



State of Arizona

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 19, 2010

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Governor Jan Brewer Submits Arizona's Application for Race to the Top Competitive Grant

Application Reflects Governor Brewer's Education Reform Agenda

PHOENIX – Governor Jan Brewer today submitted Arizona's Race to the Top (RTTT) application, a \$4.35 billion competitive education reform grant program funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, to the U.S. Department of Education.

"I would like to offer my sincere congratulations to the P-20 Coordinating Council, led by Dr. Carol Peck, and the four reform task forces for the many hours of work they've dedicated to this project," said Governor Brewer. "A special thank you goes out to Deb Duvall, Special Advisor on Education and former superintendent of Mesa Unified School District. Deb has spent numerous hours traveling around the state to coordinate local school officials' involvement and participation in the Race to the Top competition. I would also like to thank the Arizona Department of Education, the State Board of Education, and the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools and their staff members for their participation in this unprecedented and complex project. The collaboration of efforts has resulted in a very competitive application for the State of Arizona for Race to the Top."

In July, Governor Brewer established by Executive Order the P-20 Coordinating Council of Arizona in order to devise and articulate ways to achieve a more streamlined system of education while improving academic achievement. The Council was charged with providing recommendations to the Governor on specific education reforms outlined in ARRA. Shortly thereafter, the Governor appointed four task forces, one for each of the four key education reform areas under ARRA. These task forces were comprised of over 60 business, education, and philanthropy leaders from across the state. (A list of task force members can be found on Governor Brewer's Web site located at <http://www.azgovernor.gov/P20/>).

Included in the State's more than 300-page Race to the Top application is the Governor's intent to pursue and support alternative certification to attract the most qualified teachers; a strong data system to arm parents and stakeholders with the information needed to help monitor student academic progress; desired enhancement to the notification of school performance to aid in school choice decisions; and a strong reading component through third grade, coupled with early intervention and an end to social promotion, all of which she outlined in her State of the State speech last week.

Other highlights include a strategy to improve teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance - moving toward a system that begins to look at actual student performance and growth when

evaluating teachers, including performance pay, and the formation of a Governor's Distinguished Educators Corps.

In the Race to the Top application, there are two general eligibility requirements for states. First, there must not be any legal, statutory, or regulatory barriers at the State level to linking data on student achievement or student growth to teachers and principals for the purpose of teacher and principal evaluation. Second, the State's applications for funding under Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) program must be approved by the Department prior to the State being awarded a Race to the Top grant. Arizona meets the first requirement and is expecting approval of its Phase II application soon.

Although no legislation is *required* for Arizona to compete with other states for Race to the Top funds, the application notes where Arizona may pursue legislation as part of its overall reform strategy. For example, the RTTT application suggests legislation 1) to ask that the Performance Based Pay Task Force be continued and be given more strength, and 2) the State continue to push alternative certification. Also, a State Board of Education policy is needed to change the school labeling system to incorporate the new term "persistently low-achieving" schools. These suggestions are consistent with what Governor Brewer called for in her State of the State address on Monday, January 11.

"I urge the Legislature to begin the process of changing Arizona Revised Statutes based upon the recommendations, even in anticipation of the funding award," said Governor Brewer. "I look forward to working with education Chairmen Representative Rich Crandall and Senator John Huppenthal to achieve this goal. But just as important I want to thank them for their indefatigable effort to pass numerous pieces of key legislation over the years that served as the firm foundation on which our application was built."

With Race to the Top, the U.S. Department of Education is asking states to build comprehensive and coherent plans built around the four areas of reform outlined in ARRA, including: aid to struggling schools, improving data quality, supporting effective teachers and bettering standards and assessments. Race to the Top will reward states that have demonstrated success in raising student achievement and have the best plans to accelerate reforms in the future. The goal is for states to offer models for others to follow to spread the best reform ideas across the country. The application requires states to document their past success and outline their plans to extend their reforms by using college- and career-ready standards and assessments, building a workforce of highly effective educators, creating educational data systems to support student achievement, and turning around their lowest-performing schools.

The U.S. Department of Education will hold two rounds of competition for the grants. The first round application is due today. Peer reviewers will evaluate the applications and the department will announce the winners of the first round in April. Applications for the second round will be due June 1, 2010, with the announcement of all the winners by Sept. 30, 2010. States are divided in five groups based on size and population, with bottom states eligible to receive \$75 million and top states allowed up to \$700 million. Arizona is applying for \$250 million.

On January 11, Governor Brewer submitted Arizona's application for the SFSF Phase II funding to the U.S. Department of Education. The State is eligible to receive the remaining one-third or \$274,516,500 of the formula-based grant. Unlike the first relatively straightforward Phase I application submitted in May, the more than 100 page Phase II application focuses almost exclusively on data collection and reporting assurances. In Phase I, Arizona received \$557,352,500 with \$154 million going to universities and \$29 million to community colleges for FY2009 funding, while, to date, the K-12 community has received \$320 million for FY10 funding. SFSF money has been used to provide budget aid to schools, universities, and community colleges in lieu of state aid that was unavailable due to the ongoing FY10 budget crisis.

The SFSF Phase II and the Race to the Top applications will be posted on the Governor's Recovery Act website located at www.AZRecovery.gov, under the SFSF "Stimulus Spotlight" section.

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