and coherent plan with clearly articulated goals and establishes a pathway for LEA's to try innovative approaches to competency-based student learning. The terms and conditions of the MOU appear to align with the goals of the state's RTTT plan. ii. Sixty-one percent of the state's LEA's (221) have signed on to participate. To be noted is that the MOU did not require districts to link compensation to evaluations. The state has decided to continue its existing Pay for Performance Pilots through its RTTT funds, if awarded. Also to be noted is that, while 98% of superintendents and 100% of board members from participating districts signed the MOU, only 79% of the Local Teachers' Union Leaders signed. This is strong support from teacher's unions but not unanimous. iii. The state did not respond to this criterion so it received no points.</p>		
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	27
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	17
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>i. The state has taken steps to create a statewide support system for schools and LEA's through the transformation of Area Education Agencies that used to be dedicated to special education and media to a new role as agents of school-based reform. Therefore, an infrastructure is already in place to build upon, something which might speed up implementation. In addition, the DoE demonstrated self-reflection by bringing in educational research organizations to think through creating a more effective model that builds upon this infrastructure. This has resulted in a plan for a "cascading" implementation model that they believe will speed up the reform. The budget aligns well with the five overarching priorities set by the state in its RTTT plan: 1. Competency-based education; 2) Balanced assessment systems; 3. Responsive data systems; 4. Teacher/administrator evaluation and support; and 5. Intensive school support. The state intends to give additional funds from its own share of RTTT to participating LEA's to give small, rural districts enough funds to viably participate in the RTTT work, demonstrating the state's attention to differences between LEA's that could impact success in implementing the RTTT plan. ii. Numerous letters indicate that there is support from a wide constituency of stakeholders that range from the state university and community colleges to the state</p>		

business council and PTA. Importantly, the state teachers' and the state administrator associations are on board.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	17
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	2
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	15
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: The state's response to the progress it has made in the four ARRA areas over the past several years focuses on the recruiting and developing of effective teachers but does not strongly address the other ARRA areas. There was reference to data systems built and adoption of standards earlier in the application that could have been expanded upon more specifically in this section. Results for NAEP indicate that, while Iowa students do better than average, the scores have been rather stagnant for the past several years. The results for subgroups show that the achievement gap has not narrowed significantly and, in some cases, has widened since 1996. In regard to ESEA assessment scores, there have been small reductions in the gap for all subgroups except one between 2003 and 2009. Overall, there has not been significant progress toward moving all students up on NAEP or ESEA assessments nor toward making significant inroads into closing the achievement gap. While Iowa has one of the highest graduation rates, the high school graduation rates have decreased slightly which may be due to implementing a statewide student identification number that provides more accurate data. The NAEP and ESEA assessment results for subgroups are disappointing. One of the priorities in Iowa's plan is to focus on competency-based learning. This came about as a tactic to improve student achievement through more active engagement of students in their learning agenda.</p>		
Total	125	89

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	20
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	15
(ii) Adopting standards	20	5
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: Iowa belongs to the Common Core Standards initiative coordinated by CCSSO and NGA which consists of more than half of the states in the country. While no copy of the MOU was included in the appendices, it was referred to and a news release was included that listed Iowa among the members of the consortium. Iowa states that it plans to adopt the Common Core Standards as soon as they are adopted by the Consortium and released to the public by Aug. 2, 2010. However, Iowa is also planning to integrate these new standards with Iowa's Core Standards. The state plans to release this integrated set of standards by December 2010. Because there is some confusion about whether the Common Core Standards will be adopted by Aug. 2, 2010 or December 2010, full points were not awarded. Early adoption would speed up RTTT plan implementation, if the state received a RTTT grant.</p>		
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: Iowa demonstrates its plan to align its assessments with the new Common Core Standards, belonging to two consortia working on developing assessments for use by states and locally: 1) The Consortium on Developing Balanced and Comprehensive Assessments of the Common Core Standards (26</p>		

states); and 2) The Multiple options for Student Assessment and Instruction Consortium, MOSAIC (25 states).

