

November 2, 2009

Submitted at: <http://www.regulations.gov>

The Honorable Arne Duncan  
Attention: Investing in Innovation Fund Comments  
U.S. Department of Education,  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW., Room 4W321  
Washington, DC 20202

RE: Investing in Innovation [Docket ID ED-2009-OII-0012]

Dear Secretary Duncan:

On behalf of the Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA) and our more than 500 high-tech companies, I write in response to the U.S. Department of Education's notice of proposed priorities, requirements, definitions and selection criteria for the Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund (DOCKET ID ED-2009-OII-0012). SIIA appreciates this opportunity to comment on this important program.

SIIA is very supportive of the i3 program's goals of incenting and supporting education innovation, and generally of the proposed i3 rules. SIIA is the principal trade group of the software and digital content industry, representing more than 500 high-tech companies. All SIIA member companies look to the nation's schools to provide a skilled high-tech workforce, while many SIIA members partner with schools to provide educational software, digital curriculum, online services and related technologies. SIIA views technology as both a critical engine of school innovation and improvement, and necessary to meet the ARRA's four assurances as well as other educational goals and requirements.

SIIA's comments include a focus on the following:

- Further emphasis on the creation of vertically integrated systemic innovation zones that reform, leverage and align federal-state-local policy, practice and budgets to allow for the transformative reengineering of education delivery models needed for our students to compete in this digital age and global knowledge economy.
- More explicit attention to the critical role of technology and e-learning as necessary to bring innovation to education, personalize learning and differentiate instruction, and best address i3 goals and the four assurances.
- Clarification on the role of the private sector, and explicit inclusion of i3 grants centered around LEA use of third-party interventions and products.
- Support for several key research criteria and concepts, including fidelity of implementation, and ongoing evaluation and improvement, and expanded inclusion around use of intermediate outcomes.
- Clarification on the 20% matching requirement, including explicit allowance of in-kind contributions and that matching funds are not required from all private sector partners.

Please see below/attached a number of recommendations translating the issues outlined above (as well as several other issues) into specific suggested changes to the Investing in Innovation proposed priorities. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this important initiative. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions at [marks@siia.net](mailto:marks@siia.net) or 202-789-4444.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Schneiderman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark Schneiderman  
Senior Director, Education Policy

## Software & Information Industry Association

### Detailed Recommendations On Proposed Priorities

#### Investing in Innovation Fund (Docket ID ED-2009-OII-0012)

#### 1. Add a Competitive Preference Priority around Personalization of Learning through Transformative Delivery Models

SIIA encourages final i3 rules and grant awards that prioritize transformational innovation through the reengineering of education delivery models. SIIA proposes that i3 grants help incentivize a shift from a seat-time, assembly-line education model to a more flexible, student-centered model built around individual learning needs and pace, anytime-anywhere learning, and differentiated instruction (i.e., a shift from mass production to mass customization). These transformative innovations are occurring, but usually only at the margins of education, with larger scale initiatives too often limited by inflexible regulations and budget silos. SIIA encourages the use of i3 funds to support vertically integrated systemic innovation zones that reform, leverage and align policy, practice and budgets to create the conditions needed for this innovation.

SIIA recommends adding the following Competitive Preference Priority:

*“Personalization of Learning through Transformative Delivery Models. Under this proposed competitive preference priority, the Department would provide funding to support an integrated system of practices, strategies, and programs, including interventions, products, services and policies, that reengineer education delivery models, structures and formats, including through the use of technology and e-learning. Grants would help support a more flexible, student-centered model built around each student’s unique personalized learning needs and pace, anytime-anywhere learning, and differentiated instruction. Applicants would realign policies, regulations and budgets as necessary to shift away from a seat-time model to an outcomes-based model where learning time, place and pace are not fixed as the same for all students.”*

#### 2. Intervention and Product vs. Practice, Strategy or Program

The i3 draft rules repeatedly and exclusively reference “practice, strategy, or program” in describing the nature of the innovations to be supported. SIIA is concerned that the proposed rules do not explicitly include, and do not seem to recognize or allow for, grants that include one or more specific interventions, products or services as one of, or the only, core component. While the goal may have been to use broad, seemingly inclusive terms, we believe grant applicants may assume these are not eligible due to their complete omission. We hope this is not the Department’s intent. In contrast, for example, the What Works Clearinghouse, and much of the research literature around effectiveness, is built around specific interventions or products (broadly defined).

