



Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of modern history and on the heels of its most recent events, the State of Tennessee submits — with great pride and hope for our children — its application for federal resources in the U.S. Department of Education’s Race to the Top Fund. We have ambitious and achievable goals, and this application provides a road map for reaching them. The state will capitalize on strong assets:

- A rich pool of data
- A plan in place for revamped standards and assessments
- Growing STEM industries
- A wide variety of local and national organizations willing to help
- An expanded charter school law that can usher in new innovation
- The full support of every local education agency, countless state organizations, the state teachers union, and all seven gubernatorial candidates

Through Race to the Top, Tennessee will create an intensive focus on the power of human capital: recruiting, developing, evaluating, and compensating the best talent Tennessee can find for its schools; equipping them with the tools they need to succeed, such as standards and data; defining expectations and setting the bar high for student, teacher, and principal success; rethinking old and out-of-date practices that keep great teachers and leaders from succeeding; and harnessing the power of external organizations, foundations, and committed partners to help Tennessee achieve its specific goals and targets.

This document captures the highlights of Tennessee’s application, broken down by sections of the application. The full application can be found at <http://state.tn.us/education/recovery.shtml#RTTT>.

SECTION A: STATE SUCCESS FACTORS

Atmospheric conditions in Tennessee are ripe for wholesale education reform. In its modern history, Tennessee state government has demonstrated a strong commitment to making public education its top funding priority. Among our recent successes:

- Fully funding K-12 education during recent recessionary budgets
- Enacting new standards through the Tennessee Diploma Project
- Revising our policies on alternative teacher licensure
- Lifting the cap on the number of charter schools allowed and easing the path to establishing charters
- Making the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS), one of the nation’s oldest and most robust databases for tracking “student growth,” more accessible to educators

Significantly, Governor Phil Bredesen, Democratic and Republican lawmakers, the State Board of Education, teachers' unions, school districts, business groups, and child advocates joined together in the State Capitol for an extraordinary session of the legislature and enacted the most sweeping set of education reform measures in a generation. They reached consensus in a non-partisan, collaborative manner that we believe greatly enhances the long-range sustainability of reforms in Tennessee. Actions taken include:

- Creating an “Achievement School District” that allows the commissioner of the state Department of Education to intervene in consistently failing schools
- Allowing local school systems to create local salary schedules for teachers and principals
- Fully “unlocking” our TVAAS data by removing statutory barriers to using it in key employment decisions for teachers
- Requiring annual evaluations for teachers and principals
- Basing these evaluations on not less than 50 percent of student-achievement measures — including at least 35 percent based on TVAAS data for those teachers for whom it is available
- Establishing a teacher evaluation advisory committee to develop guidelines in a collaborative manner and recommend criteria to the State Board of Education

SECTION B: STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS

Tennessee is well along the road to implementing higher and clearer standards. The speed with which Tennessee tackled this issue illustrates our state’s commitment.

- The Tennessee State Board of Education will adopt the new Common Core Standards in July 2010.
 - Based on feedback from Achieve Inc., we believe these standards will be closely aligned with the new standards Tennessee adopted as part of the Tennessee Diploma Project in January 2008.
- The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) will provide significant professional development on the Common Core Standards including statewide Summer Institutes (similar to those held the past two summers on the Tennessee Diploma Project), regional trainings at field service centers, annual trainings for new administrators and teachers, and additional training through the Electronic Learning Center. TDOE will also provide additional training to high priority schools and districts.
- TDOE will develop a comprehensive item bank for formative assessments, interim assessments, benchmark assessments and summative assessments. Teachers and principals will be able to administer tests based on this item bank either online or by printing the test. All tests will be scored electronically, and the results will be automatically imported into the new State Longitudinal Data System (see below).

SECTION C: DATA SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT INSTRUCTION

Tennessee has the nation's richest data system and will expand its use. Tennessee has the most sophisticated value-added assessment system in the United States. For tested grades and subjects, our state is able to track each child's achievement, link it back to his or her teachers, and measure not just the absolute performance of a school but the actual academic growth that a school and its teachers are creating or not creating, as measured by standardized tests.