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	16
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: Iowa receives substantial points for presenting a plan to support the transition statewide to the new Iowa Common Core Standards and Assessments through work in local LEA's with the support and assistance of the Department, the AEA's, and the Centers for Inquiry that Iowa will create if it gets RTTT funding. A timeline has been included in the state RTTT plan. The state believes that using the MOSAIC to develop assessments that can be used locally will relieve some of the work of districts, providing them with support in the area of local assessments. The districts will be working on formative assessments that will inform instruction that can be shared statewide. Use of formative assessments is an important tool for advancing instructional reform as teachers and students get quick turn-around on results and so can provide RTI or enrichment based upon the student need. This fits the competency-based approach at the center of the Iowa plan. Involving districts heavily in this work is a plus point as, when districts are involved, there is a greater chance that the work will be implemented. More details around the specific work to be done at the state and district levels on alignment of standards/assessments/instructional resources to ensure fidelity to the competency-based system the state intends to implement would have resulted in more points.</p>		
Total	70	46

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	18
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: The state has 9 of the 12 America Competes Act elements in place. The elements not in place are numbers 2, 3, and 11. Elements 2 and 3 relate to student data that are particularly important in supporting reform efforts as they deal with demographic and program participation information, as well as drop-out and exit rates. Element 11 is needed to understand how successful students are at transitioning to secondary/postsecondary and whether (and what kind) of remedial coursework they are taking. The latter is particularly informative as it helps pinpoint areas of weakness in the secondary program. The state plan addresses how the state will comply with elements 2,3 and 11 in the near future.</p>		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: The state plans for a comprehensive update and expansion of its data systems, providing for data collected on numerous fronts. Its plans for implementation of the MOSAIC platform and a parallel platform (that will provide electronically) formative assessment tasks for areas of study not fully covered in the state assessments (e.g., speaking, writing, listening) should provide teacher-proven materials and formative assessments to drive on-going and timely instructional improvement. The state plan to implement interoperability standards and on-going external evaluation of the data systems (state EdInsight, the SLDS system, and Mosaic) is important to ensure user-friendliness and improve access.</p>		
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	18
<p>(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: The state plan outlines clearly several approaches to acquiring and adopting instructional improvement systems. Iowa realizes that it needs to grow its capacity to ensure substantial increased use of data to</p>		

inform instructional practice and has specific plans for enhancing not only the systems (e.g., EdInsight, the state SLDS) but also training for teachers and administrators on using the systems. The plan reflects a real focus on developing a culture of data use, an essential element in reform and instructional improvement. One of the Centers (the Balanced Assessment CCI) will be dedicated heavily to providing training to local LEA's through a variety of approaches that includes in-person and online professional development on use of data as well as obtaining instructional resources (e.g., assessment tasks, rubrics, instructional materials, etc.) through the new MOSAIC system. The enlisting of REL Midwest (regional laboratory) to provide protocols and training for researchers wanting to use state data should satisfy the RTTT requirement and could open up new mutual work between the state, the laboratory, and researchers. The time line appears appropriate.