SIIA therefore asks the Department to clarify whether its intent is to consider such grant applications – those that include one or more specific interventions, products or services as one of, or the only, core component, including those provided by third-parties – to be appropriate and considered on a level-playing field with those centered around practices, strategies and programs.

SIIA recommends changes to the proposed priorities, requirements, definitions and selection criteria to both explicitly include interventions, products, and services, including those provided by third parties and those that are published, as well as to adjust rules as appropriate to reflect applications that include as one of, or the only, core component an intervention, product or service. Perhaps an additional definition may be needed.

SIIA recommends that, in all instances where the draft rules include “practice, strategy, or program,” that the final rules be changed to read either:

*“practice, strategy, or program, including products, interventions and services provided by a third party”*

or

*“practice, strategy, program, products, interventions or services, including those provided by a third party.”*

### 3. Role of the Private Sector

SIIA asks for final rules to clarify the role of the private sector, including especially the for-profit sector. The i3 statute recognizes the private sector as an important partner in educational innovation and improvement. The statute requires private sector partnership and includes as a basis of awards the work in partnership with the private sector, and the draft rules recognize the need for private sector partners to reach scale. Yet, the draft i3 rules leave a number of questions, including questions about the nature of those partners and the degree of their involvement.

SIIA therefore seeks clarification on the role of the private sector, including especially of those for-profits (and non-profits) who provide one or both of the following:

- educational products and services, including the core competency of replicating and scaling those educational interventions and programs; and
- the technology platforms, professional development, technical assistance and other supports necessary to scale an education innovation.

SIIA especially seeks final rules that clarify that their role extends beyond that of funding through corporate and other philanthropic foundations

First, as noted above, SIIA asks the Department to clarify whether and to what extent an innovation grant could include, as a core component, a product or service provided by a third-party private sector partner. SIIA recommends that the final rules be changed to make clear that third-party products and services can be one of, or the only, core component of the innovation practice, strategy or program.

Second, SIIA recommends that the final rules include a broader list of potential partners. For example, the draft rule overview of Scale-Up Grants encourages that “*Applicants can and should partner with others (e.g., service centers, State educational agencies, institutions of higher education) to disseminate and take to scale their effective practices, strategies, and programs.*” However, this list only includes a few types of traditional non-profit, government or academic partners and does not include, for example, technology developers, educational publishers, for-profit providers of professional development, etc.

SIIA recommends amending the Scale-Up overview (and other similar references) to read:

*“Applicants can and should partner with others (e.g., service centers, State educational agencies, institutions of higher education, and for-profit or non-profit private sector providers of products or services) to disseminate and take to scale their effective practices, strategies, and programs.”*

Third, SIIA recommends that the various private sector partnership roles be separated and elaborated in the final rules. These roles are:

- (1) provider of interventions, products or services that are a core component of the innovation;
- (2) providers of professional development, technical assistance, technology platforms, etc. necessary to scale an intervention, product, service, practice, strategy or program; and
- (3) philanthropic provider of matching funds, including in-kind contributions.

In some cases, two or all three of those roles may be served by the same entity, but that multiple roles, including providing of matching funds, should not be assumed, implied or required. In many cases, innovation grants may be designed around a core product or service provided by a third-party private sector entity. In most cases, innovation grantees may be looking to private sector providers for the support necessary to scale.

