



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1



Iowa Application #2750IA-5

A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	52
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	35
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	12

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The proposal lays out a comprehensive and coherent agenda that focuses on transformation around a new competency-based system. The state recognizes that student performance has remained 'flat' for some time, and state leaders appear motivated to make the changes to implement a major overhaul of the current education system.

The state's goals are presented with a series of specific activities to achieve those goals. The plan is in alignment with the competency based system that can be found in Table A-1 of the proposal.

The overall plan addresses the four education areas and focuses on internal and external support for implementation. Full points are awarded.

(ii) The MOU that is presented is built off of the RttT template, but has been revised to align with the competency based system to be implemented.

Two specific reform areas are missing from the requirement of (A)(1)(ii)- compensation tied to evaluation and altering the current structure relative to turning around persistently low-performing schools. While both of these missing reform areas are addressed in subsequent sections, the lack of inclusion in the MOU raises concerns about the level of support from the applicant.

The state proposal has increased LEA participation to 100% support for the MOU and competency based plan, as evidenced by the signatures of all LEA board chairs (legal authority to sign the MOU). 76% of local teacher association presidents signed the MOU as well. Evidence of overall commitment is provided through the listing of support by LEA superintendents, local school board presidents, and local teacher union leaders.

The commitment appears solid, but the lack of 24% of teacher union leaders and the missing two elements of the MOU template (along with an opt-out clause) raise concerns about long-term commitment.

(iii) There appears to be a level of commitment at the local and state levels to support the state plan's goals, specifically in the area of student achievement (both NAEP and ESEA required assessments), with a concerted effort to reducing subgroup achievement gaps. In addition, the commitment to reducing dropout rates and increase college enrollment is also cited.

Overall evidence to support the conclusion above includes:

1. Level of LEA participation

2. Letters of support from the statewide business community
3. Strong higher education support
4. Miscellaneous state and local letters of support
5. Support of major elected and appointed statewide officials

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	27
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	18
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	9

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

A(2)(i)(a) Clear evidence is cited to ensure the state's capacity to successfully implement the RttT proposal. The state leadership team includes a cross-section of state leaders and consulting partners. An advisory committee is in place to help with implementation, and five regional centers to support the five areas of need to be addressed.

A(2)(i)(b) The Center for Collaborative Inquiry concept (five regional centers) will help create an infrastructure to support state plan implementation. The implementation that will occur through CCI will be a three-step process, including Design Phase, R&D Phase and Replication Phase. The infrastructure concept appears to meet the requirements as outlined. This Center appears to be a concept that is well thought out and appears to be appropriate for the state's transformational approach.

A(2)(i)(c) The state has a strong infrastructure of support for grant oversight and management. Grant oversight will operate through the state leadership team. Many budgetary procedures, including monitoring, have already been developed through previous federal grant funds, ensuring appropriate oversight. Further, expenditure of funds will be reported quarterly on the IowaRecovery.gov web site.

A(2)(i)(d) The budget and narrative is well laid out and provides clear documentation of the use of funds to meet the state's plan. The application states that other state and federal funds are being coordinated to achieve the transformed system at the core of the proposal.

A(2)(i)(e) The proposal addresses the various groups and institutions that support the RttT proposal, insinuating long-term support for the proposal after the grant period ends. However, there is no clear, concrete evidence about financial support for the reforms to continue.

(ii) The level of broad stakeholder support is impressive. The active involvement of the Governor and Legislature, and the passage of new legislation in the charter area provides clear evidence of a desire to transform the education system. The letters of support from business, higher education and other stakeholders are impressive.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	14
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	9

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

A(3) (i)- The proposal does make an adequate case of progress in the four education reform areas. Key strong progress was cited in the area of standards and assessments, and data systems are mentioned. Progress was also cited in the areas of teachers and leaders, and support for low performing schools. The RAND Corporation's positive citation of the state as having made significant progress in the area of teachers/leaders is evidence of progress in that reform area. The level of funding increase and support for improving persistently low performing schools is evidence of progress in this area.

(ii)- Student performance achievement since 2003 has reached a level described as a 'plateau' and has shown little statistically significant improvement. However, it must be pointed out that this state has some of the highest achievement levels, as specifically cited, in the nation. Key factors in scoring for this area include:

- NAEP scores in reading have improved overall but have remained flat since 2005. The number of students proficient has decreased from 2002 to 2007. Improvement in state assessments remain flat as well.
- From NAEP to ITBS assessments the pattern is clear- little statistical change among subgroup performance.
- The state has one of the highest graduation rates in the country. Overall graduation rates have ranged from 89 to 90% since 2003. No mention is made of subgroup performance. Data for graduation rates over time remain consistent.

Total	125	93
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B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

- (1)(i) Clear evidence is provided of the consortium the state is actively involved with common standards.
- (ii) The application specifically states the common K-12 standards will be adopted by the State Board of Education in August, 2010.

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i+ii) Clear and substantial evidence is provided to support the application related to improving quality assessments through consortiums:

- SMARTER Balanced Consortium- 33 participating states
- Iowa Core Assessment Program- state evidence of commitment to developing and implementing common, high-quality balanced and improved assessments

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	20
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The application has laid out a comprehensive plan to support the transition to enhanced standards and high quality assessments. A description of each activity to support the goals of the plan for standards and assessments is provided. It is clear that the state has prepared extensively for the transition to higher standards and assessments, with the previous background in the area of standards/assessments cited as a positive foundation to move into the new direction. The plan reflects an enhanced effort to support state-

wide transition, and the applicant's extensive discussion of the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium designed to assist in developing multiple, authentic measures of student achievement, is cited as an example of both the robustness and the new direction the state is moving towards to significantly improve student achievement.

Total	70	70
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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: (Tier 1)

C (1)- #1,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,12 are the elements of the America COMPETES Act that have been implemented.

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The state has a current data system titled EdInsight, which is the data warehouse and student reporting tool. Multiple sets of preK-12 achievement and demographic data are currently being collected. The state's plan to ensure these data are accessible and used to inform stakeholders is comprehensive including goals, objectives and activities to support achieving these goals/objectives. The plan includes a strategy to fully implement the America COMPETES Act elements. The activities, timelines and responsible parties are outlined in the template form in this section. It is clear that from the description of planned outcomes and assigned responsibilities, the state is moving forward to access and use state data to improve student achievement.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	13
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	6
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	4
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	3

(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(3)(i+ii) The MOU for participation by LEAs includes a requirement that local instructional improvement systems would be created and implemented. Further, the plan provides detailed information on professional development activities on how to use the systems and the data. Key components of (3)(i and ii) include:

- Acquiring instructional improvement systems at the LEA level
- Providing professional development support in areas such as accessing data and using EdInsight.

The plan appears to be a positive initial step, but the level of in-depth discussion focusing on the support for LEAs, schools and teachers is limited and does not provide a clear description of the plan the state will implement to provide a strong level of support at the LEA, school and classroom levels.

(iii) Little detailed information in the plan is mentioned regarding availability to researchers, other than a statement of commitment. The information provided does not rise to the level required of a high quality plan, as evidenced by the lack of timelines, activities and responsible parties. The frequent concerns

mentioned about maintaining security as related to researchers raises questions about the commitment of the state to (A)(3)(iii).

Total	47	36
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	16
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	4
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	5
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	7

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The state application provides evidence of the state code that supports alternative routes of certification for teachers and principals. However the description of teacher alternative programs is ambiguous and thus is difficult to assess. The principal alternative certification route is in place, as evidenced by the Northwest Iowa Principal Leadership Academy.

(ii) Clear evidence is provided of the alternative routes in use, including specific examples of programs in place (NWIPLA and the Teacher Intern Program). However, there is a question about why there is only one alternative program for principals in place, in the northwest corner of the state. Further clarification is needed.

(iii) The process for monitoring, evaluating, and identifying areas of shortage and to prepare teachers and principals to fill these shortage is extensive and well laid out in the proposal. This particular state does not have the magnitude of shortages found elsewhere, but it still is focused on identifying and monitoring these shortage areas and preparing people to work in the areas. The Iowa online effort is another strategy to provide opportunities in shortage-related areas.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	45
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	12
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	8
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	20

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

D (2) (i) The state has an approved measure for student growth for AYP and a student identifier system to track individual student growth. Additional measures are possible and planned through CCI for Balanced Assessments. Development and scale-up will take the full grant period. The measure of student growth and the new organization being developed for assessments provides evidence to meet this subsection.

(ii) The state's theory of action for educator evaluation focuses on a two-way approach: high standards for improved student learning while receiving strong support through professional development, data, coaching and continuous learning. The plan is well laid out and is strongly based on rigor, transparency and fair evaluation for principals and teachers. This plan, combined with the theory of action to guide educator evaluation, provides evidence to meet the requirements of this subsection. What is lacking is the explanation of using student data in the evaluation process- this needs to be clarified to receive full points.

(iii) Annual evaluations, either formative or summative, are currently required for principals and teachers. Individual and group professional development is provided based on evaluation data. Formal mentoring and induction programs are also provided currently. Data on student growth is to be provided in the plan, although the performance measures for Table D-2 are not clear and need further clarification.

(iv)(a) Previous information provided, and information in response to (iv)(a) provides an impressive coaching-based evaluation system that supports growth while maintaining high standards for performance.

(b) The information provided regarding compensation and opportunities for highly effective teachers and principals is inadequate. Reference is made to various pilots and projects, yet there is not a strong plan for future support of this criterion. It appears, based on the information provided and the lack of compensation/evaluation requirements in the MOU, that this state is not totally committed to the compensation factor associated with the evaluation system.

(c) Given the state's commitment to a comprehensive and fair evaluation system that provides support to educators, the information provided on using evaluations to inform decisions appears to need significant strengthening based on the following evidence:

- The process for teachers has no detail in this proposal other than a short description of what is currently being done.
- The process for principals has little detail in this proposal other than a short description of what is currently being done.
- The activities to address this in the future are limited, not timely, and appear to be less than needed to adequately plan in this area.

(d) The state has a clear process for removing ineffective tenured and untenured teachers that appears to be fair, transparent and appropriate, based on the detailed level of support, coaching and assistance throughout the process.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	20
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	14
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	6

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The plan contained in this proposal appears to be adequate and is impacted by the relatively low percentage of minority students in the state, most of whom are concentrated in urban areas that are attractive places to live and teach. Thus the state does not have the equitable distribution and access issues faced by many states. The plan is adequate, containing activities, goals and timelines that appear appropriate for the state's demographic factors. An especially strong feature is the proactive approach around monitoring and response with the strategy focused on intervening with teachers who are struggling in the classroom.

(ii) The plan to increase the number of effective teachers in hard-to-staff subjects is less than adequate. There is no concrete plan to address this issue other than a few activities. It appears this is either not an issue for the state or has not been adequately addressed. In addition, the proposal cites various formal targets for subjects and subgroups, with no explanation as to why differing percentages are proposed, with subgroup targets significantly lower for some demographic groups than for others. No explanation is provided for this difference, which raises questions about expectation levels for different subgroups of Iowa's students.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	5
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	2

(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	3
(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>D(4)(i and ii) The plan to link achievement and student growth and to expand preparation programs appears to be inadequate. There is no clear plan other than a series of activities, and most of the responsibility in this area is assigned to the state partner (CCI).</p> <p>Of special note is a statement cited in this section; "Iowa's teacher and principal preparation programs are among the best in the nation." This statement perhaps helps to explain the lack of a strong plan in this area. The lack of a clear, strong and comprehensive plan for change to support continuous improvement of effective support for teachers and principals is a significant weakness of the proposal.</p>		
(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	14
(i) Providing effective support	10	9
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	5
(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(i) The Iowa Professional Development Model appears to be an effective and data-informed professional development effort that focuses on coaching, induction and collaboration. Professional development is required via the Iowa Code:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires collaboration and common planning time • Requires a professional development plan • Requires individual teacher professional development plan (as appropriate) <p>The work of the partnership with the Wallace Foundation on leadership is also a positive part of the plan to improve performance. Overall the state appears to have a high-quality plan to meet the requirements of (D) (5)(i).</p> <p>(ii) The plan in this area is less than high quality. The state documents approved professional development offerings, but districts are not required to report on the effectiveness of these professional development activities. The main strategy to improve in this area is to turn the task over to the CCI for Educator Evaluation and Support. Limited information on the CCI's specific plans for professional development makes it difficult to assess this plan.</p>		
Total	138	100

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: (Tier 1)		
<p>E(1) The State has clear statutory authority to intervene in the persistently lowest-achieving schools through LEAs. It is not clear whether or not the state has authority to intervene directly in 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

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The state has a model for identifying these schools and has evidence that these schools, both Title I and non-Title I, have been publicly identified.

