



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

August 12, 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, including revisions to the project period to implement a portion of its plan. Between July 25, and August 11, 2014, the State 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 the revisions do not change the overall scope and 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. 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 amendment, with conditions described below.

- In Project B.3.11: "Career and Technical Education (CTE) Hard-to-Measure Test Items" Florida shifts \$1,500,000 from Budget #3 Year 4 contractual to Year 5 contractual to develop hard-to-measure CTE assessment items aligned to the Next Generation Occupational State Standards (NGOSS) and the Florida Standards CTE courses.

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.

As of February 2014 the State planned to disperse funds to local educational agencies (LEAs) to support item development. In April 2014 the State learned individual LEAs would be unlikely to meet the proposed timeline, resulting in the amended plan to shift item development to the Central Florida Assessment Collaborative, a consortium of LEAs the State reports has experience developing, reviewing, and validating test items. According to the State, all funds will still be expended and final reports submitted to the State by June 30, 2015. Due to a condensed timeline for item production, the State now anticipates 30,000, rather than 43,650, CTE items will be submitted to Florida's Interim Assessment Item Bank and Test Platform by June 30, 2015.¹

Conditions: As a condition of approval for this project the State must submit to the Department:

1. A status report that includes the number of items drafted, the number of items reviewed, the item rejection rate, the number of items accepted, and related expert review and professional development plans by December 1, 2014; and
2. A status report that includes the number of items drafted, the number of items reviewed, the item rejection rate, the number of items accepted by April 30, 2015.

As described in a July 17, 2013, amendment approval letter, the Department indicated that it generally approves the State's process to review LEA subgrant requests to obligate and liquidate funds after September 23, 2014. An updated version of the State's process is included in Appendix 1.

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 expect grantees with no-cost extensions 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 amendment.

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, Patrick Carr, at 202-708-8196 or patrick.carr@ed.gov.

¹ Under the Statewide Summative Assessments program requirement, no funds awarded under the Race to the Top competition may be used to pay for costs related to statewide summative assessments (e.g., the State assessments required under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act); this prohibition does not refer to final exams or other summative assessments designed and used at the local or classroom level.

Sincerely,

//s//

Patrick Rooney
Acting 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

Appendix 1: Process the State will use to review LEA subgrant requests to obligate and liquidate funds after the current project period, as described by Florida Department of Education.

Assurance Area and Budget #s: (A)(2) State Success Factors

Description of Requested Change and Rationale:

Florida has 65 participating LEAs. In 2010, each completed a Scope of Work (SOW) aligned to the 14 projects below. The state provided required deliverables for each, and LEAs could add additional district-specific deliverables. For each project, LEAs provided supporting activities for deliverables, timelines, key personnel, sustainability factors, and a quarterly budget. At the beginning of each grant year, they must tell us their timelines for completing deliverables. Deliverables are submitted quarterly per their SOW timelines.

LEA SOW Projects

1. Expand Lesson Study
2. Expand STEM CTE Program Offerings
3. Increase Advanced STEM Coursework
4. Bolster Technology for Improved Instruction and Assessment
5. Improve Access to State Data (Single Sign-on)
6. Use Data to Improve Instruction (Local Instructional Improvement System)
7. Provide Support for Educator Preparation Programs
8. Improve Teacher and Principal Evaluation Systems
9. Use Data Effectively for Human Capital Decisions
10. Focus Effective Professional Development
11. Drive Improvement in Persistently Low-Achieving Schools (turnaround model)
12. Implement Proven Programs for School Improvement
13. Include Charter Schools in LEA Planning
14. Administration

LEAs must complete an annual monitoring report in July.* We propose that in this year's report LEAs will provide requests to FDOE on the SOW projects of high quality (based on ongoing monitoring, including review of deliverables, and the annual report) for which they would like a no-cost extension.

LEAs may request less than a full year extension. All projects are eligible for an extension. LEAs will not be allowed to extend original timelines for major deliverables, but will be able to use extra funds in a project for related purposes in Year 5. Projects with statutory requirements will be given additional weight during the FDOE review process; for example, using local funds to develop interim assessment items not covered

by statewide assessments or state-level projects (many districts have this budgeted in Project 8). These must be in place by the 2014-15 school year, per Florida Statutes.

An LEA's budget and expenditure status will also be considered.

The specific questions LEAs will need to address for each project in their request are:

- How many additional quarters are requested (1-4)?**
- What will be different/enhanced as a result of an extension?
- How will an extension help meet their targets and goals?
- How have they considered staffing/technology costs that accompany extending this project?
- Which deliverables will be delivered in Year 5, and in which quarter?
- Which statutes, rules, or local board policies are affected by this project, if any?
- Budget information

With USED approval of this approach, FDOE will begin accepting no-cost extension requests from LEAs in July 2013 as part of the annual report.

*The other components of the annual report are below, and will help us gauge the quality of each project's progress.

For each of the 13 projects:

1. Identify greatest accomplishment in Year 3
2. Are you on target to achieve full implementation during 2013-14? Provide color rating.
 - Green=on track
 - Yellow=somewhat on track
 - Red=off track
3. Is expenditure of funds on track with successful implementation? Is anything projected to not be accomplished? If so, is it because of funds or another factor (identify)?
4. How are sustainability plans taking shape or how have they changed?
5. Consideration of No-Cost Extension, if applicable

**LEAs are already on different timelines for their projects, all to be completed by June 30, 2014, so extensions of varying lengths would not further complicate management of the grant. Extension of LEA SOW projects will not affect state-level projects.