SIIA recommends amending the Proposed Eligibility Requirement (4) to read:

*“To be eligible for an award, an applicant must: . . . (4) Demonstrate that they have established partnerships with the private sector, which may include philanthropic organizations, providers of the products or services to be scaled, or providers of other products and services necessary to bring the innovation to scale, and that one or more of the private sector partners will provide matching funds, which may include in-kind contributions, in order to help bring results to scale;”*

Fourth, SIIA recommends that Proposed Selection Criteria (G), Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel, be modified to include the qualifications of key partners such that the final rule under (2)(b) reads:

*“(b) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director and key project personnel, including of key private sector partners such as providers of the products or services to be scaled or providers of other products and services necessary to bring the innovation to scale, especially in managing large, complex, and rapidly growing projects.”*

Fifth, SIIA recommends that the Proposed Selection Criteria (C), Experience of the Applicant, be modified to include the experience of key partners such that the final rule under (2) reads:

- “(2) In determining the experience of the applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:*
- (a) The past performance of the applicant, including that of its partners, in implementing large, complex, and rapidly growing projects.*
  - (b) The extent to which an applicant provides information and data demonstrating that it and its partners has (or has supported an LEA in taking actions that have)-- . . .”*

#### 4. Limitation on Private Sector Partners or Products / Interventions

SIIA seeks clarification on whether there are any limitations on the number of grant applications in which a private sector entity may be a partner. Does the Department intend for such a limitation?

Similarly, SIIA seeks clarification on whether there are any limitations on the number of grant applications (presumably from different applicants) that include a particular private sector partner's intervention, product, service, etc. Does the Department intend for such a limitation?

SIIA recommends that the final rules be clarified to explicitly state that there are no such limitations on applications, though we recognize that the Department, all else being equal, may choose to not award multiple grants that include the same or similar partners or innovations.

#### 5. Additional Priorities vs. Scale and All Students

SIIA seeks clarification of what appear to be inconsistencies between the targeting of several additional priorities to specific student populations and the general proposed selection criteria and definitions that emphasize applications that meet the needs of all students. We ask for clarification that grant proposals may address specific student populations, including but not limited to those identified under Additional Priorities, and that a successful grant proposal would not necessarily need to demonstrate its ability to meet the needs of all types of students.

The additional priorities are largely focused on specific student populations – i.e., early learning, college access, students with disabilities and limited English proficient students, and rural LEAs. In apparent contrast, the proposed selection criteria (E)(c) calls for grantees to demonstrate their Strategy and Capacity to Scale, including “(c) *The feasibility of the proposed project to be replicated successfully, if positive results are obtained, in a variety of settings and with a variety of student populations.*” The definitions of Regional Level and National Level includes that projects be appropriate for use in “*a wide variety of communities and student populations . . . including rural and urban areas, as well as with different groups of students described in section 111(b)(3)(C)(xiii) of the ESEA (i.e., economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, migrant students, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, student gender).*” We seek clarification that a proposal targeted to, for example, students with disabilities, should not necessarily be expected to succeed with other student populations.

In light of the fact that many programs and interventions are inherently designed for certain settings or certain student populations, SIIA is concerned that the draft rules may suggest otherwise. In education, we know now that one size does not fit all, and that personalization of education is needed to meet the needs of each student. In some cases, characteristics of educational setting or student population may greatly influence the likelihood of success. It is a challenge to our educational system to understand these differences in order to best target programs and interventions accordingly. SIIA understands the goal of supporting initiatives that can work broadly, but that may inadvertently exclude many demonstrated to be effective or promising with only certain types of students or in only certain conditions.

#### 6. Timing and Funding of Scale

It remains unclear to what degree the proposed full scaling of an innovation would take place during the grant period and using grant funding. SIIA seeks clarification on whether the Secretary expects

the proposed scaling to be accomplished 100% during the grant period, or whether the grant funding is only expected to enable a certain share of that effort during the grant period? And if the latter, what share is expected to be completed during the grant period and using grant funds?

