



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Governor

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CHRISTOPHER D. CERF
Acting Commissioner

December 13, 2011

TO: Chief School Administrators
Charter School Lead Person

FROM: Andrew R. Smarick, Deputy Commissioner

SUBJECT: Race to the Top Phase Three

As I shared a few weeks ago, the New Jersey Department of Education is applying to the Federal Government for funding under Race to the Top Phase Three (RTTT3). Unlike previous phases of Race to the Top, this is not a competition. Should our proposal be deemed acceptable, the State will receive funding.

New Jersey is eligible for nearly \$38 million. Per this round's rules, we are identifying a small number of projects and activities from our Race to the Top Phase Two (RTTT2) application that we wish to have funded.

I wanted to take this opportunity to share the direction of our application and the process for LEAs to partner with the State.

Over the last year, Acting Commissioner Chris Cerf has reorganized the Department around our four building blocks of success. We are targeting our resources in these areas in order to ensure that all students in New Jersey, regardless of life circumstances, graduate from high school ready for college and career. Those building blocks include:

- Academics (standards, assessments, curriculum, and instruction)
- Performance (targets, measurement, analysis, and accountability)
- Talent (educator effectiveness)
- Innovation (high-quality, nontraditional methods of delivering K-12 schooling)

In selecting activities for our RTTT3 application, we have identified items from our previous application that most closely align with these priorities. They include:

- Supporting the transition to the Common Core State Standards and high-quality assessments;

- Developing an “Instructional Improvement System” to provide LEAs and schools with online instructional support tools, such as a model curriculum and formative assessments;
- Improving educator effectiveness through our teacher and school leader evaluation frameworks;
- Supporting LEAs in turning around the lowest-achieving schools through our new Regional Achievement Centers;
- Strengthening charter school authorization and monitoring; and
- Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain these plans

As with previous Race to the Top rounds, 50 percent of the grant award will be invested by the State, and 50 percent will be awarded directly to participating districts to use in ways that align with the State’s plan. In order to build a list of participating LEAs, we will be following up with each of you in January with additional details. We will start with the 387 LEAs that participated in RTTT2 and give other LEAs the opportunity to opt into this opportunity.

All participating LEAs will partner with the State to develop new MOUs and Scopes of Work that will describe how each district’s allocation will be invested. Allocations for each participating district will be determined based on each LEA’s relative share of funding under Part A of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

This grant provides an excellent opportunity for New Jersey to accelerate key reforms already underway and to build even stronger partnerships with LEAs. We are in the process of finalizing our application for the December 16 deadline, and we will follow up in early January with additional details on our application, as well as the process for you to participate in this award.

c: Members, State Board of Education
Acting Commissioner Christopher Cerf
Senior Staff
Executive County Superintendents