

- Arizona’s plan for turning around persistently lowest-achieving schools (PLAs) is a carefully developed and a fundamentally passionate component of its RTTT application. The state is especially confronted with a compelling need for educational reform among many of its tribal schools, charter schools, and high schools. In this reviewer's opinion, the scope of these challenges may be the reason why Arizona's timeline in response to this criterion is extended to 2014. Arizona’s plan for turning around the State’s PLA schools encompasses three major goals and five strategies designed to produce dramatic increases in student achievement. By 2014, Arizona proposes to: (1) improve achievement in persistently low-performing schools; (2) raise achievement of Native American students; and (3) close achievement gaps. Arizona recognizes the immense challenges facing its PLA schools. The strategies identified above include strong state-level support for LEAs including provision of highly effective teachers and leaders to engage in the turnaround process. Over the last two years, in an effort to continually improve the State’s system of support, the ADE has made significant policy changes based on emerging research on effective practices reported in the turnaround literature and by lessons learned through the state’s own efforts to address the PLA schools issue. The ADE is currently working with the Center for Innovation and Improvement to further strengthen its statewide system of support (SSOS).

- Of exceptional note are Arizona’s proposed efforts to expand Teach for America (TFA) to reservation schools in response to the needs of underserved populations and high-need schools specifically including PLA schools. Nationally, TFA has launched a Native Achievement Initiative, through which TFA seeks to dramatically scale its commitment to bring more teachers and leaders to Native communities. Arizona’s PLA turnaround plans include a proposed scope of work for the Native American Center for Innovation and Reform including creation of LEA-Tribal Community Partnerships—a model established by the State’s First Things First (FTF) Initiative.

- Arizona’s PLA school turnaround plan also focuses on evidenced-based approaches to address high school dropout. A significant number of PLA schools are high schools with alarmingly high dropout rates. The establishment of the University Research Center for Innovation and Reform will conduct rigorous studies to identify promising and effective practices in dropout prevention particularly including two areas of inquiry: re-enrollment and dropout prevention.

—Re-enrollment refers to the re-engagement of students who have dropped-out. Arizona has a large number of alternative high schools, both traditional and charter. Many of these schools have a long and impressive track record of re-engaging their students, many of whom have dropped out more than once. Arizona, by its own admission, has much to learn about the conditions, approaches and strategies that enable alternative high schools and charter schools to keep their students engaged in learning. This issue is being partially addressed by the Arizona Charter Schools Association (ACSA) which has begun discussions among the state’s alternative schools through its Measuring Success in Alternative High Schools initiative.

EVALUATIVE COMMENTS:

Arizona’s plan for turning around persistently lowest-achieving schools (PLAs) is a carefully developed and fundamentally passionate component of its RTTT application. However, the state's plan for turning around its PLA schools is projected to occur by 2014. A fundamentally strong, comprehensive response to this criterion is weakened by the protracted implementation timeline.

Total	50	45	45	
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10	10	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5	5	

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(F)(1) Making education funding a priority

(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education

REVIEWER'S SYNOPSIS OF EVIDENCE PRESENTED BY APPLICANT:

• In FY 2009, public education in Arizona received a higher percentage of available State revenues than in FY 2008 despite the fact that, between those two years, Arizona's total General Fund revenues dropped by nearly 18%. Because spending cuts in education were significantly less harsh than the cuts imposed in other areas of government, the total percentage of State expenditures dedicated to education rose from 53.5% in FY 2008 to 59.5% in FY 2009. For purposes of this calculation, "revenue" is defined as total available revenues for General Fund expenditures and includes the following: base revenues (ongoing taxes), bond proceeds, fund transfers, and the balance forward. Expenditures include total appropriations, administrative adjustments, and reversions.

EVALUATIVE COMMENTS:

Applicant's response satisfies the requirements of the criterion.

(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools

REVIEWER'S SYNOPSIS OF EVIDENCE PRESENTED BY APPLICANT:

• For many years, Arizona has provided an equalized funding formula in providing state funds to districts. The equalized funding formula ensures that all school districts have equitable access to budget capacity and revenues. The equalized system provides additional State funds to districts that have limited taxable property within their borders. Regardless of its taxable property, each district computes a district support level determined by:

- the total number of pupils;
- special program add-ons for academic assistance for pupils in kindergarten through grade 3;
- students with special needs; and
- the number of English language learners.

To assist with the increased costs of educational services to students served by small and isolated Arizona school districts, the State provides an additional upward funding adjustment in the district support level. A "small school" funding adjustment applies to districts with less than 600 students, and an even higher adjustment is provided for small school districts that are located in isolated areas of the state. Since the calculation of a district support level is determined not by taxable property wealth but, rather, by student numbers and characteristics, Arizona school districts have equalized access to budget capacity and revenues.

EVALUATIVE COMMENTS:

Arizona's response satisfies the requirements of the criterion given its citation of the State's equalized funding formula which ensures that all school districts have equitable

access to budget capacity and revenues. .

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	38	40	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8	8	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8	8	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	8	8	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	6	8	

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools

(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"

REVIEWER'S SYNOPSIS OF EVIDENCE PRESENTED BY APPLICANT:

- Arizona's charter schools operate under the favorable provisions of A.R.S. § 15-181 et seq., which recognize that charter schools provide "additional academic choices for parents and pupils" and "a learning environment that [improves] pupil achievement." State law imposes no caps on the number of charter schools and does not restrict charter school enrollment where capacity exists. During the 2009-2010 school year, approximately 10% (101,000) of Arizona's K-12 students attended charter schools.

EVALUATIVE COMMENTS:

Applicant's response satisfies the requirements of the criterion: State law imposes no caps on the number of charter schools and does not restrict charter school enrollment where capacity exists.

(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes

REVIEWER'S SYNOPSIS OF EVIDENCE PRESENTED BY APPLICANT:

- Charter schools enter into a contract with a charter authorizer to operate in accordance with academic and fiscal standards established in federal and State law. Charter schools are held accountable to their charter contract. Arizona charter schools also function according to a business plan that guides their overall governance and operational structure. State statutes empower the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools (ASBCS), State Board of Education (SBE) and local school districts to authorize and oversee the charter schools they sponsor. A.R.S. § 15-182 established the ASBCS as an independent State agency to authorize and oversee charter schools. The ASBCS reports annually to the Governor and the Legislature. The ASBCS's role includes:
 - evaluating applications and granting new charters;
 - providing technical assistance and guidance to stakeholders;
 - conducting ongoing academic and financial evaluations;
 - taking appropriate disciplinary action against schools that fail to comply with local, State and Federal laws or the terms of their charter contract.

