



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



November 17, 2015

Bobbie Burnham  
Director, Minnesota Office of Early Learning  
130 State Capitol,  
75 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Ms. Burnham:

This letter is in response to Minnesota's request to amend its approved Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant, including revisions to the project period to implement a portion of its plan. On November 4, 2015, Minnesota requested a 12-month no-cost extension for Project 2: Early Learning Scholarships, Project 3: Title 1 Pre-K, and Project 5: Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS).

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 March 3, 2015, the Departments issued “Amendment Requests with No-Cost Extension Guidance and Principles” indicating the process by which amendments containing requests to provide additional time for a grantee to accomplish the reform goals and deliverables it committed to in its RTT-ELC application and approved Scope of Work 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. In reviewing this request, project officers considered the State's explanation and plan for how the work will be sustained (or, if appropriate, completed) after the timeframe of the no-cost extension.

Based on the documentation submitted, Minnesota has fulfilled the conditions specified. Under the approved amendment, Minnesota will continue to implement its Early Learning Scholarships, Comprehensive Assessment System, and Title 1 Pre-K through December 31, 2016.

The following no-cost extension amendments for the above projects are approved, as described below:

- Project 2 (Early Learning Scholarships): Minnesota requests an additional 12 months of time to maintain infant and toddlers on RTT-ELC scholarships in their four Transformation Zones until they become age eligible for state funded Early Learning Scholarships. The additional time will also allow MDE staff to smoothly transition children into state funded scholarships and finalize efforts with the four Transformation Zones. By maintaining these children in these high quality settings, Minnesota will be

able to ensure there is no disruption in their access and possible negative impact on the outcomes of young children in Minnesota. The no-cost extension will also allow Minnesota to develop strategies to incorporate lessons learned from their work within the Transformation Zones and transition into its new state funded Early Learning Scholarship program. Minnesota will spend up to \$907,867.33 for salary, fringe, travel, indirect costs, and grant management.

- Project 3 (Title 1 Pre-K Incentives): The Title I Pre-K Incentive grants have increased expansion each year of the grant. The last round of grants was funded for the 2015-2016 school year. This no-cost extension request will allow school districts to use their grant funding for the whole school year, through June 30, 2016 instead of the current half of a school year, which would end on December 30, 2015. Additionally, the no-cost extension will allow Minnesota to continue its work with school districts and communities to plan, implement and evaluate a comprehensive Prenatal – 3rd Grade (P-3) aligned early learning system. Minnesota will spend up to \$2,853,619.01 for salary, fringe, travel, indirect costs, supplies, and grant management.
- Project 5: (The Comprehensive Assessment System): Minnesota's CAS supports cross-sector professional development and supports practitioners and programs to choose and use appropriate assessment tools. The extension will allow Minnesota to continue expanding the CAS into early elementary grades and support home visiting and parent education programs.

The no cost-extension request for Project 5 also includes the Online Screening Initiative in which Minnesota is piloting the use of electronic access to the ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE screening instruments to increase access to developmental and social-emotional screening, and the coordination of care and services across sectors for young children and their families. The extension will allow Minnesota to continue to pilot its electronic screening system in specific locations of Minnesota including Early Head Start/Head Start, school districts, health providers, and local public health programs. This work also includes additional work proposed by the Minnesota Department of Health in Minnesota's Budget Amendment #4 to support the online screening initiative through efforts to increase screening of children birth – 5 during a well-child visit. Minnesota will spend up to \$1,102,056.83 for salary, fringe, travel, indirect costs, supplies, and grant management.

The Departments approve Minnesota's request to obligate funds through December 31, 2016 for the purposes described in this letter for Project 2: Early Learning Scholarships, Project 3: Title 1 Pre-K, and Project 5: Comprehensive Assessment System. The State must request and receive approval to move forward with no-cost extensions for any additional projects, should other requests be needed.

It is our understanding that this amendment request will not change Minnesota's overall RTT-ELC goals, plans, outcomes, or performance measures, but will ensure Minnesota can continue to make progress on its RTT-ELC scope of work activities. The Departments expect grantees with no-cost extensions to liquidate all funds by March 31, 2017, given that by law all RTT-ELC

funds revert to the U.S. Department of Treasury as of October 1, 2017. This letter will be posted to ED's website as a record of the amendments.

If you need any assistance regarding RTT-ELC, please do not hesitate to contact your Project Officer, Brenda Wilkins, at (202) 245-6920 or [Brenda.Wilkins@ed.gov](mailto:Brenda.Wilkins@ed.gov) or your co-project officer Michael Mencarini, at (312) 886-3378 or [michael.mencarini@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:michael.mencarini@acf.hhs.gov).

Sincerely,

/s/

/s/

Libby Doggett  
Deputy Assistant  
Secretary Office of  
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Linda K. Smith  
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cc: Bobbie Burnham, Director, Minnesota Office of Early Learning  
Lisa Barnidge, RTT-ELC Project Manager