



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



August 4, 2014

Deborah Gist
Commissioner
Rhode Island Department of Education
255 Westminster St.
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist,

This letter is in response to Rhode Island's request to amend its approved Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant projects. The U.S. Department of Education approved Rhode Island's grant projects and scope of work on November 14, 2012. On June 25, 2014 the Rhode Island Department of Education submitted an amendment request, whereby it proposes to increase contractual staffing and support for Project 6, Early Learning Data System.

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.

To complete Rhode Island's original scope of work by the end of the grant period, December 2015, this request provides for additional contract positions to accelerate the pace of the development of the workforce and child domain, as well as to support data system users through a contract for a help desk. These activities are aligned with the State's approved scope of work.

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

- A contract for a full-time position for the remainder of the grant to coordinate all aspects of the business engagement and data governance. The person in this position will review, facilitate and monitor all aspects of business engagement and data governance. Specifically, the position is needed to monitor progress against the project work plan to ensure that appropriate time is allocated for stakeholder input; manage process to handle red flags raised by the technical lead; and facilitate the development and implementation of a data governance structure. This contract would require a total of \$197,500 over the remaining two years of the grant.
- Contracts for one full-time Business Systems Analyst and one full-time Web Application Developer, as well as a contract extension for the current data analyst (approved in Amendment 4) through the final year of the grant. Rhode Island has found that meeting the stated objectives

in its RTT-ELC application are more complex than originally anticipated. The additional supports will allow the State to accelerate the development of the data system's program domain and begin the development of the workforce registry. This would require \$480,480 over the remaining two years of the grant.

- A contract for a help service desk to assist providers as they enter data into the system, and to work with Participating State Agencies to determine appropriate service methods for supporting end users. A help desk would address challenges with child care providers entering information into the data system, a lesson learned from Rhode Island's K-12 Race to the Top grant. This contract would build on the functionality already developed and improve responsiveness and user support. This would require \$225,000 over the remaining two years of the grant.

These expenses totaling \$902,980 will be largely funded from savings that resulted from being able to more accurately estimate travel, equipment, supplies, indirect costs, and Quality Awards, after adjusting for Year Two actual expenditures. Additional savings came from a short-term vacancy in the position of Grants and Finance Officer. In addition, the State has determined that funds allocated for a proposed data collection effort, approved as Amendment 1 in March 2013, will not be feasible given the time remaining in the grant period, and that the activities in this amendment are higher priorities for achieving the goals of the project. For those reasons, the State will repurpose those funds, in the amount of \$280,000, for the activities in this amendment.

We understand that this amendment request will not impact Rhode Island's overall RTT-ELC goals, plans, outcomes, or performance measures, but will ensure Rhode Island 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 GRADS 360 system and the detailed budget request is saved in the official grant file.

We are confident that Rhode Island 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, Deborah Spitz, at (202) 260-3793 or Deborah.Spitz@ed.gov or your co-project officer Ngozi Onunaku, at (202) 260-5943 or Ngozi.Onunaku@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 Services

CC: Melissa Emidy