## 7. Timeline

SIIA encourages a more aggressive timeline such that grants can be awarded before the start of the 2010-2011 school year, thus allowing for implementation during the year. Grants that are awarded mid-year may be delayed into the next school year before they can be fully implemented, thus delaying progress as well as the economic impact of these funds.

Development grants

## 8. Intermediate Variables and Outcomes

SIIA strongly supports the proposed rule that *“an applicant for a Scale-up grant could demonstrate success through an intermediate variable directly correlated with these outcomes, such as teacher or school leader effectiveness or improvements in school climate.”*

SIIA encourages the use of intermediate outcomes throughout the proposed rules. However, the proposed rules do not appear to include the consistent reference to intermediate outcomes. SIIA asks the Secretary to clarify whether it is the intent to allow the use of intermediate outcomes throughout. If so, SIIA asks that changes be made throughout the final rules to reflect this option. SIIA is concerned that excluding grants in areas where direct impact on student achievement is difficult to measure or demonstrate would have the unintended consequence of excluding many important educational innovations.

For example, technology serves many educational purposes from instructional to administrative, from assessment to professional development, and from data warehousing systems to information productivity applications. While improved student achievement is the ultimate outcome, research and other limitations sometimes make it challenging to measure or demonstrate the direct impact of certain technologies on student achievement. These technologies are often measured through such intermediate outcomes as teacher retention rates, changes in classroom practice or efficiency, availability and use of data, or other student/teacher/school outcomes that can be observed and measured, and that, as demonstrated by other research, are likely to impact other final outcomes such as improved student achievement.

SIIA recommends that the final rules reflect the option of using intermediate variables throughout, including the following:

- Change the Eligibility Requirement to read:

*“To be eligible for an award, an applicant must:*

*(1) Have significantly closed the achievement gaps between groups of students described in section 1111(b)(2) of the ESEA (economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with limited English proficiency, students with disabilities), including through an intermediate variable directly correlated with these outcomes;*

*(2) Have exceeded the State's annual measurable objectives consistent with section 1111(b)(2) of the ESEA for two or more consecutive years, including through an intermediate*

*variable directly correlated with these outcomes, or have demonstrated success in significantly increasing student achievement for all groups of students described in that section through another measure, such as measures described in section 1111(c)(2) of the ESEA (i.e., the National Assessment of Educational Progress); . . .”*

- Change the definition of research for Scale-Up, Validation and Improvement grants. For example, change validation grants to read:

*“2. Validation grants would provide funding to support practices, strategies, or programs that show promise, but for which there is currently only moderate evidence (as defined in this notice) that the proposed practice, strategy, or program will have a statistically significant effect on improving student achievement or student growth, closing achievement gaps, decreasing dropout rates, or increasing high school graduation rates, ), including through an intermediate variable directly correlated with these outcomes, and that with further study, the effect of implementing the proposed practice, strategy, or program may prove to be substantial and important.”*

## 9. Quality of the Project Evaluation

SIIA strongly supports Proposed Selection Criteria, Quality of the Project Evaluation (D)(2)(c) and (D)(2)(d). These criteria recognize the important concepts of an implementation model, fidelity of implementation and ongoing evaluation and improvement. As the draft rules suggest, results, and therefore research results, are heavily influenced by the extent and quality of implementation.

For example, implementation of a technology-based intervention or practice occurs within very complex organizational structure of resources and people. Insufficient hardware access, too little time on task, lack of educator willingness and/or ability to appropriately integrate the technology, and inadequate school leadership and support can all negatively affect the implementation and, therefore, the impact. Simply providing technology without efforts to ensure that it is being used as intended and is functioning as designed—which may include the vendor ensuring necessary training, support, and leadership commitment—may not be an experimental condition that can be expected to succeed. For example, if a technology is not matched closely to the curriculum and instructional strategy, results are compromised.

