

F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	8	8	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) The percentage of total revenues available to the state for public education rose from 43% in 2008 to 48% in 2009. Furthermore, all high needs students from K-12 schools received a crucial infusion of additional dollars from the state. The state has reduced inequities by steering more funds for targeted spending to high need school districts. The state also picks up 75% vs. 70% of costs in low wealth school districts. It has also worked to equalize teacher salaries in low income districts. It is not clear how per pupil expenditures actually compares across districts in Tennessee.				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	29	29	
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) The state has a charter school law that sets a cap of 90 or 5.1% of its schools. Currently, there are 22 operating charter schools in Tennessee. It appears that charters are restricted to low achieving students from poverty. Funding for charters and facilities appears to be equitable. Conditions supporting the creation of charter schools in Tennessee are moderately favorable.				
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) There are numerous creative and innovative ideas emerging in Tennessee. The conditions are very favorable for school reform.				
Total	55	42	42	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	0	0	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) STEM is mentioned throughout the application. What's needed is a clear and memorable design process for improvement.				
Total	15	0	0	

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 has comprehensively and coherently addressed all the four education reform areas specified in ARRA. Its state success factors are very strong. Stakeholder commitment is exceptional.				
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)				

The state presentation offered convincing evidence that it fully understands its challenges. Moreover, the state team was refreshingly transparent and honest in its responses to the panel's questions. The state has the experience, confidence and supportive culture to fully implement its school reform agenda.

Total			0	0	
Grand Total	500	426	430		

several initiatives in the planning stages, such as researching teacher induction supports to novice teachers and increasing the capacity of its Field Service Centers to help districts and schools develop professional development plans. Yet, it does not appear that the State has made a significant investment in proven professional development programs statewide. The State has articulated a more refined plan for improving professional development in the STEM-related fields. The State is partnering with several STEM organizations to improve the delivery of professional development in mathematics and science. It also appears that the State has not undertaken efforts to evaluate its current professional development systems and supports. It intends to use the TN Consortium of Research, Evaluation, and Development (TN CRED) to conduct research in this area to inform policy decisions.

Total	138	112	112	
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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) The State provided copies of its legislation giving the SEA the authority to directly intervene in its persistently lowest-achieving schools and in LEAs that are in improvement or corrective action status.				
(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	
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) Tennessee provided its method for identifying its persistently lowest-achieving schools. Tennessee's commitment to turning around the lowest-achieving schools is new; the State does not have documented history of turning around low-performing schools using the models specified in the Race to the Top notice. However, the State has developed a thoughtful plan to address the needs of these schools both through policy reform and funding. The State will establish the Achievement School District comprised of schools identified for intervention. These schools will be restructured and given intensive supports to build their capacity aimed at improving student achievement in an aggressive timeframe. The State is proposing to devote a substantial portion--\$49 million, or 20 percent of its State Innovation allocation—to support its efforts in turning around persistently low-achieving schools.				
Total	50	50	50	

F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10	10	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) Tennessee has made a concerted effort to increase funding for public education even in light of the economic downturn. The percentage of revenues devoted to public education increased from 43% in FY2008 to 48% in FY2009. Actual allocations also increased between the two years. Tennessee's school funding formula makes adjustments to equalize funding between high- and low-poverty districts.				

