



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

April 9, 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. From November 7, 2013 and April 9, 2014, the State submitted amendment requests 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. 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 Project A.1.1 and A.1.2, Budget 1: "Building Strong Statewide Capital to Implement, Scale Up, and Sustain Proposed Plans," the State will extend contracts to oversee and manage work across all projects approved for no cost extensions (see below and previous amendment approval letters) to June 30, 2015. This includes contracts for 13 full-time equivalent positions, the Daptiv portfolio management system, and the Evergreen Solutions evaluation contract.

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Florida states that the contract positions will be absorbed by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) as necessary after the end of the grant.

- Budget Implications: Due to vacancies and cost savings in contracted staff positions, Florida shifts \$2,385,934 from Year 3 contractual funds and \$500,531 from Year 4 contractual funds to Year 5 contractual funds.
- In Project B.2.2.b, Budget 2, “Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reaching (FAIR)/Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN),” the State originally intended to use an Oracle-based administration module for the FAIR and PMRN assessment system. During a content upgrade to the system, FDOE determined that the assessment system would require a comprehensive rebuild and new sequencing to ensure long-term performance and sustainability. With an extension to June 30, 2015, FDOE will contract to modify and rebuild existing code, build new code, and transition all databases from Oracle to SQL.Net. The State will extend contracts to support ten staff to manage the transition as well as provide funds for the Florida Center for Reading Research to validate testing. The State reports that current FDOE information technology support staff are skilled in SQL.Net applications and will sustain the system beyond the extended grant period.
  - Budget Implications: Increase the project budget from \$3,693,660 to \$6,193,660. Add \$2,500,000 from unallocated funds to Year 5 contractual to support ten staff to manage the work detailed above.
- In Project B.2.2.c, Budget 2: “Classroom Enrollment Tool (CET),” FDOE will extend the contract for developing the CET, a comprehensive class roster application to June 30, 2015. The State originally planned to develop the CET to initially support the Item Bank and Test Platform (IBTP) and FAIR/PMRN. To align with extensions to Projects B.2.2.b and B.3.1, FDOE requires an additional year of support for the CET. Once the FAIR/PMRN system is integrated and using the data from the CET, FDOE anticipates maintaining hosting and support capabilities through FDOE funds.
  - Budget Implications: Shift \$273,694 in unspent Year 3 contractual funds to Year 5 contractual. The funds were not spent due to some contracted staff turnover and a delay in implementation of the FAIR Project B.2.2.b.
- In Projects B.3.1, “Item Bank and Test Platform,” B.3.5, “Content Experts,” and B.3.9, “Additional Hard-to-Measure Assessment Items,” Budget 3: FDOE will extend the contract with the IBTP vendor for one year to June 30, 2015 to provide technical support and training to LEAs on the IBTP during the first year of implementation in SY 2014-2015. FDOE will maintain five contracted content specialists to support LEAs and provide additional training and technical assistance on the IBTP. FDOE will also extend the timeline for LEAs with sub-grants to complete development of additional hard-to-measure items in the IBTP.

The sub-grantee LEAs were approximately five months delayed in submitting assessment items due to the contractor's delay in loading course standards into the IBTP and creating user accounts. An extension through January 31, 2015 will allow the State to meet the original project goal of developing and reviewing 13,875 assessment items for 48 courses.

- Budget Implications:
  - Project B.3.1: Increase the project budget from \$25,476,748 to \$28,699,795. Shift \$12,237,211 from Year 3 contractual to Year 4 contractual due to timing of payments and expected payments to contractor. Add \$3,223,047 from unallocated funds to Year 5 contractual.
  - Project B.3.5: Increase from \$1,280,000 to \$1,352,300. Shift \$100,232 from Year 3 contractual and \$46,680 from Year 4 contractual to Year 5 contractual. Funds were unspent because the hiring of content specialists took longer than planned and the actual salaries were lower than originally budgeted. Add \$72,300 from unallocated funds to Year 5 contractual.
  - Project B.3.9: Shift \$666,667 from Year 3 contractual and \$60,828 from Year 4 contractual to Year 5 contractual. Funds were unspent due to delays in finalizing the grant award difficulties in creating system accounts for item writers and reviewers.
- In Project C.6.1, Budget 6, "Portal with Single Sign-On (SSO)/Dashboards, Downloads, and Reports (DDR)," Florida will extend the timeline for completion to June 30, 2015. FDOE will use this time to complete the integration of the ELA Formative Assessment System, IBTP, and PMRN into the SSO environment. The DDR project team will also continue to develop resources and reports beyond the original reports and downloads planned. The additional data download will include the Teacher Certification application upon completion of the Enrollment Directory.
  - Budget Implications: Shift \$3,099,117 in unspent funds from Year 3 contractual to Year 4 contractual (\$1,071,531) and Year 5 contractual (\$2,027,586). Work in Year 3 fell behind due to procurement and contractor delays. As a result, the State reports that the majority of the application integration and DDR rollout will occur in Years 4 and 5.

It is our understanding that these amendments and no cost extensions 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 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