- TDOE, in partnership with SAS, THEC, and CBER, will create a P-20 State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) that combines data from existing TDOE, THEC, TennCare, and Department of Children's Services, Health, Human Services, Mental Health, and Correction databases. The SLDS is intended to provide educators with a "360-degree view of the student" and increase teacher, administrator, and district use of student data.
- SAS will expand the existing data dashboard currently used by teachers and principals to view students' Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) data. This new dashboard will include the "360-degree view of the student" based on the SLDS discussed above.
- SAS and a non-profit organization, such as Battelle for Kids, will provide teachers and principals training on how to use the state's new assessment system and data dashboard to improve classroom instruction and to inform teacher and principal evaluation and compensation systems.
 - This non-profit will conduct much of its training via the Electronic Learning Center and interactive WebEx™ sessions.
- Teacher pre-service programs will be required to incorporate the module into their research methods courses regarding how teachers can use TVAAS to improve classroom instruction.

SECTION D: GREAT TEACHERS AND LEADERS

Tennessee will find and support the best possible talent for its schools. We believe that a fair, transparent, and data-driven evaluation system, coupled with a transformed way of linking professional development to specific teacher needs, will result in no more than 10 percent of Tennessee teachers being defined as "ineffective" and unable to move students' growth by at least one academic year – leading to higher student achievement overall by 2014.

- TDOE will fund expansion of traditional and alternative teacher training programs focused on increasing the supply of teachers in hard-to-staff subjects. This includes funding to replicate the UTeach program, expansion of both Teach for America and The New Teacher Project, and \$8 million in competitive grants to expand principal and teacher residency programs.
- The state will create a 15-member Teacher Evaluation Advisory Committee to develop new teacher and principal evaluation systems based on multiple measures. Evaluations will be based 50 percent on student achievement growth, with at least 35 percent being based on TVAAS data where available.

- TDOE will create a \$12 million Innovation Acceleration Fund to assist districts in designing and/or implementing alternative salary schedules.
- TDOE will also create an additional competitive fund of \$375,000 a year for innovation in small school districts. As part of the scope of work, these districts can apply for additional funding to develop alternative salary schedules or turn around low performing schools.
- TDOE will create and administer a Teacher Working Conditions Survey to gauge principals' effectiveness in creating positive working conditions within their schools.
- THEC and the State Board of Education will redesign the existing Teacher Preparation Program Report Card to make it more informative and user-friendly and create new report cards for school leadership preparation programs and all professional development courses.
- THEC and the State Board of Education will commission a School Leader Supply and Demand Study to help the state and individual school districts project their future human capital needs.
- TDOE will create a Leadership Action Tank to identify and disseminate best practices that district and school leaders use to improve student achievement. This Action Tank will focus on high poverty, high-performing schools.

SECTION E: TURNING AROUND THE LOWEST-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

Tennessee will re-engineer its accountability system to focus on low-achieving schools. We will intervene in schools early, before they reach status as a persistently lowest achieving school, and will provide a variety of supports.

- **Focus Schools:** Schools in School Improvement I or School Improvement II will be known as focus schools and will receive \$6,000 a year to access turnaround strategy assistance.
- **Renewal Schools:** Schools in Corrective Action or Restructuring I will be known as renewal schools and will be provided \$300,000 a year to partner with a private provider, higher education organization, or a collaboration of non-profits to develop and implement a school turnaround strategy.
- **Achievement School District (ASD):** The Commissioner of Education will have the authority to place schools in Restructuring II or beyond or schools meeting the federal definition of “persistently low achieving schools” in a newly created ASD. The Commissioner has broad authority over these schools from funding to implementing existing turnaround strategies to turn these schools over to a charter management organization. TDOE has identified several national non-profit organizations it might partner with to turn around these schools. Schools will remain in the ASD for at least five years.
- THEC will build upon its newly developed statewide college access network to incubate new programs and help existing programs expand.