The condition in the research study is therefore ideally composed not only of the product or service itself, but also of the context and support for its use. In other words, the question is not simply whether the intervention works, but how well it works under particular conditions. Thus the treatment is best described in terms of an implementation model provided by the technology developer. Understanding these implementation conditions is, of course, necessary to facilitate replication, as well as further testing.

## 10. Limitation of Applications to a Single Funding Category

SIIA is concerned with the potential limitations posed by the proposed Funding Categories rule that *“An applicant must state in its application whether it is applying for a Scale-up, Validation, or Development grant. An applicant may not submit an application for the same proposed project under more than one type of grant. An applicant will be considered for an award only for the type of grant for which it applies.”*



SIIA's concerns center around the research evidence requirements and the standards and criteria the Secretary will use to evaluate that evidence. While SIIA does not doubt that the Secretary will employ an impartial and objective review process, such review decisions will ultimately be based upon somewhat subjective interpretations and judgments. SIIA is concerned that a grant applicant may assume its evidence would meet, for example, the Scale-Up grant, while the Secretary's review process would instead judge it as not meeting that criteria. Under the proposed rule, the applicant would be rejected and would have had no opportunity for an alternative application for, for example, a Validation grant.

Instead, SIIA recommends that: (1) either applicants be allowed to apply to multiple categories, with the understanding they would receive only one award; or (2) the Department recommends (subject to the applicant's approval) the application for an alternative grant type if the review process finds that it is a quality application, but either does not meet or exceeds the research criteria of the original grant type.

Otherwise, SIIA is concerned that good grant applications may be rejected only because a grantee chose the wrong category based on their interpretation of research evidence criteria and of the quality of their research evidence itself.

## 11. Cost Sharing or Matching

SIIA seeks clarification regarding the requirement that *"An applicant must obtain matching funds or in-kind donations equal to at least 20 percent of its grant award."* In the following cases, SIIA recommends clarification in the final rules to answer these questions.

- Must all matching funds come from private sources? The statute requires that applicants: *"(4) demonstrate that they have established partnerships with the private sector, which may include philanthropic organizations, and that the private sector will provide matching funds in order to help bring results to scale."* However, the statute does not include the 20 percent figure. This suggests that the statute only requires some matching funds, and that the Secretary could allow that a portion of those matching funds could come from other sources. SIIA recommends that final rules clarify that not all funds must come from private sources.
- May matching funds come from other non-federal funding sources, including state agency grants, local agency budget, and indirect costs? SIIA recommends that those sources of funds be allowed, provided that at least some matching funds come from private sector sources, and that the final rule be clarified to reflect this allowance.
- May in-kind donations include discounts off interventions, products, services, etc., including those that are a component of the innovation to be scaled and that are provided by third-party private sector partners? SIIA recommends that the final rule include explicit allowance of such discounts, while making clear that such discounts are not required.
- May in-kind donations include discounts off of services or products such as professional development, technical assistance, technology platforms, etc. that are used to scale the innovation and that are provided by third-party private sector partners? SIIA recommends that

the final rule include explicit allowance of such discounts, while making clear that such discounts are not required.

- Must all private sector partners provide matching funds? As noted above, SIIA recommends that this requirement not be extended to all partners. SIIA seeks to ensure that private sector partners integral to the innovation or application are not eliminated de facto due to their inability to contribute financially.