(ii) The clarity of the state's commitment to all four school intervention models needs to be transparent, especially given the historical nature of working with persistently low performing schools. Overall the plan appears to be comprehensive, well thought out, well funded, and committed to turning around these schools. The strategies appear to be traditional approaches that have been used by the state in the past, yet the history of moving schools out of the low performing category has been less than stellar. There is no evidence to support the plan in some cases, such as a lack of discussion of the 'lessons learned' based on past performance and then tying this information to the plan being provided. The plan appears to be adequate but not outstanding.

Total	50	38
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	9
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	4

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) Evidence is provided that the state increased funding for K-12 through higher education from 2008-2009, and increased the percentage of the budget for education.

(ii) The funding formula in this state appears to allocate additional resources for high-needs students and schools through a weighting formula that has been in place for a number of years. Supplemental weighting for students addresses equity within an LEA. What is missing is a clear explanation of whether or not supplemental funding follows the student, school or LEA.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	33
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	4
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	5

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The state amended the existing restrictive charter school law and expanded it significantly in January, 2010. The new law removes previous cap provisions for charter schools.

(ii) The state appears to have numerous laws and regulations governing the establishment, monitoring, accountability and renewal of charter schools. In addition there is a law regarding closing charter

schools. Data on charter school applications, including approvals, is presented. This combination of laws/regulations and data is evidence of satisfactorily meeting the requirements of this subsection.

- (iii) Complete equity of resources is a part of the state's Code and ensures equitable funding.
- (iv) The State Code includes a provision for school facilities, and the proposal includes a statement about the same benefits for charters as for traditional schools. However, it is difficult to assess what kinds of facilities support is provided at the state level, if any, and whether or not the facilities funding is provided by the state. Further clarification is needed. The lack of an explanation to adequately assess the state's status on funding results in a less than full points being awarded.
- (v) The state appears to have far reaching school options efforts that allow for creative new schools, yet the explanation of autonomous schools is very limited and confusing. It is not clear if autonomous schools are allowed and/or currently in operation. The state law does allow schools and LEAs to seek exemptions to implement innovative and efforts.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	3
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The proposal provides a number of programs and practice that demonstrate support for significant reform conditions. The state has a strong framework and is committed to balanced assessments and an evaluation system built on professional development and support.</p> <p>In addition, the opportunities for student success, employee involvement, and the involvement of state officials all demonstrate that reform conditions are in place to move forward in a positive way.</p> <p>The proposal provides strong evidence, in terms of specific programs and practices, that demonstrate the necessary conditions for reform. However, there is no evidence provided about the impact of cited reform conditions related to student achievement, graduation rates and other statistical data.</p>		
Total	55	45

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	0
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The state plan and/or emphasis on STEM is simply not strong in this proposal, rarely mentioned throughout the grant proposal, and not a significant part of the overall proposal. Other than a few references to improving STEM programs for students, the proposal is silent on the kind of K-12 plan involving STEM that qualifies as a priority for the state.</p>		
Total	15	0

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The proposal presented by Iowa is a comprehensive reform effort that focuses on system thinking, pro-activity and support for a competency-based transformational change effort. This proposal is further</p>		

strengthened by the commitment of LEAs, the specificity of the MOU, and the support and involvement of the Governor and the legislature. Iowa's transformation model appears to have the potential to be far reaching and centered around competency-based learning and instruction.

While the reform effort is positive, there are some issues to address. First, there is a lack of clear focus and direction regarding the state's STEM plan. The lack of specificity of the STEM plan is a weakness of this proposal.

Second, the proposal seems to draw on traditional strategies to implement a transformational concept. Many of these traditional strategies have been in place for some time, yet performance in Iowa has remained flat. It raises the issue of whether applying traditional programs and processes to the transformation will lead to significant improvement in student outcomes. A case in point is the attitude towards higher education- that it is the best system in the nation and thus needs little reform. Yet the plan prescribes a systems approach and apparently leaves out of the transformation process one of the key components of an education system- higher education.

This proposal is an exciting one and appears to offer the promise of real change. It can also serve as a learning laboratory for other states to follow.

Total		0
Grand Total	500	382



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Iowa Application #2750IA-8



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	54
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	4
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	40
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	10

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The proposal lists five clear goals for implementing reforms consistent with ARRA and RTTT priorities. All five goals are focused on improving student achievement and educational attainment. The state's plan addresses all four RTTT education areas, and is encompassed by an overarching vision to build a "competency-based" education system. Clear contrasts are detailed between the traditional education system and the competency-based system the state seeks to create. The plan's theory of change is that through three strategies (building implementation capacity, creating learning organizations, and establishing adaptive leadership capacity), the state will be able to transform its education system to the new, competency-based model. The reform agenda, as described, appears to be consistent with the content, but not the implementation timelines, of the specific reform plans detailed in the rest of the proposal.

(ii) The state was able to recruit 25 additional participating districts for its Phase II application, bringing the total to 246 districts (68% of LEAs), and includes the eight largest districts in the state. The state designed its own MOU, modeled on the Department MOU, but with two notable changes: (1) the requirement to use teacher evaluations to inform compensation was omitted, pending the results of an ongoing pay-for-performance pilot project occurring in the state; and (2) a school turnaround commitment, since persistently low-performing school/LEAs have MOUs already in place under the federal School Improvement Grant program. The proposal did an adequate job of explaining the rationale for these MOU modifications. The state added several of its own provisions regarding sharing of innovations, developing a competency – based education plan, and contributing to assessment development. These modifications appear to strengthen the MOU in relation to Iowa's RTTT plan.

While the proposal states that participating districts had to agree to everything in the state MOU, in fact, some districts signed with conditions and one district opted out of one element of the MOU. Teachers' union leaders signed the MOU in 76% of participating LEAs. According to some comments included in the proposal appendix, there remained some objection to evaluation provisions of the MOU. However, the proposal explains that these provisions are now required by state law, so the objections are most likely moot.

Overall, the participating LEAs will implement all or significant portions of the state's RTTT plan, as required by the criterion, and the commitment to implement appears to be strong.

(iii) The proposal provides a state map showing the distribution of participating districts, which represent the vast majority of the state's counties, includes the largest districts, and serves 79% of students in poverty. The proposal makes a strong case that this participation rate and distribution has the potential for statewide impact.

The state's RTTT goals match all four goals outlined in the RTTT criterion: increasing student achievement, decreasing achievement gaps, increasing graduation rates, and increasing college enrollment. The plan adds a fifth goal: increasing enrollment in STEM college majors. However, while the plan provides measurable targets for each goal, it does not adequately explain how these targets were selected and why they are "ambitious, yet achievable." Even in the appendix materials, where data trends for each goal were displayed, there was not sufficient explanation of the target-setting process and how these targets relate to the specific situations in the participating districts (with the exception of the achievement gap goal, for which some explanation was provided for how these targets would affect participating LEAs.) Therefore, it is difficult to tell from the proposal whether the strong participation rate and statewide LEA distribution will actually translate into meeting these targets.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	21
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	14
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	7

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The Iowa plan is to manage RTTT reforms through *dedicated teams*, or Centers for Collaborative Inquiry (CCIs), one for each of the five key projects: creating the competency-based system, creating a balanced assessment system, establishing responsive data platforms, training and supporting teachers and leaders, and providing intensive school supports, particularly for chronically under-performing schools.

These teams combine experienced and new staff within the SEA and the Area Education Agencies (AEAs). The teams will support reform work in assigned groups of participating LEAs. New staff will be hired on the basis of their relevant skills related to the state's reform goals. The five teams will be coordinated by a RTTT director, who reports to the "administrator of PK-12 education." While this structure appears to be logical in relation to the plan's goals, state-level leadership appears to be a fairly serious weakness. For example, it is not clear what the role of the Chief State School Officer is within this management plan (other than supervising the RTTT Director), the RTTT Director is not named, and no credentials/qualifications are described. A RTTT Coordinating Council will be created, which includes the five project managers, other SEA division directors, and AEA representatives; however, once again, the Chief State School Officer does not appear to be included. The role of the State Board of Education and the Governor are also not included in the plan description.

The proposal provides a budget plan that does a good job of explaining both the "big picture" of planned expenditures as well as details of specific expenses for the five key projects. Spending is projected to be allocated in approximately equal proportions across the five key reform projects of the proposal, and allocated appropriate to the project descriptions and projected work plans. The plan adequately describes the SEA's capacity to manage the funds and conduct efficient operations and processes during implementation.

The budget narrative does an adequate job of describing how other funds (state and federal) will be coordinated with the capacity-building efforts supported by RTTT funds.

A positive attribute is that the state has committed to continuing the RTTT reforms for two years after funding ends, with commitments to transition staff to state and other payrolls, and to continue implementation and scale-up processes with other funds to complete the transformation effort.

Overall, the state has provided convincing evidence that it has the capacity to implement its proposed plans through dedicated teams, LEA support systems, effective operations and processes, coordination of RTTT and other funds, and committed to continue implementation after the grant period. The main weakness is the apparent absence of state-level leadership (i.e., the Chief State School Officer, State Board, Governor) from active involvement in the plan. The response in this section merits medium points for this criterion.

(ii) The proposal demonstrates stakeholder support from a range of constituents, including legislators, the teachers union, education professional organizations, higher education, and business. The support letter from the state teachers union was especially supportive and complimentary of the collaborative process used during the development of the proposal. While the support letters represented the full range of education stakeholders and were generally complimentary of the state's RTTT plan, in general (with the exception of letters from the Area Education Agencies, which are written into the plan), they lacked specificity in relation to actual commitments of time, expertise, or funding support.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	12
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	7
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(i) The proposal describes relevant state reforms over the past several years in each of the four RTTT reform areas. Particularly impressive is the work undertaken to improve school leadership. The response qualifies for high points on this criterion.</p> <p>(ii) The proposal is quite honest about the achievement trend data in Iowa: overall achievement trends are mostly flat, there has been little or no progress in closing achievement gaps, and the graduation rate has declined slightly. The narrative accurately describes these trends as being representative of a "stalled system." Appropriately, the proposal references the state's past history of high achievement and acknowledges a period of complacency, recognition of which has now penetrated the collective consciousness of the education community and has provided the impetus for the state's RTTT reform plans. One important section noted that while poverty in the state has risen significantly, NAEP and ESEA scores have not dropped proportionately, so the state provides this information as supporting evidence that existing education efforts have at least held the line on student achievement. These include a concerted effort in reading improvement for all students.</p> <p>Overall, the state was admirably forthcoming about its failure to improve student achievement and close achievement gaps since 2003, but the data indicate that the state merits low points for this criterion.</p>		
Total	125	87

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The proposal provides evidence through a copy of its MOU that it is a member of the Common Core standards consortium. The proposal includes appropriate documentation of the fact that the standards will be internationally benchmarked, the number and names of states in the consortium, and a copy of the standards. Forty-eight states and three territories are participating in the Common Core consortium, a clear majority of states in the country. This response qualifies for full credit for this criterion.

(ii) The state has scheduled adoption of the Common Core standards by the State Board of Education for its July 29, 2010 meeting, complying with the RTTT deadline of August 2, 2010, and qualifying for high points on this criterion.

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
(i) The proposal provides evidence through a copy of its "document of commitment" that it is a member of the Balanced Assessment consortium, which will develop assessments aligned with the Common Core standards. This response qualified for full credit for this criterion.		
(ii) Thirty-three states are participating in the Balanced Assessment consortium, a clear majority of states in the country. This response qualifies for full credit for this criterion.		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	20
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
The proposal includes a rollout plan that builds on its current efforts to implement the Iowa Core standards. The Common Core standards adoption in July will fold into this effort. The plan includes a reasonable series of activities (e.g., professional development for educators related to curriculum alignment, developing elements of the balanced assessment system aligned with the new standards, and collaborating with institutions of higher education (IHEs) to prepare for the use of competency-based high school transcripts).		
The state acknowledges that the Common Core standards and Balanced Assessment Consortium products will not encompass all subjects and grades, so it is incorporating its own effort to develop additional formative and summative assessments in collaboration with participating LEAs.		
Activities, timelines, and responsibilities all conform to the criteria for a high-quality plan as defined in the RTTT notice.		
Total	70	70

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	18
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
The proposal provides evidence that 9 of the 12 America COMPETES Act elements for a statewide longitudinal data system are in place, qualifying for 18 points on this criterion.		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
One of the key reform areas in the Iowa proposals is Responsive Data Platforms. The state plan is strong and details activities designed to integrate its multiple current educational databases through its state interface, EdInsight. This work will be mostly underwritten through a federal Institute of Education Sciences (IES) grant of \$8.8 million. The ultimate goal will be an accessible, user-friendly data system with improved capacity to inform educational decisions and public reporting.		

