

better coordinate support to schools, particularly in the rural areas, and partnered with the educational cooperatives to provide more focused professional development and on-site technical support to identified schools. However, school turnaround options other than the transformation model are presented. Applicant contracted with America's Choice as the State's turnaround model during 2006 and has worked with 52 schools with varying degrees of success.

Total	50	42
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	7
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: Applicant's support for public education funding for FY 2008 (71.6%) and FY 200 (71.4%) is essentially the same. Applicant uses an Educational Adequacy formula to provide equitable funding between high-need and high-poverty LEAs and other LEAs.</p>		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	28
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: Applicant's current policies provide for three types of charter schools. Two of the models are operated by public school districts. The other model, "Open-enrollment charters, has a cap of 24 which, by definition yields medium points. However, this cap has not denied any applications (20) and there is flexibility in the language that a Open-enrollment public charter may have multiple campuses. Public Charter Schools are funded as any other public school and receive the same per pupil allocations from state funding. Applicant provides evidence of monitoring and providing accountability standards for the effectiveness of charter schools. Applicant's conversion and limited public charter schools have access to district funding with regard to facilities. Applicant does not provide LEAs the ability to operate innovative, autonomous public schools.</p>		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: Applicant's Smart Arkansas initiative provides a framework for its strategic efforts to improved student learning outcomes. These efforts have resulted in improved student learning. Smart Start, Smart Step, and Smart Future as well as Smart Leadership and Smart Accountability have been part of a successful reform effort that has been supported by expanded levels of funding for public education.</p>		
Total	55	39

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
<p>Competitive Reviewer Comments: Applicant has established 12 regional STEM centers and has recognized the critical need to expand STEM educational programs and has created programs to train additional teachers for underserved areas.</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:</p> <p>(Note comments for F-3 that document Applicant's successful comprehensive reform effort.) Applicant has made a significant effort to reform education in Arkansas. Past traditions and low expectations for public education have been put in the past and the beginning of a successful educational reform effort is evident. However, much is yet to be done. The infrastructure improvements such as the coordinated use of information technology to make student achievement information easily accessible at the school level are a must to support the school improvement process. The influx of RTT funding will be necessary for Arkansas to both sustain and provide the critical support systems to go beyond its current positive first steps.</p>		
Total		0
Grand Total	500	424

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: The state has a high quality plan for identifying and helping its persistently low achieving schools that is adapted well for its rural state context. It builds well on prior work and strengths and offers many insights and exciting ideas for the future. Funding and support for identified schools would be significant. For those schools compelled to adopt the transformational model, existing school designs should be thoroughly investigated. Low performing schools do not need to reinvent the wheel but rather build on an existing body of R & D. The eventual design should be a good fit with the existing school culture and needs. Arkansas began targeting schools in 2007 and has worked to improve 52 schools with mixed results improving 18 and maintaining current levels in 34. No schools further declined.		
Total	50	50

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	5
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: Funding for schools was substantially unchanged between 2008 and 2009.		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	18
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: Arkansas has a low cap on the number of open enrollment charter schools at 24. Charters are first approved at the district level and then go to the State Board of Education for final authorization. Applications are granted for 5 years and renewals can be granted for 1 - 5 years. Between 2004-10, 20 out of 51 applications were approved. 29 were denied. Funding appears to be quite equitable, but there is no support for facilities. Finally the state does not allow LEAs to operate autonomous innovative public schools. Conditions appear to inhibit charter school development.		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	2
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: The state's Smart initiatives focusing on key K-12 transition points for students, leadership capacity and accountability systems have apparently created favorable conditions for school reform. More discussion and elaboration is needed.		
Total	55	25

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	0
Competitive Reviewer Comments: STEM. Although mentioned throughout the application and summarized at the end of the application, its difficult to envision a comprehensive program for recruiting, training, and placing STEM teachers in schools throughout the state.		
Total	15	0