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	30	30	
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>Tennessee's charter school laws require the State to cap the authorization of charter schools to 90 schools statewide. Conversion schools are not included in this cap. Charter schools can only be operated in districts with minimum enrollment of 14,000 students and have had at least three schools that missed AYP for two consecutive years. Of the 90 charter schools authorized, only 21 are in operation including conversion schools. While the state argues it has unlimited capacity for opening new charter schools because there is no cap on conversion schools, it appears that very few schools have converted. The State estimates that if all 90 charter schools were in operation, they would enroll 5 percent of the State's students. This is the figure used to arrive at the score for this criterion. The State has policies in place to monitor charter school performance which includes student achievement measures and may close schools if they do not make progress on student achievement indicators. Charters are granted for 10 years and are audited in their 5th year of operation. While student achievement can be a factor for non-renewal or closure, the State has closed only 1 school over the past 5 years and the reason was not given. This, coupled with the 10 year initial charter, suggests that charter schools are not closely monitored for the educational progress of their students. Charter schools receive the same per-pupil allocations as non-charters. The per-pupil expenditures are subtracted from the home LEA's allocation and reallocated to the charter school. The State provides per-pupil funding to charter schools for capital expenses. It could not be determined from the information provided if the funding formula for facilities based on per-pupil expenditures is adequate to cover capital costs for charter schools. The State enables a limited number of autonomous public schools other than charters. These include LEA partnerships to partner with post-secondary institutions to establish innovative high schools and a program that allows students in Nashville to receive credit for classes taken at Vanderbilt University. These options appear not to be widespread or enroll a significant number of students. The State does not appear to have other choice options such as open-enrollment programs.</p>				
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>In addition to the existing reforms the State is building upon to address the four Race to the Top areas, it pointed to its history with pay for performance, its new charter schools incubator, and the establishment of the Achievement School District to address the needs of its lowest-achieving schools as important conditions to further stimulate reform. These are favorable conditions for implementing the Race to the Top reforms.</p>				
Total	55	45	45	

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>As detailed throughout its application, Tennessee has undertaken several initiatives to support teaching and learning in the STEM-related areas including strengthening math and science standards, improving and expanding professional development for STEM teachers, and increasing the pipeline of teachers in STEM subjects. In addition, the State has established the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network which is a joint venture with Battelle and the University of Tennessee. Tennessee will partner with the state of Ohio in this endeavor. The network will create exchanges so teachers can share best practices related to improving STEM instruction.</p>				

Total	15	15	15	
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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)

Tennessee clearly articulated its education reform agenda. The State has secured 100 percent participation of its school districts and provided evidence that the application was crafted with broad stakeholder input and support. The State has provided clear timelines and has established a strong management team for accomplishing its Race to the Top reforms. The State has committed to using Race to the Top funds to make large, short-term investment in its infrastructure that will support long-term reforms. Because funds will be used to shore-up its Infrastructure and not to add a significant number of agency positions that would need to be supported after the grant ends, the plan has strong chance for sustainability. Building on a long history of effective reforms, the State is well-positioned to hit the ground running in its Race to the Top. Tennessee has presented a comprehensive plan to expand reforms already in place in the four Race to the Top areas. For nearly two decades, Tennessee has calculated growth measures for student growth through its TVAAS system. The State has linked student growth to teacher effectiveness and used it to inform decisions related to teacher employment. Tennessee can immediately begin to address the educator effective measures called for under Race to the Top. The State also has laid the groundwork for raising academic standards through its American Diploma project which focused on developing a framework for college and career readiness.

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

Tennessee's Tier 2 presentation reinforced statements in its application about its capacity to scale-up to quickly implement the major Race to the Top reforms. The State made a compelling argument that it enjoys widespread stakeholder and district support of the Initiative, validating information contained in the application. The presentation team clearly articulated the State's comprehensive reform agenda and how it links to each of the four reform areas specified in ARRA, reaffirming this reviewer's initial observations that Tennessee is well-positioned to hit the ground running in its Race to the Top.

Total		0	0	
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Grand Total	500	453	453	
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The applicant will identify the State's persistently lowest-achieving schools (from Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools) by completing a sequence of steps. The applicant will evaluate the 13 schools eligible for possible inclusion in a state-run Achievement School District (ASD). The applicant will target the 18 schools in Corrective Action or Restructuring 1 with serious interventions before they reach eligibility for the ASD. All schools whose absolute achievement places them under the definition of "persistently lowest-achieving" will implement one of the four turnaround models in the RTTT guidelines, no matter what their levels of NCLB accountability or whether they become part of the ASD. The plan is of sufficient high quality and sets ambitious yet achievable annual targets to support LEAs in turning around these schools. Since 2001, interventions have resulted in 53% of high-priority schools achieving good standing after being placed on the list. A wide variety of approaches have been implemented within the turnaround, closure, and transformation models.

