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# Wisconsin tries again for federal grant for schools

## Doyle says revised application reflects feedback

By [Erin Richards](#) of the Journal Sentinel

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Wisconsin's second-round application for a chunk of what's left over in a \$4.35 billion federal education-reform grant competition has greater clarity as well as the support of more teachers unions, Gov. Jim Doyle said Tuesday.

The state's [revised application](#) for Race to the Top, a federal grant competition meant to spur nationwide education reform, was submitted on the June 1 deadline and incorporates the suggestions proposed by first-round evaluators in March, Doyle said during a news conference at South Division High School.

"We've taken the feedback to heart," Doyle said of the application, which seeks \$250 million for Wisconsin.

One big change from [the first application](#) is having the signatures of 81% of teachers union leaders. It also has the backing of state organizations that support school district administrators and school board members.

Mike Langyel, president of the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association, was a holdout during the first round because, he said, there hadn't been enough collaboration between state officials and teachers.

"This time, they took more time to discuss the issues and hammer out the differences," Langyel said.

The federal government's two-fold goal of Race to the Top has always been to fund big ideas for education reform but also to ensure that states have the capacity and commitment of necessary parties to carry them out.

In March, Delaware and Tennessee were awarded a total of \$600 million in the first round of [Race to the Top](#). A big part of their success was attributed to the amount of stakeholder support for the changes proposed.

Peer reviewer comments and scores on a 500-point scale for the 41 initial applicants put Wisconsin in the bottom half of the group. The state lost points for not doing enough to improve student achievement,

improve the effectiveness of teachers and principals or their preparation programs or to ensure that effective teachers are placed in high-need schools.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Evers said the new teacher and principal evaluation process has been stressed in the second-round application.

Wisconsin also passed legislation that allows the state schools chief to make changes in struggling schools.

Meanwhile, other second-round applicants - including some that scored higher than Wisconsin in the first round - have also been passing new laws and reforms. For example, New York, Colorado and Louisiana have taken aggressive steps to reform how teachers are evaluated.

By deadline Tuesday, 34 other states and the District of Columbia submitted a second-round application.

"I know the odds on this are long," Doyle said.

In Wisconsin's second application, state leaders still propose using the money to enhance early childhood education programs, support children transitioning from middle to high school and for programs that develop good teachers and principals.

Three-quarters of the money would be distributed directly to school districts through a formula that provides more money to districts with more poor children.

That puts Milwaukee Public Schools in line for \$70 million, and an additional \$10 million to support the development of a neighborhood promise zone similar to the Harlem Children's Zone in New York City, said Jeff Pertl, a policy initiatives adviser with the Department of Public Instruction.

Smaller districts that don't serve as many poor children would be ensured a minimum award: \$70,000 or \$100 per pupil, whichever is greater.

The other quarter of the money would be used to fund statewide reforms.

Wisconsin's revised application has the support of 423 school districts and charter schools, or 96% of those in the state. That's about the same number that supported the first application, but districts can still back out of participating in the reforms within 90 days of Wisconsin receiving an award.

Mary Bell, president of the Wisconsin Education Association Council, said Wisconsin was more deliberate in explaining the successful educational programs the state already has in place in its second-round application.

The U.S. Department of Education has estimated that 10 to 15 states may be awarded funds in the second round of the competition. Finalists should be announced at the end of July, and winners are expected to be announced in late August or early September.

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