The description of system expansion and refinement was clear, comprehensive, and dovetails logically with the state's overall RTTT plan.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	10
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	6
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	3
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	1
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(i) The proposal delineates a specific plan to assure that all participating districts acquire and use instructional improvement systems compatible with the state longitudinal data system as part of their MOU requirements, thereby increasing the availability and utility of data and information to inform teaching and learning. These systems will be in place by 2011. This description fully meets the criterion requirements.</p> <p>(ii) The plan acknowledges that as the availability and uses of educational data systems expand, the need for professional development will increase commensurately. In addition to face-to-face training sessions which conform to the state's professional development model, the plan includes development of on-line training modules to increase educator access. Appropriately, the plan describes how training content will progress from learning how to <i>access</i> data to learning how to <i>analyze</i> data. However, the evaluation of this training relies on as-yet undetermined survey instruments, system usage data, and an external evaluation contract of some type. The proposal does not clearly describe how the state will know that teachers are actually using the new systems to support continuous instructional improvement. This response qualifies for medium points on this criterion.</p> <p>(iii) The proposal asserts that data will be made available to researchers pending the enhancement of existing research protocols and system access requirements. The plan does not provide enough detail to determine whether researchers would have access to the data they need to evaluate materials, educational strategies, and approaches for educating different types of learners. The minimal response to this section merits low points for this criterion.</p>		
Total	47	33

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	12
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	4
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	5
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	3
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>i) The proposal includes the relevant statutes authorizing the establishment of alternative route programs through rules promulgated by the State Board of Educational Examiners.</p> <p>The proposal provides convincing evidence that the alternative teacher certification programs operating in the state meet either three or four of the five elements described in the RTTT notice (depending on the program). However, in Iowa, alternative teacher certification programs <i>must</i> be operated through</p>		

institutions of higher education (IHEs), rather than allowing programs to operate independently of IHEs, meriting low points. The principal academy operating in northwest Iowa does operate separately from IHEs and meets all five definitional elements of alternative programs. Taken together, this scenario rates medium points.

(ii) The proposal provided data for four alternative teacher certification programs currently approved in the state. Of these, only three have enrolled students, and only one has program completers to date. That program has apparently had 41 program completers over the past three years. It appears that 65 total students are projected to be participating in the three operational alternative teacher certification programs in the fall of 2010, with a new program coming on line, but with no specific enrollment projections provided in the proposal. Data for the principal program were also provided, which has licensed 25 principals in the past two years. This response provides adequate, but not detailed, information about existing alternative programs in use.

(iii) The proposal description of how the state monitors and designates areas of teacher shortage lacks detail. A list of shortage areas is supplied in the appendix, but does not specify how many teachers are needed or where the shortages are situated geographically. From the description in the section, it is not possible to determine exactly how these shortage areas were identified, although some use of emergency credential data and frequency of job postings on the state website was mentioned. The proposal states that the SEA completes a recruitment and retention survey – it is not clear whether this survey is administered annually, and to whom. The survey data is described as informing policy decisions, but is not specifically described as being used to enhance recruitment in the identified shortage areas. Descriptions of on-line instructional opportunities and attention to diversity of the teacher workforce do not specifically address the criterion. The only mention of principals in this section is a statement that the state produces more principals than there are positions available. Whether this means that all schools, even hard-to-staff and/or low-performing schools, have an easy time finding highly effective principals was *not* specifically addressed.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	39
(i) Measuring student growth	5	3
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	11
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	7
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	18

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The state has a student growth model for those subjects and grades tested in the ESEA state assessments. The proposal acknowledges the need to develop additional assessments and growth measures for other subjects and grades and that will be comparable across subjects/grades/districts, but does not provide a comprehensive description of which subjects/grades, and how these will come on line during the course of the grant. Timelines and responsible parties were lacking. Development of these additional assessments will not be complete until the end of the grant period, which has serious implications for implementing an educator evaluation system that is inclusive of all teachers and administrators. This response is not a high-quality plan to measure student growth.

(ii) The proposal delineates a credible theory of action for the educator evaluation system that outlines conditions under which the system will improve educator expertise and student achievement. The system will use multiple rating categories aligned with the Iowa teacher and principal standards. However, the proposal does not explicitly state how student growth will constitute a significant factor within the evaluations (i.e., what proportion of the evaluation will depend on student growth); rather, it states that only that a plan “goal” is to work with educators (e.g., involve teachers, principals, and other education stakeholders) to develop specific policies and practices (undescribed). This is a vague goal that may or may not result in student growth being considered as a significant factor in educator evaluations. While the

overall response merits high points, full points were not awarded because of lack of specificity within parts of the response.

(iii) Iowa law requires that both teachers and principals be evaluated annually. The proposal describes a system that includes two annual cycles of formative evaluation and feedback, with summative evaluation occurring every third year. The proposal does a good job of describing how these evaluations will provide timely and constructive feedback related to the state's educator standards. These evaluations will also include providing educators with data on student growth. However, until the assessment system is complete [see comments in (D)(2)(i)], it is not clear how this system can be fully implemented for all teachers, and the evaluation system is not slated to be fully in place until the grant period is over. This slow pace brings into question the accuracy/feasibility of the implementation timeline provided in the proposal.

(iv) The proposal adequately addresses how the evaluation system will be used to inform decisions regarding educator development, granting tenure/full certification, and removing ineffective educators. As discussed in comments for Section (A), the state has opted not to include teacher compensation decisions as part of the evaluation system or the participating LEA MOU at this time, pending the completion of work underway for a performance-based compensation system required by state law. The proposal also does not address how the evaluation system will be used to make decisions regarding promotion and retention; therefore points were not awarded in relation to these key decisions. Medium points are awarded for this criterion.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	19
(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	7

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The proposal includes adequate definitions for high-minority and high-poverty schools, and makes a logical case that the state cannot identify effective teachers and principals until new definitions for effectiveness are in place and the new evaluation system is fully operational. However, this delays implementation of equitable distribution initiatives until well after the grant period ends. Thus, the timelines provided in this section are not feasible.

When the systems are in place, the state will engage with LEAs to monitor effective educator distribution and, through professional development, strengthen the capacity of educators currently working in high-minority and high-poverty schools. A strong feature is that this monitoring will include a process of predictive modeling based on demographic data, to allow proactive responses to potential areas of concern.

(ii) The proposal includes a three-part approach to recruiting, training, and placing teachers and principals in hard-to-staff schools and subjects (as identified by the state), which provides a credible, multi-pronged strategy to assure that staffing levels are adequate in these areas. However, the same timeline feasibility concerns apply as for (D)(3)(i).

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	7
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	5
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	2

(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) Pending the completion of the comprehensive balanced assessment system that will provide student growth data for all teachers and principals, the state has a credible plan to use existing data (growth measures based on state ESEA assessment data) to begin reporting educator effectiveness information back to in-state preparation programs. The state has set an ambitious yet achievable goal of reporting

these data back to 100% of preparation programs, but this cannot be accomplished by the end of the RTTT grant period as stated in the proposal timelines.

(ii) The proposal provides only a vague plan for expanding successful preparation programs. The plan provides no details regarding what will happen as a result of an annual conference and dialogue among preparation programs. Low points are awarded for this criterion.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	8
(i) Providing effective support	10	6
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	2

(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) IA has a strong basis for providing effective professional development based on past work. However, for the purposes of the RTTT plan, the professional development approach described in the proposal does not fully link the planned activities to the stated goals. For example, the plan lists goals of providing professional development training regarding the balanced assessment system, but no activities are described for this goal. An activity to develop an integrated digital technology platform is not linked to any of the goals. Overall, the professional development support, as described, does not appear to be well-integrated to support LEA progress in the proposal's five stated reform areas, resulting in medium points.

(ii) The response to this criterion was inadequate to determine how the state will evaluate professional development programs. The very general description provided that mentions collaborating with stakeholders to determine how to evaluate programs is insufficient; it does not indicate that the state has any concrete sense of how to measure program effectiveness. This response does not constitute a high-quality plan; therefore, low points are awarded for this criterion.

Total	138	85
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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: (Tier 1)		
The proposal provides evidence, through inclusion of statutory language effective January 2010, that the state has authority to intervene in LEAs with persistently low-performing schools, but not to directly intervene in those schools.		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	20
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	15

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The state has a credible methodology, conforming with U.S. Department of Education guidelines, to identify persistently low-achieving schools, currently identifying 35 schools in 18 LEAs.

(ii) The proposal does link its planned activities with the five key reforms of the overall plan. The proposal provides narrative discussion of "lessons learned" in past efforts at school turnaround, but does not link the specific interventions to the results. It is not clear why performance improved in the 36 schools that were

removed from the intervention lists. While the general intervention process is described (diagnosis, intervention design, implementation, and evaluation), no information is provided about the actual interventions the schools implemented, which ones worked, which ones didn't, and why.

The proposal does not include information about the projected numbers of schools among the current 35 persistently low-achieving schools that will implement each of the four turnaround models, although the application requires this information to be provided. These decisions will apparently be made by the participating LEAs at some later date.

The response for this criterion merits medium points.

Total	50	25
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	9
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	4
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
(i) The proposal provides financial data for fiscal years 2008 and 2009 showing that education funding as a percentage of state funding increased. This response merits high points for this criterion.		
(ii) The proposal provides credible evidence, in the form of the funding formula statute and explanatory text, that the state's policies lead to equitable funding among high-need LEAs and other LEAs. No information was provided regarding fund distribution <i>within</i> LEAs. Supplemental weighting of funds for certain students was mentioned, but did not specifically explain how these funds are distributed to schools within LEAs.		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	33
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	7
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	5
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	5

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) The state has no caps on the number of charter schools that may be authorized, based on a law taking effect in January 2010. The provisions of the law are clearly described in the narrative. The proposal lists seven charter schools operating in the state, which is a very small number (.5% of public schools). This response qualifies for high points for this criterion.

(ii) The description of applicable laws regarding charter school authorization and accountability includes criteria for approval, monitoring requirements, accountability provisions, and a 4-year renewal cycle. The proposal provided data for each of the last five years that conforms with the evidence required for this criterion.

(iii) According to the description provided of the state's applicable laws, Iowa provides the same funding to public charter schools as it does to regular schools. This response qualifies for high points for this criterion.

(iv) The state provides the same support to charter school facilities as it does to regular public school facilities; that is, allowing LEAs to levy funds and local taxes to support facilities construction and maintenance. The narrative demonstrates that charter schools are not subject to more stringent facilities requirements than regular schools. However, there is no additional state funding support for charter school facilities. This response merits medium points.

(v) The state has a long track record of approving waivers/exemptions from state requirements in order for LEAs to establish innovative practices in schools. Over 1000 such exemptions have been granted in the past decade. The proposal lists a variety of innovative school models currently in operation. However, these schools, as described, do not match the RTTT definition of innovative/autonomous schools, e.g., the proposal does not state whether these schools control their own budgets and their own staffing.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	2
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
The proposal describes a variety of state reforms that hold promise for increasing graduation rates, promoting college attendance and attainment, and focusing on competency-based student credentials. However, no data is provided regarding outcomes/results of these reforms to date (i.e., improving student achievement, reducing achievement gaps, graduation rates, or other important outcomes) as required in the application criterion.		
Total	55	44

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	0
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
Surprisingly, the proposal did not include information for this competitive preference priority, even though one of the proposal's five stated priority goals was to increase participation in STEM education and careers. There is no high-quality plan for STEM initiatives (timelines, responsible parties, etc.) and no budget allocation for STEM improvement, no description of rigorous courses of study, or STEM collaboratives, or preparing more students for advanced study and STEM careers (with the exception of one recently reconstituted school). This response does not meet the Competitive Preference Priority.		
Total	15	0

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
The Iowa application has several strengths and several significant weaknesses. The plan comprehensively addresses the four RTTT reform areas, with a strong sense of understanding how the state can build on its current reform efforts to accomplish its goals. The management approach uses dedicated teams for each of the reform areas, and incorporates collaborative work among regional education support centers and the participating LEAs. The overall participation rate and strength of		

commitment appears to have the potential for statewide impact. A significant strength is the emphasis placed on creating a comprehensive and balanced assessment system to provide measures of progress for students, educators, schools, and LEAs.

The proposal acknowledges that winning an award in this competition will be challenging: the state's history of strong (but now stagnant) performance may be either a strength or a weakness, depending on how seriously the new reforms are implemented.

Weaknesses appear in the management plan, which has weak or nonexistent roles for state leadership, including for the Chief State School Officer (Director of PK-12 Education), the State Board of Education, and the Governor. Letters of support were positive, but did not offer specific commitments for time, funding, or other resources. Of particular note is the fact that proposal did not describe a coherent focus and high-quality plan for STEM education, even though this was one of the five stated priority goals of the plan. An additional concern is that implementation timelines in the plan appear to be either too long to complete during the grant period or are not feasible to implement as described.

Overall, the Iowa plan meets the Absolute Priority.

