



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



November 17, 2014

Bette Hyde
Director
Department of Early Learning
State of Washington
P.O. Box 40970
Olympia, WA 98504-0970

Dear Bette,

This letter is in response to Washington'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 Washington's grant projects and scope of work on November 14, 2012. On August 4, 2014 the Washington State Department of Early Learning submitted an amendment request, whereby it proposes to roll over unspent Year 2 funds entirely into the same project budgets for Year 3.

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 Washington's scope of work by the end of the grant period, December 2015, the State requests that unexpended Year 2 funds in the projects listed below will be rolled over into the budgets for these projects in Year 3. These budget shifts are aligned with the State's approved scope of work and do not reflect modifications in any activities.

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

- Project 1: DEL originally budgeted \$187,325 for the Grants Management project in Year 3. DEL anticipates accelerating the drawdown of funds for IT technical assistance in Year 3 and therefore proposes to move \$589,720 in unspent funds from Year 2 to Year 3. The unspent funds were due to DEL's overestimation of technical assistance needs in Year 2. As a result, the Technical Assistance category remained somewhat unallocated. DEL seeks to allocate the remainder of these funds in Year 3.

Project 2: The Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System Expansion (TQRIS) expenditures were lower than expected in Year 2. DEL found that early learning providers

moved through the rating process more slowly than anticipated; therefore fewer early learning programs than anticipated were rated. One specific step that DEL took was to direct more funds than originally intended toward quality improvement awards and Training Resource Center stipends to address technical assistance issues. Secondly, a data systems readiness issue impacted Head Start and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Programs from enrolling in Early Achievers and moving through the rating process. To prevent these issues from reoccurring, Washington has implemented policy changes, outreach, and incentives to encourage programs to register, train and proceed through the rating process. Despite these efforts, \$869,134 was underspent in Year 2. In Year 3, DEL and its partners would like to rollover the \$869,134 in RTT-ELC grant funds from Year 2 to Year 3 for Project 2: TQRIS Expansion.

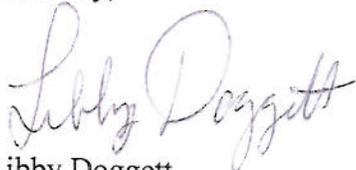
- Project 3: The TQRIS Infrastructure project underspent funds due to delays in the development of the Managed Educational Registry and Information Tool (MERIT) system, which is used to manage operations and track progress of TQRIS activities. The State requests to shift \$1,990,972 in RTT-ELC grant funds from Year 2 to Year 3.
- Project 4: RTT-ELC funds in the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developmental Skills (WaKIDS) total expenditures were underspent by \$633,073 during Year 2. The underspending was attributed to two lags. The Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction (OSPI) experienced a lag in receiving payment requests from the contractor that oversees the nine Educational Service Districts (ESDs) that implement WaKIDS. The ESDs had been using the school year calendar while the RTT-ELC grant operated on the actual calendar year. Learning from Year 1, OSPI worked to improve timeliness of payment requests and payouts in Year 2 and has continued these efforts in Year 3. The second lag had to do with the delayed rollout of the kindergarten assessment where the volume of assessments carried out in Year 2 was less than OSPI anticipated. OSPI is working to correct this lag in Year 3, but may continue to experience delayed rollout as LEAs continue to voluntarily implement full-day kindergarten. OSPI continues to work on addressing both lags, and DEL will be tracking the progress of these efforts relative to the overall goals of the project. The State proposes to shift \$633,073 of RTT-ELC grant funds from Year 2 to Year 3.
- Project 5: The Professional Development Incentives project continued to experience underspending. Due to this underspending, in August 2013 DEL performed an investigation of its policies, operations, and IT systems related to the redemption of professional development incentives. Based on the investigation's findings, DEL is making improvements by way of streamlined policies, operations and systems, including a simplified career lattice and validation requirements. Once completed, these improvements are expected to accelerate the redemptions of professional development awards and allow the state to make up for the prior delays. The State proposes to move \$2,539,660 of RTT-ELC grant funds from Year 2 to Year 3.

We understand that this amendment request will not impact Washington's overall RTT-ELC goals, plans, outcomes, or performance measures, but will ensure Washington 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 Washington 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 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: Juliet Morrison