

Update: Washington's Race to the Top Grant Application Development

Washington is preparing a Round Two application¹ for Race to the Top which is due June 1, 2010 to the U.S. Department of Education. Round Two grantees will be announced in late August or early September.

The Steering Committee (Governor, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and State Board of Education chair) oversees grant development, finalizes content and signs the grant application. The grant requires these three signatures.

Grant provisions and award

Four-year Race to the Top grants will reward past accomplishments and incentivize future improvements in the following four priority areas: 1) standards and assessments, 2) teacher/leader quality, 3) data collection and use, and 4) struggling schools. A successful grant to Washington would help us build upon the policy and funding work begun in ESHB 2261 (2009 legislative session) and SHB 2776 and E2SSB 6696 (2010 legislative session).

Washington is applying for \$250 million. Over half of the funds will go to school districts that sign up to participate in the grant application. Those funds are used to implement the required application activities described below. The remainder of the funds support state services to participating school districts, development of state program capacity, and provide innovation resources obtained by districts through an optional competitive process.

Components of the application

The grant criteria require a state education reform plan – either one that is in place or one that is developed. Washington does not have a single document that is referred to as our reform plan. Therefore a framework for such a plan has been created that builds upon the work of state policy makers and school districts. A process will be proposed to create a plan from this framework over the next year. Four goals have been identified that encompass our work in Washington.

All Washington students will:

1. Enter kindergarten prepared for success
2. Be competitive in math and science nationally and internationally
3. Attain high academic standards regardless of race, ethnicity, income, or gender and close achievement gaps
4. Graduate able to succeed in college, training, and careers

Activities contained in the grant application have been developed by a number of work teams with input from various interests and organizations. These activities are designed to support Washington's current education reform efforts and are proposed within the Race To The Top criteria. There are essentially three activity levels: state, school district, and innovation opportunities. The state level and school district level activities are related to one another and form a partnership that is the framework for the Partnership Agreements signed by participating school districts with the state.

¹ Delaware and Tennessee are the two states (out of 41 applicants) that won grants for Round 1.

Washington state will support districts with implementation of:

- ▶ Common Core Standards
- ▶ Aligned Formative & Summative Assessments (via multi state consortia)
- ▶ Instructional Improvement Data System & Technical Assistance
- ▶ Improved Math and Science Instruction and Comprehensive STEM Models
- ▶ Model Teacher & Leader Evaluation Systems
- ▶ New, District-based Teacher Preparation Models
- ▶ Regional Professional Development Delivery Network & New PD Center
- ▶ Math & Science Specialty Endorsements (elementary) & Credentialing (middle & high)

School districts agree to:

- ▶ Implement Common Core Standards and Washington standards in other content areas
- ▶ Implement aligned formative and summative assessments
- ▶ Increase student participation in courses earning college credit
- ▶ Implement an Instructional Improvement Data System
- ▶ Implement the new evaluation system and use it to inform professional development and assignment (includes student growth)
- ▶ Develop and implement a required action plan (if designated and not funded in first School Improvement Grant round)
- ▶ Improve math and science instruction and increase math and science exposure in elementary grades
- ▶ Partner with STEM experts and organizations to prepare teachers and provide student opportunities

Partnership Agreements

Key stakeholders have been engaged through their associations in discussions regarding grant content and the structure of participating district agreements. Certain elements of these agreements are specified by the US Department of Education, however, Washington like most states has tailored its agreement to address our application content and strategies.

All school districts have been requested to sign a Partnership Agreement. The school district superintendent's signature is required. In addition we are requesting signatures from school board presidents, teachers' union presidents and principal representatives. The greater the demonstration of district participation, the stronger our application. The deeper the commitment shown in each district, the better the foundation for implementation success.

Innovation

The grant criteria is designed to encourage states to draw on their particular strengths and successes to date, and to use those as launching pads for statewide scaling of promising practices. Creativity and innovation are rewarded in this competition. Washington's application will have four optional innovation opportunities for school districts. Innovation areas are:

- Teacher & Leader Development and Effectiveness (est. \$20 M)
- Persistently Lowest-Achieving (PLA) Schools (est. \$10 M)
- Improving College and Career Readiness, and Closing Achievement Gap (est. \$10 M)
- STEM (est. \$15 M)

School districts will compete to participate in one of the four innovation areas. The goal is that through these district activities new strategies and/or implementation activities will inform the rest of the state about ways to improve student achievement, develop highly skilled teachers and leaders and close achievement gaps.

