

RACE TO THE TOP



3/2/2010

Technical Assistance Planning Workshops

Overview

The US Department of Education hosted two technical assistance planning workshops for potential applicants to review technical and logistical aspects of the Race to the Top grant competition. The first workshop was held in Denver, Colorado on December 3, 2009 at the Crowne Plaza Denver Airport Convention Center. The second workshop was held in the Baltimore-Washington Area on December 10, 2009 at the Sheraton Baltimore-Washington International Airport. The purpose of the two technical assistance workshops was to provide opportunities for potential Race to the Top state applicants to hear from and ask questions of Department of Education staff involved in the Race to the Top grant competition. At the workshops, Department staff reviewed the Race to the Top selection criteria, requirements, and priorities and answered technical questions about the Race to the Top program.

TOTAL STATISTICS

Grand Total States attending TA Workshops or participating on Conference Call	49 States, plus the District of Columbia
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Denver Workshop

Total Number of State Reps at Denver TA Workshop	50
Total Number of Public Attendees	22
Total Number of States Represented in Denver	19

List of States Attending Denver Workshop

State	Number of State Representatives
Alaska	1
Arizona	4
California	8
Colorado	4
Hawaii	2
Idaho	3
Iowa	3
Kansas	1
Louisiana	2
Massachusetts	1
Michigan	5
Minnesota	1
Missouri	1
Montana	1
Ohio	1
Oregon	3
Utah	3
Washington	1
Wyoming	5

Baltimore Workshop

Total Number of State Reps at Baltimore TA Workshop	86
Total Number of Public Attendees	60
Total Number of States Represented in Baltimore	34

List of States Attending Baltimore Workshop

State	Number of Representatives
Alabama	1
Arkansas	5
Connecticut	4
Delaware	2
DC	3
Florida	3
Georgia	1
Hawaii	3
Illinois	2
Iowa	1
Kentucky	1
Louisiana	2
Maine	5
Maryland	5
Michigan	2
Mississippi	2
Montana	1
Nevada	1
New Hampshire	4
New Mexico	1
New York	3
North Carolina	2
Oklahoma	2
Oregon	2
Pennsylvania	2
Rhode Island	3
South Carolina	3

South Dakota	2
Tennessee	4
Texas	2
Vermont	2
Virginia	5
Washington	1
West Virginia	3
Wisconsin	1

Baltimore Conference Call

Total Number of State Reps on Conference Call	20
Total Number of Public Attendees on Call	21
Total Number of States Represented on Conference Call	14

State	Number of State Representatives
Alabama	1
DC	1
Florida	1
Indiana	4
Minnesota	1
Missouri	1
Nebraska	2
Nevada	3
New Hampshire	1
New Jersey	1
Pennsylvania	1
Rhode Island	1
Vermont	1
Wisconsin	1

RACE TO THE TOP SURVEY RESULTS

A link to an electronic survey was sent to all registrants of the Denver and Baltimore Race to the Top Technical Assistance Planning workshops. All responses were anonymous. See Appendix A for the full survey.

General Findings

While the response rate was not very high (27%), the pattern of responses was clear with the vast majority of respondents reporting that they were satisfied or very satisfied (94%) with the Race to the Top technical assistance planning workshops. Respondents commented that the workshops were well-organized, informative and helpful. The lessons learned from these survey responses were that potential grant applicants felt these workshops were a good use of their time and appreciated the Department's efforts in holding these events.

Respondents

Fifty-nine of the total 218 participants responded to the survey (27% response rate). (Note: Two respondents attended both the Denver Workshop and the Baltimore Workshop). Seventy-six percent of the respondents were state representatives and 24% were general attendees. The majority of respondents attended the Baltimore workshop (n=44, 72%).

Survey Responses

Nearly all (95%) of the survey respondents reported that the workshop was a valuable use of their time. Eighty-eight percent reported that sufficient amounts of time were spent on each topic, and similarly, 93% felt that the workshops covered the right topics and information. Eighty-nine percent agreed or strongly agreed that the topics were covered clearly, 63% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their questions were answered clearly and 68% reported that the answers to their questions were helpful. Roughly 30% of the respondents were neutral about whether their questions were answered clearly or whether the answers to their questions were helpful.

Eighty-seven percent strongly agreed or agreed that they left the workshop with a good sense of how to proceed in developing their applications. None of the respondents answered "strongly disagree" to any of the statements regarding topic coverage or usefulness/helpfulness of the event. Respondents were somewhat less satisfied with the logistics and support for the workshops; however the vast majority of respondents still reported being satisfied or very satisfied (ranging from 92% to 97%). Between three and seven percent of respondents were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with the registration process, materials provided, facilities and information that was sent prior to coming to the event.

Survey Comments

In general, comments provided by the respondents indicated that the workshops were informative, helpful and well-organized. Some commenters expressed their concerns with the short timeline for the Race to the Top application process and others stated that some of the answers to questions seemed to be vague or even contradictory. Two respondents felt it would have been beneficial to provide time for state teams to work together and discuss their applications with one another. There were also several comments that reflected dissatisfaction with the lack of luncheon options and with the fact that attendees were expected to pay for their own coffee and meals. One respondent suggested that it would have been beneficial to have expertise from both the School Improvement Grants program and the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund program at the workshop to answer questions that intersected the various programs.



