



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

October 25, 2013

The Honorable Nathan Deal
Office of the Governor
State of Georgia
203 State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Dear Governor Deal:

I am writing in response to Georgia'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 August 23, and October 17, 2013, the State submitted documentation 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 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.

On July 2, 2012, the Department placed goals 1-4 in Section D of Georgia's approved Scope of Work, related to its teacher and leader evaluation systems, on high-risk status under 34 CFR 80.12. As stated in the July 2, letter, the Department is concerned about the overall strategic planning, evaluation, and project management for that system, which includes decisions regarding the quality of the tools and measures used during the educator evaluation pilot and the scalability of the supports the State offered to participating districts. The State has not demonstrated that it is developing and approaching implementation of the teacher and leader evaluation systems in a comprehensive and deliberate manner that includes consideration of dependent deliverables, a structured process for evaluating and incorporating formative feedback, and a communications

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.

strategy including all relevant stakeholders. Please note that in addition to the Principles mentioned above, the Department considers Georgia's high-risk status when reviewing amendments.

I approve the following amendments, including an extension to the time period for implementation, as described below. The Department notes its continued concern with the overall strategic planning, evaluation, and project management for that system, which includes decisions regarding the quality of the tools and measures used during the educator evaluation pilot and the scalability of the supports the State offered to participating districts.

- For the project area of Great Teachers and Leaders: 1) While Georgia will fully implement its evaluation system for teachers of tested grades and subjects in SY 2013-2014 and for teachers in non-tested grades and subjects in SY 2014-2015,¹ the State will shift the end date for activities related to implementation of its teacher and leader evaluation system to June 2015. Specifically, Georgia will extend activities related to:
 - Developing and utilizing a student growth percentile (SGP) measure;
 - Developing and utilizing student learning objectives (SLOs);
 - Developing and utilizing student and climate surveys (for teacher and leader evaluations, respectively);
 - Developing and utilizing teacher and leader professional practice measures;
 - Training and supports for LEAs on implementing the teacher and leader evaluation system with fidelity;
 - Expanding implementation to additional LEAs, as outlined in its approved Scope of Work;
 - Combining and utilizing the evaluation system component measures into a Teacher Effectiveness Measure (TEM) and a Leader Effectiveness Measure (LEM); and
 - Communicating with and engaging stakeholders.

Georgia reports that the extension is necessary to allow for adequate training and support for LEAs to implement a new performance evaluation system and that expanded training, resources, and support to all LEAs will ensure there are sufficient resources to effectively prepare and build capacity in all LEAs to successfully implement the system.

- For the project area of Great Teachers and Leaders, shift \$5,942,414 of unexpended funds from Year 3 to Year 5 to maintain the Georgia Department of Education Great Teacher and Leaders staff and support the activities outlined above, including personnel and fringe expenses for 39.11 FTE. Positions include two Value-added/Growth Specialists, one District Improvement Specialist, three SLO Support Specialists, two Electronic Platform Specialists, Data Analyst, Training Program Specialist, Data and Evaluation Program Manager, two Research and Evaluation Specialists, and 24 Evaluation Specialists. In total, Georgia identified \$11,050,886 in Year 3 cost savings to support this work in Project 13: Value Added Growth Model, Project 14: Development, Testing, and Validation of Other Quantitative Measures, and Project 16: Evaluation Training and Process Feedback. Due to late hiring,

¹ For more information, see the Department's July 30, 2013 amendment approval letter available at: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/amendments/georgia-10.pdf>

Georgia identified \$1,458,078 in unexpended Year 3 personnel and fringe funds. As a result of its approved amendment to build its student growth model in-house Georgia identified \$1,500,000 in Year 3 and \$7,500,000 in Year 4 contractual cost savings.² Due to the State's decision to develop SLOs with the assistance of educators rather than with a vendor, Georgia identified \$415,000 in Year 3 and \$373,000 in Year 4 contractual funds. Additionally, the State decided to incorporate SLOs within its Online Assessment System rather than building a new database, resulting in contractual cost savings of \$652,000. The State also made minor adjustments in its Year 3 budget based on projected actual costs.

- For the project area of Great Teachers and Leaders, hire an additional 30 contractual personnel per year in Years 3 and 4. The State reports that these positions are necessary to expand training and supplement the existing teams that are supporting implementation. The State will form an educator evaluation team in each of the 16 Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESA) that will include evaluation system specialists, SLO specialists, and electronic platform specialists. Georgia will use \$2,250,000 in Year 4 and \$2,500,000 in Year 5 from the cost savings described above to support these positions.
- For the project area of Great Teachers and Leaders, shift the end date for technology work conducted by Georgia Professional Standards Commission and the University System of Georgia from September 2014 to June 2015. As outlined in its approved application, these data systems must be designed and built to meet the requirements and specifications for implementing and sustaining the preparation program and tiered certification work. As described in more detail below, the policies, procedures, and rules for implementing tiered certification and educator preparation program accountability will be developed and refined through Year 5. As a result, Georgia will shift \$385,345 in unexpended Year 3 contractual funds to Year 5.

I approve the following amendments with the condition outlined below:

- For the project area of Great Teachers and Leaders, shift the end date for work related to implementation of the teacher preparation program effectiveness measure (TPPEM) and leader preparation program effectiveness measure (LPPEM) from September 2014 to June 2015 due to its dependencies on full implementation of the teacher and leader evaluation system. Georgia reports that the additional implementation year will ensure that it will have sufficient data and time to calculate TPPEM/LPPEM; develop business rules, calculation methodologies, policies, guidance, and rules; develop data systems necessary to conduct and sustain the collection, reporting, and use of data in TPPEM/LPPEM; and to build State and LEA capacity to ensure sustainability of the reforms. The State reports that it will conduct a comprehensive pilot including all available data in SY 2014-2015. However, the Department notes that Georgia will not begin implementing the report cards until SY 2015-2016, one year later than outlined in its original Race to the Top plan.
- For the project area of Great Teachers and Leaders, shift the end date for work related to implementation of tiered certification from September 2014 to June 2015

² For more information, see the Department's January 9, 2012 amendment approval letter available at: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/amendments/georgia-4.pdf>.

due to its dependencies on full implementation of the teacher and leader evaluation system. Georgia reports that the additional implementation year will ensure that it has sufficient time to determine how teacher and leader effectiveness will be incorporated within tiered certification; develop business rules, calculation methodologies, policies, guidance, and rules; develop data systems necessary to conduct and sustain the collection, reporting, and use of data in tiered certification; and to build State and LEA capacity to ensure sustainability of the reforms. The State reports that it will begin phasing in implementation of the new certification levels in SY 2014-2015, with full implementation of tiered certification in SY 2016-2017.

The Department approved the two requests outlined above related to TPPEM, LPPEM, and tiered certification with the condition that the State submit the final approved rule from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, expected in April 2014, demonstrating the State's commitment and intent to implementing these initiatives after the Race to the Top grant period.

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 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 amendments.

If you need any assistance or have any questions regarding Race to the Top, please do not hesitate to contact Georgia's Race to the Top Program Officer, Melissa Siry, at 202-260-0926 or Melissa.siry@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

//s//

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

cc: Superintendent John Barge
Dr. Susan Andrews
Erin Hames