Final Guidelines

The US Department of Education released the final guidelines for the Race to the Top district (RTT-D) competition last week. The intent to apply is due on August 30, 2012 and applications are due on October 30, 2012. The Department is holding technical assistance webinars on August 16th and 21st.

For more information visit the Department’s RTT-D website.

Changes from the RTT-D Draft Guidelines

The Department has made some changes to the competition guidelines, including:

Competitive Preference Priority – Results, Resource Alignment, and Integrated Services (10 points)

The Coalition commends the Department of Education’s commitment in giving “priority to applicants that propose to integrate public or private resources in a partnership designed to augment the schools’ resources by providing additional student and family supports to schools that address the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of the participating students (as defined in this notice).”1 The Department defines family and community support with multiple examples of child and youth health programs, safety programs, community stability programs, family and community engagement programs that are systemic, integrated, sustainable, and continue through a student’s transition from K–12 schooling to college and career. Furthermore, it includes “programs that promote collaboration with educators and community organizations to improve opportunities for healthy development and learning.”2

The Competitive Preference Priority will be the differentiating factor, and therefore, a very important priority for LEAs to consider. It will be important for LEAs to integrate results, resources and services into their vision, policy, infrastructure and strategies in creating personalized learning environments to prepare students for college and career readiness.

Plans for Continuous Improvement

The Department emphasizes that LEAs should have a “clear and high quality approach” to continuously improving their plan by3:

- **Ongoing communication and Engagement** (5 points): “Strategies for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders.” The Coalition strongly suggests LEAs to consider engaging key community stakeholders in the planning and implementing process such as parents and parent organizations, students and student organizations, early learning programs, the business community, civil rights organizations, advocacy groups, local civic and community-based organizations, local government agencies, the local school employee organization, and institutions of higher education (IHEs).

- **Performance Measures** (5 points): The Department requires LEAs to identify and provide the rationale, measuring strategy and reviewing and improving strategy for each of the 12 to 14 applicant-proposed

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1 RTT-D Executive Summary, Competitive Preference Priority, p.13
2 RTT-D Executive Summary, Definitions, p.18
3 RTT-D Executive Summary, Continuous Improvement, p.11-12
performance measures tailored to the applicable population. For each of the applicable populations, the Department requires:

- PreK – 3: “Applicant must propose at least one age-appropriate non-cognitive indicator of growth (e.g., physical well-being and motor development, or social-emotional development).”
- All other: “Applicant must propose at least one grade-appropriate health or social-emotional leading indicator of successful implementation of its plan.”

- **Evaluating effectiveness of investments** (5 points): The Department included a new criterion for an improvement plan. It requires LEAs to create “plans to evaluate the effectiveness of Race to the Top – District funded activities, such as professional development and activities that employ technology, and to more productively use time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results, through such strategies [as working with community partners, compensation reform, and modification of school schedules and structures (e.g., service delivery, school leadership teams (as defined in the notice), and decision-making structures).”

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### Coalition Guidance on RTT-D Competition

- **NEW: Guide to RTT-D**
  
  The guide provides a brief overview and explanation of the competition framework in the context of the community schools strategy, and next steps for LEAs and community partners.

- **RTT-D Webinar**
  
  Based on the draft guidelines for the competition, the Coalition discussed how the RTT-D competition aligns with community school principles. The webinar voiced district and community leaders about how they have developed district-community partnerships that are required throughout the grant competition.

- **RTT-D and community Schools Fact Sheet**
  
  The two page fact sheet defines the community schools strategy and provides an understanding of the roles LEAs and community stakeholders would be playing in the RTT-D application.

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Please feel free to contact us if you are interested in applying or need support as you work with a district

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### Other Resources

- [Education Department Invites Districts to Apply for $400 Million Race to the Top Competition to Support Classroom-Level Reform Efforts](#) by Department of Education
- [Remarks](#) by National School Board Association
- [Remarks](#) by American Association of School Administrators