



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

June 17, 2013

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 amendment request submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) on June 11, 2013, by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). PARCC proposed an amendment requesting a no cost extension of the grant period for the purpose of completing three non-summative assessment components of the approved project and selected research studies requiring data that will not be available until a few months before the grant period ends.

As you know, the Department has the authority to approve an amendment to your plan and budget provided that such a change does not alter the scope or objectives of the approved grant project. The Department's February 28, 2011, letter establishes the review process for any amendment to PARCC's approved plan. In determining whether to approve this request, the Department has applied the conditions noted in the February 28 letter.

Through this amendment request, PARCC proposes to extend the development period for the diagnostic, formative, and speaking and listening assessment components. Accordingly, these components would not be operational for state use until the 2015-2016 school year.

PARCC proposed this amendment in order to address challenges regarding state and national content experts having sufficient time to complete all facets of this work during the grant period, given that these experts are needed for both the summative and non-summative assessment development. The consortium reports that this change will permit PARCC to better coordinate the development of the summative and non-summative assessment components to minimize the time that the development work overlaps. PARCC reports that capacity constraints at both the state and contractor levels limit the consortium's ability to simultaneously develop and review summative and non-summative assessment items and that this change will permit the consortium to stagger summative and non-summative development work to develop all components with high quality.

In addition, the consortium is requesting an amendment to adjust its approach on its optional K-2 formative tools by refocusing on grades K-1 and developing exemplar items and tasks that will provide resources to educators and states doing related work. Because of the previously approved amendment to develop diagnostic assessments, which will be available for grade 2, PARCC does not believe the grade 2 formative exemplar items and tasks are necessary. It is the Department's understanding that PARCC's summative assessments in the English language arts and mathematics as well as the optional mid-year interim assessments are still being designed and developed for grades 3-8 and high school as planned and will be available and operational in the 2014-2015 school year. Furthermore, PARCC has stated that the assessment professional development modules, and the Partnership Resource Center

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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.

will be available in time for the 2014-2015 school year. PARCC's change to the K-1 formative tools, in addition to cost savings realized through technology and the revised timing of development, will reduce PARCC's overall budget for the non-summative assessment components. The Department anticipates receiving an additional amendment request detailing how these funds will be directed.

Through this amendment request, the consortium is clarifying when it will complete several of the research projects outlined in its proposal. Some of its research projects depend upon data from the field test, which will not be available until summer 2014. Therefore, the no cost extension allows PARCC to use the best available data to inform continued assessment development work.

The Department *conditionally approves* this amendment, including the request for the extension of the grant period. During the first two years of the grant, PARCC experienced delays with procuring the services necessary to support the assessment system and challenges with project management and summative assessment development. As a result, the Department approves this change, in which the consortium is prioritizing its work to develop the summative assessments and taking advantage of a no cost extension to develop the three non-summative assessment components for the 2015-2016 school year, conditional on the consortium's development and implementation of a revised, comprehensive project management and procurement plan.

To receive full approval, PARCC must, by July 31, 2013, formally submit a revised, comprehensive budget and sufficiently detailed overall project plan. With that submission, PARCC must provide justification for the changes from the approved budget and plan, including the use of the funds saved with this change to the three non-summative components. The Department received a draft project plan on May 31, 2013, but an amendment request with additional detail and justification is necessary for the Department to fully analyze the proposed changes.

As part of the regular program review process, PARCC will continue to provide a monthly update on its progress against project deadlines, including any delays and mitigation strategies.

The original grant period ends on September 26, 2014. The Department is hereby approving a one year no cost extension for certain non-summative assessment components and selected research projects. The project period for this work will therefore extend through August 1, 2015. It is our understanding that this amendment and no cost extension will not result in a change to PARCC's performance measures and outcomes, nor will they substantially change the scope and objectives of the work. Please note that we are expecting grantees to liquidate all funds by September 1, 2015, given that by law all Race to the Top Assessment funds revert to the U.S. Department of Treasury as of October 1, 2015. The Department is not awarding any additional funds through this amendment approval. The consortium must request and receive approval to move forward with no cost extensions for any additional projects.

The grantee remains responsible for complying with all terms and conditions of the grant award and with all statutory and regulatory obligations.

As noted in our communication of February 28, 2011, this letter will be posted on the Department's website as a public record of the amendment proposal and consideration. If you need any assistance or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Jessica McKinney at (202) 401-1960 or Jessica.McKinney@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

//s//

Ann Whalen
Director, Policy and Program Implementation
Implementation and Support Unit

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cc: Tony Bennett, Florida Department of Education
Mitchell Chester, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Michael Cohen, Achieve, Inc.
Linda Champion, Florida Department of Education
Laura Slover, Achieve, Inc.
James Mason, Mississippi Department of Education
Mary Ann Snider, Rhode Island Department of Education