Total		0
Grand Total	500	344



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1



Iowa Application #2750IA-7

A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	50
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	34
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	11

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(A)(1)(i)

Iowa has articulated an ambitious innovative reform agenda that addresses the four areas of ARRA. This agenda is based on competency-based education. Iowa notes that it has a record of collaboration among stakeholders such as: Iowa Department of Education (IDE); the Iowa Legislature; the governor; area education agencies (AEA); the community (including families, the business community, and elected officials); institutions of higher education (IHE) and other agencies. The State points to current and previous initiatives as being a natural fit with RTTT. There is already a data system in place which has unique student identifier capacity. Legislation was passed in 2010 mandating that persistently low achieving schools select an intervention model and undertake major reform. Iowa proposes a model based on three prongs: Learning Organizations, Adaptive Leadership, and Implementation. The budget seems to allocate enough resources to build capacity within the state and the state's LEAs. This combination of factors presents a coherent plan that should be achievable as Iowa appears to have garnered the support of important stakeholders and has already established reform mechanisms that fit the RTTT agenda. Iowa earned all points for this section.

(A)(1)(ii)

Iowa has built significant LEA commitment. Iowa notes that the majority of the LEAs (68%) have agreed to participate in the reform agenda of RTTT. This encompasses 73% of Iowa's public school population, and 79% of students living in poverty. However this is weakened by the fact that only 76% of the MOUs came with the signature of a teacher association president and at least three of the Iowa's largest LEA teacher associations did not sign the MOU. This lack of support from local teacher associations would make implementation across the state more difficult. This weakness is somewhat mitigated by the Iowa State Education Association (ISEA) signing a letter of support. Other weakness are: that Iowa's MOU does not require districts to agree to use evaluation to inform compensation because they are in the midst of a Pay-for Performance and Career ladder pilot. The MOU does not address "turning around" low achieving schools. These factors are an important piece of RTTT criteria, and thus weaken the narrative. Iowa earned moderate points.

(A)(1)(iii)

Iowa, in its overview, notes that it has five goals which support the four areas of ARRA and the STEM proposal. However, little definitive information is provided specifically addressing the element. The overview is nonspecific as to plans for closing the achievement gaps and other RTTT elements. Iowa provides only general narrative for support of this element. Iowa earns moderate points for this section.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	30
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	20
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>(A)(2)(i)</p> <p>Iowa proposes an ambitious and achievable plan to ensure the capacity to implement RTTT. Iowa proposes to change their current model of one-way communication and dissemination style to a new infrastructure. Iowa proposes a well thought out structure that will create <i>Centers for Collaborative Inquiry (CCI)</i>, which are organized around Iowa's five priority reform areas to solve Iowa's needs in a collaborative, iterative research process. There five CCIs are: CCI for Competency-Based Education; CCI for Balanced Assessment; CCI for Responsive Data Platforms; CCI for Educator Evaluation and Support, and CCI for Intensive School Supports. These CCIs align well with the RTTT agenda and should help ensure the capacity to implement Iowa's plan. The structure of Director of RTTT, director's staff, and the five CCI teams seems like an effective method of coherently implementing the RTTT process. The use of a common continuous improvement process to monitor and track LEA, AEA, and state progress toward goals and outcomes is a process that should foster efficient implementation. The centers will work together as a system to innovate, transform, and quickly revise practices for maximum effects, terminate ineffective practices, replicate effective practices across sub-grantees, and monitor effects and progress within LEA sub-grantees in order to proactively intervene when needed. Iowa's research and development, rapid prototyping, evaluation, data analysis, collaboration, and support are in the spirit of the Race to the Top effort.</p> <p>Iowa has shown that it is capable of acquiring multiple funding streams and integrating them to foster the implementation and sustainability of their reform efforts including RTTT. Iowa has applied for or has received funding from several funding sources with which it will coordinate its efforts for reform. The IDE has established a plan of coordinated funding to cover staff salaries in the CCIs, using a combination of federal, state, and local funds to cover the current and new positions in the Centers. The fiscal planning and objective in the development of this application is to transition funding for all CCI staff from RTTT to other state and federal funds at the conclusion of the four-year grant period. This should ensure the sustainability of the RTTT initiative. Some examples of funding streams and programs to be coordinated with RTTT funds are: State allocated funds for STEM through Iowa Math and Science Education Partnership (IMSEP); State-allocated Iowa Core Implementation funds; Iowa's National Science Foundation funded Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Equity Pipeline project; ESEA Title I School Improvement Grants; ARRA (i.e. State Fiscal Stabilization Funds, Education Technology Grants etc.) IDEA and Teacher Quality Partnership grant. IDE lays out a coherent plan for budget reporting, oversight and monitoring of fund disbursement. Iowa is awarded full points for section.</p> <p>(A)(2)(ii) Iowa has achieved broad stakeholder support. Iowa brought together 110 stakeholders across five priority areas to formulate their RTTT plan. Iowa has the support of various stakeholders most importantly the Iowa State Education Association, the state affiliate of the National Education Association, representing 34,000 educators in Iowa, and the School Administrators of Iowa (SAI), representing all of Iowa's elementary and secondary principals and superintendents. These two organizations are key to ensuring implementation of Iowa's plan In addition to these key stakeholders other organizations such as the Iowa Business Council, Iowa Parent Teacher Association, state legislatures, the governor, and post-secondary institutions have indicated their support. The different stakeholders should be helpful in both initial implementation and future sustainability. Iowa is awarded high points for this section.</p>		
(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	19
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	4

(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	15
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(A)(3)(i) Iowa has a commendable record in establishing standards and assessments. Iowa was an early and leading member of the Common Core Standards initiative, and has adopted the Iowa Core. The Iowa Core stresses the concepts and skills necessary for success in a rapidly changing information technology dense world. Iowa has a relationship with Iowa Testing Program (ITP) which has helped Iowa to develop state wide assessments. However, it is not clear how these assessments are translated across the state. Iowa has been proactive in gaining funds for and acquiring a new data system as evidenced by Iowa's investment of \$ 2.9 million in a data system and has received \$8.8 million from a grant for work on the data system. Iowa has made great strides in teacher and principal policy and notes that they have been recognized by RAND Corp. as one of three states named as the best in progress towards a cohesive leadership system. Iowa has made significant progress in working with low-performing schools. Twenty-seven schools have come out of the "School Districts in Need" program since 2004-2005. Iowa has proactively addressed reform in all four areas and sought funds to enhance their effort. Iowa receives high points for this section.</p> <p>(A)(3)(ii) Iowa is one of the highest performing states on both NAEP and ESEA data. While, Iowa has made progress for all students in both reading and mathematics across the long term, recent data suggest a plateau has been reached. Iowa does note that the rate of poverty in the state has increased but academic indicators have not decreased. Iowa has not been successful in closing the achievement gap among different ethnic and socioeconomic groups. However, Iowa notes that they have some programs such as Reading First that have shown potential on a smaller scale. Iowa has one of the highest graduation rates in the country hovering around 90 %. In 2008, the graduation rate dropped to 88%. However, Iowa notes that they have improved their method of tracking students and 2008 was the first year for the use of this method, making it difficult to do comparisons longitudinally. Iowa has several programs in place that are intended to increase this rate. Iowa notes that the increase in poverty might be one reason for the lack of movement upward. Iowa hopes the new design of RTTT will help move the graduation rate up, and close the gaps among different groups. Iowa has had only modest success in meeting the criteria of this section. Iowa earned moderate points for this section.</p>		
Total	125	99

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(B)(1)(i-ii) Iowa was an early signer to the Common Core Standards (CCS) initiative. They plan on adopting the standards on July 29, 2010. Implementation of the CCS begins August 2010. A detailed timeline is provided in B3. Iowa earns full points for this section.</p>		
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		

<p>(B)(2)(i-ii) Iowa belongs to the consortium SMARTER (33 states). Iowa attached the list of states and a letter of commitment. IDE has already assigned staff to assist in item development, formative assessment, growth modeling and technical adequacy. Iowa earned high points for sections i and ii.</p>		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	20
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>(B)(3)</p> <p>Iowa has articulated a well designed plan for supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments. The state will use the CCI structure to form leadership teams throughout the roll out of RTTT. This structure should provide for efficient implementation, and for sustainability after RTTT funding is gone. Additionally, Iowa notes that it already has extensive experience in developing and implementing balanced assessment. The Iowa plan includes goals: to provide Professional Development to support adoption of instructional materials and to support integration of interim assessments at the local level; adopt CCS; transition to a high quality assessment system; to develop a network to support standards, instruction and assessment at the teacher and administrator pre-service level; collaborate with institutes of higher education to develop acceptance guidelines for students who have been in competency-based programs; and to monitor implementation and evaluate effects. The plan is in the spirit of RTTT and its initiatives. The plan is ambitious and doable. A timeline with responsible parties is provided to supplement the narrative. Iowa is awarded high points.</p>		
Total	70	70

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: (Tier 1)</p> <p>(C)(1)</p> <p>Iowa has nine of the twelve elements met. They plan to implement all of them in the future.</p>		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>(C)(2) Iowa has a clearly ambitious defined plan to enhance their current data system "EdInsight". Iowa not only has a system that should enhance the implementation of RTTT but also has plans to provide support and professional development to enable stakeholders to make effective use of data to inform instructional decisions at all levels. This innovative integrated data system includes formative assessment that should help teachers to strategically plan for instruction in an efficient manner. CCI for Responsive Data Platforms is a key partner in implementing this ambitious but well defined plan. Iowa plans to fully develop and complete the America COMPETES Act elements by January of 2012. Other goals of this plan are to: build three new data platforms; enhance Iowa's statewide longitudinal data system; fully implement a tiered system of access; increase use of EdInsight; develop interoperability standards; and improve reporting. The use of outside evaluators will provide for continuous improvement and sustainability of the system. A timeline with responsible parties provides further detail supporting the plan. Iowa earned high points.</p>		

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	18
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	6
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	6
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	6
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(C)(3)(i-ii) Iowa presents a high quality plan that focuses on developing a culture of "data use" while supporting LEAs, schools and teachers in that use. Not only is Iowa upgrading their data systems in a substantive manner, but Iowa is planning on conducting professional development to help districts to access and analyze data. As Iowa continues to build multiple data platforms, training to districts will be provided on accessing and using them. The CCI provides an innovative structure for working with districts to not only access data, but also how to use data to inform instruction. Iowa notes that all participating districts have agreed, through the MOU, to implement a local instructional improvement plan. All participating LEAs agreed to share with the state lessons learned. In addition, the CCI will track the effectiveness of the Professional Development provided with both internal and external evaluators. The use of external evaluators lends strength to the narrative. A timeline adds evidence as to the effective implementation of the plan. Iowa earned high points for each element.</p> <p>(C)(3)(iii) Iowa plans on allowing access to researchers to the system. The use of a subcommittee made up of various stakeholders to review access to the system should foster the usability of the system, and stakeholder buy-in. However, it is not clear what standards or criteria will be used to decide the accessibility issue. The use of Regional Education Laboratory Midwest and the CCI to enhance existing protocols for researchers, as well as building training for handling access seems to be an efficient method of facilitating researcher access to data. Iowa earned high points for this section.</p>		
Total	47	41

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	17
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	3
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	7
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	7
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(D)(1)(ii) Iowa has both principals and teachers using alternative certification programs. While there is an alternative route for principals not attached to an IHE, it is not clear from the narrative that such a venue exists for teachers. This weakens the plan. Iowa earned moderate points</p> <p>(D)(1)(iii) Iowa does not have a general teacher or principal shortage, though they do experience some shortages in particular areas (e.g., the STEM fields, special education, ESL, and in some rural areas). Iowa has an ambitious program for tracking principal and teachers in high need areas. Of particular merit is their tracking of underrepresented groups in these high need areas. Iowa tracks shortages and the number of potential graduates in each. Iowa recruits teachers/principals into these areas through incentives for potential teachers and market incentives to provide funding for districts to recruit teachers and principals for shortage areas. Of particular note are Iowa's efforts to increase minority representation within the ranks of principals and teachers to more closely match the student population and</p>		

STEM areas. Iowa also uses distance technology to enhance learning opportunities for students in rural areas. Iowa has earned high points.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	50
(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	20

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

D)(2)(i) Iowa has a multifaceted, ambitious plan for measuring student growth and to tie this growth to teacher and principal evaluations. Teachers and administrators have access to data on individual student growth. The CCI for Balanced Growth is continuing to develop additional measures of students' achievement and growth. The state intends to develop multiple, authentic measures of student achievement and growth. Iowa earned high points.

(D)(2)(ii) Iowa has put together an impressive group of stakeholders to develop an evaluation system of Iowa teachers and principals. This system is being developed in collaboration with multiple stakeholders including: the Iowa State Education Association (ISEA); School Administrators of Iowa (SAI); IHEs; business partners; and educators to develop specific policies, practices, and processes to ensure that student growth is a significant factor in evaluation. This system uses multiple forms of evidence of student learning and growth. Of equal importance are Iowa's plans for refining and expanding evaluator training. This is extremely important if the system is to be perceived as being fair and unbiased. Iowa earned high points for this section.

