



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

March 10, 2014

The Honorable Rick Scott  
Office of the Governor  
The Capitol  
400 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Governor Scott:

I am writing in response to Florida's request to amend its approved Race to the Top grant project. Between November 7, 2013, and February 27, 2014, the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) submitted documentation to and held conversations with the U.S. Department of Education (Department) to support amendment requests to its approved Race to the Top plan. 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. In March 2013, the Department 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. To determine whether approval could be granted, the Department 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 issued to Governors of grantee States in October 2011.

I approve the following amendments, including extensions to the time period for implementation:

- In subcriterion B:
  - In Project B.2.4, Budget 2: "Student Common Core State Standards Tutorial," the State originally intended to contract with a vendor to create item specifications, lesson blueprints, and mini-assessments. FDOE reports that it has terminated this contract and plans to meet this project's objectives by using FDOE personnel and support from school district curriculum specialists, coaches, and teachers.

[www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)

400 MARYLAND AVE., SW, WASHINGTON, DC 20202

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

The State believes that the development of new mini-assessments would duplicate work that is already being done and uploaded to Florida's Interim Assessment Item Bank and Test Platform. Instead of developing mini-assessments for teachers to use, FDOE will develop electronically-delivered tutorials for kindergarten-12 (K-12) grade English Language Arts (ELA), K-12 mathematics, 5-8 grade science and Biology 1, and 6-8 grade civics, with at least three tutorials per standard or benchmark. The tutorials will primarily consist of mini-lessons, activities and practices that students will use independently. FDOE will extend the completion of this work to June 30, 2015.

- Budget Implications: After terminating the contract for the student tutorials, Florida reduces this project in Budget 2 from \$23,309,268 to \$12,793,242. The new total includes the actual amount paid to the contractor in Years 2 and 3, and \$8,382,240 in contractual funds to be divided with \$3,382,240 in Year 4 and \$5,000,000 in Year 5. Of the remaining \$10,516,026 from the original project allocation:
  - Shift \$1,627,977 to cover technology overages in Years 3 and 4 across all projects in Budget 2;
  - Shift \$213,112 to Budget 25 (project E.25.1)<sup>1</sup>;
  - Shift \$29,083 to Budget 16 (project D.16.3); and
  - Shift the remaining \$8,645,854 to unallocated<sup>2</sup>.
- In Project B.3.8, Budget 3: "External Evaluator," FDOE will extend the contract with an external evaluator to review and evaluate assessment items developed through the Interim Assessment Item Bank and Test Platform and hard-to-measure items projects from Year 4 to Year 5. Due to delays in item development, FDOE has not yet awarded a contract to conduct item evaluation, but plans to select a vendor by May 1, 2014 and complete work by August 31, 2015. This will enable the vendor to include more approved interim assessment items in the evaluation and for the contractors to work with FDOE staff to transfer knowledge.
- Budget Implications: The State shifts \$666,667 in contractual funds for this project from Year 3 and \$833,333 in contractual funds from Year 4 to Year 5 contractual.
- In subcriterion D:
  - In Project D.11.1, Budget 11: "Develop Value-Added Calculations of Student Growth," FDOE extends its work developing value-added models (VAM) and running data against the models for delivery to school districts to June 30, 2015. This includes additional time for the contractor to close out VAM development activities and FDOE to conduct VAM analysis and provide data to school districts in spring 2015. These timeline and budget shifts (described below in "Budget 11 Implications") are due to the timing of payments and expected payments to contractors, as well as hiring new staff in Year 5 to continue the work.

<sup>1</sup> This shift was approved by the Department on June 10, 2013; however the State did not shift funds until the current request.

<sup>2</sup> Due to contracts coming in under budget, Florida has an unallocated amount of \$19,271,598. Florida will submit an amendment in the near future once it has determined the best use for unallocated funds.