SECTION V: COMPETITIVE PRIORITIES

Tennessee will be a national leader in STEM education. At its core, our STEM approach is designed to bolster the philosophy underpinning President Obama’s “Educate to Innovate” campaign to move American students from the middle to the top of the pack in science and math achievement over the next decade. As a state that is rich in STEM assets, Tennessee strongly believes that America’s future hinges on our ability to improve teaching and learning in the STEM disciplines.

- TDOE will partner with Battelle, which in partnership with the University of Tennessee runs Oak Ridge National Laboratory, to establish a statewide STEM Innovation Network. This network will work with Oak Ridge Associated Universities, existing higher education STEM Centers of Excellence, and several new regional STEM hubs to share best practices in STEM education and deliver professional development for STEM teachers across the state. This network will be modeled on a similar STEM effort led by Battelle in Ohio.
- TDOE will expand the STEM training offerings on the Electronic Learning Center (ELC) by uploading content from PBS’s Digital Learning Library onto the ELC.

BUDGET SUMMARY

Tennessee’s application asks for approximately \$501 million in funding to support these efforts. As required by the federal guidelines, \$250.5 million will be distributed via the Title I formula directly to each of the local education agencies that agreed to implement the reforms as outlined. The other \$250.5 million will support statewide reform efforts.

Approximately 87 percent of the total statewide reform funding requested is directed towards developing teachers and leaders and turning around the state’s lowest performing schools. Of that, 52 percent is related to professional development and the expansion of human capital for education within the state, including human capital within the Achievement School District, and 35 percent will go toward specific interventions within the state’s lowest performing schools. The remaining 13 percent of the total funding will be utilized for implementation and continuous improvement through research and evaluation. Below is a summary of projects according to the primary project purpose.

- **Human Capital** projects include the expansion of teachers trained by alternative licensure programs; pre-service training on standards, TVAAS, and STEM disciplines; training of principals and teachers in residency programs; the revised Teacher Preparation Program Effectiveness Report Card; UTeach replication; the administration of the Teacher Working Conditions survey; and the Innovation Acceleration Fund. The total budget for Human Capital projects is approximately \$61.3 million.
- **Professional Development** projects include expansion of content for teachers on the Electronic Learning Center; training on the Common Core Standards and assessments, a newly developed evaluation, and the usage of TVAAS; content area training in STEM disciplines; and usage of data for instruction. The total budget for Professional Development projects is approximately \$68.1 million.

- **Interventions** in the state's lowest performing schools will target an estimated total of 196 schools in the first year and an estimated 226 schools by Year 4. Through the Achievement School District, TDOE would contract services for the schools to nationally and locally recognized non-profits with a demonstrated track record of reform in recruiting highly effective teachers or principals, working with districts and states on revamping human capital systems, creating and expanding high-quality charter schools, and paving the way for dramatic improvement in student outcomes. Tennessee will seek out leading non-profits that have already proven they can do this work and enlist them in the ASD effort. Schools categorized in Tennessee's reconfigured accountability system as Renewal Schools (Corrective Action and Restructuring 1) would receive approximately \$300,000 per school to purchase school turnaround services from a list of providers established through a Request for Information process. Schools categorized as Focus Schools (School Improvement 1 and 2) would receive approximately \$6,000 per school to purchase similar turnaround services. Interventions will also include the start-up and expansion of a statewide college access network. The total budget for Interventions is approximately \$88.6 million.
- **Implementation** funds will go toward coordination and oversight of all projects outlined within this application as part of the First to the Top Oversight Team; development of a Delivery Unit within TDOE; and creation of a STEM Innovation Network. The total budget for Implementation is approximately \$10 million.
- **Research** efforts will inform the continuous improvement of Tennessee's Race to the Top programs. Tennessee's Consortium on Research, Evaluation and Development will lead these efforts in coordination with the non-profits that will work to integrate data for improving instruction. The state will also conduct a School Leader Supply and Demand study and develop a Leadership Action tank. The total budget for Research is approximately \$22.8 million.