- With respect to charter approval, A.R.S. § 15-183 governs the process for approving new charters and charter requirements. Arizona Administrative Code, Title 7, Chapter 5, Article 2 provides additional guidance for those seeking charter approval through the ASBCS. Title 15, Chapter 1, Article 8 of the Arizona Revised Statutes sets forth the responsibilities and regulations concerning charter schools, provides for periodic review and evaluation during the contract period, and outlines the requirements for reauthorizing a charter. Since its inception, the ASBCS has received 609 new charter applications and 22 replication applications, and has approved 413 total applications, granting more charters than any other authorizer in the United States. At the same time, consistent with its commitment to school accountability, the ASBCS has revoked the contracts for 12 charter schools that failed to meet the requirements of the law and their charter contracts.

EVALUATIVE COMMENTS:

The ASBCS has established a policy related to the components of a comprehensive charter school review that includes examination of academic performance. Schools not meeting the ASBCS level of adequate academic performance are subject to a Performance Management Plan. Performance Management Plans are intended to assist schools in addressing academic performance deficiencies with a plan that clearly articulates the academic achievement area in need of improvement, the tools intended to measure improvement, and the degree of improvement to be achieved.

(iii) Equitably funding charter schools

REVIEWER'S SYNOPSIS OF EVIDENCE PRESENTED BY APPLICANT:

- Arizona's charter schools receive equitable funding compared to traditional public schools and a commensurate share of local, State and federal revenues. Both charter schools and traditional school districts are allocated tax dollars through the State's base level funding formula. Based on ADE FY 2009 data (the most recent fiscal year for which full-year data are available), charter schools educated over 9% of Arizona students and received approximately 14% of the State's \$676.3 million General Fund appropriation for K-12 education. During that fiscal year, the State's funding formula yielded an average of \$6,396.40 per charter school student and \$5,435.25 per traditional public school district student. Arizona's equalized funding system ensures that charter schools and district schools are funded equitably and competitively.

EVALUATIVE COMMENTS:

Both charter schools and traditional school districts are allocated tax dollars through the State's base level funding formula.

(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities

REVIEWER'S SYNOPSIS OF EVIDENCE PRESENTED BY APPLICANT:

- Arizona provides funding to charter schools for facilities, assistance with facilities acquisition, access to public facilities, and the ability to share in bonds and mill levies. As further evidence of Arizona's commitment to equitable facility support of charter schools, the legislature has enacted two key bills to help charter schools acquire facilities:
 - Zoning: A.R.S. § 15-189.01 was amended to specify that charter schools be classified as public schools for the purposes of municipal and county zoning. The amendment also requires municipalities and counties to allow charter schools to operate at locations or in facilities that would be permissible for district schools.
 - Property Tax Relief: A.R.S. § 42-11132 was amended to provide significant financial relief from

burdensome property taxes for non-profit charter schools that lease their facilities.

EVALUATIVE COMMENTS:

Arizona provides funding to charter schools for facilities, assistance with facilities acquisition, access to public facilities, and the ability to share in bonds and mill levies.

(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools

REVIEWER'S SYNOPSIS OF EVIDENCE PRESENTED BY APPLICANT:

- Arizona's local educational agencies (LEAs) have the flexibility and authority to operate innovative, autonomous public schools in addition to charter schools. As a result, Arizona LEAs have accumulated a robust portfolio of "traditional," alternative, extended-year, focus, magnet and virtual schools. More than 170 alternative schools provide a diverse array of options for elementary, middle and high school students with special needs or extenuating circumstances. These schools follow distinct educational philosophies and generally offer self-paced curricula, small classes and a focus on social and emotional development. In addition:

- A.R.S. § 15-881 requires each school district to make extended school year services available to all pupils with disabilities for whom such services are necessary.

- Magnet schools provide yet another option for students and parents. These schools offer specialized curricula with high academic standards in areas such as aviation/aerospace, business and finance, communication arts, international studies, law-related studies, marine science, medical arts and health, performing and visual arts, STEM and world languages.

- Nearly all of Arizona's large high school and unified districts offer online learning options or support distance learning academies. Students do coursework at any time of day and need only a computer with a high-speed Internet connection. These programs also include interactive online practice activities, tutorials, discussion groups, and instructor contact via e-mail.

EVALUATIVE COMMENTS:

While the criterion is essentially satisfied, this reviewer was unable to determine the degree to which the applicant fully understands the term "autonomy" in the context of the criterion. Rather, the reviewer is left to imagine just how this term translates operationally, particularly including the ordinarily assumed responsibility for staff hiring decisions and/or other personnel decisions which generally occur in autonomous schools.

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

This reviewer has modified the score assigned to criterion F (2) (v) based upon information provided by Arizona's Presentation Team—specifically including that of Associate Superintendent Butterfield and Superintendent Cowan—which clarified and amplified the state's provisions for operating other types of innovative and autonomous public schools. This information responded appropriately to this reviewer's prior concern about the degree to which the applicant fully understood the term "autonomy" in the context of the criterion.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5
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(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions

REVIEWER'S SYNOPSIS OF EVIDENCE PRESENTED BY APPLICANT:

Arizona's education reform history is marked by important milestones including:

- Teacher career ladder programs (A.R.S. § 15-918); since 1990, Arizona has pioneered the development of performance pay for teachers; the Arizona Career Ladder Program is a performance-based compensation plan that provides incentives to teachers in 28 districts around the state who choose to make career advancements without leaving the classroom or the profession;
- The language of this landmark legislation established a multi-tier system of teaching positions. This legislation has set the stage for successful implementation of Arizona's new SB 1040 which requires student growth to be a part of the teacher and principal evaluation process;
- Extensive participation in the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification program: in 2009, Arizona ranked 17th nationwide in the number of teachers who earned board certification;
- Open enrollment; beginning in 1994, Arizona students were allowed to attend any school within the school district, to allow resident pupils to enroll in any school located in or within other school districts in this state and to allow nonresident pupils to enroll in any school within the district, pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-816.01;
- Charter schools (A.R.S. §§ 15-181 to -189.03): beginning in 1994, Arizona has allowed and encouraged the establishment of charter schools (now numbering 502) throughout the state; the History Channel ranks Arizona schools as having the highest history standards among all states; further, the Fordham Foundation ("The State of State Standards") gave Arizona the highest possible grade for having high standards in history, geography and science;
- Joint Technological Education Districts (A.R.S. §§ 15-391 to -396): voter-approved JTEDs combine resources and facilities to provide upper-tier career and technical education. Total enrollment in JTEDs for 2009-2010 was 73,950 (18,475 full-time students);
- Education and Career Action Plan (ECAPS): In its application, Arizona notes that nine out of ten seventh and 8th graders aspire to go to college, but only two out of ten will actually complete college. To close that gap, ECAPS incorporate a student's academic goals, career goals, postsecondary education goals and extracurricular activities. ADE has been actively engaged in professional development of the ECAPS program. More than 3,000 educators have received professional development around ECAPS implementation strategies and resources;
- Passage of Move On When Ready (HB 2731 in 2010: this bill, known as "Move on When Ready," creates an optional "Grand Canyon Diploma" that students obtain by passing college-level mathematics and English board examinations. Students earning these diplomas are exempt from all other Arizona graduation requirements and may continue academic preparation for university admission or may graduate early to pursue career and technical studies. In addition, HB 2731 allows Arizona to participate in the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) Board Exam Consortium;
- Online instruction ((HB 2525)): Arizona's commitment to meet students' needs, particularly in rural areas, removed the caps on the number of school districts and charter schools that were allowed to participate in online education and directed the SBE and ASBCS to jointly develop standards for the approval of online course providers and online schools. Each new school approved to provide online instruction is placed on a probationary status until the school has clearly demonstrated the academic integrity of its curriculum and instruction.

EVALUATIVE COMMENTS:

Arizona's evidence of other significant reform conditions is impressive. Of particular note is the state's pioneering work in the development of performance pay for teachers. Other initiatives are commendable. It is difficult to identify a coherent strategy surrounding these other reform efforts. However, they provide strong evidence of state executives, legislators and education leaders who want to be more innovative and who are actively seeking to enhance Arizona's efforts to improve education for the state's K-12 students.

Total	55	53	55	
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Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM				
EVIDENCE SUMMARY				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arizona's STEM planning centers around a rigorous STEM course of study, cooperation with STEM capable partners, continued support of SFAz STEM (advanced STEM study and careers—especially for underrepresented groups), provision of graduate research fellowships, continuation of pathway programs, and other considerations. • SFAz STEM (Arizona's existing STEM statewide program) initiative's purpose is to improve STEM education and economic opportunity in Arizona by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> —Increasing the number of qualified and motivated teachers of mathematics and science; —Providing greater access to meaningful and effective formal and informal STEM learning experiences on the part of students; —Exciting students and helping them acquire STEM-related skills needed to succeed in today's economy; —Advocating for STEM education and its importance to individual success and to the success of the state and nation. 				
EVALUATIVE COMMENTS:				
<p>Arizona has woven specific references to its STEM education reform policies and initiatives throughout its RTTT application. Additionally, a well developed response is given in the Competitive Preference Priority 2 section of its application. Substantial work remains for Arizona to do in terms of expanding and amplifying its STEM education emphases.</p>				
Total	15	15	15	

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform				
EVALUATIVE COMMENTS:				
<p>Arizona's Race to the Top proposal is uneven in terms of the quality of writing and</p>				

excellence of exposition. Some sections are rambling. Others are tightly written and effectively argued. THIS REVIEWER STRUGGLED AT TIMES TO BREAK THROUGH THE RHETORIC TO GET AT THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL. Nevertheless, taken in its entirety, this reviewer believes that Arizona's application is solid and has presented ambitious yet achievable goals which are comprehensive and coherent—sometimes even passionate (e.g., discussion of reform goals related to its Native American student population). Arizona's plan effectively addresses the four education reform areas specified in the ARRA as well as the State Success Factors Criteria. Arizona clearly demonstrates that the state and its participating LEAs are taking a systemic approach to education reform and it provides substantial evidence that participating LEAs have a strong commitment to achieving the goals inherent in the Race to the Top legislation. Arizona also provides extended evidence as to how it, in collaboration with LEAs, will use RTTT funds to increase student achievement, decrease achievement gaps across student subgroups, and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

Total			0	0
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Grand Total	500	449	470	
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improving specific supports on an ongoing, continual improvement basis. A score in the top of the "medium" range is awarded.

Total	138	103	103	
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(E)(1) The state has strong legal authority to intervene both in the state's underperforming schools identified as "failing" (although not in Bureau of Indian Affairs schools) and in systematically failing schools districts. In 2010, the state board of education amended policy to align its definitions of "underperforming" and "failing" schools to the state's definition of "persistently lowest achieving" schools. If a charter school is designated as a school failing to meet academic standards, the state is required to immediately notify the charter school's sponsor, which must take action to restore the charter to acceptable performance or revoke the charter school's charter. The state has extensive tribal consultation policies to address failing schools on Indian reservations, which account for one of three failing schools in the state. Full points are awarded.				
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	37	37	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	32	32	
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(E)(2)(i) The state has a U.S. Department of Education-approved definition for "persistently lowest-achieving" (PLA), and the state has already announced 30 schools identified as PLA, including some non-Title I eligible secondary schools that would be considered PLA if they were eligible to receive Title I funds. Full points are awarded.				
(E)(2)(ii) The state has a long history of working to turn around struggling schools. The state's plan commits to providing ongoing support and assistance to LEAs and their PLA schools in implementing one of the four intervention models and to intervene as needed. The state also plans to build the capacity of leaders to do turnaround work by providing a pipeline of Turnaround Teachers and Leaders, and to improve the coordination of capacity-building efforts, community services, and strong family supports provided to reservation schools serving high-need Native American communities. The plan is of high quality and is awarded points in the "high" range.				
Total	50	47	47	

