

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	6
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: California increased the percentage of revenues allocated to public education from 46 percent in FY08 to 47.4 percent in FY09. While this is not a large increase in the percentage of revenues devoted to public education (and total expenditures have decreased) the State's commitment to education is commendable considering the severe economic conditions the State is facing. California faces significant challenges in funding public education given that Proposition 13 significantly eroded property tax revenues that are available to fund public education. The State has attempted to equalize education funding through the General Fund, although the formula seems to favor funding adequacy rather than equity. The current formula is heavily weighted on district growth, type and size and not poverty. Points were deducted because of the formula's focus on adequate funding. However, Economic Impact Aid and other categorical programs provide significant funding to attempt to equalize funding between high and low poverty LEAs. In light of the current economic conditions, LEAs have been granted greater flexibility in how these funds are spent which could put equity funding in further jeopardy. The applicant did not describe how LEAs ensure equity between high and low poverty schools.</p>		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	31
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: Since 1998 California has capped its number of charter schools not to exceed 100 newly authorized charters per year. Unused charters may be rolled over into the next year. While there is a cap, it is a "high cap". In Section A, the State reported that there were 10,225 schools operating statewide. In school year 2009-10 the State authorized 1,350 charter schools, which is 13 percent of all schools. The State provided clear evidence that it has processes in place for LEAs to monitor the effectiveness of charter schools and close them if necessary. Once approved, charters do not operate indefinitely; they must be renewed after their first 5 years of operation. The applicant provided data showing that LEAs have revoked 139 charters since the 2005-06 school year. The State did not thoroughly address how charters are encouraged to serve high-need students. However, the State has plans to have its new partner—the Regional Charter School Innovation Center—work with LEAs to increase support for the creation of charters to serve high-need populations. State laws require funding mechanisms that ensure charters receive equitable funding compared with traditional schools and the State has made significant investments in securing and improving facilities for charter school operations. As evidence, the applicant noted that recent bond measures have authorized \$850 million for charter school construction projects. It is clear from the legislation provided in the appendix and the discussion on the bonds approved by California voters that there is considerable public support for charter schools in the State. The applicant did not provide evidence that it enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools (such as open enrollment programs) other than charter schools.</p>		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: The application provided compelling evidence that it is committed to additional systemic reforms related to empowering parents, creating a culture of innovation and flexibility to support reforms at the district level, and improving and expanding early childhood education. The State did not address how these reforms will improve student outcomes.</p>		
Total	55	41

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	0
Competitive Reviewer Comments: Throughout the application the State demonstrated its need to educate more students in STEM areas, strengthen STEM standards and curriculum, and increase the number of effective teachers in these areas. The State provided evidence of a strong PK-20 partnership to improve STEM instruction. The State also has documented partnerships with the technology industry designed to support the State's long-term reform efforts in STEM education, as well as the initiatives detailed in its Race to the Top application. However, the State's approach to STEM does not meet the standard of a high-quality plan. There are no detailed action plans or timeframes to meet the STEM goals and the STEM activities do not appear to be coordinated across the agency. Also lacking is a cohesive discussion on how the State plans to offer a rigorous course of study across the STEM-related subject areas.		
Total	15	0

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: California has done a commendable job articulating its commitment to undertaking the reforms in the four Race to the Top areas. The State has made critical linkages between teacher quality and student achievement and recognized the need to make major investments in data systems to measure teacher effectiveness and student growth. The plan supports both the educator workforce and the children and youth enrolled in the State's elementary and secondary schools. California's plan strengthens academic standards, provides professional development in crafting curriculum frameworks and helping teachers teach to the new standards, and aligns assessments with the new content standards. The State intends to coordinate Race to the Top funds with existing state and local dollars to expand systems of supports to LEAs through the 11 regional offices to fully implement the Race to the Top Reforms. The State also is leveraging state and federal funds to refocus an array of professional development efforts to support this initiative.		
Total		0

Grand Total	500	309
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(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	25
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: The California application provided details on the procedure for identifying persistently low achieving schools and reported the results of applying the criteria. California provided a comprehensive high-quality plan for supporting districts in turning around persistently low achieving schools. The plan describes the processes and several funding mechanisms to be used but did not provide information on the amount of funds to be allocated. California did only partial reporting on the performance measures and did not report results and lessons learned since the 2004-2005 school year.		
Total	50	40