Total	50	45	45	
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	8	8	

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

The applicant increased its percentage of total revenues available to the state for public K-12 and higher education from 43% to 48% between FY2008 and FY2009. Since 1992, the applicant has used a funding formula called the Basic Education Program to provide equitable K-12 public education funding. In 2004-05 the applicant changed the BEP program to direct additional dollars to high-need systems in an attempt to equalize teaching salaries. Further changes were made in 2007 to support high-needs districts, and those changes are about 60% implemented as of January 2010.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	28	28	
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

This subsection has five elements (subsections (a) to (e)). The new state cap on charter schools is 90 (if reached, that would equal 5.1% of all public schools in the state). This cap does not include conversions of existing schools into charter schools. In qualifying districts (five districts with a minimum enrollment of 14,000 with at least three schools on the high priority list), all students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch qualify to attend charter schools in the LEA. Districts not qualifying can open up eligibility to all free and reduced students by vote of the local school board (2/3 vote). Otherwise, more stringent restrictions appear to apply as to who is eligible to attend a charter school. These restrictions appear to moderately or severely inhibit which students may attend charter schools in the state. The cap and the attendance restrictions contributed to a loss of points for the first element. Charter applicants apply to their LEA for approval, and if denied, can appeal to the State Board. The charter laws govern how charter schools are approved, monitored, held accountable, reauthorized, or closed. The law encourages the creation and maintenance of charter schools that serve populations similar to local student populations, with special assurances that charter schools serve high-need students (priority in enrollment by lottery if the school is oversubscribed). The state has closed 1 charter school since 2004-05. The applicant requires equitable funding for charter schools. Under state law, charter school students receive the same per-pupil funding that would have followed them to a school district if the students had enrolled in a non-charter public school. The per-pupil amount passes through the LEA to the charter schools, and the LEA cannot deduct a portion of the allocation for administrative costs. The applicant imposes no facility-related requirements on charter schools that are stricter than those applied to traditional public schools. Charter school students in this state receive per-pupil funding for capital expenses, which may be used for rent for school facilities, construction, renovation, leasehold improvements, or debt service. The applicant also has other innovative school

options, beyond charter schools. LEAs may partner with higher education institutions to establish innovative high schools, and LEAs can develop innovative educational programs (non-charter public schools of innovation and non-traditional high schools, for example). Applicant was scored in the "high" range for elements (b) to (e), but in the "low" range for element (a), as described above. The overall score for this subsection reflects a score in the high part of the "medium" range. Most, but not all, of the conditions for ensuring successful high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools are present in this state.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4	4	
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(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The applicant highlights a charter school "incubator" in Nashville Public Schools and two counties that have adopted differentiated pay programs in an effort to raise student achievement and other policies at the state-level. These differentiated pay programs have a potential to pave the way for further experimentation with differentiated pay plans in this state. These programs provide additional evidence of favorable conditions for education reform in this state and complement the reforms highlighted elsewhere in the applicant's proposal.

Total	55	40	40	
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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)

The applicant addresses STEM policies and innovations throughout its proposal, including a new public education partnership with a global research and development enterprise that will work with the state and LEAs to establish a statewide network of programs and schools designed to promote and expand the teaching and learning of the STEM disciplines. The applicant is actively pursuing a strategy to produce and support STEM educators, develop curriculum linked to the state's STEM industries, create new pathways to STEM careers, and partner with multi-sector regional organizations and companies to raise student achievement in STEM. Specific goals related to increasing the numbers of students graduating with the Tennessee Diploma Project diploma and going on to complete degrees in STEM fields, the number of students who enter STEM careers, and the number of women, minority, and economically disadvantaged students who participate in STEM fields are provided. Additional focus is provided on reducing achievement gaps and enhancing overall student performance in STEM disciplines.

Total	15	15	15	
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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)

This is an exceptional application—clear, well-organized, comprehensive, 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. The state demonstrates that it is committed to adopting and developing wide-ranging reforms focused on raising student achievement and to implementing them

statewide. The applicant has taken a serious, systemic approach to RTTT that meets the threshold for being considered for funding.