Total	47	41
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	10
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>i. and ii. Iowa does not allow by statute for providers outside of higher education to certify teachers. It has a program called the Teacher Intern Program for teachers of grades 7-12 but doesn't mention elementary teachers. This Teacher Intern Program addresses the RTTT certification characteristics "b" to "e" but not "a." The principal certification appears more progressive, allowing for a private partnership of two agencies and the School Administrators of Iowa to offer PK-12 principal certification through the Northwest Iowa Principal Leadership Academy (NWIPLA). The NWIPLA meets all five RTTT certification characteristics. Points were allocated for providing an alternate route for principals separate from an IHE, but full points were not awarded for this criterion because the state does not provide such an alternate route for teachers. iii. Iowa identifies teacher/principal shortages annually and has several approaches to filling these. The state earns points for this criterion for its annual review of shortages and for attempting to seek teachers/administrators of color to reflect its changing and increasing student body diversity.</p>		
(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	33
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	10
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	10
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	8
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>i. Iowa receives full points for it's proposed a high quality plan for measuring student growth and achievement as part of its move to competency based instruction. The state intends to develop multiple, authentic measures of student achievement and growth. ii. Iowa receives substantial points for the Board of Education notice to districts that educator evaluation systems will provide, in the future, multiple forms of evidence of student learning and growth and for the planned involvement of teachers/administrators in developing the evaluation systems. However, Iowa does not receive all points for this criterion because student achievement does not seem to be a significant part of the proposed teacher or principal evaluations. iii. Full points were awarded for this criterion as it appears that the state's plan includes annual evaluations for both teachers and principals. iv. The state receives substantial points for its plan to use teacher and principal evaluations to inform decisions such as <i>removing tenured teachers, compensating teachers and principals, and granting tenure</i>. However, the state did not receive all points because the Performance Measures chart indicates that the state's goal for using evaluations to inform compensation is only 1% of the state's teachers and principals by 2013-</p>		

2014. In addition, some of the wording in the plan raises questions of credibility concerning, for example, how serious the state is about using evaluations for removing ineffective tenured and untenured teachers and principals, as it states that this may be done after "ample opportunities to improve" have been provided without defining "ample." While evaluation systems need to be fair to teachers and principals, they also need to be fair to students whose education might be affected by ineffective teachers/principals.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	20
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	12
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	8

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments:

i. The state receives substantial points for this criterion, as Iowa has reviewed data and established a plan for ensuring the students in high-poverty or high-minority schools are served by highly qualified teachers and principals. The Iowa plan will embed multiple strategies for ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas. One of these strategies, the TQ(3) project, has a target of placing 80% of its highly effective graduates into high-need rural schools. Many of these state funded strategies are traditional (such as incentives like student loan forgiveness). The Performance Measures chart indicates that the state's plans are ambitious yet achievable in aiming for 75% of the teachers and principals in high poverty; high minority schools being highly effective teachers (as defined in the RTTT notice). ii. The state plan includes addressing the need for teachers to fill the hard-to-staff positions, particularly in high poverty and high minority schools. The state receives substantial points for its plans to include funded market factor incentives such as offering additional compensation (e.g., moving expenses, funds for licensure or endorsements in areas of shortage, etc.). The state is also working with the university to develop an integrated system for identification and development of teacher and administrator talent to create a diverse pool of future teachers and administrators. Most of these are more common strategies. Full points were not awarded for this criterion because most of these appear to already be in place rather than new or innovative strategies that might also be tested involving entities other than the university.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	8
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(D)(4) Reviewer Comments:

i. The state plan includes linking student achievement and growth data to the student's teachers and principals and to link this data to the in-State programs where teachers/principals received their preparation for credentialing. The state plans to collaborate with the state preparation programs to pilot the linking of student achievement and growth to teachers/principals and their preparation program by 2013 (the date when the new student assessment will be in place). The timeline for full implementation of the public reporting of this data is spring 2014. The state receives points for this criterion but not all points because the timeline seems less than ambitious. The state could begin linking the achievement/growth data with present assessments results and then move to linking with the new assessments once they are in place. ii. The state indicates that it plans to encourage expansion of successful preparation programs and the improvement of less successful programs by reporting the data publicly. The state did not earn full points for this criterion, as it did not suggest any additional strategies for moving less successful programs toward improvement and expanding successful programs.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	18
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(D)(5) Reviewer Comments:

i. The state receives substantial points for this criterion. The Iowa plan for collaborative work with LEA's on professional development contains a range of data-informed professional development programs (some of which have been rated highly by external evaluation organizations) for both teachers and principals. The professional development programs that will be data-informed include induction, coaching, and mentoring programs, as well as others such as the development of

professional learning communities. The state's "cascade" model for dissemination of professional development appears to be well thought out and hold promise. Timely evaluation will be important to ensure that successful professional development is advanced and less successful professional development is eliminated or improved. The state earns additional points for this criterion by setting requirements for LEA's to provide data-based professional development plans that provide differentiation to meet the needs of career teachers and principals as well as new ones and to approach professional development for both individual and group growth. ii. The state has a plan for working collaboratively with LEA's to evaluate professional development programs and providers. The state will work with LEA's to collect data on the quality of professional development programs and providers rather than just tracking the expenditures and to include this data in its longitudinal data system. The state earns points for this criterion but not the full points, as the evaluation plan and subsequent follow-up is not discussed in detail.