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Race to the Top Technical Assistance Planning Workshop for States

SURVEY STATISTICS

Note: Percentages may not always total 100 percent due to rounding.

1. WHICH SESSIONS DID YOU ATTEND? (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

Denver Workshop (December 3rd 2009)	(17) 27.87%
Baltimore Workshop (December 10th 2009)	(44) 72.13%

2. DID YOU ATTEND AS A?

State Representative	(45) 76.27%
General Attendee	(14) 23.73%

3. HOW SATISFIED WERE YOU, OVERALL, WITH EACH SESSION YOU ATTENDED:

	Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Denver Workshop	(0) 0.00%	(0) 0.00%	(9) 50.00%	(9) 50.00%
Baltimore Workshop	(3) 6.81%	(1) 2.27%	(22) 50.00%	(18) 40.91%

4. FOR THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS, PLEASE RESPOND ACCORDINGLY:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Overall this event was a valuable use of my time.	(0) 0.00%	(0) 0.00%	(3) 5.08%	(31) 52.54%	(25) 42.37%
The amount of time spent on each topic was sufficient.	(0) 0.00%	(2) 3.45%	(5) 8.62%	(32) 55.17%	(19) 32.76%
The workshop covered the right topics and information.	(0) 0.00%	(1) 1.69%	(3) 5.08%	(35) 59.32%	(20) 33.90%
The topics were covered clearly.	(0) 0.00%	(1) 1.69%	(5) 8.47%	(34) 57.63%	(19) 32.20%
The questions I had were answered clearly.	(0) 0.00%	(4) 6.78%	(18) 30.51%	(24) 40.68%	(13) 22.03%
The answers to my questions were helpful.	(0) 0.00%	(1) 1.72%	(17) 29.31%	(28) 48.28%	(12) 20.69%
Overall I left the workshop with a good sense of how to proceed in developing my application.	(0) 0.00%	(1) 1.75%	(6) 10.53%	(31) 54.39%	(19) 33.33%

5. PLEASE OFFER ANY COMMENTS THAT MIGHT CLARIFY OR EXPAND ON YOUR ANSWERS TO THE ABOVE QUESTIONS. (CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM AND COMPLIMENTS ARE BOTH WELCOME!)

1. The presenters did a great job of handling a variety of questions. I look forward to the new FAQ to see how some of the unanswered questions are going to be resolved.
2. It appeared that "you" were all well-prepared and that you really understood the RFP and its underlying goals.
3. This is not a criticism of the session but on the process itself. Given the restraints under which state agencies are now working, the release time for Phase I of the RFP and the due date make it impossible for states to submit a quality application given the extensive scope of work required. This was very poor planning on the part of USDOE.
4. Very professionally delivered. I was impressed.
5. Since this funding intersects with the Phase II SFSF application and also with Title I School Improvement Grants, it would have been more beneficial to have representation for those grants as well. This would have encouraged greater collaboration across programs. Having to call the other programs for clarification did not seem to be a good use of time. Scheduling technical assistance opportunities together would also benefit states with limited capacity.
6. Great job!
7. Last question assumes one person has control over application process.
8. At a few points, contradictory answers were offered to related questions.
9. Very thorough presentation by staff. Easy going pace and informal presentation style was appreciated. Thanks!
10. While I felt that Joanne Weiss was incredibly helpful, the presentation section conducted by Josh (missed his last name) was actually counter-productive given his snarky responses. For instance, when someone asked what to do if the State does not have some data elements they are required to report as a baseline, he responded, "Don't make it up." For a high stress, high-stakes meeting, he set a negative, condescending tone that was not necessary. But a big thanks to Joanne for the answers to the group's questions!
11. It was mentioned several times that it is up to the states to make their case for how their program may vary from the norm. It was never very clear as to how that would help if varying from the norm resulted in zero points.
12. Toward the end, the second major presenter did not answer questions as authoritatively as I would have wished. Many of the answers were vague.
13. This is a complex program. Examples were helpful. It is clear that each member of the department's team is thoroughly knowledgeable regarding the issues in the application. Thank you!
14. Great to get specific perspectives from the USED RTTT team directly. Very helpful when guidance was able to be translated specifically into what the state team should do / how the state team should approach each section. Also appreciated when USED declined to state "magic numbers" relying on states to come up with coherent approach.