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	9
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: California provided evidence that it was able to slightly increase the percentage of state funds dedicated to education from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009. The actual dollar level of funding for education was down slightly. California also provided evidence that it has a system assuring equitable funding across LEAs in the state including equitable funding for high-poverty and other schools.		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	28
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: California provided evidence that its charter school law, while restricting the percentage of charter schools that can be added in a given year, does not place any limit on the total number or percentage of the schools in the state that can become charter schools. For this current school year, California has 810 charter schools which is 8% of schools in the state. For each school year, 100 schools, or approximately 1% of the total schools in California, can become charter schools. The statute provides for revocation of charter school authorization for low performing charter schools. Data were presented showing that roughly one third of the charter schools in California closed each year from 2005-2006 to 2009-2010. No breakout of the reasons for the closure was provided and that data are reportedly not collected. California provided evidence that its funding processes and sources for charter schools are comparable to those made available for regular schools. The financial analysis indicated that California charter schools are funded at approximately 95% of the level of regular schools. California provided evidence that it does provide funding for charter school facilities and in fact has a charter school set aside in its state school building program. California, in its application, did not address F(2)(v) element regarding the operation of innovative or autonomous public schools.		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	3
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: California provided information on other significant reform conditions present in the state but did not address the extent to which they have increased student achievement, impacted graduation rates, or narrowed achievement gaps.		
Total	55	40

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	0
Competitive Reviewer Comments: California provided evidence of wide ranging activities and processes to support science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The application narrative included past STEM activities and planned emphases aligned with RTTT. The TechNet partnership and the Higher Education Science and Mathematics Initiates are just two examples of the good things California is doing with STEM. The information submitted did not show a plan for addressing STEM that is sufficiently systematic, comprehensive, and coherent to be considered of high quality.		
Total	15	0

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: California's application presented a comprehensive approach to supporting the four key education reform areas integrating a wide range of processes and resources to support reform efforts of local school districts. California's successes with improvement efforts and the level of participation of LEAs should provide a basis for a successful RTTT implementation.		
Total		0
Grand Total	500	376

very ambitious and may not be achievable, but it is not unreasonable based on the comprehensiveness of the state's support initiatives. There is no mechanism to ensure that not more than 50% of the schools employ the transformation model, as specified in the criterion. The project budgets for these criteria are reasonable and appropriate.

Total	50	45
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The state increased the percentage of revenues used to support education in FY09. The state's school finance formula results in equalized funding across LEAs and schools, with the flexibility that categorical funding can be funded flexibly based on local priorities. This formula meets the criterion (ii) for equitable funding.</p>		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	31
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: The state has a "high" cap on the number of charter schools, multiple authorizers, favorable laws and regulations, and comparable funding. There is no facility funding stream but there are several programs that serve to help charter schools solve the facility challenge. (Note it is not clear whether or how many charter schools actually benefit from the requirements of school districts to provide space under Proposition 39.) The proposal does not address criterion (v) with respect to other innovative schools.</p>		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	2
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: In addition to providing some financial flexibility and certain early childhood education initiatives, in January 2010 the state enacted legislation that creates conditions favorable to education reform and the reform models included in the application. The state does not, however, provide evidence that these conditions have yet resulted in positive outcomes.</p>		
Total	55	43

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
<p>Competitive Reviewer Comments: The state's proposal meets the criterion for emphasis on STEM. It appropriately references other sections of its proposal where it integrates its STEM emphasis. The state has previously demonstrated a commitment to promote STEM education, and its proposal will likely increase the quality and rigor of STEM instruction through professional development and alternative certification, involve external stakeholders (e.g., TechNet), and proliferate STEM programs in low-achieving schools and for underrepresented students through the LEA challenge grants.</p>		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
<p>Absolute Reviewer Comments: The state's proposal is comprehensive, coherently addresses all of the criteria, and has sufficiently broad support to have statewide impact. The state has previously demonstrated its commitment to the reform agenda articulated in the notice, and presents a high-quality plan that is focused on improving student achievement and outcomes. The most troubling features of the plan are the low level of teachers union support for the ambitious reform agenda, and the risk that the \$700 million of funds requested by the state for the LEAs (excluding the amounts in the specific project budgets) is deployed as supplementary operating funding and not used explicitly to advance the Race to the Top reforms.</p>		
Total		0

