



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



December 15, 2014

Angel Rhodes, Ph.D.  
Early Education and Development Officer  
21<sup>st</sup> Century Education  
Office of Ohio Governor John R. Kasich  
77 S. High Street – 30th Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Barbara Weinberg  
Interim Director, Office of Early Learning and School Readiness  
Ohio Department of Education  
25 South Front Street, Mail Stop 208  
Columbus, Ohio 43215-4183

Dear Dr. Rhodes and Ms. Weinberg:

This letter is in response to Ohio's request to amend its approved Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant projects. The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (the Departments) approved Ohio's grant projects and scope of work, including supplemental funds, on May 15, 2012. In August, 2014, the Ohio Department of Education and the Office of the Governor submitted an amendment request, whereby it proposes overall adjustments to its budget.

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.

Ohio seeks to reallocate unspent funds from its Years One and Two budget to Years Three, and Four for Projects 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, and 11. Substantive adjustments to projects include the following:

Project One: Grants Management

- Removing underspent funds in the amount of \$15,000 since the contract awarded was less than originally budgeted.
- Adding \$1,000,000 for a Family and Community Engagement Pilot. The pilot will enhance and deepen the family engagement activities originally outlined in Ohio's funded grant application. It aims to provide communication and engagement to parents in

such a way that it moves them to take action on behalf of their child. The pilot focuses on families most in-need (those under 200% of the federal poverty level), is supported by the Office of the Governor, leverages existing State licenses and resources, involves wide stakeholder engagement, and is expected to result in information that will inform future statewide activities.

#### Project Two: External Validation and Consumer Education

- Removing unspent funds in the amount of \$300,000 since another group will undertake the cost of a study of Ohio's Step Up to Quality (SUTQ) quality rating and improvement system, thereby rendering a second study a duplication of effort and unnecessary expense.

#### Project Three: Increase Access to High Quality Programs

- Removing unspent funds in the amount of \$4,651,722. Ohio will take out two pilot studies from their Project 3 project plan: activity 3.8 —“Pilot the elimination of copayments for families under the Federal Poverty Guidelines that enroll in higher quality settings” and 3.9 —“Pilot slot incentive programs to increase the number of high needs children served.” As originally envisioned, these two pilot projects would have provided more information about how changes to the fiscal components of early childhood programs might encourage families to access in higher-SUTQ-rated programs. However, the State has made fiscal commitments and program changes that render these pilot studies unnecessary. Undertaking pilot studies in which the outcomes would not be widely considered in future decisions is an ineffective use of grant funds. Elimination of the pilot studies will not impact expansion of access to high quality programs for disadvantaged children as outlined in Ohio's project plan.
- Adding \$20,000 to support accurate ratings of high quality programs through a video/simulator component to train raters in the new Ohio classroom observation tool (OCOT). This activity will enhance and deepen the State's approved work toward consistent, reliable SUTQ ratings via improved inter-rater reliability.
- Adding \$43,460 to enhance and improve the interface between the State's early childhood professional registry portal run by Ohio Child Care Resource & Referral Association (OCCRA) and the teacher licensure and professional development system run by the Ohio Department of Education. This new activity would directly support existing approved work by allowing the two systems to interface automatically.
- Adding \$91,040 to increase staff capacity of OCCRA's professional registry portal based on the increased demand SUTQ places on the portal and the fact that an additional agency now uses the registry. This activity is an augmentation of work in the approved project plan.

Project Six: Professional Development Coordination

- Removing underspent funds in the amount of \$328,280 since the contract awarded was less than originally budgeted.
- Removing underspent funds in the amount of \$704,761 since the contract will be in years 3 and 4, but the amount budgeted over the whole 4 years (including years 1 and 2) was more than needed.
- Adding \$10,000 to continue the work on learning and development standards (including Approaches Toward Learning, Social Emotional Development, and Physical Well-being and Motor Development), taking them from development to implementation.

Project Nine: Alignment with Ohio's Core Knowledge and Competencies (CKC)

- Adding \$180,000 to continue work in developing early childhood workforce competencies. The funds would support needed focused, careful communication and consensus building with institutions of higher learning and other providers of early childhood-related education.

Project Ten: Child Link Statewide Student Identification (SSID)

- Adding \$1,600,000 to continue the project plan's task 10.5.4 and execute a way to bring the data from varied places (three agencies) into the State's data warehouse so that it can be pulled together to answer key analysis and policy decisions.

Project Eleven: Re-engineer Step Up To Quality and Licensing Database

- Adding \$3,100,000 to this data project to continue and refine the next iteration of the work that aligns and connects some 50 different data systems used for licensing and other key information needed for SUTQ rating.

We understand that this amendment request will not impact Ohio's overall RTT-ELC goals, plans, outcomes, or performance measures, but will ensure the State 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.

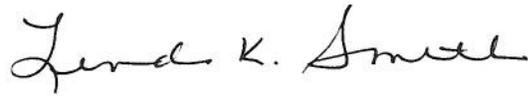
We are confident that Ohio will continue its comprehensive efforts towards building successful state systems of early learning.

If you need any assistance regarding RTT-ELC, please do not hesitate to contact your Project Officer, Katie Chase, at (202) 205-0266 or [Katie.Chase@ed.gov](mailto:Katie.Chase@ed.gov) or your co-project officer Richard Gonzales, at (202) 401-5138 or 202-401-5138 or [richard.gonzales@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:richard.gonzales@acf.hhs.gov).

Sincerely,



Libby Doggett  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Office of Early Learning  
Office of Elementary and Secondary  
Education  
U.S. Department of Education



Linda K. Smith  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early  
Childhood Development  
Administration for Children and Families  
U.S. Department of Health and Human  
Service

Cc: Amanda Besner