

Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the President and Congress have invested extraordinary resources into the improvement of K-16 education in the United States. As part of that investment, the \$4.35 billion Race to the Top Fund has created an unparalleled state-by-state focus on education reform.

Race to the Top includes \$350 million in competitive grants that will be awarded to a consortium of states that develop assessments which are valid, support and inform instruction, provide accurate information about what students know and can do, and measure student achievement to determine if they are on track to succeed in college and the workplace.

- **Purpose.** The purpose of this program is to encourage states to collaborate, through the formation of a consortium, to design and develop assessments that accurately gauge student skills and the knowledge needed to succeed in college and careers. The assessments are intended to play a critical role in educational systems and provide administrators, educators, parents and students with the data and information needed to continuously improve teaching and learning.
- **Grant Types.** There are two types of grants within the Race to the Top Assessment program.
 - Comprehensive Assessment System:
 - **Designed to support the Common Core mathematics and English language arts standards** are designed to prepare students for college and the workplace, and provide a valid measure of student knowledge and skills across a full range of standards.
 - **Assessment system must:**
 - **Include one or more summative assessment components** in mathematics and English language arts that are administered at least once during grades 3-8 and at least once in high school.
 - **Produce student achievement and growth data** that can be used to determine if students are on track to graduating college and career ready.
 - **Identify best practices** to support a culture of continuous learning and improvement in education by providing timely and meaningfully data to improve programs and instruction.
 - High School Course Assessment Program:
 - **Designed to cover multiple high school courses** and includes a process for certifying the rigor of the assessments in the assessment program.
 - **Assessment program must:**
 - **Measure student knowledge and skills against a college-and career-ready standards.**
 - **Produce student achievement and growth data** that can be used to inform evaluations of principal and teacher effectiveness and professional development needs and teaching, learning and program improvements.

The following is a table that summarizes the differences amongst the two types of grants within the Race to the Top Assessment program:

Race to the Top Assessment Program: Grant Types Available			
	Estimated Funding Available	Estimated Number of Grants	Project Period
Comprehensive Assessment System	Up to \$160 million	1-2	Up to 48 months
High School Course Assessment Program	Up to \$30 million	1	Up to 48 months

- **Eligibility Requirements.** Grant eligibility requires each state in the consortium to submit a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreeing to the consortiums conditions of membership, outlines the potential state barriers and how the state will address them, and commits to implementing the assessment system in 2014-15. The MOU must be signed by the state’s Governor, Superintendent, State Board and Procurement Officer. Participation in the Common Core Assessment competition is limited only to consortia of states; the number of states participating in each consortium varies based on the type of grant the consortia is applying for.
 - Comprehensive Assessment System:
 - Eligible consortia must include at least 15 states, of which at least five states are governing states¹.
 - An eligible application must identify a project management partner and provide an assurance that the project manager partner is not partnering with any other applicants under the Comprehensive Assessment category.
 - An eligible application must be able to ensure that the summative assessments will be fully implemented in each participating state no later than the 2014-2015 school year.
 - An eligible application must address all absolute priorities (listed below).
 - High School Course Assessment Program:
 - Eligible consortia must include at least five governing states.
 - An eligible application must identify a project management partner and provide an assurance that the project manager partner is not partnering with any other applicants under the Comprehensive Assessment category.
 - An eligible application must address all absolute priorities (listed below).

Three main consortia have been formed which are eligible to submit an application:

Race to the Top Assessment Program Consortia				
	Grant Type Seeking	Assessment Focus	States Participating	Governing States
Achieve “Florida” Consortia	Comprehensive Assessment	New-age summative <u>assessments</u> that include performance assessments.	~ 30 states	Massachusetts, Florida and Louisiana
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortia	Comprehensive Assessment	Curriculum-embedded, computer-adaptive <u>formative and summative assessments</u> .	~ 27 states <i>*(including Washington state)</i>	Maine, West Virginia and Oregon
National Center on Education and Economy	High School Course Assessment	Assessments modeled on the <u>British “board exams”</u> .	~ 8 states	n/a

¹ Governing states are those states that are members of only one consortia applying for the grant in the completion category, have an active role in policy decision-making for the consortia, and are committed to using the assessment system or program developed by the consortia.