Total	138	89
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	5
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: The state earns some points for this criterion but not all, as it appears that the state has the legal authority to intervene in LEA's, but it is not clear that the state can intervene directly in schools.		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	25
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	20
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: i. and ii. The state plan receives medium points for the following: 1) Identifying lessons learned in past experiences with turning around schools; 2) the proposed plan to work with the Center for Collaborative Inquiry on Intensive School Support, and the targets and timelines set for implementing one of the four RTTT Intervention Models (Performance Measures Chart).		
Total	50	30

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	8
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: i. The percent of the state budget that went to Iowa public education increased last year (over 2008) from 53.73% to 54.51%. It appears that Iowa legislation provides for increased funding for a range of variables including at-risk students (high poverty included in this definition). Iowa receives a "medium" score for the percent of increase in funding as it is very close to the same as in 2008. ii. Iowa receives full points for equitable funding between high-need LEA's (as defined in the RTTT notice) and other LEA's, and for schools within LEA's. The fact that several court cases have been filed to test the equitability of the formula in court and all have failed, provides a level of credibility regarding the equitability of the state's funding.		

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	20
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>i. The state receives high points for this criterion, as there is no cap on the number of charter schools allowed in the state. Only one half of one percent of Iowa schools are charter schools. This may be partly due to caps that existed earlier and were removed legislatively in 2010. Iowa's open enrollment law provides options for other innovative schools. ii. Iowa receives a few points for having charter schools but only has 7 such schools which represents only one half of one percent of the state's schools. The state provides minimal information about how charter schools are approved and monitored. iii. and iv. The state did not earn any points for "iii" and "iv," as it did not provide a response to these criteria.</p>		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	0
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>No response to this criterion was provided in the application.</p>		
Total	55	28

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
<p>Competitive Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan addresses the three aspects of the STEM priority. The state plans to adopt the new Common Core Standards with an emphasis on rigorous study in STEM subjects and is cooperating with community partners to advance their STEM efforts and prepare students for advanced study in STEM related careers. The application began with a story about an at-risk student (potential drop-out) who was turned around by an opportunity to set up a virtual reality lab in his school - the first school in the nation to have one. Now Iowa has eight virtual reality labs around the state. The focus on STEM was threaded throughout the application.</p>		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
<p>Absolute Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application addressed all four ARRA reform areas comprehensively and coherently. Groundwork already laid by the state and significant LEA participation and commitment to implementing the state's RTTT plan is evident. At the heart of the state's plan are five Centers of Inquiry (CCI's) that embed the four ARRA reform areas. 1) CCI for Competency-Based Education Systems (new Common Core Standards and instruction based upon competency rather than seat time) 2) CCI for Balanced Assessment Systems (multiple and more authentic assessment systems that embed 21 Century skills) 3) CCI for Responsive Data Platforms (data to inform student achievement and instructional improvement) 4) CCI for Teacher and Administrator Evaluation and Support (evaluation and development of highly effective teachers/principals); and 5) CCI for Intensive School Support (assistance to LEA's and schools to turnaround low performing schools and districts). The state's theory of action revolves around data collection and analysis to inform instruction and professional growth that feeds effective strategies into these Centers for Inquiry that, in turn, use a cascading model</p>		

that provides assistance to schools and LEA's. All parts are connected in the plan. The challenge for the state, should it be granted RTTT funds, is to see that all connections work effectively to produce the kind of reform the state envisions.

Total		0
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Grand Total	500	338
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