15. Generally this was excellent. The Department staff did everything they could to help. My only criticism is that the Teachers and Leaders section was rushed, and that speed also made it seem like the presenter didn't want any questions. Otherwise, the event was extremely helpful.
16. The best and most important part of the workshop was the panel addressing the issue of competition or selection of LEAs when determining what constitutes a 'Participating LEA'. This was not well defined in the original application.
17. The staff from USDOE did an excellent job of balancing the big picture with the details and with sticking to the powerpoint plan yet allowing participant questions and engagement.
18. We appreciated how organized the training was. The presenters were very well prepared.
19. The format of the meeting was excellent. You asked questions and presented the information in a coherent, clear manner.
20. Would have liked more time spent on the Competitive Preference Priority for Emphasis on STEM.
21. It seems that some questions had several answers delivered and this was confusing. Good effort though and I appreciated that when an unclear question was identified, you took a minute to huddle or promised feedback.
22. I thought the format and information was very helpful. Because each state has some specific needs and questions, it may have been helpful to have a time around lunch where state teams could get together to develop questions or address issues that would then be posted to the FAQ for the grant. Otherwise, I attended from a state that is most likely not eligible nor qualified to participate.
23. The meeting was informative.

6. HOW SATISFIED WERE YOU WITH THE LOGISTICS AND SUPPORT?

	Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Information provided to you prior to coming to the event	(1) 1.72%	(3) 5.17%	(32) 55.17%	(22) 37.93%
Registration process	(1) 1.69%	(1) 1.69%	(32) 54.24%	(25) 42.37%
Materials provided	(1) 1.69%	(2) 3.39%	(34) 57.63%	(22) 37.29%
The room and hotel facilities	(0) 0.00%	(3) 5.17%	(30) 51.72%	(25) 43.10%

7. PLEASE SHARE WITH US ANY ADDITIONAL WAYS IN WHICH THIS EVENT COULD HAVE BEEN IMPROVED.

1. Should have made lunches available that we could purchase at the site.
2. As the facility in Baltimore was not within walking distance of either coffee or lunch facilities, it would have been very convenient if arrangements had been made with the hotel to purchase sandwiches directly outside the conference room. Coffee was very slow in setting up in the morning. Better information concerning lunch would have been helpful.

3. See comments above
4. WE need an online community to help keep in touch & share ideas. Monster.com can help with this. please email or call me [contact information redacted] if you'd like more information.
5. It would have been better to skip the hour and fifteen minutes for the lunch break and end earlier. That might have been accomplished with some kind of registration fee that could have provided for a set of sandwiches or something that could be gathered up and eaten as part of a working lunch. Otherwise, great!
6. A joke but true...My career has previously been in the private sector, and in thirty years this is the first time I had to pay for the coffee!!!
7. Provide a list of attendees with contact information so that states can work with each other. Provide time for states to discuss applications together and share information.
8. It would have been helpful for general attendees to be placed at tables. Difficult to take notes on lap in chairs at back of room!
9. It would have been nice to have coffee. The meeting site was fine.
10. With only a 60-day response period, it would have helped to have this event earlier. Only 30 days before the application is due is too late.
11. It was unusual to have to pay \$2 for coffee, but I do understand. You may have indicated meals would be on our own ahead of time, but I missed that one. Unfortunately, while the location was very convenient to the airport, there were NO restaurants or other shops nearby, so that made those meals tough. Not a huge problem, though. The content of the meeting was great.
12. I did not receive an email about what I needed to bring with me until I was in travel to the conference, so I had to print out all of those materials at a copy center, which turned out to be very expensive. Then I got to the conference and I spent most of my time with the PowerPoint handout that was provided, so just wish I would have known to be a little bit better prepared before travel.
13. Overall, the federal register and funding opportunities need to be streamlined. The required reading for Race to the Top is over 1000 pages. That is exorbitant and I think that critical information can be condensed to 50 pages or less and then allowing questions to be asked continuously through out the process via web submission and monitoring would be a welcome process improvement. Just an observation.
14. We could have made better use of our time by participating in the webinar. The travel to the site was unnecessary.

Appendix A: Race to the Top Technical Assistance Planning Workshop Survey Questions



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Race to the Top Technical Assistance Planning Workshop for States

Feedback Requested

Thank you so much for attending the U.S. Department of Education’s Race to the Top Technical Assistance Planning Workshop. We want to ensure that the Department’s events serve our attendees well. If you have about 10 minutes to answer the questions below, we would greatly appreciate it.

1. Which sessions did you attend? (Please check all that apply.)

- Denver Workshop (December 3rd 2009)
- Baltimore Workshop (December 10th 2009)

2. Did you attend as a?

- State Representative
- General Attendee

3. How satisfied were you, overall, with each session you attended:

	Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Did Not Attend
Denver Workshop	<input type="radio"/>				
Baltimore Workshop	<input type="radio"/>				

4. For the following statements, please respond accordingly:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Overall this event was a valuable use of my time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The amount of time spent on each topic was sufficient.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The workshop covered the right topics and information.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The topics were covered clearly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The questions I had were answered clearly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The answers to my questions were helpful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall I left the workshop with a good sense of how to proceed in developing my application.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Please offer any comments that might clarify or expand on your answers to the above questions. (Constructive criticism and compliments are both welcome!)

6. How satisfied were you with the logistics and support?

	Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Information provided to you prior to coming to the event	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Registration process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Materials provided	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The room and hotel facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Please share with us any additional ways in which this event could have been improved.

Submit

Thank you for taking the time to help us improve these events in the future.