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

The State team's presentation confirmed what was already apparent in the State's application: Tennessee is a State highly worthy of funding under RTTT. Its history of reforms across the education reform areas of the ARRA, as well as the State Success Factors Criteria, has brought the State to the point where it has clearly thought through where it wants—and needs—to go, and the State has marshaled the political will to venture forth and to do right that which it seeks to accomplish. The State is already moving ahead at a fast pace on many areas of the reforms, and while there are many moving pieces, it has provided a solid plan for comprehensively reforming its State K-12 education system during the course of a RTTT grant and for building the internal and external capacity needed to sustain those reforms over the long-term.

One general area of disappointment with this application and with the State team's responses to questions is the level of the State's commitment to charter schools. During the State team presentation, when asked, the team did not provide a clear explanation for why the State has chosen to maintain a cap and eligibility restrictions in its charter school legislation, or a clear vision for how charter schools fit in with the extensive plans for reforming K-12 education through RTTT. The State appears pleased to have charter schools, but they do not appear to have a well-developed plan for integrating charter schools with their RTTT efforts.

In sum, despite the charter school caveat, this State is serious about systemically reforming K-12 education to achieve greater academic gains and close achievement gaps. It is poised to use a RTTT grant as a strategic investment to implement their reform plans over the next several years.

Total		0	0	
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Grand Total	500	444	444	
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standing, though 63% achieved AYP (presumably at least one year; data provided is unclear regarding performance of unique units over time). There is considerable year-to-year variance in the pattern of High Priority schools moving to good standing, ranging from 5 to 54% percent. The inclusion of a variety of support organizations, from non-profit contractors to universities, seems appropriate. The information provided by the Lessons Learned section seems worth further consideration in the design of intervention strategies, as several transformative approaches (though included within the Turnaround section) appear to have been very effective, particularly embedded, ongoing, and aligned professional development (with a special note regarding the need for local professional learning communities) and the provision of increased learning time. Such lessons appear in marked contrast to state experience with principal performance contracts, for example. Each of the approaches noted as most successful in the state -- the need to replace staff and/or address PD and instructional time -- are consistent with other states'/cities' experiences, and highlight the need for interventions to be assessed based on their ability to enhance local capacity. The degree to which these lessons learned will be included in the design of interventions in the lowest-achieving schools is not entirely clear, though several references to the need for local buy-in and adjustment to local community context seems consistent with those lessons. Further information would be needed to assess the role of "learning maps" within this plan, as well as to assess the balance of external expertise and local capacity development.

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

The presentation affirmed the complexity of the challenges turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools, and the attention to political and community context in the proposed tiered approach. The continued relation of Achievement District Schools to their home districts warrants further description, though the presentation provided additional evidence of the plan's attention to the eventual transition of schools out of the Achievement District.

Total	50	45	45	
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	7	7	

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

While the portion of general fund expenditures spent on K-12 education in FY2009 rose relative to the same figure in FY2008, and that the absolute dollars in FY2009 were slightly higher, it is also true that K-12 education as a percentage of the total state budget fell slightly from FY2008 to FY2009 (14% to 13%). Several policies and funding streams, especially Basic Education Program (BEP) 2.0, continue efforts dating back to 1992 to revise funding formulae, with the intent of better serving high-needs districts. Information provided suggests greater equity in funding, but no data is provided comparing actual distribution of funds in high-need LEA's versus other LEA's.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	30	30	
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Recent legislative changes provide fairly open conditions for charters and other innovative schools, though with caveats. Some limits remain, as the total cap of 90 charters represents just over 5% of all Tennessee schools, though conversions could increase that number. The policy does not open up charter access universally, though, as it targets students who qualify for free-/reduced-price lunch. Further, only districts over a certain size (14,000 students) and with 3 schools not meeting AYP for two consecutive years qualify automatically to be able to offer charters; five districts qualify, and some have caps per district (e.g., 35 in Memphis, 20 in Nashville, and 4 in Shelby County). Those districts not qualifying per above may offer charters if the school board approves (2/3 vote required), and then can only offer to those students