(D)(2)(iii) Iowa state law mandates that principals and teachers be evaluated annually. Iowa has a unique and coherent annual evaluation system that integrates evaluation with professional development plans. IDE provides teachers and administrators with an Innovation Configuration Map of the characteristics of effective teaching and leading. As a part of the evaluation process, the teacher and evaluator analyze student achievement data and use that data to develop a PD plan. IDE will require districts to provide educators with data on students' growth. Iowa provides a timeline and responsible parties table to supplement the narrative. These are all important pieces of a cohesive whole. The timeline appears to be doable and ambitious. Iowa earned high points for this section.

(D)(2)(iv) Iowa has a strong coherent model linking PD to evaluation of teachers who do not meet teaching standards. Evaluations are directly tied to PD plans. Iowa also notes that the evaluation process is a form of PD. Iowa has had a pilot program since 2002 linking compensation to evaluation. This seems to have been a small program and it is not clear how it will be scaled-up. The performance measures table shows an expectation that only 2.4% of districts to be participating as late as 2014, with full implementation not available until 2014-2015. This is not an ambitious timeline as it appears to have minimal goals. The Iowa evaluation plan is tied to both initial tenure and dismissal of teachers. The link is not as strong for principals; Iowa plans to strengthen the connection between evaluation and licensure of principals in the future, but does not give much detail about this section. Iowa also has a method for removing teachers. However, it is not clear that Iowa has a plan for removing principals. The plan talks of remediating principals, but the narrative does not explicitly mention a removal process for principals. So while this is strong plan for teachers, that is not the case for principals. Iowa earned moderate points for this section.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	22
(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	7

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(D)(3)(i) Iowa has few schools with minority populations and these schools are in urban areas that are attractive to teachers and principals. Despite this, Iowa still has developed an insightful and forward thinking plan to ensure equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals. Iowa does have schools that are "high-poverty", but with few

exceptions there is little measurable difference between high-poverty and low-poverty schools' staffing with respect to highly effective teachers and principals. Iowa notes that high-poverty schools are located in urban areas that are attractive to educators. Iowa will monitor the distribution of highly effective teachers and principals. A very laudable part of Iowa's plan is the use of predictive modeling. This would ensure that as demographics change, districts are able to be proactive in approaching equitable distribution. This strategy is very proactive in preventing future staffing shortages. Iowa also plans on using targeted PD in order to increase the number of highly-effective educators in these schools. Iowa earned high points for this section.

(D)(3)(ii) Iowa currently is using a variety of coherent ambitious strategies and activities to increase the number and percentage of effective teachers in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas. Iowa offers school districts funds to help attract teachers by providing additional compensation or additional support (e.g. moving expenses, funds to prepare for endorsement or license in a shortage area). Loan forgiveness is also available for first time teachers in shortage areas at an approved K-12 school. Iowa plans on using RTTT funds to recruit and retain underrepresented minority candidates. Iowa has reached out to IHEs to develop methods to target these areas and develop a cadre of talented principals to fill these needs. More detail about the plan would have strengthened the narrative. Iowa earned moderate points for this section

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	6
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	4
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	2

(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(D)(4)(i) Iowa has a coherent plan to link student data to teacher and principal preparation programs. However, the timeline indicates that these data will become public in 2014. While this is an achievable goal, it does not appear to be ambitious. Iowa earned moderate points in this area.

(D)(4)(ii) Iowa notes that their certification programs are some of the best in the nation. Iowa has a partial plan to expand programs that are effective in producing effective teachers. 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. It is not clear how this would encourage expansion, unless the programs have the necessary resources to expand. The state did not indicate that this support would be available. Iowa's narrative mentions withholding program approval, but that is not the same as expanding effective programs. They also note in a previous section that they have a surplus of teachers and principals. Iowa earned low points for this section.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	20
(i) Providing effective support	10	10
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	10

(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(D)(5)(i) Iowa has a very well developed PD agenda articulated in their RTTT plan. Iowa developed this plan with many of their stakeholders (teachers, principals and community members). The PD uses a cycle that is directly tied to teacher and principal evaluation. The PD agenda covers mentoring, coaching and induction. This plan has already been set in motion using funds from their Teacher Quality Partnership Grant. The plan includes goals to provide professional development to teachers in rural areas. The PD agenda focuses on both principals and teachers. Iowa also includes an Integrated Technology platform that will document effective teaching tied to PD. This is a cohesive array of options that should provide effective support to principals and teachers. Iowa earned high points for this section.

(D)(5)(ii) The CCI for Educator Evaluation and Support will determine the information needed to evaluate PD. Data will be analyzed and then will be used to inform PD at the building level. Iowa plans to start this process in 2011; this is an ambitious goal. Iowa earned high points for this section.

Total	138	115
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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: (Tier 1)		
(E)(1). The language of the bill is not clear as to whether IDE has the power to intervene directly with schools. However, it does appear that they have the right to intervene at the LEA level. Iowa earned medium points.		
(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: (Tier 1)		
(E)(2)(i) Iowa has a clearly defined plan for identifying lowest-achieving schools. The plan includes mechanisms for publishing results. Iowa earns five points for this section.		
(E)(2)(ii) Iowa, taking lessons learned from previous statewide systems of support, has presented an integrated high quality plan to turn around the persistently lowest-achieving schools. Iowa plans to combine the School Improvement Grant program with RTTT and their Title I system of support to provide low-performing schools with intensive cohesive support over time. This is an aggressive use of funds and resources to facilitate this process. This two year process includes logical phases: audit, diagnosis, implementation, and evaluation. Iowa's new plan is based on lessons learned from the previous process. The new, ambitious plan expands the infrastructure of support and builds a process for disseminating lessons learned. RTTT funds will be used to coordinate the CCI of Intensive School Support. The CCI will work with LEAs to identify additional ways to systemically support schools. The ambitious plan involves three strands. The CCI will: support the persistently lowest-achieving schools within participating LEAs; focus on serving schools with the largest gaps in achievement statewide between average achievement and the achievement of low-income students; and focus on overcoming racial disparities. The plan includes the schools using one of the four intervention models with the chosen plan being implemented in the following school year. The use of a CCI dedicated to intensive school support is an indication of the state's commitment to turning around the persistently lowest achieving schools. Iowa earned high points for this section.		
Total	50	40

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(F)(1)(i)-(ii) Iowa has allocated a consistent percentage of State revenue to education. Iowa's funding from 2008 to 2009 increased both in dollars and as a percent of the total state budget. The state provides supplemental funding for students with high need such as students who come under IDEA, and also includes provisions for supplemental weighting of certain at-risk students in order to generate additional funds on top of the per-pupil amount. This supplement provides additional funding to high need schools and LEAs. Iowa earned high points for each area.

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

40 38

(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	8
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	6

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(F)(2)(i) The state has no cap on the number of charter schools. Iowa earned high points.

(F)(2)(ii) Iowa has applicable laws that regulate the way charter schools are approved, monitored, reauthorized and closed. An innovative part of the process is that they must present a report to the legislature on a yearly basis. Students attending charter schools must show progress over what had existed before the student attended the charter school. Iowa earned high points for this section.

(F)(2)(iii) Iowa has the unique ability to ensure equitable funding for charter schools as their charter schools operate as public schools. This should ensure complete equity between charter schools and non charter schools. Iowa provided summaries of the laws that pertain to funding of charter schools as evidence to support their narrative. The state provides the same amount of per student funding to charter schools as it does to other public schools. This includes "supplemental" funds for special populations, and high needs schools and LEAs. Iowa earned high points for this section.

(F)(2)(iv) Iowa has an ambitious law that treats charter schools as public schools. Iowa provides the same benefits under the law to charter schools as to non-charter schools when it comes to financing schools facilities and infrastructure needs. A description of the state's regulation pertaining to charter schools is provided. Iowa earned high points for this section.

(F)(2)(v) Iowa has an impressive record of fostering innovation within their state. Iowa allows LEAs and their schools the opportunity to introduce innovative programs through the use of exemptions. Iowa law allows LEAs and schools to seek exemptions from State requirements in order to implement innovative and autonomous efforts to meet their needs. The impressive number of more than 1000 exemptions has been granted since 2001. However more detail would have been helpful. Iowa earned moderate points for this section.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions

5 3

(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(F)(3)

Iowa has legislation and a climate that supports and creates innovation. Among innovative programs that have increased Iowa's graduation rate are: The Iowa CARE; Innovation Zones; Senior Year Plus, and Competency-Based Promotion. Other programs are Concurrent Enrollment and Career Academies, both are partnerships with Community Colleges. The lifting of the cap on charter schools and Iowa's ability to

<p>give exemptions to LEAs are also important pieces of enacting reform. Equally important in the enactment of reform is Iowa's willingness to redesign their department of education, and their being in forefront in the development of assessments. However, Iowa did not provide data that showed improved achievement rates. This is a weakness for this element. Iowa earned moderate points for this section.</p>		
Total	55	51

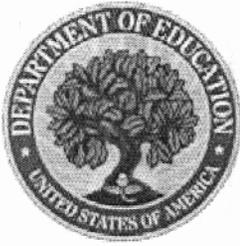
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
<p>Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) Iowa has placed an emphasis on STEM. Iowa has included the STEM initiative in its MOU; incorporated STEM in the work of their CCIs, and made it a part of their five goals. They have established partnerships with STEM related stakeholders, such as local businesses and IHEs. They have plans in place, not only to increase general student enrollment and success in STEM initiative, but also are targeting in particular minority students. Iowa has earned full points for this initiative.</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: (Tier 1) Iowa has put forth a plan that comprehensively and coherently addresses the reform areas specified in the ARRA and State Success Factors Criteria. Iowa has already had significant success in the field of standards and assessment. They have the backing of 68% of the state's LEAs and have crafted a precise MOU with a specific scope-of-work. The eight largest school districts have signed the MOU. The plan is ambitious and comprehensive and provides an innovative melding of current state resources with RTTT funds.</p>		
Total		0

Grand Total	500	431
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Iowa Application #2750IA-6



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	51
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	3
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	36
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	12
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>In its application, Iowa provided documentation concerning its history of reform efforts and theory of change for its reform initiatives. Iowa identified five broad reform goals which can be loosely coupled with the four RTTT reform areas. This section of the application included a lot of background philosophy which did not very effectively get to the point of how Iowa would address the four core reform areas of ARRA and RTTT. Iowa seems to be reframing the reform concepts of RTTT to serve its own agenda in its own style. Restructuring delivery of services to schools in light of systems theory and implementation science is a major focus for Iowa's RTTT proposal and in some ways overshadows the RTTT elements.</p> <p>Iowa succeeded in obtaining the participation of 246 LEAs representing 68% of all LEAs and 73% of students, which is quite substantial. The participating districts do include the largest LEAs and those with the highest percentages of students in poverty, so that 79% of Iowa students in poverty will be served. The LEAs appear to be representative of all areas of the state. The high level of LEA participation and the fact that 76% of LEA MOUs included a union representative signature shows strong support for Iowa's RTTT efforts. Iowa began with the standard MOU, added some elements of their own, but did not require LEAs to agree to implement use of evaluations to inform compensation decisions or the element for turning around the lowest performing schools. Iowa argued unconvincingly that there are other state initiatives in these areas which effectively substitute for the omitted RTTT elements.</p> <p>Iowa did provide a set of five ambitious goals and targets running through 2014 which partially satisfies evidence requirements for (A)(1)(iii). Overall, it is not very convincing that the broadly described work that Iowa will undertake is impactful enough to achieve the ambitiously stated objectives. As Iowa indicated in the later sections, most districts will not be touched by the work of the new centers until the projects are taken to scale after the grant ends in 2014. Also, Iowa seems to have a fuzzy focus on and slow/minimal implementation of the reform elements of RTTT which is likely to minimize the impact on the four (A)(1)(iii) subelements.</p>		
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	25
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	17
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p>		

Iowa's application details steps which have been taken to create a RTTT director and center-based teams and administrative structures which support each of their goal areas to provide RTTT implementation capacity. The centers are reportedly not places, but work groups with distinct agendas. They are blended teams using current IDE and Area Education Agency staff as well as new people to be hired. The centers will provide support to LEAs on various aspects of RTTT implementation. Iowa will create an RTTT Coordinating Council to oversee the RTTT budget and monitor/track progress.

Detailed budget plans were provided for overall RTTT project management as well as for each of the five centers. The budgetary plans support the creation of a number of state-level positions which are critically needed for a successful RTTT implementation. Iowa has used federal funding (IES data systems, teacher quality, school improvement) in recent years to help make moderate progress in the four core RTTT reform areas and described how it will be aligning other ESEA federal funds to support the RTTT work. Iowa also addressed in a general way how the budget for some RTTT positions will be transitioned after the grant to other state and federal sources to continue the work. The overall plan is adequate. As noted elsewhere, the rollout and scale-up are rather slow.

