



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



October 21, 2014

Rolf Grafwallner  
Assistant State Superintendent  
Division of Early Childhood Development  
Maryland State Department of Education  
200 West Baltimore St., 10th Fl.  
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Dr. Grafwallner,

This letter is in response to Maryland's request to amend its approved Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant projects. The U.S. Department of Education approved Maryland's grant projects and scope of work on November 26, 2012. On September 5, 2014 the Maryland State Department of Education submitted an amendment request, whereby it proposes to increase support for its approved Project 7 in order to purchase developmental screening tools for all licensed child care programs.

As you are aware, the Departments have the authority to approve amendments 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.

The following amendments to the State's budget and projects are approved, as described below:

- This amendment will move \$2,500,000 to the "Contractual" line of Project 7 in order to purchase screening tools for all licensed child care providers.

As part of Project 7 of the State's approved scope of work, Maryland convened a workgroup to draft language for the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) to require early childhood programs to adhere to high-quality developmental screening practice. The regulation is being adopted, and requires providers to implement developmental screening from birth to age 5 by July 1, 2016. In order to ensure that this new regulation is not an unfunded mandate, Maryland requested this amendment to purchase of developmental screening tools for all licensed child care providers.

Without the tools, providers will find it difficult or impossible to implement the development screening in their programs. Developmental screening is the first step in Maryland's Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS), and is an entry point where children who have

special needs can have those needs identified and be provided with intervention services earlier than their entrance into public schools. This amendment will support Maryland's work across RTT-ELC projects and enhance Maryland's accomplishment in its performance measures by helping to ensure early and appropriate intervention for young children leading to better child outcomes.

Funds to support this amendment will come from two areas of savings:

- In Project 2 — Maryland budgeted for incentives for programs based on their attainment of certain ratings in the State's new TQRIS (called Maryland EXCELS). The timing of the start-up of EXCELS and the fact that so many program have chosen to wait and publish their TQRIS rating after 12 months means that \$1,749,665 budgeted for incentives in year 2 and 3 will not be needed. Maryland expects that the amount currently budgeted for incentives to programs in year 4 will be sufficient as allocated.
- In Projects 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 — Maryland will move a total of \$750,335 in unspent funds from the "Personnel" and "Fringe benefits" lines from year 2. Maryland budgeted to pay contractual staff in full. However, recruitment delays, turnover, and staff occasionally working fewer than full-time hours resulted in unspent funds in these categories.

We understand that this amendment request will not impact Maryland's overall RTT-ELC goals, plans, outcomes, or performance measures, but will ensure Maryland can continue to make progress on its RTT-ELC scope of work activities.

Please note that this letter will be posted on the Department of Education's website as a record of the amendment request and our approval. All budget changes are recorded in the GRADS360° system and the detailed budget request is saved in the official grant file.

We are confident that Maryland 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, Katie Chase, at (202) 260-3793 or [Katie.Chase@ed.gov](mailto:Katie.Chase@ed.gov) or your co-project officer Richard Gonzales, at (202) 401-5138 or [Richard.Gonzales@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:Richard.Gonzales@acf.hhs.gov).

Sincerely,



Libby Doggett  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Early Learning  
Office of Early Learning  
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Linda K. Smith  
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Administration for Children and Families  
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