- In Project D.11.2, Budget 11: “Develop Measures for Performance-Based Courses,” FDOE shifts the timeline to develop and recommend VAM for performance-based courses to June 30, 2015. Performance-based courses include: career and technical education (CTE), health, physical education, music, and art. Due to contract protests on the Test Development Contract for Performance-Based Courses, interim assessment item development and the Interim Assessment Item Bank pilot tests were delayed. As a result, VAM development was delayed pending results from the pilot tests in Years 3 and 4. Instead of contracting to develop VAM for performance-based courses, FDOE will apply the development process provided by the contractor in Project D.11.1 and develop VAM internally using stakeholder and professional association input.
  - Amend outcome as follows:
    - By ~~2013-14~~ the end of the 2014-2015 school year, the State will adopt recommendations for student growth performance measures in high-incidence performing arts, visual arts, and physical education courses and/or grade levels.
- In Project D.11.3, Budget 11: “Integrate student growth calculation into Florida Education Data Warehouse,” Florida extends in-house management supporting work in Projects D.11.1 and D.11.2 from June 30, 2014 to June 30, 2015. As a result of the strategy shift in Project D.11.2, Florida is now developing VAM for performance-based courses rather than engaging a contractor to conduct this work. FDOE anticipates adding 5.5 full time employees to produce VAM calculations, run models, review data for quality control, and provide analysis to school districts.
  - Budget 11 Implications: Florida increases this budget from \$5,397,798 to \$6,616,155.
    - Shift \$2,299,957 in contractual funds from Year 3 to Year 4 contractual (\$1,634,301) and Year 5 contractual (\$800,000);
    - Add \$103,939 from unallocated funds to Year 3 (\$43,938.80) and Year 4 (\$60,000) technology contracts; and
    - Add \$1,114,418 from unallocated funds to Year 5 contractual to cover additional staff to support the selection of VAM and provide analysis to school districts.
- In Project D.19.1, Budget 19: “National Expert Review of LEA Practices and State-level Initiatives,” FDOE extends its contract with a third-party evaluator for its work in Great Teachers and Leaders through June 30, 2015. State law requires teacher and leader evaluation results to be reported by the State by December 1 and the extension allows the contractor to include school year (SY) 2013-2014 evaluation results in the final report. Additionally, in Year 5, FDOE staff will research and report on evaluation system monitoring, annual evaluation results, the status of evaluation system revisions requested by school districts, and routes to certification.
  - Budget Implications: Florida shifts \$114,533 from Year 3 contractual funds and \$270,467 from Year 4 contractual funds to Year 5 contractual to support

the external contract. The State also adds \$125,119 from unallocated funds to Year 5 contractual funds for in-house transition support staff.

- In subcriterion F:
  - In Project F.29.3, Budget 29: “Supporting Charter School Transition to Common Core State Standards and Use of a Local Instructional Improvement System (LIIS),” the State extends the contract from June 30, 2014 to June 30, 2015. As a result of this expanded contract, the vendor will develop web-based, self-paced versions of the 28 targeted professional development training modules and provide follow-up support to those charter schools that complete a web-based module and demonstrate need. The vendor will also focus on specific marketing and communication efforts to target charter schools that have not participated in the previous training offerings.
  - Budget Implications: Increase Project F.29.3 from \$3,875,000 to \$5,275,000. In the Year 2 budget true-up, \$1,131,671 was set aside for associated technology costs in Budget 29 in Years 3 and 4. The State shifts these funds back into the F.29.3 project contract in Years 4 and 5, because the development of web-based modules will replace associated technology costs.
    - Shift \$981,000 in contractual funds from Year 3 to Year 4; and
    - Shift \$1,131,671 technology set-aside funds to F.29.3 contract, add \$268,329 from unallocated, and split between Year 4 contractual (\$700,000) and Year 5 contractual (\$700,000).
- Florida will extend its support of underperforming schools through August 31, 2015 in the following projects:
  - In Project C.8.1, Budget 8: “Data Captain and Data Coaches (Assigned to Regional Teams) and Instructional Designer” and Project C.8.2, Budget 8: “Multi-media Professional Development on Accessing and Using Data,” eight data coaches will continue to serve in Florida’s five Differentiated Accountability (DA) regions across the State, assisting schools and districts with data disaggregation, data analysis, and data-driven problem solving around student achievement.
  - Budget Implications: Shift \$725,022 in contractual funds from Year 3 and \$898,085 in contractual funds from Year 4 to Year 5 contractual. The State revises the budget in Years 3 and 4 to reflect actual costs and though services were completed in Year 3, payments were not made until Year 4.
  - In Project E.23.1, Budget 23: “Differentiated Accountability Summer Academy,” Florida will extend its DA summer professional development to summer 2015. The DA Summer Academy will continue to include coaches, departmental chairs and lead teachers from low-performing and persistently lowest-achieving schools and their feeder patterns. As of 2013, FDOE has conducted 25 DA Summer Academies including 4,321 participants. The extension will allow FDOE to exceed its goal of conducting 40 DA sessions and training over 4,500 by 2014.
  - Budget Implications: Reduce this project budget from \$6,207,292 to \$5,486,381. The total budgeted funds were not spent in Year 3 due to the timing of contractual payments and because some of the DA Summer

Academies were held in early Year 4 rather than the end of Year 3. Additionally, based on actual costs in Years 2 and 3, the State over-budgeted for this work and shifts excess funds to Project E.26.1.