Grand Total	500	387
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Total	138	76
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: California has good systems and structures for “intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs” [(E)(1)]. The state learned from working primarily with individual schools. The state has broadened its reach to include the LEAs within which the struggling schools reside. Legal, statutory and regulatory authority is in place. California earns a 10 with this criterion.</p>		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	31
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	26
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: Despite the strength of the previous criterion, California has had a mixed record of “turning around the lowest-achieving schools” [(E)(2)]. The state is able to identify the persistently lowest-achieving schools, as well as the LEAs [(E)(2)(i)]. The proposal evidences California’s keen sense of the limitations it faces in bringing failing schools to a better place. No hubris is in evidence on one of the toughest aspects of school reform nationally. California proposes heavy attention to regional level work—just above the LEA level—to help break the barriers to fixing failing schools. Impressively, the Regional Lead Offices will implement a comprehensive set of accountability and support pieces to both foster and force LEAs to turnaround their failing schools. Relative to this criterion, the proposal is strong in terms of clarifying the particulars of proposed work at the LEA and school level. In this section, California strikes the right balance between concept and action, strategy and tactics. This section also benefits from repeated attention to the best use of the likely onetime RTTT funds and the important role of external partners [(E)(2)(ii)].</p>		
Total	50	41

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	8
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: California has been doing everything possible to “make education funding a priority” [(F)(1)]. Based solely on the proposal, the evidence is clear that California, despite severe economic and fiscal challenges, has held strong on the share of funding dedicated to K-12 education in the state budget. While the total dollars has dropped substantially, the percentage of the budget allocated to K-12 education rose from 46 percent to 47 percent in the last two fiscal years [(F)(1)(i)]. California also presents good evidence on the extent to which “the state’s policies lead to equitable funding between high-need LEAs and other LEAs, and within LEAs, between high poverty schools and other schools” [(F)(1)(ii)]. The state shows how complicated school finance policies are ensuring that LEAs receive comparable support. Unfortunately, the proposal is silent on within-LEA funding matters.</p>		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	27

<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: California stands out nationally, as the proposal conveys, with its long and careful attention to charter schools. The state scores nearly a perfect run of points with the criterion “ensuring successful conditions for high performing charter schools and other innovative schools” [(F)(2)]. California has a “high” cap on the number of charters, which has amounted to no restrictions on charter formation over the past several years [(F)(2)(1)]. One of the few areas where the state falls short in the charter school review is a failure to explicate the typical reasons charter schools close in California. The proposal does not present evidence on how many charters closed due to quality problems—a factor important in the criteria [(F)(2)(ii)]. In addition, the proposal leaves reviewers to assume that the large proportion of charters in California are serving typical populations of public school students [(F)(2)(ii)]. California provides multiple funding boosts to charters, including facility assistance, resulting in an even playing field (financially speaking) with traditional public schools [(F)(2)(iii)(iv)]. Lastly, the largest points (eight) were lost because the proposal does not indicate that California “enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools other than charter schools” [(F)(2)(v)].</p>		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: California does a good job of “demonstrating other significant reform conditions” [(F)(3)]. Parent empowerment is essential, as well as the various mechanisms California uses to create a culture of innovation and flexibility, primarily through “education code flexibility,” “categorical flexibility,” and “local budgeting flexibility.” The state demonstrates recognition that a key condition for reform is providing local leaders the capacity to make programmatic and financial decisions—within certain standards and quality parameters—that reflect their local situations. Early childhood also is an essential focus; even though the proposal gives it sparse attention, the state is wise to note that it pays attention to “school readiness” for its children. California falls short of a perfect score in this section for not including evidence of how these various reforms resulted in improved student outcomes and graduation rates.</p>		
Total	55	39

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	0
<p>Competitive Reviewer Comments: No doubt, California has the multi-sector capacity and plans to pursue a vibrant initiative in STEM. Unfortunately, the proposal does not make that case. As handled in the proposal, STEM would be tacked on, an added minor element, in the RTTT initiative in California. Throughout the proposal, STEM references are dropped into plans and explanations without tying them into the work coherently. In summing up the STEM plans, the proposal only provides a list of actions and activities (albeit many of them exceedingly large actions). Most important, it is not clear from the evidence provided that “a rigorous course of study,” rather than a linked set of separate initiatives, will result from the proposed STEM effort. There is not a comprehensive or coherent plan. Thus, as required in the scoring rubric, no points are awarded for California’s STEM proposal.</p>		
Total	15	0

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes

Absolute Reviewer Comments:

