



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

March 14, 2014

The Honorable John Hickenlooper  
136 State Capitol Bldg.  
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Governor Hickenlooper:

I am writing in response to Colorado's request to amend its approved Race to the Top grant project. Between January 24, 2014 and February 20, 2014 the State submitted amendment requests and clarification to the U.S. Department of Education (Department). As you are aware, the Department has 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 October 4, 2011, the Department posted on its website a revised "Grant Amendment Submission Process" document indicating the process by which amendments would be reviewed and approved or denied. To determine whether approval could be granted, the Department has applied the conditions noted in the document, and compared it with the Race to the Top program *Principles*, which are also included in that document.

I approve the amendments:

- In Standards and Assessments (B)(3), shift \$300,000 in unspent Year 1 and 2 contractual funds to Years 3 and 4. These funds will be used to create training modules to support the field with the implementation and use of assessments aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards. The State reported that feedback from LEAs indicated a need for in-depth assessment literacy and support at the district and school levels. The addition of this activity also supports the State's existing efforts in supporting LEAs in transitioning to high quality standards and assessments. This work will take place between February 2014 and December 2015. Funds are available to support this activity because the State overestimated some contractual costs in Years 1 and 2, and had small savings in other projects in this subcriterion.

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*The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.*

- In the STEM project, the State will change its approach from integrating STEM-themed resources and tools that complement model curriculum in STEM subjects to instead creating sample curriculum units that are STEM focused. The State reported that this change was motivated by a realization in the education community that STEM is more of a comprehensive teaching philosophy than a set of resources to be added to an existing curriculum. The new STEM units will span multiple content areas and include experiential and real-world application suggestions and resources.
- In the STEM project, the State will change its approach to the STEM in Action subgrants. The State originally planned to hold three subgrant competitions during the grant period, during which it would award small subgrants totaling \$500,000 to multiple grantees. Instead, the State held one competition in Year 2 with awards of sufficient size to allow for impact. The State awarded four STEM in Action subgrants of \$120,000 each for two years<sup>i</sup> (a total of \$480,000). Because there are now fewer STEM in Action grantees than originally planned, the State will hold five STEM convenings for grantees and other participating LEAs that made STEM commitments in their scopes of work. The State reported that participants in past STEM meetings have had very positive experiences and requested the State continue to facilitate these opportunities. All resources, best practices and lessons learned from the convenings will be documented and shared to LEAs statewide. To support the meetings, the State will shift the remaining \$20,000 in contractual funds as well as \$76,000 in unspent contractual funds from the Content Collaboratives project ((B)(3)) to Travel in Years 3 and 4.

It is our understanding that this amendment will not result in a change in your State's Race to the Top performance measures or outcomes, nor will they substantially change the scope and objectives of the work. Please note that this letter will be posted on the Department's website as a record of the amendment.

If you need any assistance or have any questions regarding Race to the Top, please do not hesitate to contact Colorado's Race to the Top Program Officer, Renee Faulkner, at [renee.faulkner@ed.gov](mailto:renee.faulkner@ed.gov) or (202) 205-4012.

Sincerely,

//s//

Ann Whalen  
Director, Policy and Program Implementation  
Implementation and Support Unit

cc: Commissioner Robert Hammond  
Tricia Miller  
Jill Hawley

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<sup>i</sup> Awards for the second year are contingent on performance in the first year. If funds become available in the second year, the State will host another grant competition to redistribute those funds.