- **Absolute and Competitive Priorities.** Consortia for the two grants must address the following absolute priorities and may choose to address the competitive priorities.

Race to the Top Assessment Program: Absolute and Competitive Priorities			
Comprehensive Assessment		High School Course Assessment	
<p><u>Absolute Priority:</u> Comprehensive Assessment Systems Measuring Student Achievement Against Common College- and Career-Ready Standards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Measures student knowledge and skills against a common set of college-and career-ready standards. ▪ Consists of assessment components in mathematics and in English language arts that include one or more summative assessment components. ▪ Produces student achievement data and student growth data. ▪ Assesses all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities. ▪ Produces data that can be used to determine school, principal, and teacher effectiveness, determine principal and teacher professional development needs, and teaching, learning, and program improvement. 	<p><u>Absolute Priority:</u> High School Course Assessment Programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Measures student knowledge and skills against commons set of college-and career-ready standards. ▪ Elicits applications of student knowledge and skill. ▪ Produces student achievement data and student growth data. ▪ Includes assessments for multiple courses. ▪ Includes a process for certifying the rigor of each assessment in the assessment program.
<p><u>Competitive Priority 1:</u> Collaboration and Alignment with Higher Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commitment that the Institute of Higher Education system will participate in the design and development of high school summative assessments for mathematics and English language arts in order to ensure that assessments measure college readiness. ▪ Commitment that the Institute of Higher Education system will implement policies that exempt students from remedial courses if they have met necessary achievement standards for each assessment. ▪ Applications must be signed by Higher Education executive officer and the president or head of each participating Institute of Higher Education. ▪ Applications must provide the 	<p><u>Competitive Priority 1:</u> Focus on Preparing Students for Study in STEM-Related Fields</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applications include a high-quality plan to develop assessments for high school courses designed to prepare students for post-secondary study and careers in STEM fields. ▪ Plan must address the courses that will be assessed, how the courses will comprise a rigorous course of study, and include how post-secondary input will be obtained.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applications must provide the 	<p><u>Competitive Priority 2:</u> Focus on Career Readiness and Placement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applications include a high-quality plan to develop assessments for high school courses that comprise a rigorous course of study in career and technical education. ▪ Plan must address the courses that will be assessed, how the courses will comprise a rigorous course of study, and include how business community participation and support will be obtained.

This document is intended as guidance only. Please refer to the official notice of final priorities, requirements, definitions, and selection criteria published in the *Federal Register*.

	total number of direct matriculating students in the 2008-09 year and total number of matriculating students in the consortia's member states.		
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- **Selection Criteria.** Applications will be reviewed based upon the following selection criteria.

Race to the Top Assessment Program: Summary of Selection Criteria and Points Available			
Comprehensive Assessment Systems		High School Course Assessment Program	
(A)(1) Consortium Governance	20	(B)(1) Consortium Governance	30
(A)(2) Theory of Action	5	(A)(2) Theory of Action	5
(A)(3) Assessment System Design	55	(A)(3) Course Assessment Program Design and Development	60
(A)(4) Assessment System Development	35	(A)(4) Research and Evaluation	25
(A)(5) Research and Evaluation	30	(A)(5) Course Assessment Program Implementation	45
(A)(6) Professional Capacity and Outreach	15	(A)(6) Project Management	35
(A)(7) Technology Approach	10	<i>OPTIONAL: Competitive Preference Priority 1: Focus on Prepare Students for Study in STEM-Related Fields</i>	10
(A)(8) Project Management	30	<i>OPTIONAL: Competitive Preference Priority 2: Focus on Career Readiness and Placement</i>	10
<i>OPTIONAL: Competitive Preference Priority: Collaboration and Alignment with Higher Education</i>	20	Total Points	200 points
Total Points	200 points		

- **Timing.**
 - **Technical Assistance Workshop:** April 22, 2010
 - **Notice of Intent to Apply:** April 29, 2010
 - **Application Deadline:** June 23, 2010
 - **Awards Announced:** September 2010
 - **Required Implementation of Assessment System:** 2014-15
- **Additional Inquiries.**
 - **Email:** racetothetop.assessment@ed.gov
 - **Website:** www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment
 - **Telephone:** 202-453-7246