

Purpose

Our purpose is to design and implement a communications plan that will effectively engage stakeholders throughout the four years of Race to the Top implementation in Rhode Island.

Theory of Outcome

Building and maintaining stakeholder support and engagement for Race to the Top initiatives will enhance the success of programmatic implementation.

Evaluation

Communications and engagement strategies will be analyzed for effectiveness, which will inform improvements to state communications strategies and during Race to the Top implementation and beyond.

Context: Rhode Island's Race to the Top Plan

Rhode Island is using Race to the Top funding to realize a single powerful vision: an education system that prepares all Rhode Island students for success in college, careers, and life. Rhode Island's Race to the Top grant funds five statewide systems of support, which will benefit districts and schools across the state: (1) Standards and Curriculum; (2) Instructional Improvement; (3) Educator Effectiveness; (4) Human Capital Development; and (5) School Transformation and Innovation.

Key Messages

- Race to the Top is a source of funding that will help the state to meet the goals set out in its strategic plan, *Transforming Education in Rhode Island*.
- Rhode Island has set bold, achievable goals that will dramatically accelerate student achievement by strengthening our teachers and school leaders and the systems that support them in our state.
- Rhode Island's Race to the Top plan is a unified, statewide initiative. The state and participating LEAs are working together to build and implement statewide systems of support that benefit all students and educators.
- As one of only 12 Race to the Top winners, Rhode Island's plan for reform is recognized as one of the nation's best.



State-Level Communications: RIDE’s Role and Resources

This communications plan is carried out by Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) Race to the Top staff and project leads, using existing resources. Rhode Island’s Race to the Top plan includes one staff position dedicated to developing and implementing the communications plan; it does not include a budget for communications activities. RIDE may seek outside support to carry out additional communications and engagement strategies, as needed.

Internally, RIDE is tracking all communications and outreach conducted around Race to the Top, including communications materials used; meetings, trainings, and technical assistance conducted; attendance at meetings and trainings; and participant feedback on meetings and trainings. In conjunction with this plan, RIDE is using an internal Race to the Top communications workplan to guide and track progress on specific communications efforts. RIDE will maintain a working timeline illustrating the progression of planned Race to the Top activities, to be shared with LEAs and the public on the RIDE website.

The table below (and continued on page 5) lists the modes of communication that will be used with each target audience. RIDE’s overarching strategy is to “over-communicate,” communicating early and often with each target audience using various modes of information distribution and engagement, differentiated by the needs of each audience.

Audience	Intended Outcomes	Modes of Communication
<p>Local Education Agencies (LEAs) LEA leadership responsible for implementing Race to the Top and other reform initiatives</p>	<p>Enhance LEA awareness of and engagement in Race to the Top implementation to ensure fidelity of implementation, buy-in to systems of support, and sustainability of systems of support.</p> <p>Enhance LEA capacity to communicate about Race to the Top with educators, families, and communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioner’s field memo • Professional association (RISSA, RIASBO, RISTE) meetings and correspondence • Collaborative Learning for Outcomes meetings and virtual community • LEA Design Team meetings and correspondence • RIDE website • Correspondence from RIDE Race to the Top staff to LEA Race to the Top leadership teams • Committee work on systems of support • Training on systems of support • Annual Race to the Top kick-off meetings • Informational and technical assistance webinars • Messaging and informational materials to share with educators, families, and communities

Audience	Intended Outcomes	Modes of Communication
<p>All Educators Classroom teachers, school administrators, and other school professionals who will use and benefit from Race to the Top systems of support</p>	<p>Ensure that educators have access to timely and accurate information about the implementation and benefits of Race to the Top systems of support.</p> <p>Ensure that educators have opportunities to ask questions and engage in the design and implementation of Race to the Top systems of support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information shared and distributed by LEA leadership • RIDE website • Social media • Video messages from the Commissioner • Commissioner’s Updates emails • Commissioner’s meetings with teachers and school administrators in each district • News releases • News conferences and events • Committee work on systems of support • Professional association (RIASP, RIMLE, RIASCD, content-area associations) meetings and correspondence • Open meetings, forums, and webinars on systems of support • Training on systems of support
<p>Race to the Top Steering Committee Representatives from nearly every stakeholder group involved in Race to the Top</p>	<p>Enhance committee members’ capacity to communicate about Race to the Top with their respective constituencies and networks and serve as champions for Rhode Island’s Race to the Top plan.</p> <p>Support committee members in identifying additional vehicles and resources for communication and engagement around Race to the Top.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee meetings • Email correspondence from the Commissioner and RIDE Race to the Top staff • Other meetings with the Commissioner • Messaging and informational materials to share with constituencies • RIDE website
<p>All Rhode Islanders Students, families, community groups, civic leadership, and all Rhode Islanders</p>	<p>Ensure that all Rhode Islanders have access to information about the implementation and benefits of Race to the Top systems of support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information shared and distributed by LEAs and Steering Committee • RIDE website • Social media • Commissioner’s Updates emails • Video messages from the Commissioner • Commissioner’s community forums • News conferences • News releases • Commissioner’s speeches • Legislative updates and testimony

Evaluation

RIDE will track Race to the Top communications efforts against the key leading indicators listed in the table below and conduct an annual analysis of the effectiveness of our communications plan. That analysis will inform improvements to state communications strategies during Race to the Top implementation and beyond.

Of our four target audiences, RIDE has most direct access to the LEAs and to the Race to the Top Steering Committee. Part of our strategy with LEAs and with Steering Committee members is to enhance their capacity to communicate about Race to the Top with their educators, families, communities, and constituencies. For this reason, much of our communications efforts and our key indicators are focused on LEAs and the Steering Committee.

Key Leading Indicators of Successful Race to the Top Communications

- Attendance rates at meetings and trainings
- Percent of meeting and training participants who report that meeting/training was effective
- Percent of LEA representatives reporting that communications and engagement efforts are sufficient and/or effective in biannual surveys
- Percent of steering committee members reporting that communications and engagement efforts are sufficient and/or effective in biannual surveys
- Percent of Commissioner's Updates contact list members reporting that they support Race to the Top and that communications are sufficient and/or effective in biannual surveys
- Number of Race to the Top materials posted on RIDE website, relative to goals



For more information about Rhode Island's Race to the Top communications, contact Nicole Shaffer at nicole.shaffer@ride.ri.gov.