

percentage of students who have limited English proficiency, come from low-income families, or are otherwise disadvantaged; evidence of achievement gaps among student populations; or other need factors as identified by the applicant. (5 points)

(2) Documents how the creation of smaller learning communities will address the nature and magnitude of specific gaps or weaknesses in both structural and operational services, infrastructure, or opportunities within the learning environment. (5 points)

(b) *Foundation for planning.* (30 points)

In determining the merit of the proposed process for developing its smaller learning communities plan, the Department will consider the extent to which the applicant:

(1) Provides evidence on how the applicant has involved and secured the support of, and will continue to involve and secure the support of, teachers, administrators, and other pertinent staff within each school to be restructured in the planning process, particularly those teachers and other staff who will be directly affected by the implementation plan. (10 points)

(2) Provides evidence on how the applicant has involved and secured, and will continue to involve and secure, the support of individuals within the broader local community (such as parents, institutions of higher education, businesses, employers, and community organizations, including local non-profit agencies, faith-based organizations, and other service organizations) in the planning process. (5 points)

(3) Provides evidence on how the proposed effort aligns with the State's education reform efforts and State, or, when applicable, industry standards. (5 points)

(4) Describes the applicant's approach for identifying and utilizing evidence-based practices, particularly practices that are grounded in "scientifically-based research" as defined in section 9101(37) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, in designing the structural and operational changes necessary to accomplish the desired change in the learning environment. (10 points)

(c) *Feasibility and soundness of the planning process.* (40 points)

In determining the feasibility and soundness of the applicant's planning process, the Department will consider the extent to which the applicant:

(1) Proposes a process for developing a plan that, within a three-year grant period, will result in identification of the structural changes necessary to

create smaller learning communities, assign all students to a smaller learning community within the school(s), and describe the method the school(s) will use to place students in a smaller learning community. (10 points)

(2) Proposes a feasible and sound process to conduct research and plan for the development of smaller learning communities that address the operational and instructional considerations needed to facilitate student achievement. These considerations include a common core of rigorous academic coursework and a clear, sequenced program of study, appropriate teacher assignment and professional development, strategies for assisting struggling students, and strategies for ensuring school, district and community engagement and support. (15 points)

(3) Proposes a process for developing a plan that would ensure appropriate autonomy of the smaller learning communities in their administrative and managerial relationship to the governance structure of the high school(s) and the local school district, including other Federal grants and how those programs will come together to produce a comprehensive and successful smaller learning communities project. (10 points)

(4) Proposes a process for developing a plan that includes quantifiable goals, objectives, and timelines for implementing structures and operational strategies needed for the implementation of smaller learning communities, and phasing them in over the period of the grant, addresses evidence of achievement gaps within student populations, and identifies key personnel who are qualified to undertake project activities. (5 points)

(d) *Commitment of resources to the planning effort.* (20 points)

In determining the commitment of resources to the planning process, the Department will consider the extent to which the applicant:

(1) Requests a budget that adequately supports the proposed activities. Expenditures on equipment and administrative costs should be limited. (10 points)

(2) Provides evidence that the administrators of the district and school(s) understand and are committed to the smaller learning community concept, and to the inclusion of rigorous academic courses in smaller learning communities and propose to integrate project planning activities with local policy and to use other State, local, and Federal funds to ensure sustainability of efforts after Federal support ends. (10 points)

### *Implementation Grants*

(a) *Need for the project.* (10 points)

In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary will consider the extent to which the applicant:

(1) Describes and documents evidence of the applicant schools' need for implementation funds and how a smaller learning communities approach will facilitate improved student learning. Need may be demonstrated by such factors as: student achievement scores and enrollment; attendance and dropout rates; incidents of violence, drug and alcohol use, and disciplinary actions; percentage of students who have limited English proficiency, come from low-income families, or are otherwise disadvantaged; or other need factors as identified by the applicant. (5 points)

(2) Describes and documents the nature and magnitude of specific gaps or weaknesses in current school services, infrastructure, or opportunities and how the proposed project will address these gaps and weaknesses. (5 points)

(b) *Foundation for implementation.* (25 points)

In determining the quality of the implementation plan, the Department will consider the extent to which the applicant:

(1) Provides evidence of the involvement and support of teachers, administrators, and other pertinent staff within each school in the planning, development, and implementation of the proposal, particularly those teachers who will be directly affected by the implementation plan. (5 points)

(2) Provides evidence of how the applicant has involved and secured, and will continue to involve and secure, the on-going support of stakeholders within the broader local community (such as parents, institutions of higher education, businesses, employers, and community organizations, including local non-profit agencies, faith-based organizations, and other service organizations) in the planning process. (5 points)

(3) Provides evidence of how the proposed effort aligns with State education reform efforts designed to increase student achievement (5 points); and

(4) Provides evidence of how the applicant has identified and used evidence-based practices in the development of structural and operational strategies for creating smaller learning communities designed to improve student achievement. (10 points)

**Note:** Implementation grant applicants who received planning grants under either the FY