



December 15, 2009

Dear Colleague:

We are excited to invite you to participate in Wisconsin's Race to the Top application to the federal government. Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, President Obama and Congress provided \$4 billion in competitive grant funding to states that move forward with innovations and reform in education.

Earlier this fall, at our request, the Wisconsin Legislature passed bills to make Wisconsin both eligible and more competitive for the Race to the Top grants. Now our local school district leaders – school board members, superintendents, principals, teachers, and other staff – need to prepare their district for participation in Wisconsin's grant application. Enclosed is the Race to the Top district memorandum of understanding (MOU) that the federal government requires participating districts to sign as part of the state's Race to the Top grant application. The MOU provides a framework of collaboration between districts and the state articulating the specific roles and responsibilities necessary to implement an approved Race to the Top district grant.

The MOU is divided into two parts – Exhibit I and Exhibit II. To receive any Race to the Top funding, a district must agree to the activities in Exhibit I. Districts that agree to Exhibit I are eligible, if they so choose, to participate in Exhibit II. In Exhibit II districts will receive additional funding for participating in the additional activities. Exhibit I is included in this information and Exhibit II will be forthcoming in the very near future.

The MOU provides your district with critical information regarding a district's participation in Race to the Top. The following sections are included:

- Scope of Work,
- Project Administration, (i.e., Participating LEA responsibilities, State Responsibilities, Joint Responsibilities, and State Recourse for Non-Performance),
- Assurances,
- Modifications,
- Duration/Termination, and
- Signatures.

We are working under incredible time constraints to finalize the Wisconsin Race to the Top application and anticipate a draft of the Wisconsin Race to the Top application will be made public on or near December 28, 2009. This draft application will be made public on the Department of Public Instruction's website.

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To demonstrate broad commitment to the MOU, districts should seek to obtain signatures from the LEA superintendent, the president of the local school board, and the local teachers' union leader or their authorized representatives. However, to be considered an eligible participating local education agency (LEA), the MOU must be signed by at least one authorized representative of the school district before submission.

The signed MOU must be returned to the Department of Public Instruction by 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 13, 2010.

Please note that under the federal guidelines, a district that does not sign and submit the MOU by the deadline cannot be included as a participating LEA in Wisconsin's Race to the Top application and cannot be given an opportunity to participate once the award is received.

If Wisconsin is awarded Race to the Top grant funds, a participating LEA will have 90 days to finalize their work plan for their Race to the Top funds and submit that to the state. During this 90-day period, districts will have the right to review and reassess their scope of work in light of their Race to the Top local award. At this time, districts may also withdraw from the MOU and forgo their local award and participation in the Race to the Top program without penalty.

Currently, Wisconsin does not know exactly the level of funding that would be provided to the state through Race to the Top. However, federal guidelines require that at least 50 percent of the state's total award be distributed to participating LEAs through the Title I formula. To ensure districts have sufficient support to participate in the program, the state has decided that each LEA participating in Exhibit I will receive at least \$60,000. This adjustment will be made using the funds that may be distributed by the state through other means.

For your information, attached to this letter is a projected level of funding based on the Title I formula with adjustments made for the base level of funding of \$60,000. These estimates assume the state receives \$250 million in Race to the Top funding.

We hope all of you will complete the MOU and consider being a part of this important initiative. Please contact Dr. Scott Jones, Special Assistant to the State Superintendent, by email scott.jones@dpi.wi.gov or by phone 608/267-9269 if you have any questions or concerns regarding this letter.

Sincerely,



Jim Doyle
Governor



Tony Evers, PhD
State Superintendent

Enclosure