

**TO:** Dane Linn, National Governors' Association  
Gene Wilhoit, Council of Chief State School Officers

**FR:** Vicki Phillips, Director of Education, College Ready, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

**RE:** **Criteria and Support for States for "Race-to-the-Top" Applications**

As you know, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is committed to supporting efforts to dramatically increase the number of students who graduate high school ready for college, career and life, and ensuring that all graduates, particularly low-income students, succeed at earning a postsecondary credential. Our strategy focuses on effective teaching, clear and rigorous standards, excellent assessments, implementation tools, and the thoughtful use of data. Both NGA and CCSSO have played an integral role in advancing this work.

As you also know, this summer we offered consulting assistance to 15 states for their "Race to the Top" (RTTT) applications. These states have all demonstrated a deep commitment to the policy components mentioned above, and we believe that with the right support and the additional leverage of RTTT funds they are poised to successfully scale reform efforts that can dramatically improve student achievement. Accordingly, these states will be targets for further foundation investment provided they continue to follow through on these commitments. In the case of two states, Texas and New York, they will need to make additional, explicit progress on common standards and removing barriers to linking student and teacher data respectively in order to remain eligible for future investments.

After much discussion and careful consideration of your feedback, we have decided to offer funds for consulting support to any of the remaining 35 states who can meet similar criteria for funding. This support will assist those states in the development of proposals to the federal government for the initial distribution of RTTT funds. Offering assistance to all states able to meet the criteria we have established for assistance will, we hope, help accelerate progress.

States that would like to take advantage of this assistance are invited to apply to the Arabella Legacy Fund, who will administer this funding. In order to receive the support, states must complete a brief application responding to the criteria below, and provide background information on the consulting firm of their choice.

#### Criteria for Funding

1. Has your state signed the MOA regarding the Common Core Standards currently being developed by NGA/CCSSO? [Answer must be "yes"]
2. Does your state plan to adopt the common core standards by June 2010 (as currently referenced in the draft RTT guidance)? [Answer must be "yes"]
3. Demonstrate how your state plans to adopt/prioritize the common core standards currently being developed by NGA/CCSSO? [Answers will be scrutinized to assess commitment and viability]
4. Does your state offer an alternative route(s) to teacher certification? [Answer must be "yes"]
5. Does your state grant teacher tenure in fewer than three years? [Answer must be "no" or the state should be able to demonstrate a plan to set a higher bar for tenure]
6. Does your state have policies or grant programs (e.g., TIF grant) in place that encourage the placement of the most effective teachers in schools with most disadvantaged kids (e.g. to

campuses undergoing state/fed accountability intervention) [Answer must be “yes” or state must demonstrate commitment and/or plans to put policies in place]

7. Does state have at least six of the DQC’s 10 essential data elements? (Required six: unique student identifier, teacher-student link, student level enrollment data, graduation and dropout data.)
8. Does your state have policies that prohibit the linkage and/or usage of student achievement data in teacher evaluations?

Pending final approval and a signed grant agreement, the Arabella Legacy Fund will manage this process and will review applications; field questions from states; assist in “marketing” this opportunity; review the grant proposals from the states and determine the awards; conduct basic due diligence on firms; negotiate the contracts directly with the consulting firms; execute contracts (draft final documentation, disperse first payment); and follow up (send second payment, collect the final RTTT proposals from the States ).

We hope you find this effort helpful and request your help in making states aware of this opportunity. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Danielle Gonzales, who will serve as the Program Officer on this grant.

Best regards,  
Vicki