



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

May 11, 2011

The Honorable Rick Scott
Executive Office of the Governor
PL05, The Capitol
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0001

Dear Governor Scott:

I am writing in response to the document submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) on April 11, 2011, by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). That document outlined PARCC's revised approach for item development under its Race to the Top Assessment (RTTA) grant. As you know, the Department has the authority to approve amendments to your plan and budget provided that such a change does not alter the scope or objectives of the approved proposal. On February 28, 2011, the Department sent a letter to you indicating the process that would be used to review any amendment to PARCC's approved plan. To determine whether approval could be granted for this request, the Department has applied the conditions noted in the February 28 letter.

I am pleased to approve your proposal. Under this amendment, PARCC will create two phases for assessment development by separating item prototyping activities from the operational assessment development, as opposed to its original plan to incorporate item development into the overall operational assessment development work. This will enable PARCC to identify and try out innovative and functional items and through-course components early in the process. PARCC will issue sole-source contracts to multiple public universities, permissible under Florida procurement law, for the item prototyping work. This change is consistent with the requirements in 34 CFR 80.36(a) that grantees follow the same policies and procedures they use for procurements from non-Federal funds. This change also revises the timeline and process for procuring services for the development of the operational assessment. PARCC will use the Invitation to Negotiate (ItN) process, a full and open competitive process, to procure services for assessment development. The ItN is scheduled to be released in October 2011. The approved change does not change PARCC's budget for assessment development nor will it impede PARCC's ability to have its proposed assessment system delivered as required by school year 2014-15. Most importantly, the changes do not impact PARCC's full compliance with the absolute priority for the grant award, which is developing a new assessment system that will be used by multiple states; is valid, reliable, and fair for its intended purpose and for all student subgroups; and measures student knowledge and skills against a common set of college- and career-ready standards in mathematics and English language arts.

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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

As noted in our communication of February 28, 2011, this approval letter will be posted on the Department's website as a public record of the amendment.

I am confident that PARCC will continue its bold efforts to create a next-generation assessment that will more accurately measure what students know and are able to do. If you need any assistance or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Patrick Rooney at (202) 453-5514 or Patrick.Rooney@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

/s

Ann Whalen
Deputy Director
Implementation and Support Unit

cc: Commissioner Eric Smith
Kris Ellington
Linda Champion
Laura Slover