



## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Honorable John Hickenlooper  
Office of the Governor  
136 State Capitol Building  
Denver, CO 80203

July 15, 2015

Dear Governor Hickenlooper:

I am writing in response to the Colorado Department of Education's (CDE) May 15, 2015, request to amend its approved Race to the Top plan and budget to extend the period of obligation for specified projects and activities resulting in a No Cost Extension. Between May 15, 2015 and June 26, 2015, the State submitted documentation to and held conversations with the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to support amendment requests to its approved Race to the Top plan. ED has the authority to approve amendments to your plan and budget, provided the revisions do not change the overall scope and objectives of the approved proposal. In June 2014, ED issued *Amendment Requests with No-cost Extension Guidance and Principles*, indicating the process by which amendments containing request to provide additional time for a grantee to accomplish the reform goals and deliverables it committed to in its Race to the Top application and approved scope of work would be reviewed. To determine whether approval could be granted, ED 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 following amendments, including a timeline extension, as described below.

- Shift a total of \$830,925.58 in unexpended funds to extend the time of specified projects in Year 5 for sub-criterion (A)(2), "Building Strong Statewide Capacity to Implement, Scale Up, and Sustain Proposed Plans," (B)(3), "Supporting the Transition to Enhance Standards and High-quality Assessments," Project 6.7<sup>1</sup>, "Support Integrated Use of Resources Created by CDE specific to the Colorado Academic Standards, Performance and Other Assessments and Educator Evaluation Systems," (D)(2), "Improving Teacher and Principal Effectiveness Based on Performance," (P)(2), "Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)." Colorado will shift funds from Year 4 to continue projects and activities during the no-cost extension year for five projects. According to the State, projects where unallocated funds were identified have completed the planned scope and objectives successfully or were allocated more funds than necessary and expect to be completed with a revised budget.

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<sup>1</sup> SEA submitted an amendment request on 2/5/2015; however, per program officer's email, the budget request was not at a level that required a formal amendment. This project and associated activities are not part of the State's most recent scope of work and budget.

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- Utilize \$137,611.14 of the total unallocated funds discussed above to extend the time period of work to continue into Year 5 in sub-criterion (A)(2), “Building Strong Statewide Capacity to Implement, Scale Up and Sustain, Proposed Plans.” The funds will be used to implement quarterly monitoring and support contact with participating LEAs. This activity will be necessary for any LEA that applies for a no-cost extension to complete their Race to the Top work.
- Utilize \$376,459.72 of the total unallocated funds discussed above to extend the time period of work to continue into Year 5 in sub-criterion (B)(3), “Supporting the Transition to enhance Standards and High-Quality Assessments.” The funds will be used to provide resources and training modules to support the field with the effective implementation and use of assessments aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards through in-field training and support on the use of these modules to advance assessment literacy.
- Utilize \$294,654.72 of the total unallocated funds discussed above to extend the time period of work to continue into Year 5 in sub-criterion (D)(2), “Improving Teacher and Principal Effectiveness Based on Performance.” The funds will be used to provide ongoing one-on-one technical assistance to districts implementing the model system and/or aligning their systems to the State. CDE would like to continue to assist districts to effectively implement and sustain the new evaluation systems for teachers, principals and SSPs through quality resources like the Colorado State Model Performance Management System and in-person technical assistance tailored to address individualized context and needs.
- Utilize \$22,200.00 of the total unallocated funds discussed above to extend the time period of work to continue into Year 5 in sub-criterion (P)(2), “Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).” The funds will be used to conduct STEM meetings to include STEM in Action recipients and RTT participating districts focusing on STEM activities to provide information, support, and facilitated cross-district learning. Districts focusing on advancing STEM agendas would greatly benefit from continuing these meetings.