qualifying per above. Thus, while recent policy changes have loosened restrictions upon charters, and "charter-like" entities are possible, charters formation faces some local restraints. The State has laws, statutes, regulations, or guidelines regarding how charter school authorizers approve, monitor, hold accountable, reauthorize, and close charter schools; authorizers require that student achievement (as defined in this notice) be one significant factor, among others, in authorization or renewal. Authorizers encourage charter schools that serve student populations that are similar to local district student populations, especially relative to high-need students (as defined in this notice); and have closed or not renewed ineffective charter schools. Data provided on charter approvals/denials indicate a relatively high local denial rate (68%) and few successes upon appeal (23%), with reasons for denial clustered in "fiscal/academic weakness." The pattern raises concerns regarding unstated challenges to charter formation per se in the state, though possibly addressed by recent legislation. Nearly half of all charter applications occurred in 2004-05, and the high rate of denial that year ((73%) may suggest reasons behind the dramatic drop in applications the next two years (from 26 to 3, 5 respectively), and slow increase since then. Per-pupil funding and facilities support are the same across charter/non-charter schools. The application provides evidence that per-pupil allocations will be based on "one hundred percent of state and local funds received by the LEA, including current funds allocated for capital outlay purposes, excluding the proceeds of debt obligations and associated debt service." Charters face no facility requirements that are more severe than for other schools, and are required by law to receive the same per-pupil funding for capital expenses. LEA's may submit bond applications on behalf of their charters. State law provides for the formation of "charter-like" organizations through postsecondary partnerships, commissioner-waived regulations or public "schools of innovation." For example, LEA's can partner with postsecondary institutions to form alternative high schools with the same regulatory and statutory waiver options as charters, something the state intends to use to expand STEM-themed high schools. This state law provision has already been used to form five early-/middle-college high schools.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
The state plan describes experience with differentiated compensation plans (e.g., TAP, Benwood), the recent formation of the Center for Charter School Excellence, and the recent Tennessee Race to the Top Act as evidence of other conditions supportive of reform.				
Total	55	42	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)

The state presents a high-quality plan, integrated across the proposal, to address the need to (i) offer a rigorous course of study in mathematics, the sciences, technology, and engineering; (ii) cooperate with industry experts, museums, universities, research centers, or other STEM-capable community partners to prepare and assist teachers in integrating STEM content across grades and disciplines, in promoting effective and relevant instruction, and in offering applied learning opportunities for students; and (iii) prepare more students for advanced study and careers in the sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics, including by addressing the needs of underrepresented groups and of women and girls in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The state has forged deep partnerships across a number of STEM-capable partners, with links to the state's own significant STEM assets, and is developing an innovative cross-state collaboration with Ohio. Key to the plan is a recently-formed partnership with the Battelle Memorial Institute, "which co-manages Tennessee's own Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) in a joint venture with the University of Tennessee." Battelle appears to be a strong partner for the state,

allows leveraging of prior experience in a neighboring state – the proposed teacher exchanges, e.g., would also enhance the professional community of classroom educators – and further extends existing cross-institutional/sector relationships in the STEM field within the state [e.g., The Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), Oak Ridge Associated Universities (ORAU)]. In forming this new Tennessee STEM Innovation Network, the state provides further evidence of emerging plans to address the three major needs indicated above in a manner that integrates “previously disparate assets” in STEM.