- Shift \$48,177 in contractual funds from Year 3 to Year 4 and \$2,043,641 in contractual funds from Year 3 to Year 5;
  - Shift the remaining \$720,911 to Project E.26.1 in Budget 26.
- In Project E.25.2, Budget 25: “Five Career and Technical Education Experts Assigned to Regional Teams,” FDOE will continue to support five regional CTE experts. The five CTE experts operate through FDOE’s DA regional teams and monitor progress in the 22 Career and Professional Academies (CAPE) within Florida’s lowest-achieving high schools. Additionally, they consult with other low-performing schools on expanding or creating CTE programs and integrating reading, mathematics, and science standards into the CTE curricula.
- Budget Implications: The State revises the budget in Years 2, 3 and 4 to reflect actual costs and though services were completed in Year 3, payments were not made until Year 4.
- Add \$213,112 from Project B.2.4 in Budget 2 to Year 2 contractual funds in Budget 25 to address a deficit<sup>3</sup>.
  - Shift \$1,703,357 in contractual funds from Year 3 to Year 4 contractual (\$1,203,357) to complete payment of grants and contracts and Year 5 contractual (\$500,000) to support five regional CTE experts.
- In Project E.26.1, Budget 26: “Reading Coordinators to Assist Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools and Their Feeder Patterns,” the State will continue to fund 40 reading coordinators through FDOE’s five DA regional teams to support reading coaches and other school staff in Florida’s lowest-performing schools in the areas of standards-based instruction, interim assessment data analysis, differentiated instruction, reading intervention program implementation, lesson study implementation, and instructional modeling.
- Budget Implications: Florida increases this Project Budget by \$720,911. The State revises the budget in Years 3 and 4 to reflect actual costs and though services were completed in Year 3, payments were not made until Year 4. Additionally, the reading coordinator positions were not fully staffed in Year 3 so Florida did not spend as much as originally expected.
- Shift \$1,954,398 in contractual funds from Year 3 to Year 5 contractual;
  - Shift \$724,691 in contractual funds from Year 4 to Year 5 contractual; and
  - Add \$720,911 from Project E.23.1, Budget 23 to Year 5 contractual.
- In Project E.27.1, Budget 27: “Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Coordinators Assist Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools and Their Feeder Patterns,” FDOE will continue to fund 20 STEM coordinators operating through Florida’s five DA regional teams to support school-based mathematics

---

<sup>3</sup> This shift was approved by the Department in June 10, 2013; however the State did not shift funds until the current request.

and science coaches in Florida's lowest-performing schools in the areas of standards-based instruction, interim assessment data analysis, differentiated instruction, reading intervention program implementation, lesson study implementation, and instructional modeling.

- Budget Implications: The State revises the budget in Years 3 and 4 to reflect actual costs and though services were completed in Year 3, payments were not made until Year 4. Additionally, the STEM coordinator positions were not fully staffed in Year 3 so Florida did not spend as much as originally expected.
  - Shift \$1,318,322 in contractual funds from Year 3 to Year 5 contractual; and
  - Shift \$517,058 in contractual funds from Year 4 to Year 5 contractual.
- Revise all references to Common Core State Standards to the "Florida Standards." The State believes that the Florida Standards align with the Common Core State Standards and the rebranding includes all subjects' standards, rather than only English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics.

It is our understanding that these amendments and no cost extensions will not substantially change the scope and objectives of the work. Please note that we are expecting grantees to liquidate all funds by September 1, 2015, given that by law all Race to the Top funds revert to the U.S. Department of Treasury as of October 1, 2015. The State must request and receive approval to move forward with no cost extensions for any additional projects. This letter will be posted on the Department's website as a record of the amendments.

If you need any assistance or have any questions regarding Race to the Top, please do not hesitate to contact Florida's Race to the Top Program Officer, Ariel Jacobs, at 202-453-7025 or [ariel.jacobs@ed.gov](mailto:ariel.jacobs@ed.gov).

Sincerely,

//s//

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

cc: Pam Stewart, Commissioner of Education  
 Linda Champion, Deputy Commissioner of Finance and Operations  
 Holly Edenfield, Race to the Top Program Coordinator