F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
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(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	9	9	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	4	4	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(F)(1)(i) The state increased the level of its State General Fund expenditure support for elementary, secondary, and public higher education from 53.5 percent in Fiscal Year 2008 to 59.5 percent for Fiscal Year 2009. High points are awarded.				
(F)(1)(ii) The state has a longstanding equalized funding formula that provides state funds to LEAs. This formula ensures that all school districts have equitable access to budget capacity and revenues and provides additional funds to LEAs that have limited taxable property within their borders. To assist with the increased costs of education services to students served by small and isolated LEAs, the state provides an additional upward funding adjustment in the district support level. The system also limits the ability of districts with very high amounts of taxable property from generating additional dollars beyond the calculated district support level. A "high" level of points is awarded for this subsection.				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	36	36	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8	8	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8	8	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	6	6	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	6	6	
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(F)(2)(i) State law imposes no caps on the number of charter schools in the state and does not restrict charter school enrollment where capacity exists. Full points were awarded.				
(F)(2)(ii) The state has a rigorous approval, monitoring, and reauthorization process for charter schools. The state has a strong record of revoking charters and not renewing charters for ineffective charter schools. If a charter school is designated as a school failing to meet academic standards, the charter school's sponsor must either take action to restore the charter school to acceptable performance or revoke the school's charter. "High" points are awarded for this subsection.				
(F)(2)(iii) The state's equalized funding system ensures that charter schools are funded equitable and competitively. In FY 2009, charter schools educated over 9 percent of the state's students and received approximately 14 percent of the state's General Fund appropriation for K-12 education. This amounted to \$6,396 per charter student and \$5,435 per district student. "High" points are awarded for this subsection.				
(F)(2)(iv)				

The state legislature recently enacted two laws helping charter schools acquire facilities. One statute classified charter schools as public schools for the purposes of municipal and county zoning and required municipalities and counties to allow charter schools to operate at locations or in facilities that would be permissible for district schools. The second law provided significant financial relief from burdensome property taxes for non-profit charter schools that lease their facilities. "High" points are awarded for this subsection.

(F)(2)(v)

The state's LEAs have the flexibility and authority to operate innovative public schools in addition to charter schools, although the application is not clear on exactly how autonomous these schools are under the law or in practice. More than 170 alternative schools exist focused on students with special needs or extenuating circumstances. Focus and magnet schools offering specialized curricula with high academic standards in their focus areas provide additional options for students and parents in other LEAs. Nearly all of the state's large high school and unified districts also offer online learning opportunities or support distance-learning academies. A score in the "high" range is awarded.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4	4	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(F)(3)				
The state emphasizes its 20-year history of experimentation with performance pay for teachers through its Teacher Career Ladder Programs, its longstanding open enrollment policies offering full intra- and inter-district enrollment, its longstanding support of providing educational choice through charter schools, and its high-quality standards, especially in history. The state is also developing a statewide technical skills assessment system in partnership with multiple entities, and it is expanding the use of Education and Career Action Plans to provide personalized learning and career guidance to middle and high school students. These reforms demonstrate the state has a long history of additional longstanding education reforms in areas of K-12 education outside the RTTT reform elements, as well as several new initiatives that seek to improve the reform conditions in the state's schools. Limited attention is paid to demonstrating how some of these reforms have led to increased achievement or graduation rates or decreased achievement gaps, or other important outcomes. A score in the bottom of the "high" range is awarded.				
Total	55	49	49	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
The applicant provides a STEM plan that focuses on (1) expanding access to a rigorous course of study; (2) leveraging partnerships to prepare and assist teachers to integrate STEM content across grades and disciplines, promote effective and relevant instruction, and offer applied learning opportunities; and (3) preparing more students, especially underrepresented groups, for advanced study and STEM careers. The state has significant cooperation with STEM-capable partners. The plan is sufficient in scope and breadth to meet the competitive priority.				
Total	15	15	15	

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	
<p>Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>This is a well-developed application that is clear, thorough, and detailed in how the applicant will use RTTT funds to implement significant reforms across all four education reform areas of the ARRA, as well as the State Success Factors Criteria. It meets the threshold for being considered for funding.</p> <p>Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)</p> <p>The state provided a coherent and focused presentation and provided additional insight into how it works with the state's large population of minority students, especially the Native American student population. The panel's presentation and responses to reviewer questioning demonstrated strong engagement with and commitment to the state's RTTT application and reform agenda. The state has struggled to improve academic performance generally and especially in some subgroups over the past decade, and the state's plans provide strong alignment of policy changes with focused deployment of resources to spur greater academic achievement moving forward. All part of the state's plan components are of at least average quality and several of very high quality, with no segment of the application being significantly weaker than other parts. The state's plans for turning around the lowest-achieving schools are particularly strong.</p>				
Total		0	0	
Grand Total	500	402	407	

(E)(1)

Statutorily, the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) can intervene in low-performing local education agencies (LEAs) and/or schools. Because Tribal Schools, a critical target of Arizona's RTTT plan, fall under the jurisdiction of autonomous nation/states, ADE cannot statutorily intervene in these schools.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	35	35	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	30	30	
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(E)(2)(i)				
Arizona's definition of persistently lowest-achieving (PLA) schools was approved by the U. S. Department of Education. For elementary Title 1 schools, the identification of PLA schools was based on student performance in reading and math and (lack of) growth over three years. At the secondary level, PLA schools include schools that are eligible for Title I but not receiving funds (Tier II) as well as Title I-eligible high schools with a graduation rate of less than 60% for 2006, 2007 and 2008.				
(E)(2)(ii)				
To facilitate turn-around, PLA schools would employ one of the four models stipulated in the RTTT guidelines. The plan is coherent, has a reasonable time table, and includes critical key elements (e.g., use of effective extant initiatives such as Teach for America (TFA), and focus on Native American students in PLA schools).				
Total	50	45	45	

F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	8	8	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	3	3	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(F)(1)(i)				
The percent of total Arizona state revenues devoted to public education rose from 53.5% in FY 2008 to 59.5% in FY 2009, an increase of 6 percentage points.				
(F)(1)(ii)				
To help eliminate the inequities associated with the use of property taxes as a basis for funding public education in LEAs, the state has long implemented a funding formula that effectively provides for horizontal and vertical equity among LEAs.				
The narrative does not discuss the extent to which state policies foster intra-district equity. For example, once general funds are allocated to LEAs, it's not clear from the narrative whether LEAs must allocate				

these funds to their schools in a manner consistent with how the funds were allocated by the state (e.g., students with special needs, ELL).