Over 100 people and a "consultant" were reported to be involved in the planning for the application but there were no details on who those people were. Iowa provided 28 letters of support from a broad array of stakeholders including teacher and school administrator organizations. The letter from ISEA, the Iowa affiliate of NEA, is especially significant and documents their engagement in the planning process as well as showing support.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	20
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	15
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
Iowa has used federal funding (IES data systems, teacher quality, school improvement) in recent years to help make moderate progress in the four core RTTT reform areas. Iowa provide convincing documentation of its progress with standards/assessments, data systems, teacher and principal preparation/evaluation, and supports to schools and LEAs for turning around low achieving schools.		
Analysis of the data provided by Iowa reveals that NAEP reading trends have been flat at the 4 th grade and slightly negative at 8 th grade. NAEP mathematics trends have shown modest improvements of 5-6 points. Small overall improvements on the state ITBS assessments have been reported for math and reading at grades 4 and 8, but the gains have been more significant (sometimes double digit) for students in the African American, Hispanic, free/reduced price lunch, disabled, and ELL subgroups. High school graduation rates have dipped slightly.		
Total	125	96

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		

Iowa is a part of the Common Core Standards Initiative which includes 51 states and territories. Iowa is on track to adopt the Common Core Standards by August 2, 2010 and in fact has it scheduled for consideration by the Iowa State Board of Education on July 29, 2010. A MOU documenting the participation was provided.

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
Iowa is a member of the Smarter Balanced Consortium (33 states) which will develop assessments aligned with the Common Core Standards. A MOU documenting the participation was provided.		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	18
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
Iowa submitted a seven goal comprehensive plan for supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments. The plan included activities, timelines, and responsible positions or entities but they were not very coherently integrated in the application narrative. Overall responsibility for implementing the plan for this section will fall to a yet to be created "Center for Collaborative Inquiry for Balanced Assessment." A detailed budget was provided for the work of the center with reasonable funding set at \$1.2 to \$2.5 million per year. Most of the activities will be implemented with a limited subset of the participating RTTT LEAs. Plans for scaling-up the work are unclear. Considering there were seven goals, the number of activities was fairly small and plan detail was limited. The phased implementation delays access of many LEAs to the assessment and instructional systems.		
Total	70	68

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	18
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
Iowa has nine of the required America Competes Act elements for statewide longitudinal data systems in place at the present time and is using \$2.9 million of its own resources and a 2009 IES data system grant to build-out the system. The missing elements are: (2) student-level enrollment, demographic, and program participation information, (3) student-level information about the points at which students exit, transfer in, transfer out, (11) information regarding the extent to which students transition successfully from secondary school to postsecondary education, including whether students enroll in remedial coursework.		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
Iowa submitted a high quality plan for accessing and using state data with its EdInsight data warehouse. The plan includes eight goals, activities with timelines and responsible positions or entities. A detailed budget was provided which shows adequate funding (\$1.8 to \$2.6 million per year) which will support the further development and implementation of the longitudinal data system. Additional project budgets were provided for creation and operation of the Center for Collaborative Inquiry for Responsive Data platforms		

and the creation of three new data platforms which will "be accessible and used to inform and engage stakeholders."

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	12
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	4
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	4
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	4
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>Iowa submitted a plan for using data to improve instruction in which participating LEAs will use RTTT funds to acquire an instructional management system aligned with the state SLDS. Iowa described, in general terms, how it would provide Instructional Management System and State Longitudinal Data System professional development to staff in LEAs. The plan includes two goals with just five activities. The plan also includes timelines and responsible positions or entities. The level of detail in the plan was low. IDE envisions that LEAs will use \$57 million in settlement money from a Microsoft law suit for acquisition of instructional improvement systems. Each district will select its own system in accordance with the MOU and district improvement plans. Iowa made a broad commitment to making data available to researchers for program improvement purposes but provided more details about security considerations than how it will provide the required access.</p>		
Total	47	35

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	15
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	4
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	4
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	7
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>Iowa has statutory authority and regulations which provide alternative pathways to certification for teachers and principals. A copy of the regulations was included as evidence. The certification process meets all five elements requirements for principals and four of five for teachers (only IHEs can be providers for teachers. This limits (D1)(i) to "low points" based on teachers but the principals alternative certification program meets the requirement so "middle range points" were awarded. The application narrative implies that the principal alternative certification pathway is available in only two of the state's ten area education agencies. The number of Iowa teachers and principals credentialed through alternative pathways is low. Iowa described several credible processes and reporting systems used to monitor areas of principal and teacher shortages and steps taken to address the shortages including underrepresented groups.</p>		
(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	32
(i) Measuring student growth	5	2
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	12

(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	10
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	8
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>Iowa, in the application narrative, stated that it has a measure of student growth based in the ITBS and Iowa Test of Educational Development but provided virtually no information about it and chose not to provide responsible parties or a timeline for the work to implement it. Other growth measures based on the formative assessments from the balanced assessment consortium are planned. Iowa described impressive work that has been done to develop teacher and principal evaluation capacity working with stakeholder groups and effectively communicated its vision/philosophy with a theory of action chart. Iowa reported that teacher and principal evaluations would be based to a "significant" degree on student growth but provided no operational definition of significant. Iowa acknowledged that the evaluation system, as presently configured, does not meet the RTTT specifications.</p> <p>Iowa already provides for annual evaluations for teachers and principals. Iowa's MOU did not require LEAs to agree to implement use of evaluations to inform compensation decisions. The performance measures table for D2 is confusing in that there are two columns for 2013-2014. It would appear Iowa meant to reference the final column as 2014-2015, the year after the grant has ended, as the year that growth measures and evaluation system would be brought to scale statewide. Very few participating LEAs (20%) will use the new evaluation system to inform key decisions within the life of the grant. Iowa provided unambitious implementation performance targets. The slow rollout of the evaluation system undermines and delays the use of growth data for evaluation in the state.</p> <p>Iowa submitted a plan for improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance. The plan includes a set of eight goals with 16 activities as well as timelines and responsible positions or entities. Iowa proposes to create the "Center for Collaborative Inquiry for Educator Evaluation Support" to manage the evaluation reform work and included a detailed budget for it that will provide \$.9 to \$2.1 million per year in funding which should be adequate for the relatively small scale implementation they plan during the life of the grant.</p>		
(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	15
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	8
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	7
<p>(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>Iowa supplied the required definitions of high-minority and low-minority schools and submitted a plan for ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals. The plan includes two broad goals with four activities, timelines, and responsible positions/entities and will be managed by a new "Center for Collaborative Inquiry for Educator Evaluation Support" working with the "Center for Collaborative Inquiry for Responsive Data Systems". The plan had minimal detail.</p> <p>The budget does not show direct support for this area but the application narrative described Iowa's history of providing funding to districts for an impressive array of incentive programs designed to help with recruitment and retention of teachers in challenging contexts and content areas. Performance measures and targets were provided and appear in general to be challenging and attainable. The target percent for effective teachers maxes out at 90% for science, math, special education, and language instruction teachers statewide, but inexplicably maxes out at a lower figure of 75% for highly effective teachers and principals in high and low poverty and minority schools. This differential suggests Iowa may have lower expectations for teachers and principals in high poverty and high minority schools, which is troubling.</p>		
(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	9

(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	5
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	4
(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>Iowa submitted a plan for improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs. The plan includes three goals with five activities, timelines, and responsible positions or entities. The work for this area will be managed by a new "Center for Collaborative Inquiry for Educator Evaluation Support" working with the "Center for Collaborative Inquiry for Balanced Assessment". Performance measure targets were provided for 2012-2013 at only 25% for the percent of teacher and principal preparation programs in the state for which the public can access data on achievement and growth of their graduates' students. The performance target does reach 100% for the final year of the grant. The timelines for this section do not appear to be consistent with the slower planned rollout of the full set of student growth measures detailed in the performance measures for section D(2)(ii). Iowa did not address the steps and processes it will take to "expand" its effective teacher and principal effectiveness programs as requested in the application notice but did address how effectiveness data might be used in program approval and accreditation.</p>		
(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	13
(i) Providing effective support	10	8
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	5
(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>Iowa submitted a plan for providing effective support to teachers and principals. The state has a strong mentoring and induction program and is also implementing a Teacher Quality grant that aligns with the RTTT work. The plan includes six goals with eight activities, timelines, and responsible positions or entities. The plans were anemic lacking in detail especially with regard to "Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support." The work for this area will be managed by a new "Center for Collaborative Inquiry for Educator Evaluation Support" working with the Iowa School Administrators Association and other stakeholders. Iowa included extensive information on excellent prior work undertaken to support new and career teachers and principals. That work and a recently won Teacher Quality grant provide such a strong foundation that the plan described here adds minimally to what Iowa already has in place or in process. The budget shows about a half million dollars per year to support the Iowa Leadership Academy/Superintendents Network and Principals Center. This funding is minimal but the Teacher Quality Grant and Iowa's ongoing support will collectively provide adequate support when added to it.</p>		
Total	138	84

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: (Tier 1)		
<p>In its application, Iowa provided narrative describing its authority to intervene with LEAs with persistently low achieving schools. A copy of legislation passed in January, 2010, was included as evidence. The wording of the application narrative and the law is confusing. The law appears to focus on intervening with schools but only through LEAs. It does not address intervening with LEAs and schools separately. Iowa law also provides some approval authority for the intervention to bargaining units, which limits the state's authority to intervene.</p>		

(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: (Tier 1)		
<p>Iowa described a process for identifying persistently low-achieving schools which meets federal criteria. Application of the criteria identified six Tier 1 Title I schools and 29 Tier 2 non-Title I schools. Iowa has had fairly good success using the Support System for Schools in Need of Assistance (SINA) and Districts in Need of Assistance (DINA) processes to turn around low-performing schools with 36 schools being removed from the on-improvement list since 2003-2004. Iowa reported no experience with the RTTT turnaround models. While 36 schools have come off the improvement list, 320 schools have been identified as needing improvement through 2008-2009.</p> <p>Iowa plans to implement the RTTT turnaround models next year with 12 persistently low-achieving schools that are part of participating RTTT LEAs, some of which are receiving school improvement grants. Those not receiving school improvement grants will have their turnaround efforts funded by RTTT. Iowa submitted a high quality plan for turning around the lowest-achieving schools. The plan includes three goals with 15 activities and includes timelines, and responsible positions or entities. The work for this area will be managed by a new "Center for Collaborative Inquiry for Intensive Support to Schools." The center's budget is \$.84 to \$1.1 million per year. Other related budgets are for Supporting Lowest-Achieving Schools (\$4.3 million to \$6.0 million), Persistently Low Achieving School District Subgrants (\$1.8 to \$3.0 million), Overcoming Achievement Gaps through Learning Support (\$.77 to \$.90 million), and Racial Equity Collaborative (\$.87 to \$.99 million). This budget should be adequate. Iowa set reasonable and achievable performance measure targets for the number of turnaround schools to be implemented annually for the next four years. In the application, Iowa described an impressive SINA process providing a comprehensive array of interventions that precede use of the turnaround model.</p>		
Total	50	40

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	7
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	3
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	4
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>From fiscal year 2008 to 2009, the proportion of state expenditures devoted to education in Iowa increased from 53.73% to 54.51, which is less than 1%. Since the percent was substantially unchanged, medium points were awarded. Iowa's policies concerning the provision of funding for high need versus other LEAs and within LEAs for high poverty versus other schools assures equitable funding for high poverty schools. No evidence was provided that LEAs provide equitable funding between schools.</p>		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	37
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8

(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	8
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	5
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>Iowa provided documentation showing that it does not have a cap on the number of charter schools. It has seven charter schools operating in the state currently and one other recently approved. Iowa provided no documentation that it requires charter school applicants to address steps taken to assure representative racial and socioeconomic diversity for the school. Startup charter schools are not authorized. Achievement outcomes are a consideration in the initial approval and the continuing approval of charter schools but Iowa has never closed a charter school due to poor academic performance.</p> <p>Funding for charter schools is provided on a basis equal to non-charter schools and it appears that all charter schools begin as regular schools. Charter schools have access to facility funding on the same basis as regular schools.</p> <p>Iowa did not provide convincing information that it enables LEAs to operate innovative autonomous public schools, other than charter schools, which meet all of elements for the definition of autonomous schools. The application included references to the State Board of Education's waiver authority and the open enrollment process but neither provide appear to provide for the full independence of autonomous public schools including the ability to control budget and select and replace staff. Iowa provided a copy of the state charter law as evidence.</p>		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	3
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>Iowa provided information concerning several other meaningful reform initiatives including the Iowa Core (standards), Innovation Zones (waiver process), Senior Year Plus, Competency-Based Promotion, and open enrollment. Iowa did not discuss the extent to which these efforts have increased student achievement or graduation rates, narrowed achievement gaps, or resulted in other important outcomes which is the basis for the point reduction.</p>		
Total	55	47

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	0
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>STEM activities were referenced in the Iowa application in a few places but attention to STEM in this application was not deep or systematic enough to constitute a high quality plan and does not warrant awarding STEM points. A specific STEM section is not required for the application but there was a reference to a STEM section in the table of contents. This implies the intent to have such a section, so it may have been inadvertently left out.</p>		
Total	15	0

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
<p>Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>Iowa's RTTT application described comprehensive reform activities in each of the four assurance areas. It is clear that many of these reform activities predate the RTTT initiative. Iowa's readiness and success in these areas is due in no small part to substantial funding obtained from IES data system and Teacher Quality competitions.</p>		
Total		0
Grand Total	500	370



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1



Iowa Application #2750IA-4

A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	59
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	41
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	13

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

A i

Iowa has a vision of a transformed educational system that is truly student-centered and asserts that as it adopts its proposed systems change, it will be able to address all of the RTT reform areas and student achievement will improve as a result. Its plan was creatively conceived and cleverly introduced. It is consistent with state goals and cogently presents a clear and credible path to achieving them. A table comparing its proposed competency-based system with the current traditional system is included.

ii

Iowa demonstrates that its Local Education Agencies are strongly committed to its plans and to implementing the RTT reform areas. The Memorandum of Understanding signed reflects strong commitment to the State's plans and adds a few provisions to the RTT model. Two provisions of the RTT model were not included as implementing them could interfere with State initiatives currently underway. However, also added was an opt-out clause giving union members the right to bargain any part of the MOU that is construed to be in conflict with any part of a negotiated agreement. Yet, included in support letters is a very strong endorsement from the state education association that represents 40,000 members.

