

18 States & D.C. Named Race to Top Round 2 Finalists

By [Michele McNeil](#) on July 27, 2010 12:20 PM | [11 Comments](#) | [1 TrackBack](#)

Education Secretary Arne Duncan picked 19 finalists, including Hawaii and Arizona as surprise picks, to compete in the interview portion of the Race to the Top Round Two competition. That means each state will assemble a group of five people to come to Washington the week of August 9 to make their **final, last-ditch pitches** for a portion of the \$3.4 billion in federal money still left in the pot.

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The finalists, which beat out 17 other states that applied in the second round, are: Arizona, California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and South Carolina. These finalists all scored above 400 points on the 500-point grading scale. Arizona vaulted from a surprising 40th place finish in the first round to make the finals this time.

The winners will be announced in late August or early September and will share the remaining Race to the Top funding provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. (Unless, of course, [Rep. David Obey manages to get his way](#).)

UPDATE (1:40 p.m.): Duncan is taking questions now at the Press Club, but he said that the average score from Round 1 to Round 2 increased by 23 points. He said, "The improvement was absolutely inspiring."

In [our predictions](#), [State EdWatch's Lesli Maxwell](#) and I ended up doing pretty well, matching 17 of them. (We had guessed 20 finalists.)

Going into the interview portion of the second-round competition, the end result is far more predictable than the first round.

If you'll remember from the first round, Duncan surprised a lot of people by [picking 16 finalists](#), which many considered a lengthy list given that he promised to set a very "[high bar](#)" for the competition. Then he turned around and again surprised folks by [picking only two winners](#), Delaware and Tennessee, to share \$600 million. That left a lot of money on the table for Round Two, and statements from Duncan that there would be 10 to 15 winners.

We now know that the round-one interviews didn't move the scores very much—the average change was 4.6 points on a 500-point scale. So the real guessing game is which states have already scored near the bottom of the finalists' list, because it's likely those states won't be able to budge their scores much.

And the number of winners—whether it's closer to 10 or 15—will depend on which states win. After all, if New York, Florida, and California win and are awarded the maximum amount allowed by the [Education Department's rules](#), they'll eat up \$2.1 billion, or more than half of the remaining funds. Altogether, the states are asking for \$6.2 billion, far more than the \$3.4 billion that's available.

A more extensive analysis, with reaction from some of the key players, will be going up shortly at [edweek.org](#).

Tags: [Duncan](#), [education department](#), [Grants](#), [RTT](#)