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	27	29	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8	8	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	6	6	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	3	5	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	2	2	

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(F)(2)(i)

According to the narrative, "State law imposes no caps on the number of charter schools and does not restrict charter school enrollment where capacity exists." This is consistent with data indicating that 9% of Arizona's public school pupils attend charter schools, one of the highest percentages in the nation.

(F)(2)(ii)

Arizona's charter school laws and policies have strong, coherent strategies for authorizing, monitoring, reauthorizing (or, if applicable, closing) charter schools. Academic achievement is a key factor in decisions regarding charter school reauthorization and closure. Twelve (12) charters have been revoked because of problems with finances, contract compliance, and/or academic achievement. It is not evident from the narrative that Arizona's charter school law requires or encourages that the characteristics of students attending charter schools should be similar to the characteristics of students attending traditional public schools. An independent State agency, the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools (ASBCS), is the chief agent for carrying out these functions. However, given ASBCS's small size (8 staff members), it's not clear how effective it can efficaciously perform all critical legislated functions. As charters begin to come up for their 5-year reauthorization, it is conceivable that ASBCS's organizational capacity may be taxed.

(F)(2)(iii)

For FY 2009, by funding formula, the State allocated about \$6,396 for each charter school student, which was about 18 percent higher than the per-pupil allocation for traditional public schools (about \$5,435).

(F)(2)(iv)

The narrative identifies two areas where the State provides facilities-related support to charter schools: (1) a law that reclassifies charter schools as public schools for the purpose of municipal and county zoning; and (2) property tax relief for non-profit charter schools that lease their facilities. Otherwise, it is not evident that Arizona provides funding to charter schools for facilities or enables charter schools to share in bonds and mill levies.

(F)(2)(v)

According to the narrative, "LEAs have the flexibility to operate innovative, autonomous public schools in addition to charter schools." However, while examples of innovative LEA schools were mentioned, little was revealed regarding the extent to which alternative LEA schools were autonomous.

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

The State panel indicated that, by formula, charter schools receive funds for maintenance and operations. However, it was not stated that charter school receive funding for expenditures such leasing, purchasing,

building, and/or improving facilities. While charter schools do not participate in state bond issues, they are not legally precluded from pursuing their own bond initiatives.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
The state has taken steps historically to facilitate improved student outcomes. Examples include:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows LEAs to implement career-ladder programs that included pay-for-performance. • Permits students to attend any school within their district or outside their district. • Encourages teachers to pursue National Board Certification. • Is developing standards and assessments for career and technical education concentrations. • Is expanding deployment of online instruction, particularly in rural areas. 				
Total	55	40	42	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>Arizona's application is infused with elements related to STEM. With respect to rigor in STEM courses, the State has worked with the American Diploma Project Network, the College and Career Readiness Policy Institute, and Achieve, Inc., to raise high school math and science standards.</p> <p>As an extension of a joint industry–government effort started in 2006, in 2008 SFaz STEM was launched to expand access to rigorous courses and prepare more students, especially those from underrepresented groups, for advanced STEM study and careers. With an advisory council representing business, higher education, P-12 teachers, informal education and philanthropies statewide, SFaz STEM strives to better align, integrate and embed STEM principles and practices benchmarked to international standards. SFaz STEM would continue and expand under RTTT.</p> <p>One of Arizona's most promising teacher pathway programs is the Teacher Industry Internship Program (TIIP). Teachers intern at high-tech companies (e.g., Raytheon, Texas Instruments) for three summers and take math and science courses throughout the year while earning a master's degree, thereby strengthening the ability of teachers to transfer the application of STEM from the workplace to classrooms.</p> <p>Arizona plans to continue supporting models (e.g., the Rural Engineering Pathway) that create STEM pathways for students – including in-school courses and out-of-class activities that inspire students to pursue a STEM path during their K-12 years and beyond.</p>				
Total	15	15	15	

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				

Overall, Arizona's application meets the conditions of the Absolute Priority. Arizona's RTTT application comprehensively and coherently addresses the four education reform areas specified in ARRA as well as the State Success Factor Criteria. Backed by a recent history of steady progress in growth in student performance on national and State assessments, the State is engaged in concerted efforts to develop, adopt, and implement and high-level standards and assessments. The State has a clear plan for improving the use of longitudinal student-level data to improve instruction, including giving growth data a significant weight (between 33% and 50%) in the evaluation of teachers and principals. The State will employ both traditional and alternative routes for developing and certifying teachers and principals, and includes plans for evaluating teacher and principal development programs partly on the basis of growth in student achievement. The State has clear plans for pursuing improvements in the allocation of effective teachers and principals among schools. The State solidly supports both operationally and financially the development of effective charter schools, with no cap on the number of charter schools. Stated LEA participation and commitment is high (over 90 percent of Arizona's public school students would participate in the State's RTTT initiative). The State has a history of implementing coherent STEM initiatives, and would continue and/or expand these efforts under RTTT. To facilitate effective implementation of these elements, the State continues to support public education at a high level relative to other functions. Moreover, the State has created a regional infrastructure for providing support to LEAs, schools, principals and teachers.

Total			0	0	
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Grand Total	500	368	384		
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2. Definite attention to raising achievement of Native American students and closing achievement gaps by implementing a strong consultation model; sharing evidenced-based practices among tribal communities and educators; leveraging charter school and tribal college experiences to develop K-12 models for tribal communities.
3. A commitment to identify, disseminate and replicate what works by providing support to LEAs and PLA schools to implement one of the four turnaround models; building a pipeline of turnaround teachers and leaders; coordination of capacity building and community support for children and youth in high-need Native American communities.

The proposal presents excellent details on action plans, timelines and partners to achieve each of these goals. More than any other part of the proposal, this section connects goals, objectives, targets, educators, external partners, capacity building, the four RTTT priorities, and evaluation systems to present a coherent and fully considered plan.

