



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

April 15, 2014

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, Washington 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee:

I am writing in response to the request submitted by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced) on March 4, 2014, to make adjustments to its approved budget. As you know, the U.S. Department of Education (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 the Smarter Balanced approved plan. In determining whether to approve this request, the Department has applied the conditions noted in the February 28 letter.

The Department approves the overall reallocation of funds within the budget modules, which will reduce the money allocated to assessment design, system design, research and evaluation, and professional capacity and outreach and increase the allocation to governance and technology, as described below.

- In System Design, reallocate \$59,875 from funds that were not necessary to carry out the work carried out in this module to develop cost estimates for the operational assessment and for support developing Smarter Balanced requests for proposals during the grant period.
- In Assessment Design, reallocate \$1,666,130 from this module to the Governance and Technology modules. Smarter Balanced reported that it saved \$1,652,289 due to changes in its item development activities, including changes in its contract for item development and eliminating the system to have states donate existing test items to the consortium. In addition, the consortium reports that it has funds remaining for procurement activities following the completion of all

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procurement (\$210,381), funds for technical consultants (\$133,578), and for technical assistance meetings (\$425,835).

Smarter Balanced will add two activities to this module, analyses of the performance of English learners and students with disabilities on the field test in spring 2014 and the creation of formative tasks and modules for the Digital Library specifically designed for teachers of English learners. In addition, the consortium will add \$400,000 to support other Assessment Design activities.¹

- Reallocate \$985,864 from the Research and Evaluation module for the Governance and Technology module activities noted below. This is primarily due to the postponement of studies included in the budget that will no longer be carried out during the grant period because they are dependent upon data from the first operational administration. Smarter Balanced will use part of the savings from this change to add \$124,000 for several research activities related to the field test, such as a study involving items from NAEP and PISA and a second round of item calibration following the completion of the field test.
- In Professional Capacity and Outreach, reallocate \$248,471 that supported travel and membership fees that are no longer needed in year four of the grant period for the Council of State School Officers' (CCSSO) State Collaboratives on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS). In addition to the \$248,471 reallocated to other budget modules, the consortium will shift \$400,000 within this module intended for the Director of Communications and a communications service provider to support other Professional Capacity and Outreach activities.²
- In Governance, reallocate \$909,679 to this module from the modules outlined above. This will support the development of a state procedures manual and certification process, the addition of an all-state collaboration conference in summer 2014, and to add staff capacity to support the transition to the operational assessment system following the end of the grant period. From this total reallocation, the consortium will add \$171,011 to support other Governance activities.³
- In Technology, increase the budget for this module by \$2,048,661. As part of this realignment, Smarter Balanced will reallocate \$466,491 from specific technology activities to other technology activities. Smarter Balanced will reduce the expected expenditures to support interoperability certification from \$903,165 to \$603,165. In addition, the consortium conducted two studies to support the use of automated scoring of assessments and will repurpose the remaining \$137,254

¹ Smarter Balanced will submit an amendment to the Department by July 1, 2014, describing the proposed use(s) of \$400,000.

² Smarter Balanced will submit an amendment to the Department by July 1, 2014, describing the proposed use(s) of \$400,000.

³ Smarter Balanced will submit an amendment to the Department by July 1, 2014, describing the proposed use(s) of \$171,011.

intended for this activity. The consortium's procurements for the digital library, data warehouse, and test delivery platform were finalized and the remaining funds allocated to support those procurements (\$29,237) will be shifted to support other technology activities.

The increase to the technology budget will support additional work to add functionality to the test delivery platform, the item authoring and archive tool, and the data warehouse and to add the capacity for teacher hand scores of the interim assessments to be captured in the assessment system. Of this total reallocation to technology, \$1,000,000 will be shifted to support other Technology activities.⁴

It is the Department's understanding that the requested budget adjustments will not change the consortium's scope of work nor result in a change to the consortium's approved master work plan. This approval letter will be posted on the Department's website as a public record of this amendment.

As always, the Department looks forward to a continued partnership with Smarter Balanced as it completes its goal of designing and implementing an assessment system that will provide information to students, parents, and educators about student readiness for college and careers. If you have questions or need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Patrick Rooney at Patrick.Rooney@ed.gov or (202) 453-5514.

Sincerely,

//s//

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

cc: Randy Dorn, Washington State Superintendent
Joe Willhoft, Executive Director, Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
Tony Alpert, Chief Operating Officer, Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
Michael Middleton, Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public
Instruction
Stanley Rabinowitz, WestEd

⁴ Smarter Balanced will submit an amendment to the Department by July 1, 2014, describing the proposed use(s) of \$1,000,000.