



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

May 4, 2012

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

Dear Governor Gregoire:

I am writing in response to the revised timeline amendment request submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) on February 20, 2012, by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced). This timeline proposed to revise the dates by which activities related to the development of the summative assessments will be completed. Smarter Balanced submitted this proposed revised timeline to reflect the work completed since the previous timeline was submitted in fall 2011 and approved on November 22, 2011. The consortium awarded several contracts over the past six months, generally in line with that workplan. As that work has gotten underway, however, the consortium has revised the order and timing of subsequent work, to align with the work currently underway and to prioritize the work necessary to meet key activities. The revised timeline maintains the overall plan from Smarter Balanced to conduct a pilot test during the 2012-2013 school year and a field test in 2013-2014 in preparation for having an operational test for administration in the 2014-2015 school year.

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 proposal. On February 28, 2011, the Department sent a letter to you indicating the process that would be used to review any amendment to the approved plan from Smarter Balanced. To determine whether approval could be granted for this request, the Department has reviewed the request against the principles noted in the February 28 letter.

I am pleased to approve your revised timeline. It is our understanding that this amendment will not result in a change to the consortium's overall outcomes or key activities from the approved plan, nor will it change the scope of work. This timeline, in

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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.

conjunction with your approved plan, will now be the primary manner by which the Department evaluates the progress of Smarter Balanced. As we noted in our letter on November 22, 2011, we remain concerned about the tight timelines and the interdependent nature of the projects. While we acknowledge the progress you have made to date, including awarding in the past six months several important contracts related to the development of the summative assessments, any deviation or delay from this schedule will likely have consequences for future work. Your continued commitment to maintaining your timeline is crucial to ensuring Smarter Balanced continues to meet its goals to develop a next-generation assessment system by the 2014-2015 school year.

I also understand that the revisions to the schedule will necessitate revisions to the budget, both to account for projects that have shifted in the time period in which they will be carried out and because you have gained a better understanding of whether the estimated costs provided with the grant application need to be adjusted. The Department requests that Smarter Balanced submit by June 4, 2012, for our review and approval a revised budget that reflects these changes.

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

I am confident that Smarter Balanced will continue its efforts to create the next generation of assessment systems 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 Patrick.Rooney@ed.gov or (202) 453-5514.

Sincerely,

/s/

Ann Whalen
Director, Policy and Program Implementation

Enclosure

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