Total	50	50	50	
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10	10	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5	5	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<u>(F)(1)(i)</u>				
Arizona has struggled to close what it describes as “catastrophic, record-setting budget shortfalls and imposed Draconian cuts in vital government programs and services.” Nevertheless, the State has protected the share of the state budget going to education. Total dollars dropped between FY08 and FY09 by about \$466 million—a decrease of nearly nine percent. At the same time, the share of the budget going to education rose from 53.5 percent to 59.5 percent. Thus, Arizona scores in the high range for this criterion, since “the proportion of total revenues available to the State that were used to support elementary and secondary, and public higher education, increased from FY08 to FY09.”				
<u>(F)(1)(ii)</u>				
Similarly, the proposal provides sound evidence that Arizona’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)].				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	36	36	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8	8	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8	8	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	6	6	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	6	6	

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Arizona has an exceptional record with the charter school movement. According to evidence provided in the proposal, it has the second largest number of charters nationally, has one of the fastest growth rates and serves one of the largest populations attending charter schools. Clearly, the state is highly dedicated to “ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools” [(F)(2)].

(F)(2)(i)

Arizona's charter school law imposes no caps on the number of charter schools and does not restrict charter school enrollment where capacity exists. Thus, the State earns full points for this criterion.

(F)(2)(ii)

Arizona also earns a perfect score for setting and abiding by rigorous standards and accountability systems regarding charters [(F)(2)(ii)]. Arizona law empowers the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools (ASBCS), State Board of Education and local school districts to authorize and oversee the charter schools they sponsor. The bulk of charters are sponsored by the ASBCS; the state board no longer authorizes new charters. Since inception, the ASBCS has approved 413 of the 609 charter applications it has received. It has revoked the contracts for 12 charter schools.

The ASBCS has a comprehensive review and oversight system, which examines all key governance, management, financial, academic, facility and extracurricular aspects of a charter school proposal and the charter school in action. All charters go through an extensive five-year review and an annual independent audit; they also submit an annual performance report.

(F)(2)(iii)(iv)

Arizona's funding for charters meets RTTT's criterion that “a state's charter schools receive equitable funding compared to traditional public schools” [(F)(2)(iii)]. Similarly, the State meets RTTT's criterion that it provide charter schools with facilities assistance [(F)(2)(iv)]. In Arizona's case, the financial assistance is in the form of zoning amendments and property tax relief.

(F)(2)(v)

Regarding support for “innovative, autonomous public schools” [(F)(2)(v)], Arizona provides a good explanation of the more than 170 alternative schools operating across the state. The evidence in the proposal indicates that all but two of the required elements for “innovative, autonomous public schools” are met by these schools. No explanation can be found that these schools have the authority to hire or fire personnel, or to control their budgets. Such may be the case, but reviewers need evidence to ascertain if this is true. Arizona does score in the high range, however, since it otherwise makes a strong case for its support of “innovative, autonomous public schools.”

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	3	3	
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(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Arizona scores in the high range for “demonstrating other significant reform conditions” [(F)(3)]. An intriguing set of reform efforts is listed, all of which are central to work related to the RTTT priorities. Two of particular note--teacher career ladders and promotion of National Board for Professional Teaching Standards--are good examples of the State's overarching commitment to advance teacher quality prior to and separate from RTTT. Unfortunately, little evidence is provided for how the various efforts and initiatives have improved student outcomes.

Total	55	49	49	
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Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
<p>Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>Arizona does a good job of featuring STEM throughout the proposal. Indeed, at the outset and at subsequent pivotal points, the proposal highlights promoting STEM careers and jobs as a joint priority of the RTTT proposal and economic development leaders in Arizona. Within each of the four RTTT priorities, Arizona discusses how STEM will be advanced.</p> <p>In terms of the specific elements of the STEM criterion, Arizona provides definite plans that are systematic and multi-faceted. The call for a rigorous STEM course of study would be met by an expansion of STEM related AP courses and related increases in professional development for AP teachers. Such an effort would provide a capstone set of courses for Arizona's stronger students and make it possible for even more students to pursue AP courses and credit. Cooperation with STEM partners would occur in a variety of ways, both at the statewide level in pushing policies that advance STEM education and related economic development, and at the local level in internships and special courses and programs for students. STEM partners will be essential as the higher education sector expands its capacity to offer STEM course work and conduct STEM research and evaluation.</p> <p>Arizona proposes several ways that more students would be prepared for study and careers in STEM, including those students, such as girls and women, who typically are underrepresented in the STEM arena. A graduate research fellowship program would be established, with special attention to underrepresented students. An ongoing statewide initiative (i.e, SFaz STEM) will be expanded to ensure that a wide range of students are taking a rigorous course of study in STEM related areas. Pathway programs also are supported such that students have coordinated in-school courses and out-of-class activities that promote STEM careers. For instance, the Rural Engineering Pathway was developed in a particular rural county to provide early college and international industry certifications to high school students in local community colleges.</p> <p>In sum, Arizona earns 15 points for its STEM plans. They are woven throughout the proposal and they are tied together well in this closing section.</p>				
Total	15	15	15	

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	
<p>Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>Arizona presents a comprehensive and coherent reform agenda. The planning for RTTT has brought together diverse stakeholders, including representatives of traditional and charter schools, higher education, elected officials, business, philanthropy, Native American tribes and innovative educational agencies and programs. Several pieces of new reform legislation were adopted this year addressing alternative certification for teachers and leaders, new teacher and principal evaluation, a systemic approach to managing education, and new efforts and measures regarding the achievement gap. Despite serious statewide financial challenges, and major budget cuts, the state has increased the percentage of support for public education, and passed an emergency stop-gap 1.0 percent sales tax.</p>				

Building on reform experiences, the state will focus RTTT on “effective instruction for all students,” by pushing leaders to support and hold accountable teachers, and by securing extensive support from partners. Similar clarity will be provided for RTTT by intensive attention to preparing students for careers and jobs in STEM. Lastly, definite benchmark points for gauging progress have been established in 3rd, 8th and 10th grade.

Arizona presents an impressive theory of action for RTTT. Four definite strategies frame the theory of action, across which the four RTTT priorities are met.