SIIA recommends that Proposed Eligibility Requirement (4) be clarified by adding the following sentence:

*“(4) Demonstrate that they have established partnerships with the private sector, which may include philanthropic organizations, and that one or more of the private sector partners will provide matching funds or in-kind donations, including discounts off products or services, in order to help bring results to scale; and”*

SIIA recommends that explanatory note on Cost Sharing or Matching under Proposed Eligibility Requirement (4) be clarified in the final rule to read:

*“Cost Sharing or Matching: To be eligible for an award, an applicant must demonstrate that it has established one or more partnerships with an entity or organization in the private sector, which may include philanthropic organizations, and that the entity or organization in the private sector will provide matching funds or in-kind donations, including discounts off products or services, in order to help bring project results to scale. An applicant may establish one or more partnerships with a private sector entity that does not provide matching funds or in-kind donations.”*

## 12. Costs per Student and Cost Effectiveness

SIIA recognizes the importance of the cost per student in evaluating i3 grants, but SIIA is concerned with the potential unintended consequences of weighing cost too heavily if related considerations are not factored. SIIA notes that many innovations may rely on capacity and infrastructure, including technology, that is either existing or should exist, and that is best amortized over multiple uses and multiple years. SIIA supports the notion of including cost effectiveness, but notes that the draft rules neither weigh cost savings nor calculate net costs relative to outcome gains.

Proposed Selection Criteria (e), Strategy and Capacity to Scale, includes (for example, under Scale-Up grants): “(d) The applicant's estimate of the cost of the proposed project, which includes start-up and operating costs per student (including indirect costs) for reaching the total number of students proposed to be served by the project, as well as for the applicant or others to reach 100,000, 500,000, and 1,000,000 students.”

SIIA raises several factors for consideration through the example of technology-based innovations:

- First, existing technology infrastructure (e.g., computer hardware access, high-speed broadband network, etc.) will vary widely among school districts and schools.
- Second, much of this technology infrastructure is likely necessary for a large and wide number of educational functions, not just those related to the grant-funded innovation.
- Third, much of this technology infrastructure can be amortized over a number of years.

- Fourth, as in other sectors, technology-based approaches in education can be more productive and efficient, thus maintaining or improving outcome levels but at a lower cost than the existing traditional method.

SIIA is concerned that the failure by grantees or the Department to appropriately consider these factors could result in costs per student for a technology-based innovation grant that are significantly skewed, and therefore potentially placed at a competitive disadvantage relative to other grants.

More specifically, SIIA recommends that the final rules include more explicit guidance for grantees so that such indirect start-up costs are appropriately calculated, and so that the full costs of baseline technology infrastructure are not included, but instead only those extraordinary costs specific to the innovation itself. For example, the average school today has about a 4:1 (student per computer) ratio, and so innovation applications requiring no greater access should not need to factor in computer hardware costs, just as they would not need to factor in costs of desks or pencils.

SIIA further encourages that the final rules, to the extent the Department truly wishes to consider cost effectiveness, include not just costs but also push applicants to report direct and indirect cost savings, and compare those relative to outcomes, including intermediary outcomes.

### 13. Widely Adopted

The Proposed Selection Criteria, (A) Need for the Project and Quality of the Project Design, includes (2)(a): *“The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priorities the applicant is seeking to meet (i.e., addresses a largely unmet need, particularly for high-need students, and is a practice, strategy, or program that has not already been widely adopted).”*

SIIA seeks clarification on “widely adopted.” Does that refer to scale (i.e., numbers of students, teachers, schools, etc.), scope (i.e., most states), or both? For example, there may be practices, strategies and programs that are implemented throughout the country, but which may only be used in a select few schools or districts within the state. Conversely, there may be practices, strategies and programs implemented very widely within a certain state or region, including very large numbers of students, but which is relatively unknown or untried in other states or regions.

### 14. Proposed Absolute Priority 2, Innovations That Improve the Use of Data

SIIA supports this priority. Unlike many other sectors, education stakeholders – including students, educators, parents and policymakers – have a dearth of data available to them to inform and make decisions. SIIA recommends a number of specific changes to further clarify the proposed rules and ensure inclusion of a full range of data innovations.

SIIA recommends that the final rule includes: (1) data collection; and (2) and additional data types beyond student achievement or growth data, considering that other student, teacher or school data, including data around intermediate outcomes, is often valuable and even necessary.