Yes, California meets the "Absolute Priority – Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform." California makes the case that its RTTT initiative will link deeply standards and assessments, data systems, human capital, and low-achieving schools turn around. California does well to frame the RTTT investment as a way to "create conditions for success." California also is wise to underscore the RTTT grant as a likely one-time infusion of cash that must be applied to building technical structures and developing capacities that ideally will not require recurring infusions of Federal assistance. California is to be commended for being honest and evidence-based in noting areas requiring most improvement. The less than 50 percent rate of participation among LEAs threatens the statewide value of RTTT funding in California; and the 26 percent participation rate of local union presidents also is troubling. However, these disappointing rates of participation by LEAs and local unions do not immediately end California's chances for funding (as a "no" score relative to the Absolute Priority would do). Throughout the proposal California loses points for lack of implementation plans and details. Specific details are impossible in a proposal of such immense magnitude, but California could have struck a better balance between concept and action, strategy and tactics. Too much is at stake with a massive RTTT grant to California not to know with more clarity how the impressive array of concepts and strategies would be implemented to advance policies and practices at the school and classroom level.

Total		0
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Grand Total	500	273
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(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: The proposal provides sufficient evidence that the state has the legal authority to intervene in both the lowest-achieving schools and the lowest-achieving LEAs.		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	25
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	20
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: i. The proposal identifies 187 persistently lowest-achieving schools, including high schools that would be Title-I eligible but do not receive Title I funds, using a viable methodology consistent with RTTT intent. This method appears to accurately identify the state's persistently lowest-achieving schools as defined in the RTTT application notice. ii. The proposal provides evidence that not only the signed MOUs, but also state law, require persistently lowest-achieving schools to implement one of the four RTTT intervention models. It is not clear from the narrative how the state will manage the RTTT limitation on the use of the transformation model. The documentation provided for the state's historical performance with school turnaround indicates that the past focus has largely been on changing school inputs, with limited success. The new plan calls for strengthening the roles of both the LEA and the regional support services in school turnaround, but an essential switch in focus from inputs and process management to attainment of specific outcomes is not well-described. The proposal is vague as to the types of progress benchmarks that will be required of the participating schools and LEAs.		
Total	50	35

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	6
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: i. The proposal provides evidence that, despite large state budget deficits, CA INCREASED its relative share of state funding for public education from FY2008 to FY2009, from 46% to 47.4%. ii. The proposal narrative regarding funding equity seems to conflate equity with equalization, and the question of intra-district equity among schools is not addressed.		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	30
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: i. The proposal provides evidence that CA has a "high cap" on its number of charter schools, such that if it were filled, the number of charters would be greater than 10% of the state's public schools. ii. The proposal provides detailed descriptions of state regulations regarding charter school approval and accountability, including significant emphasis on student achievement. The proposal cites state regulations that charter schools must substantially reflect the student population of the LEA. The proposal indicates that since charter schools can be approved locally and at the county level, as well as by the state, the state does not collect systematic data on reasons for denial or non-renewal. The data provided indicate that each year, a number of charter schools are closed, but the reasons are not provided. The plan calls for establishing a state-level data system to collect and analyze charter schools information. iii. The proposal provides evidence that state law requires equitable funding for charter schools. iv. The proposal provides evidence that the state has provided several mechanisms for charter school facilities financing, including set-asides from public district general obligation bonds. v. The proposal does not address how the state enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools.		

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	0
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: While the narrative provides three examples of reforms (strengthening parent roles, waivers/flexibility, and early childhood education, no evidence is provided that these reforms have increased student achievement or graduation rates, narrowed achievement gaps, or resulted in other measurable outcomes.		
Total	55	36

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	0
Competitive Reviewer Comments: The plan, as described, does not seem to add substantially to the existing efforts in the state to increase the availability of mathematics and science teachers. Planned activities are very general, such as "facilitating professional learning communities" or "embracing hands-on inquiry methods," but offer no specific plans for offering rigorous courses of study for students, or preparing more students (other than prospective teachers) for STEM careers. The plan is insufficiently developed to meet the competitive priority.		
Total	15	0

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: The CA application takes a comprehensive approach with ambitious yet achievable goals. The proposal indicates intent to meet the full extent of the RTTT requirements. The state has done an adequate job of addressing the four "pillars" of RTTT in its application. The relatively high percentage of participating districts and the strength of the MOUs governing their participation indicate strong potential for grassroots support and statewide impact.		
Total		0
Grand Total	500	354