- Strategy 1 addresses public policy, through which standards and assessment, data systems, teacher and leader quality, and school turnaround are advanced by state law and regulation.
- Strategy 2 strengthens and aligns partners—LEAs, charters, higher education, business and community—to take advantage of the new policy environment to bring each of the four RTTT priorities to life.
- Strategy 3 sets the transition year targets (3rd, 8th and 10th), with attention to the antecedents required if goals are to be met by each of these measurement points.
- Strategy Four systematically increases the education system’s attention to STEM, linking the work directly to ongoing efforts and plans to rebuild Arizona’s economy around science, technology and engineering.

On the other hand, the proposal has a couple of notable weaknesses. As documented in the budget, many of the RTTT reforms will depend on sub-contracting and letting of RFPs to agencies yet to be determined. Not addressed is whether there is enough quality in the pool of contractors (national and state based) to take on all of this work at a high level.

Of similar concern is that Arizona does not discuss in any detail the sustainability of the work to be started or boosted by RTTT funding. The Governor and other elected officials reportedly are committed to continuing key RTTT work. However, there is no explanation provided for how that will occur, other than to promise that “the Governor, Legislature, Superintendent of Public Instruction, SBE, Board of Regents and philanthropic and business communities [will formulate plans] to implement a long-term commitment to RTTT success.”

Ultimately, Arizona does an impressive job of designing a reform plan that reflects well its unique demographic, geographic and educational characteristics. As listed in the proposal, each of these characteristics is directly addressed by elements of the State’s RTTT plans:

- While the sixth largest state in square miles, Arizona is the 14th largest in population, *requiring web-based reform tools that can span great distance.*
- Although 98 percent of the state is considered rural, 70 percent of the population resides in urban areas, and Phoenix is now the nation’s fifth largest city, *requiring reform approaches that work in underresourced urban schools and communities.*
- Public school enrollment is growing faster in Arizona than in all but one other state. From 2000 to 2008, the school population rose by roughly 20 percent (from 840,000 to 1.04 million). *Reforms in a growth climate must create common standards and assessments so that there is a high-level touchstone for all new to the schools.*
- Arizona is home to the nation’s largest Native American population, with 30 percent of the state’s lands in “Indian Country,” which legally is a separate jurisdiction from Arizona. Latinos also are a major force in Arizona, comprising 40 percent of the student population. *Reforms must address the varying needs of students and families, and the significant historical and legal aspects of a state’s unique populations.*

Total		0	0	
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Grand Total	500	384	435	
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(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>E.1 The State Board of Education recently amended policy to better align its definitions of "underperforming" and "failing" schools to the State's definition of "persistently lowest achieving" (PLA) schools. This gives the State the legal authority to begin school improvement process in all persistently lowest achieving schools. Under A. R. S. #15-241.01 Arizona has statutory authority to intervene systematically in failing school districts. If a failing district is identified, ADE may submit a recommendation to SBE for a hearing to determine whether the school district should be subject to an alternative operation plan. If a charter school is designated as a school failing to meet academic standards, ADA will immediately notify the school's sponsor who shall immediately take action to restore the charter to acceptable performance or revoke the school's charter. One of three failing Arizona schools is located on Indian reservations. Assessing the needs of those schools will require significant research and tribal governmental and community consultations.</p> <p>The data presented in this response indicates that Arizona can intervene in schools and LEAs. However, It does not have jurisdiction over all schools.</p>				
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	40	40	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	35	35	
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>E.2.i Arizona has established a process to identify PLA schools and the definition of "persistent lowest-achieving" was approved by the U.S. Department of Education. Criteria were established which would indicate Tier I schools (the lowest-achieving 5% of Title 1 schools in improvement status) and for secondary schools that are eligible for Title I but not receiving funds (Tier II). Fifteen of the 30 PLA schools are charter schools, the majority in 11 urban settings and serving some of Arizona's at-risk students. Another 10 schools are located on reservations or have high populations of Native American students. A detailed plan includes the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties. Measures taken to meet the criterion are indicated and a performance measure chart is included.</p> <p>E.2.ii Arizona's plan for turning around the State's PLA schools encompasses five strategies designed to produce dramatic increases in student achievement. The first strategy plans to implement support and assistance to LEAs and their PLA schools in implementing one of four intervention models and intervene when needed. The second strategy aims to build the capacity of leaders to do turnaround work by creating a pipeline of turnaround teachers and leaders. The remaining strategies address the improvement of educational outcomes for children and youths in high-need Native-American communities, focusing on evidence-based approaches to address high school dropouts, and establish partnerships to coordinate services and intervention in persistently lowest achieving schools.</p> <p>The responses to these criteria summarize Arizona's comprehensive efforts to turn around its persistently lowest-achieving schools.</p>				
Total	50	50	50	

F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10	10	

(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5	5	

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

F.1.i In FY 2009, public education in Arizona received a higher percentage of available state revenues than in FY 2008, despite the fact that between these two years, Arizona's total general fund revenues dropped by nearly 18% of the total revenue available to the State. Because spending cuts in education were significantly less harsh than the cuts imposed in other areas of government, the total percentage of State expenditures dedicated to education rose from 53.5% in FY 2008 to 59.5% in FY 2009.

F.1.ii For many years, Arizona has provided school districts with an equalized funding formula that provides State funds to districts. The equalized funding formula ensures that all school districts have equitable access to budget capacity and revenues and provides additional state funds to districts that have limited taxable property within their borders. Regardless of its taxable property, each district computes a district support level determined by: the total number of pupils; special program add-ons for academic assistance for pupils in kindergarten through grade 3, students with special needs, and the number of English language learners. The number is adjusted upwards for districts that have classroom teachers who are more experienced than the state average, and school districts transportation programs. To assist with the increased costs of educational services to students served by small isolated Arizona school districts, the State provides as additional upward funding adjustment in the district support level. A "small school" funding adjustment applies to districts with less than 600 students, and an even higher adjustment is provided for small school districts that are located in isolated areas of the state. Since the calculation of a district support level is determined not by taxable property wealth but, rather, by student numbers and characteristics, Arizona school districts have equalized access to budget capacity and revenues.