All but one of the LEAs signed on to every one of the agreements in the revised MOA. Since Phase One, Iowa increased the number of school districts participating from 221 to 246 and all 8 of the largest school districts signed on – seven more than the first time.

All board presidents and all but one superintendent signed. Three-fourths of the local union leaders signed. There seems to be strong support for the state's plan, yet revisions and caveats have the capability to weaken it – at least somewhat – so the criterion fell short of being fully met. High but not full points were not awarded.

A iii

The evidence is strong that Iowa will be able to achieve statewide impact. 68% of Iowa's LEAs, 74% of Iowa's schools, 73% of its students and 79% of its students in poverty will be participating. Those are large percentages. The schools are well-distributed geographically over Iowa's 99 counties. Its regional services agencies are joined to its state department denoting close cooperation and further enabling broad impact. In addition, Iowa has made efforts to involve a range of stakeholders and seems to have worked with them in a particularly collaborative manner. Another positive factor is Iowa's strong history of educational involvement and support from its political leaders. As pointed out in the narrative, Iowa has the right number and mix of districts, students and stakeholders to move the needle. It is in the process of building

capacity to bring all measures to scale statewide so that it will be able to impact achievement in all its districts, including any still not participating. The State's plans seem achievable, but not all that ambitious, especially in relation to the timeline. High, but not full points are awarded.

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

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

A 2 i

Iowa developed a supportive leadership team by convening frequently and working with policy makers during the application phase. This group became the advisory group and an additional 90 diverse stakeholders were engaged to concentrate on priority sections. Five Centers for Collaborative Inquiry (CCI) concentrating on a different area - data management, intensive school supports, educator evaluation and support, competency-based education and balanced assessment - will be formed, developing the infrastructure to support the LEAs and implement the plan. This will not be an added layer of bureaucracy but a flattening of current staffing into a more collaborative structure. A RTT director with expertise in system transformation and a coordinating council will oversee and support the Centers' work. The Director will work with three staff with expertise in communications, technology and evaluation. Each Center will have a manager and work with both department and regional agency staff as well as with the other centers as a system to:

- Innovate, transform and quickly revise practices for maximum effects;
- Terminate ineffective practices;
- Replicate effective practices across subgrantees; and
- Monitor effects and progress of LEA subgrantees, proactively intervening when needed.

The Director and CCI will build readiness statewide and internal capacity and collaborate with colleagues in other RTT states. An organizational chart explains the implementation structure to carry out all the above activities along with many others to support LEAs in improving achievement.

The RTT Director and Coordinating Council will be responsible for grant administration, budget reporting and monitoring and fund disbursement. It will use a small REL Midwest grant this summer to further develop its design specifications. It will use a combination of federal, state and local funds to cover current and new positions and the CCIs. It is intended that when fully staffed, 40% of these positions will be supported by the combined funds and 60% by RTT funds. Iowa is using and will continue to use the following funds to support RTT goals: Title I, Part A; IDEA grants, Parts B and C; Education Technology Grants; Vocational Rehabilitation Funds; Independent Living Services Fund; McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Funds and State Fiscal Stabilization Funds. This criterion was fully met.

ii

Iowa has done a good job of garnering support of all the educational stakeholders including the Iowa Education Association and its higher education institutions. In addition, it has letters of support from various other important stakeholders such as the Iowa Business Council and the Greater Des Moines Partnership. The support stems from the Iowa Department of Education's bringing together 110 stakeholders to establish goals and create the plan.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	24
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	19
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>A 3 i</p> <p>Iowa has made progress in the reform areas in the following ways. The State has demonstrated consistent progress in the area of standards and assessments. It was an early member of the national Partnership for 21st-Century Skills and used that association to develop its Iowa Core. Its 70-year history with the Iowa Test of Basic Skills has benefited the state in many ways and with the help of some ESEA funds, enabled the State to become a leading laboratory for testing nationally. Iowa understands the importance of having robust data to accomplish its work, e.g., teachers being able to engage in formative assessments and students being able to take an active role in their learning, so it invested \$2.9 million in its data warehouse. It also received an \$8.8 million grant from U.S. Department of Education for its data system. In addition, Iowa's LEAs will share in a \$57 million settlement with Microsoft. Iowa's progress in developing teachers and leaders includes completely reengineering its administrator preparation programs and approving administrator alternative certification. Also, it was one of three states given an award from the RAND Corporation in 2009 for best progress toward a cohesive leadership system. Iowa has taken several steps to strengthen its teacher quality and recently received a \$10-million Teacher Quality Partnership grant from USDE that will be administered alongside its Great Teachers and Leaders' programs in its Center for Collaborative Inquiry for Teacher and Leader Evaluation and Support. The State spent six years developing a researched-based model to assist low-performing schools that is now used in its Schools and Districts in Need of Assistance (SINA), developed in 2003 in response to federal and state legislation. Adding to the Title I investment used to run SINA will be \$18 million in School Improvement Grants to help with the state's work on persistently-low achieving schools. Also, Iowa has been working with University of California on its Learning Supports Model that focuses on developing community and school structures to address myriad barriers to student achievement.</p> <p>ii</p> <p>Already scoring at the top, Iowa may not have shown the percentages of increases in achievement that other states have. Iowa offers no excuses for its flattened achievement trend or its inability to close achievement gaps, only renewed determination to do better. It presents a list of reading and math initiatives it has undertaken to address its stagnation. As a result of its investment in reading, it did have some success in closing the gaps in reading scores. Another mitigating factor is that the slight decline in graduation rates last year could be attributable to the fact that last year is the first time students have had an identification number for all four years in high school. The state does not deserve to be overly penalized but full points are precluded.</p>		
Total	125	113

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

B 1 i

Iowa is one of the 51 members of the Common Core Standards initiative and includes a signed MOA in the appendix.

B 1 ii

Iowa has met this criterion in that it has prepared its State Board - the entity with legal authority to adopt - for the standards by presenting them to the Board and discussing them with board members. The Board is on record as committed to adopting the standards and will do so at its regular meeting, July 29.

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

B 2 i

Iowa has a remarkable history in regard to assessments and throughout its application, it demonstrates great concern for and interest in outstanding common assessments. It joined the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium and volunteered to work on several elements of the assessments. The MOA is included in the appendix. Iowa included a variety of ways that it will work with SMARTER. A timeline is presented in another section. Iowa will have the consortium's data platform operable by 2012 and also a parallel data platform to monitor and assess student competencies in science, social studies and 21st-century skills.

B 2 ii

The consortium is made up of 33 states.

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	20
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

B 3

Iowa has a "leg up" on meeting this criteria in that it has been gathering assessment data for over 70 years. Its teachers and administrators are very accustomed to using information about the achievement and growth of each of their students plus the State has been doing extensive work developing its own common core standards. Thus, much infrastructure is already in place to facilitate the transition to national common core standards and assessments. Iowa is building on that foundation with other initiatives such as the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing's Assessment for Learning that develops local capacity for formative assessment - a major component of a balanced assessment system. One of the State's five planned Centers for Collaborative Inquiry will be a center for balanced assessment. It will collaborate with local, regional, state and national experts and cull specific expertise from the Iowa Department of Education, Area Education Agencies, Local Education Agencies and Institutions of Higher Education - already responsible for building capacity and providing technical assistance for implementing Iowa's Common Core Standards. Among this group will be those who understand and can provide assistance in implementation science and systems change. The initial work in

2010 will focus on disseminating information to all involved on the local level and collaborating with the IHEs to integrate Common Core into pre-service programs. Thereafter, the emphasis will be on working to gain community understanding of Common Core and supporting teachers in incorporating the standards at the classroom level. In all, Iowa presents a thorough transition plan covering all aspects involved; in addition to the above, also covered are the revision of instructional materials, developing growth measures, monitoring and evaluating effects and identifying those responsible for the various activities involved. A clear timeline is provided.

Total	70	70
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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: (Tier 1) C 1 While Iowa intends to complete all 12 elements of America COMPETES, it currently has fully implemented 9.		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) C 2 Iowa has an extraordinarily detailed, multi-faceted plan to meet this criterion. It recently invested nearly \$3 million in its data warehouse, EdInsight, and was awarded a \$8.8 million Institute for Education Science grant to expand and refine its State Longitudinal Data System. EdInsight will allow the collection and analysis of data needed for decision making at every level of the system - from the Capitol to the classroom. With input from over 400 individuals from various levels of the educational system, a new version was released in March to users in the Iowa Department of Education, Area Education Agencies and Local Education Agencies. A statewide roll out to the broader education community is next. One of Iowa's five centers is dedicated to responsive data platforms and the State plans three new platforms: the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium Data Platform, the Iowa Core Data Platform and the Teacher Quality Partnership Data Platform. It will fully implement a tiered system of access so that all involved - parents, students, teachers, principals, community members, unions, researchers, policymakers and LEA, AEA and IDE staffs - will have access to essential information. Interoperability standards will be developed to integrate all the information from multiple systems and make it user friendly.		
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	15
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	6
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	6

(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	3
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
C3 i		
<p>Iowa's Local Education Agencies are already implementing instructional improvement systems and will be financially helped to acquire them with RTT subgrants and the \$57 million Microsoft settlement. The designated Center for Collaborative Inquiry will collaborate with districts to help them select systems that permit seamless access to the information housed in the state's SLDS. All of this activity will increase use of the instructional system. Particularly, the CCI will help in increasing teacher use of the Teacher Quality Partnership data platform. The State recognizes that there is currently a limited amount of professional development provided on either the functionality of EdInsight or on data literacy per se. Therefore, as the use of EdInsight increases, there will be a commensurate increase in training of both for the different types of stakeholders accessing the system. Meeting these needs will also increase use. The CCI will evaluate the degree of use by tracking the number and type of reports run, by whom and how often. It will use baseline data to determine if it meets its goals of increasing use of the SLDA by 10% in 2010-2011, 30% in 2011-2013 and 50% in 2013-2014.</p>		
ii		
<p>In Year 2, the CCI will expand its staff to target changes in knowledge and behavior and will segue from accessing to analyzing data. It will work with districts to understand their respective needs and, through a combination of in-person and virtual training and on-going coaching, will help districts sort out what they need and make sense of it. The CCI will also commission an external evaluation of district use of data and CCI support.</p>		
iii		
<p>While Iowa acknowledges that researchers' access to the data platforms is essential to pinpoint areas in need of improvement and highlight best practices and states its commitment to making data available, a concern for security is stressed and there does not seem to be the movement and detail to expedite the availability of the data that exists in other sections of the application. A subcommittee will be formed to review researcher requests. Medium points were awarded for this criterion.</p>		
Total	47	38