Colorado also submitted a request to revise the project period for local educational agencies (LEAs) to implement their scopes of work. In June 2014, ED 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 Race to the Top application and approved scope of work would be reviewed and approved or denied. In order to consider amendment requests with no-cost extensions, ED indicated that States must address the timelines and implications of the amendment on the 50 percent LEA subgrants (i.e., allocations to participating LEAs), as well as the process the State will use to review LEA subgrant requests to obligate and liquidate funds after the current project period. To determine whether approval could be granted, ED has applied the conditions and elements specific to no-cost extensions noted in the document, and compared it with the Race to the Top program *Principles* included in the “Grant Amendment Submission Process” document issues to Governors of grantee States.

Through conversations with Colorado and documentation submitted as part of this amendment request, we understand that the State will begin to review requests from participating LEAs to extend the project period to complete Race to the Top activities on a case-by-case basis. ED generally approves the State’s process as described in appendix 1. Prior to September 30, 2015, ED expects the State to submit a

Page 3 – The Honorable John Hickenlooper

record of each participating LEA project approved by the State for a no-cost extension and the total funding approved for the LEAs' Year 5 Scopes of Work.

It is ED's understanding that this amendment will not result in a change in your State's performance measures and outcomes, nor will they substantially change the scope and objectives of the work. Please note that we expect grantees with no-cost extensions to liquidate all funds by September 30, 2017, given that by law all Race to the Top funds revert to the U.S. Department of Treasury as of October 1, 2017. This letter will be posted on ED's website as a record of the amendments.

If you need any assistance or have any questions regarding Race to the Top, please contact Cynthia Wright of my staff at: (202) 453-6834 or [OSS.Colorado@ed.gov](mailto:OSS.Colorado@ed.gov).

Thank you for your continued commitment to enhancing education for all of the Colorado's students.

Sincerely,

/s/

Monique M. Chism, Ph.D.  
Director  
Office of State Support

Enclosure

cc: Dr. Elliot Asp, Interim Commissioner of Education  
Patrick Chapman, Executive Director, Federal Programs  
Tricia Miller, Project Director, Director, Race to the Top

**Appendix 1. Process Colorado will use to review LEA subgrant requests to obligate and liquidate funds after the current project period, as described by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE).**

CDE does not anticipate having many districts that need to extend their timelines to complete their work as supported by Race to the Top phase 3 grant. However, ED will make that option available. Below are the criteria for approval of a no-cost extension for participating LEAs:

- Compliance with all reporting criteria for years 1-4 of RTT grant
- Effective and appropriate management of RTT funds
  - The need to extend the grant term cannot be due to mismanagement of resources or failure to monitor activities
- Requested extension is not for wholly new work; it is to complete already approved work
- Rationale for extension is acceptable to the Colorado Department of Education Race to the Top office
- Original allocation amount must have been over \$450,000

Four (4) of the 161 Colorado districts participating in Race to the Top are eligible for a no-cost extension based on the final criterion above. Upon approval of Colorado's request for a no-cost extension by the U.S. Department of Education, the Race to the Top Director will contact each of these four LEAs to determine whether they will need to extend their RTT work. At that time, the criteria will be provided. No-cost extension requests are to be submitted in written form to the Director and are to include similar information as is required for amendment requests as established by CDE in the Race to the Top Phase III Grant Management Manual for LEAs and BOCES (<http://www.cde.state.co.us/rttt/race-to-the-top-grant-management-manual-for-leas-boces-january2014>).

These requirements include:

- **Indication of allowable activity(s) that would be affected by the change.**
- **Description of the requested change.** This is to include a brief explanation of the original work/activities/budget and a detailed description of the extended work, timelines and budget along with a rationale for the extension request.
- **Impact statement regarding performance targets.** This is to include an explanation as to how an extension would affect the LEA performance targets, and how the requested change helps the LEA meet its goals.
- **Budget documentation.** This is to include the most recent relevant project-level budget table(s), and the requested changes.

Upon submission of a no-cost extension request from a participating LEA the Race to the Top Director will determine whether the approval criteria are met and will notify the LEA. Because the original Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) states that the agreement will remain in effect until the end of the grant period, a new MOU will not be needed. Any other necessary grant related documents (e.g. the Grants Fiscal Award Letter) will be created to reflect the new grant period.