These two criteria have been met.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	40	40	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8	8	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8	8	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	8	8	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	8	8	

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

F.2.i Arizona's charter school law restricts neither charter school growth or enrollment. State law imposes no caps on the number of charter schools and does not restrict charter school enrollment where capacity exists. Charter schools enter into a contract with a charter organizer to operate in accordance with academic and fiscal standards established in federal and State law, and the schools are held accountable to their charter contract. Arizona charter schools also function according to a business plan that guides their overall governance and operational structure. At the time of this report, there were 385 charter holders who operated 502 charter schools in 14 of Arizona's counties, comprising over 255 of the total public schools. Approximately 26% of the State's charter schools are in rural counties. Seventeen charter schools specifically serve Native American students.

F.2.ii Arizona statutes empower the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools (ASBCS), the State Board of Education and local school districts to authorize and oversee the charter schools they sponsor. The ASBCS sponsors 356 of the charter holders (459) sites. The State Board of Education no longer grants new

charters. Consistent with its commitment to school accountability, the ASBCS has revoked two contracts for 12 charter schools that failed to meet the requirements of the law and their charter contract. A chart is included in the response which delineates Arizona Charter School Applications, Approvals, Denials, and Closings.

F.2.iii The State's charter schools and traditional school districts are allocated taxpayer dollars through the State's base level funding formula. Arizona's equalized funding system ensures that charter schools and district schools are funded equitably and competitively. Arizona law does not prohibit charter schools from applying for or receiving funding from the federal government, and charter schools receive significant federal funding in addition to their State appropriation.

F.2.iv Recent Arizona legislation included two bills to help charter schools acquire facilities. One specified that charter schools be classified as public schools for the purposes of municipal and county zoning. The amendment also requires municipalities and counties to allow charter schools to operate on location or in facilities that would be permissible for school districts. A Property Tax Relief Law was amended to provide significant financial relief from burdensome property taxes for non-profit charter schools that lease their facilities.

F.2.v Local educational agencies (LEAs) have flexibility and authority to operate innovative, autonomous public schools in addition to charter schools. More than 170 alternative schools provide a diverse array of options for elementary, middle and high school students with special needs or extenuating circumstances. These schools follow distinctive educational philosophies and generally offer self-paced curricula, small classes and a focus on social and emotional development. Several alternative schools specifically serve pregnant and parenting teenagers, others offer community resource centers that bring together health and education services for children and their families. Legislation requires each school district to make extended school year services available to all pupils with disabilities for whom such services are necessary. Arizona's focus and magnet schools provide yet another option for students and parents. These schools offer specialized curricula with high academic standards in areas such as aviation/aerospace, business and finance, communication arts, international studies, law-related studies, marine science, performing and visual arts, STEM and world languages.

The State of Arizona ranks second in the country regarding number of charter schools. The State's responses to Criteria F 2 bear testimony to the State's experiences and increasing proficiency in working with charter and innovative schools.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>F.3 Arizona has developed new approaches which demonstrate its endeavors to achieve the goals stated in Section A. Milestones in its Education Reform History include Teacher Career Ladder programs and the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. The State's Open Enrollment Policy allows students to attend "any school within the school district, to allow resident pupils to enroll in any school located in or within other school districts in this state and to allow nonresident pupils to enroll in any school within the district." Additional programs include Charter Schools, Joint Technological Education Districts, and Online Instruction. These endeavors have provided conditions which have increased student achievement and narrowed achievement gaps.</p> <p>The response has demonstrated significant reform conditions.</p>				
Total	55	55	55	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
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Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
<p>Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>STEM Education has a strong foundation in Arizona and is woven throughout the education reform agenda. STEM education is about entrepreneurship, innovation, and creativity. STEM-based curricula emphasizes appropriate levels of rigor to maximize success in college, careers, and life, embed project-based learning experiences so that students apply fundamental academic concepts in real work contexts, and include complex problem-solving applications that require "out of the box" thinking. The STEM plan will expand access to a rigorous course of study, leverage partnerships to prepare and assist teachers to integrate STEM content across grades and disciplines, and prepare more students, especially underrepresented groups for advanced study and STEM careers.</p> <p><u>Rigorous STEM Course of Study.</u> As early as 2006, Arizona had initiated efforts, in conjunction with the American Diploma Network, the College and Career Readiness Policy Institute, and Achieve, Inc, to significantly raise high schools math and science standards, assessments, and curricula to more effectively align them with the demands of college and career. The result was a notable change to Arizona's graduation requirements, increasing the prerequisites for math and science. The SBE also increased the level of math rigor required to graduate from high school. These requirements to evolve as Arizona works with Common Core to align standards and assessments through the P-20 continuum.</p> <p><u>Cooperation with STEM-Capable Partners.</u> In 2006, prominent Arizona business organizations and State government joined forces to create Science Foundation of Arizona (SFAz), a distinctive public/private organization led by a board of directors comprised of 11 nationally recognized leaders in science, engineering, and education. With all operational support provided by private sector contribution, funds invested by the State require a private-sector match. Thanks to a peer-reviewed, competitive grant process, that match yielded \$2.18 for every dollar invested by the State. STEM Plan will expand access to a rigorous course of study. As early as 2006, Arizona initiated efforts to significantly raise high school math and science standards and to align assessments and curricula effectively with the demands of colleges and career. Data provided by RESPONSE addresses measures already undertaken to cooperate with STEM-capable partners. Provision has been made to assist teachers through integrated, streamlined math and science certification programs.</p> <p>This priority has been addressed throughout the application. It is positioned as a critical component of all of reforms undertaken.</p>				
Total	15	15	15	

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The State of Arizona has comprehensively and coherently addressed all of the four education reform areas specified in the ARRA as well as State Success Factors. Although the responses to some of the Criteria were more extensive than others, the information provided matched and often exceeded the purpose of the criteria. It was obvious that serious effort was made to explain Arizona's reform plan and the Appendices provided valuable supporting evidence. The role played by LEAs in the implementation of the proposal was significant and critical to the realization of its goals. It was also evident that Arizona, because of its terrain and the diversity of its population, has already had experience in dealing with situations that connect with their responses to a good number of the criteria. It certainly has had a wealth of experience and success in promoting charter schools.

The State has clearly demonstrated how it will use Race to the Top funds to meet its standards, increase student achievement, decrease achievement gaps across sub-groups, and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

Total			0	0	
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Grand Total	500	472	481		
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