



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



February 23, 2017

Dr. Cynthia L. Tate
Executive Director
Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development
160 N LaSalle St, Suite N-100
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Dr. Tate,

This letter is in response to Illinois' request to amend its approved Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant. On January 23, 2017, the Illinois' Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development submitted a budget amendment request for funds to be moved within and across all 13 grant projects from one fiscal year of the State's budget to another.

As you are aware, the Departments have 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 July 18, 2012, the Departments sent a document to Project Directors describing the process by which amendments would be reviewed and approved or denied. To determine whether approval could be granted, the Departments have applied the conditions noted in that document and compared it with RTT-ELC program requirements and conditions. Based on the documentation submitted, Illinois has fulfilled the conditions required for the Departments to approve the requested budget amendment.

The State has the Departments' approval to move a total of \$1,166,466.41 of unspent funds from its Year 4 budget to Year 5. Specifically, Illinois may transfer \$1,166,466.41 among budget lines within Projects 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13. Illinois requests to transfer \$724,874.96 from Projects 11, 12, and 13 into Projects 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10. The total sum of the funds to be reallocated is \$1,891,341.37.

The description of Illinois' continued project work is as follows:

Project 1 (Grant Management): These funds will support the Illinois' staff to complete Illinois' Scope of Work and full expend all federal funds. As RTT-ELC projects near completion, the Illinois Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) has adjusted its staffing plan to ensure continuity of project management; during the No-Cost Extension year, their RTT-ELC positions include the Executive Director, Deputy Director, Data Manager, and the Grants Manager.

Project 2 (Core-Infrastructure for QRIS): Illinois has been working towards continued refinement of its QRIS data system and processes to support QRIS applications and renewal. Illinois is working to streamline systems and processes as a key strategy for sustainability. Additional funding in this project is an essential component towards meeting performance measures for enrollment of programs in the QRIS system.

Project 3 (Core Supports for Quality Improvement): Illinois will continue its progress meeting ambitious performance measures. Reflected in this budget amendment request are key activities to support Culturally Competent Practice Awards of Excellence resources, translation of on-line and in-person training curriculum into Spanish, and training materials and resources for Gateways credentials.

Project 4 (Core Infrastructure for QRIS Assessments): The QRIS Assessor will complete their work related to the external assessment of programs in the State's QRIS (ExceleRate Illinois). The QRIS Assessor will assess Head Start school-based programs, collect and analyze the data and assist the State in determining if their key performance metrics were met.

Project 5 (Public Awareness): The funds will be used for building awareness of the importance of high quality early care and education experiences. Illinois will print and distribute ExceleRate Brain Activity Books in Spanish, promote education reimbursement opportunities for license exempt providers to achieve the ECE Credential Level 1 and filming key projects across the State to document innovative work being completed under RTT-ELC.

Project 8 (Gateways Registry): Illinois is working to process 12,500 Gateways Registry credential applications. The number of applications requires additional time to complete processing. The Illinois RTT-ELC is working to have all centers and family child care homes apply for credentials; applicants will then receive credentials, from the Gateways Registry, based on the requirements met for coursework/experience.

Project 9 (Professional Development): Illinois saw a significant increase in the number of credentialed early childhood professional due to RTT-ELC grant support. Illinois also made tremendous progress aligning the Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) credential system. Year 5 will allow Illinois to transition credentials to a competency-based framework and provide concrete assistance to IHEs to implement the framework.

Project 10 (Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS)): The State overestimated the underspending for Project Year 3 and moved funds into Project Year 4 in the budget amendment dated September 2016. The underspending was less than Illinois predicted and additional funds are needed to reconcile the actual expenditures.

Project 13 (Targeted High Need Communities): Illinois proposes to transfer a total of \$1,403.08 of unspent funds into Project 13—Targeted High-Need Communities. The State overestimated the underspending for Project Year 3 and moved funds into Project Year 4 in the budget amendment dated September 2016. The underspending was less than Illinois predicted and additional funds are needed to reconcile the actual expenditures.

It is our understanding that this amendment request will not change Illinois' overall RTT-ELC goals, plans, outcomes, or performance measures, but will ensure that Illinois can continue to make progress on its RTT-ELC scope of work activities. This letter will be posted to ED's website as a record of the amendments.

We are confident that Illinois will continue its comprehensive efforts towards building successful state systems of early learning. If you need any assistance regarding RTT-ELC, please do not hesitate to contact your Project Officer, Miriam Lund, at (202) 401-2871 or Miriam.Lund@ed.gov or your co-project officer Maria Pestalardo, at (312) 353-4158 or Maria.Pestalardo@acf.hhs.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

Monique M. Chism Ph.D.
Acting Assistant Secretary
Childhood Office of Elementary and Secondary
Education
U.S. Department of Education

/s/

Colleen Rathgeb
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early
Development
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