SIIA recommends that the final rule read:

*“Statement of the Proposed Absolute Priority. Under proposed absolute priority 2, the Department would provide funding to support strategies, practices, or programs that encourage and facilitate the collection, evaluation, analysis, and use of student, teacher or school data, including achievement or student growth data by educators, families, and other stakeholders in order to inform instruction and decision-making; improve student achievement or student growth, and teacher, school leader, school, or LEA performance and productivity; or enable data aggregation, analysis, and research.”*

#### 15. Proposed Absolute Priority 3 – Innovations That Complement the Implementation of High Standards and High-Quality Assessments

SIIA is very supportive of this priority to improve state academic standards and implement aligned assessments to ensure more students graduate college and career ready.

SIIA notes that Priority 3 seems to be focused exclusively on “states,” and asks that the final rule clarify whether that is the Department’s intent?

Further, SIIA recommends that the final rule be modified to include not only states, but also the other i3 eligible applicants of local educational agencies and a partnership between a nonprofit organization and LEAs or schools. Most of the examples cited in Proposed Priority 3 – e.g., acquiring and implementing high-quality curricular materials and assessments, delivering professional development, and using assessment and other data to inform classroom practice – are largely local district and school functions, though states certainly can play an important supportive role.

#### 16. Proposed Absolute Priority 4 – Innovations That Turn Around Persistently Low-Performing Schools

SIIA supports this absolute priority. As an initial observation, SIIA notes the apparent inconsistency between the draft i3 rules for this priority and the related draft rules in both the Race to the Top and Title I School Improvement. While the differences are not necessarily in conflict, and while SIIA had some concerns and recommended that the final rules for those two programs include several changes, it would seem – as a matter of principle and to provide clarity and simplicity to grantees and other stakeholders – that the Department should strive toward such consistency when appropriate, including in this situation.

More specifically, SIIA does recommend a number of changes in the final rule:

Personalized Learning. SIIA recommends that the final priority add a focus or example that centers around the shift from a seat-time, assembly-line education model to a more flexible, student-centered model built around individual learning needs and pace, anytime-anywhere learning, and differentiated instruction.

SIIA recommends adding the following:

*“Implementing innovative policies and practices to reengineer education delivery models, structures and formats, including through the use of technology and e-learning, to provide a more flexible, student-centered model built around each student’s unique personalized learning needs and pace, anytime-anywhere learning, and differentiated instruction.”*

Instructional Improvement System. SIIA recommends including the following System, copied from the proposed Race to the Top rules and proposed to be modified by SIIA (see single underline) as an example of an innovation to turn around persistently low-performing schools:

*“Implementing an Instructional Improvement System, defined as technology-based and other tools that provide teachers, principals, and administrators with meaningful support for a cycle of continuous instructional improvement, including activities such as: instructional planning; gathering information (e.g., through formative assessments, interim assessments, and looking at student work and other student data); analyzing information with the support of rapid-time reporting; using this information to differentiate instruction and inform decisions on appropriate next steps; and evaluating the effectiveness of the actions taken.”*

Increasing Instructional Time. The proposed Absolute Priority 4 includes targeted reform (b)(1) to increase instructional time for core academic content. SIIA recommends modifying this requirement to allow for the restructuring of existing instructional time. Student instruction can be enhanced through the more efficient use of existing instructional time through the use of software, online tutoring, and other methods. In a traditional direct instruction setting, instruction cannot be easily differentiated, and so an individual student may find that much of the instruction does not meet their learning needs. These alternative methods can make for more efficient and productive use of the time, and may be more cost effective to extending the number of hours.

SIIA recommends amending (b)(1) to read: *“Providing more time for students to learn core academic content by expanding the school day, school week, or the school year, making more efficient use of existing instructional time through technologies and other means for differentiating instruction, or by increasing instructional time for core academic subjects during the day and in the summer.”*