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: There is a comprehensive approach to school reform in place that meets all four of the education reform areas. Furthermore, there appears to be strong state support from key stakeholder groups, especially LEAs.		
Total		0
Grand Total	500	347

participating in opportunities for their own learning. The state will do a broader study to gain a better picture of conditions in schools and tailor the professional development to what they find. This is the first step in developing a system of regular evaluation and continuous improvement for professional development. (9pts)

Total	138	100
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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
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: The state has the authority to intervene in schools and districts.		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	33
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	28
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (i)The state has a process to identify the lowest performing schools. The state has a Differentiated Accountability plan. (ii)They are aware of the need to change the SEA to a culture of support and assistance, not just compliance. They have been building that capacity through state support teams. The state models are similar to the 4 turnaround models. They have given thought to which models work in a given situation. Given that they have a large number of rural schools with high teacher turnover (50%), the transformation model is the one most likely to be used. Given the preference for the transformation model, it is not clear that the state will not bump into the 9 school/50% issue. The state has a multi-pronged approach to support, but it specifies targets for the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, but not other initiative.		
Total	50	43

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	5
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: There was a modest increase. Nothing was said about the allocation of funds to high-need LEAs.		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	23
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (i)There is a cap on open enrollment charter schools, which can draw students from anywhere in the state, but not on district controlled schools. The cap has been raised once and could be raised again. (4pts) (ii)The state has laws that govern the charter schools. Evidence was given about charter schools that were not reauthorized. (8pts) (iii)Charter schools receive equitable funding. The formula was provided in this section.(8pts) (iv)District chartered schools receive support in finding facilities. Open enrollment schools do not. They do have first right of refusal for purchase or lease of available public school facilities. Money is not provided for facilities.(3pts) (v)The state does not provide for schools of innovation in addition to charter schools. (0pts)		

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	2
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: The foundation for reform is mentioned throughout the proposal. The actual response to the section did not give information about how the various initiatives are interwoven to support reform. It did not provide information on the success of the additional reforms mentioned in this section.		
Total	55	30

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
Competitive Reviewer Comments: A commitment to raise the attention given to STEM areas is demonstrated throughout the proposal. This section gives added detail. Collaboration with a variety of stakeholders is apparent in this section. There are several initiatives in place that offer the possibility of broad impact in improving STEM readiness in the state.		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		No
Absolute Reviewer Comments: •I did not see evidence of a broad base of support. The depth of reform the state intends to make will require support from stakeholders beyond education. There was no evidence of support from three critical groups- parents, community based organizations, or business. •It was difficult to see what the targets for improvement were in all education areas. Those that were mentioned were often low. •There is no alternative route for principals. •Open enrollment charter schools currently have a low cap.		
Total		0

Grand Total	500	394
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should be placed on having mentor teachers on-site or available by video for the persistently low-performing schools.

Total	138	108
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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: (E)(1) Arkansas is one of nine states receiving approval from the USDoE to be part of the Differentiated Accountability Pilot. Thus, the state can intervene directly in both schools and LEAs. (E)(2)(ii) Even though Arkansas did not receive additional funding from the state, it chose in 2009 to implement a Smart Accountability plan to attempt to dramatically turn around the state's lowest performing schools. The state is committed to accelerating its work with the persistently low performing schools. A very detailed activity plan is described.</p>		
(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
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (E)(2)(i) Arkansas has outlined a logical, credible, and understandable process for identifying persistently low-performing schools. (E)(2)(ii) Even though Arkansas did not receive additional funding from the state, it chose in 2009 to implement a Smart Accountability plan to attempt to dramatically turn around the state's lowest performing schools. The state is committed to accelerating its work with the persistently low performing schools. A very detailed activity plan is described to address low-performing schools.</p>		
Total	50	35

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	6
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (F)(1) Even though the percentage of total state revenues decreased by .2% from 2008 to 2009, the dollar amount of allocated revenues increased by \$23,207,397; thus they were substantially unchanged.</p>		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	24
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (F)(2) Even though Arkansas has a statutory cap of 24 on the number of open-enrollment charter schools, each of these entities may petition the Arkansas State Board of Education for additional "licenses" to establish additional campuses across the state. Arkansas law clarifies that all charter schools are public schools; thus, they are included in the public school monitoring process. Open enrollment charter schools do not receive facilities funding since they do not collect property taxes.</p>		