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	16
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	5
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	4
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	7
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
D 1 i		
<p>Iowa Code authorizes the State Board of Educational Examiners to make rules for the licensure of principals and teachers including rules for alternative routes to certification/licensure. However, no rules have been created for alternative certification for elementary teachers. Iowa has an alternative route in</p>		

use for principals that meets all five required characteristics – the Northwest Iowa Principal Leadership Academy. It is not limited to institutions of higher education, is selective, provides ongoing support and mentoring, limits the amount of coursework required and grants the same level of certification as traditional routes. For teachers, the narrative is confusing: it says that it does not meet the requirement that programs be offered by non-traditional institutions, but later states that its approved Teacher Intern Programs "include non-traditional institutions, such as Kaplan University and Maharishi University of Management. Further, The Board of Educational Examiners recently approved reviewing applications of teacher candidates who have completed non-transcribed programs from out-of-state, permitting these candidates to submit portfolio proof that they have met Iowa's professional education core and content area work within their program. However, Iowa's alternative route in use for teachers is for only grades 7-12 and admittedly meets not all 5 characteristics. High but not full points are allocated.

ii

Iowa has its new principal alternative route in use in the Northwest region of the state. It has had several cohorts complete the training - 73 students - and 20 more are currently in the program which has recently been expanded to meet demand. The Teacher Intern Program has been approved at several locations, but few students have been impacted by it yet. Medium points are awarded.

iii

Iowa has a process for monitoring, evaluating and identifying areas of teacher and principal shortage. Overall it has no shortage, but rather a surplus. However, it has experienced shortages in hard-to-fill areas such as STEM, special education and ESL in rural areas. These shortages have been addressed by the Iowa legislature's providing market incentives for recruiting purposes, student loan forgiveness and distance learning opportunities, both to provide courses for students and for preparation of teachers.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	39
(i) Measuring student growth	5	2
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	10
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	7
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	20

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

D 2 i

Iowa reports that it has the capacity to track individual student growth on summative exams, that teachers and administrators have access to data on individual student growth, that it will work to develop additional measures of student growth that will be comparable across classrooms but that it anticipates development of authentic measures of student achievement may take the full grant period. So while on the one hand, the applicant has an approach, on the other hand, its plan does not seem ambitious or all that clear or detailed. Medium points are awarded.

ii

The applicant discusses the state's theory of evaluations and how it conducts them, that it is working to identify and articulate attributes of "effective" and "highly effective" teachers and administrators and points out the Iowa Code has established that student achievement and growth be used in educators' evaluations, but, inexplicably, its plan does not ensure that participating LEAs will design systems incorporating these factors, i.e., differentiated effectiveness using *multiple* rating categories and taking into account student growth as a significant factor. The concept of value added in measuring student growth and how that

reflects teacher and principal quality is ignored. Broad stakeholder support for strengthening evaluations is stated. Principals' evaluation system was developed with the involvement of 200 administrators, but no corresponding involvement of teachers was included. Medium points are allocated.

iii

Iowa states that Iowa code currently requires that teachers and administrators be evaluated annually. It uses both formative and summative evaluations and states that to ensure due process, formative evaluations should always precede and inform summative evaluations. Student achievement, but not student growth is a factor in evaluations. As part of its plan to improve teacher and principal effectiveness, participating districts will provide educators with timely and constructive feedback specifically designed to improve practice as part of annual evaluations. The Iowa Department of Education will make data on student growth available to districts as it is developed and collected and will require districts to provide such data to educators as part of their evaluations. Medium points are allocated.

iv

Iowa has presented evidence that it will use evaluations to inform decisions in all four areas stated in the criterion. In performance measures that are included, targets show only small percentages of LEAs complying by 2014. Medium points are allocated.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	15
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	8
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	7

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

D 3 i

Iowa explains that few of its buildings have over 25% minority populations (its definition of high-minority), that the few that do are located in urban areas that are attractive to highly *qualified* teachers and principals (Iowa has not yet determined what constitutes a highly *effective* educator and it does not define *qualified*), that there is little measurable difference in the qualifications and experience of teachers in high- and low-poverty schools, that Title II Part A funds already are intended to preclude poor and minority students from being taught by inexperienced teachers. The Iowa Department of Education will revise its guidance on the use of Title II Part A funds, but the narrative doesn't say how; once "effective and highly effective" educators have been defined, IDE will work to ensure that there is equitable access to them, but the narrative does not explain how. In short, the State's plan in this regard is vague. IDE will engage in predictive modeling to track demographic changes and take a proactive approach to equitable distribution needed as a result of changes. Also, the Center for Collaborative Inquiry for Intensive School Supports will provide direct support to teachers in high-poverty and high-minority schools to increase the number of highly effective educators in these schools and their investments in persistently lowest-achieving schools will consequently positively impact high-poverty and high-minority schools. Evidence of a high-quality plan to meet this criterion is not complete. Medium points are allocated.

ii

Currently, Iowa's legislature funds market factor incentives to ensure that school districts throughout the state can attract qualified teachers for hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas. Loan forgiveness is also available for both teachers and teacher candidates. Iowa's plan includes a TQ 3 project: Talent to Teach (teacher candidates and para-educators), Talent to Lead (teachers becoming administrators) and Talent to Change (second career professionals becoming teachers) that will be directed by its CCI for Educator Evaluation and Support. This initiative is intended only for high-need rural schools. No mention was made of collaboration with participating LEAs. The State has set laudable goals but the plan seems incomplete. Medium points are allocated.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	6
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	4
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	2

(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

D 4 i

Iowa does not plan to link its student achievement and growth to its teacher and principal preparation programs until after it has completed designing its new multiple, authentic measures of student achievement, greatly slowing down its timeline to report such data publicly and its ability to improve transparency about the quality of the individual institutions or begin any improvements deemed necessary. Medium points are allocated. The State has the ability to link the current student data to the institutions and the comparison of such results with ones gleaned later from the new assessments could enrich its plan.

ii

This section is very weak as it is silent on expanding credentialing *options* as called for in the criteria. Also, the State's approach to expanding credentialing *programs* that are successful seems to be that "cream will rise to the top" naturally, and unsuccessful programs should be given the opportunity to improve, but no details are offered. Further, a pilot program linking student growth to preparation programs is not planned until 2013 for the reasons given above and aggregate data will not be used to determine successful programs until 2014. Low points are allocated.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	17
(i) Providing effective support	10	10
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	7

(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

D 5 i

Iowa has a very thorough plan for its participating Local Education Agencies to provide elements necessary for successful professional development. The State funds a mentoring and induction program for teachers and administrators, requires districts to incorporate a professional development plan in their comprehensive school improvement plans and requires educators to collaborate - meaning common planning time must be made available. There are several other important aspects such as each school being required to develop a professional development plan that enhances student achievement, including help in meeting differentiated needs and every career teacher's having to develop an individual plan. A professional development infrastructure includes The Superintendent Network, the Iowa Leadership Academy, The Teacher Work Sample, The Principals Center, The Teacher Quality Partnership, New Administrators Institute, the Center for Collaborative Inquiry for Educator Evaluation and Support and Responsive Data Platforms and the Iowa Professional Development Model. In addition, Iowa has received national recognition for its outstanding mentoring and induction program and improving school leadership. Also, Iowa was the only state agency to receive a federal Teacher Quality Partnership grant that is awarded for improving student achievement by developing more highly effective teachers. Full points are allocated.

ii.

Iowa's approach to evaluating its professional development efforts is to first determine what information is necessary to do so, then collect and analyze that data and report the findings to Iowa Department of Education and then use it to inform policy and practice. While the plan is reasonable, it is lacking in detail. Medium points are allocated.

Total	138	93
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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: (Tier 1)		
E 1		
The State has the legal authority to intervene only in lowest-achieving districts, not individual schools so points are awarded accordingly.		
(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: (Tier 1)		
E 2 i		
Iowa has a high-quality plan to identify its lowest achieving schools based on overall proficiency and summative assessment growth using the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and fully meets this criterion.		
ii		
To meet this criterion, Iowa has a very sophisticated, high-quality plan that it has developed over the past six years. It consists of assisting its low-achieving schools through its Iowa Support System that was developed in 2003 in response to federal and state legislation. Within three months following identification by the IDE, a two-year plan is adopted that includes five phases: audit, diagnosis, design, implementation and evaluation. Root causes that are barriers to student learning are identified and diagnosed; scientifically researched strategies are matched with needs; both new and experienced teachers are mentored and parents are engaged – these are just some of the myriad actions taken. The State's process has been informed by several key lessons learned from experience and has resulted in 36 schools increasing student achievement sufficiently to be removed from the SINA list.		
Iowa will use RTT funds with its CCI on Intensive School Support that will focus on three strands: participating LEAs' persistently lowest-achieving schools, schools with the largest gaps between the state average achievement and low-income student achievement and overcoming racial disparities. It has used the turnaround model by closing a middle school and reopening it as George Washington Carver Academy with new leadership, a new STEM curriculum and 21 st Century technology. The turnaround has shown great results – the most growth among district buildings in the percent of students proficient on the math, science and reading portions of the ITBS.		

Total	50	45
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	8
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	3

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

F 1

The percent of Iowa's budget for education increased from 53.73% in 2008 to 54.51% in 2009, meeting this criterion.

ii

The applicant states that Iowa has equitable funding and refers to the appendix for proof, but it seems Iowa bases funding on enrollment, not need. It does give supplemental funding evenly across the board for various categories. Later it is explained that one of the criterion for categorical aid given for at-risk students is high-poverty. Medium points were given for an incomplete answer that avoided the question.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	32
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	5
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	7
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	5
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	7

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

F 2 i

The State recently removed its cap that allowed 20 charters and significantly expanded the scope of access to charter schools this year. It lifted the limit of only one charter school per district, ended the sunset provision on Iowa's charter law and allowed two or more districts to establish an innovation zone. Even with the previous cap that allowed 20 charters, the State has just seven operating charter schools and only two have been approved in the last five years. Given the few operating charters, it could be assumed that the state is not all that hospitable to charters, but it should be noted that Iowa has an open enrollment law for years that already provides families with some school choice, likely lessening the demand and need for alternatives.

ii.

The State does have laws and regulations governing all phases regarding charter schools and improving student achievement is a significant factor in authorizing them. It has not closed any schools but with one application not meeting the criteria and a couple applications voluntarily withdrawn, there were few to close. It is difficult to ascertain whether or not charter schools serve populations similar to local district student populations as even though the State recently opened a charter school to serve at-risk middle school students, the state has only seven charters representing 0.5 percent of the State's school *buildings*, not *students* (and that number not given). Medium points are awarded.

iii.

Iowa's charter schools receive equitable funding compared with traditional schools. The narrative was silent regarding commensurate share of other revenues, not fully meeting the criterion. High, but not full points were awarded.

iv.

The narrative states that there is no difference in the statewide facilities support offered charter schools. However, it's not clear if charters have to pass bond issues to fund buildings (or fund them from general revenue). The state does make funds available for facility-related *projects*. Medium points are awarded.

v.

The State fully meets this criterion with diverse innovative schools operating across the state. Also in addition to its open enrollment law, Iowa permits LEAs to seek exemptions from State requirements to implement innovative and autonomous efforts to meet educational needs.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	3
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
F 3		
Iowa has demonstrated that it has in place several significant reforms, for example: Innovation Zones that permit a consortium of two or more districts to work with an area education agency to establish innovative practices, competency-based promotions that (like mastery learning) award credit based on student performance or mastery of course content as soon as that occurs rather than on the completion of an amount of instructional time, the Iowa Core that with more individualized rigorous instruction better prepares all students for the world of work and lifelong learning and Senior Year Plus that consolidates several dual-credit coursework programs for high-school students. However, the State does not include any outcomes that resulted from these innovations. Medium points are awarded.		
Total	55	43

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
STEM Priority		
Iowa infuses its provisions for STEM into its planned competency-based education system in a variety of ways. Cognizant that recent economic shifts have made bioscience and information systems new industry		

sectors in the state and understanding the need for students to acquire 21st-Century skills, Iowa made one of its five major goals Increasing Undergraduate Enrollment in STEM Majors. Objectives include: 1) increasing STEM majors 20 percent overall, 2) increasing under-represented minority enrollment by 50 percent and 3) increasing female STEM majors by 50 percent. Another of its five major goals is to eliminate achievement gaps by poverty and race in mathematics in grade three. Iowa State University's Center for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Education collaborates and conducts research with STEM teachers, teacher educators and practitioners. Also Iowa is investing in mathematics professional development with its Every Student Counts program and Teacher Development Academy. There could have been more emphasis on collaboration with industry experts and museums.

Total	15	15
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Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)



Absolute Priority

Iowa's application indeed encompasses the four RTT reform areas, as the state wants not just to reform its educational system but rather to transform it and has devised a clear plan to do so. The application is somewhat uneven in that some sections are more developed than others, but there can be no doubt that the proposal lays out the necessary initiatives to carry out its plan. It is evident that the determination and commitment are there to use the RTT opportunity to strongly impact education in the State and achieve the goals set to improve student achievement.

Total		0
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Grand Total	500	417
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