Total	15	15	15	
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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 application comprehensively and coherently addresses all of the four education reform areas specified in the ARRA as well as the State Success Factors Criteria. Sub-section comments provide further analysis. The state outlines a significant set of initiatives, integrated around its human capital strategy development, leveraging a well-developed student achievement data system. Significant evidence of broad support is provided. The ability to affect practice at the classroom and building level remains the core challenge, including assessment and support of professional practice needs that build beyond student achievement data. In an effort to expand and/or highlight prior feedback, it should be noted that further evidence regarding the following would strengthen the plan: 1) The development/collection/analysis of qualitative/quantitative data on professional and community variables to complement the student assessment data described; further evidence warranted to gauge implementation, sustainability, formation of local capacity, shifts in professional norms, etc., including, e.g., gauges of collective efficacy, instructional practice, community engagement, parental support, working conditions, changes in use of daily time, daily professional routines, understanding of plan vision, school climate, etc.; 2) The impact of the total plan on school-level decision-making practices and demands, particularly the impact on school-level leadership practice; the plan has components to which it is committed (many seem well-warranted per evidence presented) and on set timelines; how this plan drives support rollout while also stimulating the demand-side pull from practitioners remains unclear; the plan must balance local flexibility in adapting to local context and support for this balancing warrants further clarification; 3) An opportunity exists in the continued development of longitudinal student data systems to link to non-school data, providing the greater “360-degree” view of the child, and the promise of more integrated analysis of drivers to educational performance, and thus the promise of more efficient and effective use of funds and interventions across agencies, public and private, supporting this development; 4) Data regarding local community support and civic capacity remains limited, and yet are critical factors in successful reform efforts; 5) Data regarding the drivers of inequitable teacher and principal distribution in the state; 6) Explicit strategies in how the gap between tool development/dissemination and tool use will be bridged, given the frequent experience of this gap in prior reform efforts; 7) With a public commentary period built into the rollout of the new Common Core standards, fallback strategies should be considered, should public comments/engagement demonstrate further work needed to coalesce sufficient support; and 8) Further supporting evidence of sustainability, e.g., how standing state funds would be reallocated to sustain an enhanced continuous improvement cycle, how existing funding sources would support ongoing collaborative support structures and intensive assistance, and how existing funding would support the upkeep of new standards, assessments, enhanced technologies, etc.

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

The presentation provided additional clarification of important aspects of the plan, and the team’s understanding and candor provided solid evidence of team capacity.

Total		0	0	
Grand Total	500	426	426	

Implementation of one of the four turnaround models in each persistently lowest-achieving school. The proposal outlines "lessons learned" from Tennessee's years of experience with school accountability. One lesson stands out: the observation that, historically, Tennessee has not been bold enough. Taking that lesson seriously, the proposal outlines a bold reform plan. Tennessee will establish an Achievement School District, a groundbreaking approach that will capitalize on the newly created authority of the State, best practice research on school turnaround and unprecedented partnerships with non-profit groups. Tennessee will remove designated schools from their home LEA and place them under the direction of the commissioner of Education. Tennessee has demonstrated in this proposal that it has the capacity for success in the Achievement School District and in its reform plans for persistently lowest-achieving schools not placed in the Achievement School District. Tennessee's experience with school accountability, the lessons it has learned, and its clear focus on data and results demonstrate that Tennessee clearly has the capacity for success in its turnaround plans.

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	

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

Despite the State's financial challenges, education funding was protected and its percentage of available funds increased. The proposal presents financial data that shows that the percentage of total revenues available to the State for public K-12 and higher education increased from 43% to 48% between FY 2008 and FY 2009. Tennessee's progressive policies on equitable funding between high-need LEAs and other LEAs, as well as within high-poverty and low-poverty schools, have resulted in a school funding formula that boosted average expenditures per student from \$3,732 in 1991-92 to \$8,345 in 2007-08, an increase of 124%, according to the Department of Education's 21st Century Schools Report Card. The latest revamping of the formula reduced inequities by steering more funds for targeted spending to high-need schools.

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

40	33	33	
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Tennessee charter school law does have a cap on charter schools. The cap is 90 schools statewide, with a cap of 35 in Memphis, 20 in Nashville and 4 in Shelby County. The law defines charter school qualifying districts, which must have a minimum enrollment of 14,000 students and must have had at least three schools that missed AYP for two consecutive years. All students who are eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch in qualifying districts are eligible to attend charter schools. In non-qualifying districts a two-thirds vote of the local school board can authorize a charter school serving students who qualify for free- and reduced-price lunch. The proposal states that Tennessee is strongly committed to growing the number of charter schools and anticipates that positive outcomes from existing charter schools will result in political support to raise or lift the cap on charter schools. It is important for Tennessee to raise or lift the cap in order for the students of Tennessee to benefit from the full potential of charter schools. Tennessee State law governs how charter schools are approved, monitored, held accountable, reauthorized, or closed. The law does a particularly good job of setting standards that recognize the importance of student achievement and the importance of serving high-need students. Charter schools are required to submit annual reports, including progress toward academic goals, to the LEA and to the Tennessee commissioner of education. LEAs conduct periodic monitoring visits, and the Department of Education conducts an audit every five years to determine whether the charter's goals are being met. Failing to make adequate progress in student achievement is one of the reasons a charter school may be closed. One charter school was closed in 2007. State law assures that charter schools serve high-need students and populations similar to the local population: • If any charter school class or grade is oversubscribed, enrollment is determined by lottery. •