Arkansas does not permit LEAs to operate any other than what is traditionally allowed or through open enrollment, conversion, or limited charter school status.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (F)(3) Arkansas' "Smart Arkansas" initiatives cut across the education spectrum with increased focus on a solid, rigorous curriculum, educator preparation, accountability, and school improvement, while implementing well thought-out initiatives to elevate the education system in Arkansas to a higher level and serve the students in Arkansas well by creating conditions favorable for needed reform.		
Total	55	34

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
Competitive Reviewer Comments: Throughout the application Arkansas has focused on STEM by emphasizing the adoption and implementation of rigorous content standards, requiring more rigorous preparation of teachers and principals, and enhancing school accountability to ensure that Arkansas can be a strong producer of well-educated young adults and attract individuals and businesses to the state to stimulate its economy.		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: Arkansas has met the absolute priority. There is a very strong, and well-needed, focus on STEM, systemic reform, accountability, raising academic standards, and enhancing teacher preparation. The state is taking a proactive approach to reform by seeking out grants, providing needed support to its school districts, and attempting to maintain its education budget at a level comparable to that of the previous year.		
Total		0
Grand Total	500	403

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: Arkansas has the authority to intervene in both LEAs and schools, and does so.		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	35
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	30
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: Arkansas identified the lowest 5% of Title I schools plus the bottom two (5%) of Title I eligible secondary schools using a well-explained methodology. Arkansas provided data on their success so far in turning around lowest-achieving schools. They have used America's Choice as their preferred model, which they categorize as a transformational model. Of the 52 schools ever involved (since 2006 -07), thirteen are no longer served (7 made enough performance gain, 3 received a waiver, 2 were consolidated, and one was replaced with another in greater need of the services of America's Choice.) Of the 52 schools, 6 show more growth than the Arkansas average, 12 showed growth, but some of which was less than the state as a whole; 34 showed mixed results, with growth in some areas but at least one area where scores were lower. None declined for all grades in both math and literacy. Arkansas' rural nature brings challenges to replacing significant numbers of staff, so building capacity is preferred as an intervention to the turnaround model. However, the state intends to work with schools to determine the best intervention model. If LEAs do not select turnaround, closure or restart, the state will require implementation of the transformational model. As they say "it is not a case of lack of political will, but lack of practical capacity that necessitates the transformation model." Arkansas will add elements to their current Transformational Model. It will use its School Improvement Grants (SIG) to accelerate the Smart Accountability (a component of Arkansas' strategic process) timeline and build capacity. They specify activities that must be incorporated into a transformational (or turnaround) model, including building state and LEA capacity, professional learning teams, the National Board Take One! Initiative, expanding Jobs for Arkansas Graduates (to teach job readiness skills to high-need youth - a great idea), a compensation study and pilot, a focus on the whole child and scholastic audits. Arkansas' proposal provides evidence of a strong commitment to assisting LEAs and schools to, as they say, help schools take the courageous steps of implementing the models of school turnaround, closure or restart that will use their new model of student growth for professional development and interventions. It certainly remains to be seen, however, whether RttT funding and additional intervention strategies will lead to more success than did the America's Choice turnaround model. The track record is modest, but the plans are creative.		
Total	50	45

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	7
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The state appears to have increased its education funding, although the column headings (Education, State, Total) are not clear (5). Arkansas has taken great strides since 2007 to add hundreds of millions of dollars to education and implement sweeping changes in accountability, standards and		

Absolute Reviewer Comments:

The proposal did address the four educational reform areas in ARRA as well as the State Success Factors criteria. But the lack of student achievement growth targets made this determination difficult. Without these benchmarks, Arkansas is not going to know if it is making progress of two of the four key performance goals contained in the State Success Factors Criteria.

Total		0
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Grand Total	500	389
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