First priority is given to students who are eligible because they failed to reach proficiency, or are zoned to or are attending a school that failed to make AYP. • Second priority is given to students who qualify because of free- or reduced-price lunch. The proposal presents solid evidence that funding for charter schools is equitable. Tennessee law requires that charter school students receive the same per-pupil funding that would have followed them to a school district if the students had enrolled in a non-charter public school. The law states that these per-pupil allocations will be based on "one hundred percent of state and local funds received by the LEA." Federal funding has been awarded to each charter school in the State through the federal public Charter Schools Program. The proposal presents solid evidence that the State provides charter schools with equitable funding, assistance, access and other supports for facilities and that facilities-related requirements are equitable. Tennessee law requires that charter school students receive per-pupil funding for capital expenses. Tennessee imposes no facility-related requirements on charter schools that are stricter than those applied to traditional public schools.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4	4	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>The proposal describes three other conditions favorable to education reform in Tennessee. Although the proposal presents no evidence that these innovations have, as yet, increased student achievement or graduation rates, narrowed achievement gaps, or resulted in other important outcomes, each of the three favorable conditions has the potential to have a powerful positive effect on these important outcomes. First, State law passed in 2007 requires districts to submit differentiated pay plans to the State Department of Education, paving the way for experimentation in this area. Second, a charter school "incubator," headed by a proven expert, will recruit, develop and train charter school leaders. Third, the Tennessee First to the Top Act passed in January 2010 establishes a committee to create a new annual teacher and principal evaluation instrument that includes student achievement growth, establishes an Achievement School District and other new accountability rules for the State's lowest-performing schools, and enables teacher effect data to be sent to institutions of higher education for analysis of the institution's effectiveness.</p>				
Total	55	47	47	

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>Tennessee is partnering with Battelle Memorial Institute to establish a statewide network of programs and schools designed to promote and expand the teaching and learning of science, technology, engineering, and math. Tennessee intends to dramatically accelerate STEM education through the development of the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network. The proposal demonstrates Tennessee's capacity to carry out a plan to offer a rigorous course of study in STEM disciplines, connect schools with other partners and prepare more students for STEM careers, including underrepresented groups and women and girls. The STEM initiative is addressed throughout the proposal, indicating that it will be an integral part of Tennessee's Race to the Top efforts.</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	
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Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Tennessee has presented a strong plan to comprehensively and coherently address each of the four education reform areas, and the State has presented a strong record of success in education reform in its response to the State Success Factors Criterion. Tennessee has 100% participation of the State's LEAs and 100% of these LEAs have committed to 100% of the goals of the plan. The proposal demonstrates how the States will use Race to the Top funds and other 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 career. Tennessee is well positioned for this work, with its consistency in combining Federal, State, and other funding to reach its educational goals, with its forward-looking legislation, and with its development and use of groundbreaking data systems for student achievement growth. With the education reform progress that Tennessee has made to date, and with its strong plan for meeting the goals of Race to the Top, Tennessee is prepared to make exemplary use of Race to the Top funding. Tennessee is well on its way to establishing a culture of achievement in all of its schools. Race to the Top funding will enable Tennessee to secure this culture of achievement so that the reforms made with Race to the Top funding will continue beyond the funding period and so that further reforms will grow out of this culture of achievement.

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

The presentation confirmed my three assumptions about the Tennessee Race to the Top plan:

- There is a clear sense of urgency regarding the need to improve student achievement.
- This sense of urgency, as well as enthusiasm for the plan, is shared across constituencies.
- The Tennessee Race to the Top plan is thoughtfully designed and can be expected to take Tennessee "to the Top."

Total			0	0
Grand Total	500	453	453	