



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

August 21, 2012

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. Between August 7 and August 16, 2012, the State submitted documentation to 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. On October 4, 2011, the Department sent a letter and revised "Grant Amendment Submission Process" document to Governors of grantee States indicating the process by which amendments would be reviewed and approved or denied. To determine whether approval could be granted, the Department 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.

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, 2012 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 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.

The Department approves the following amendments:

- For the project area of Great Teachers and Leaders, Georgia will repurpose \$3.2 million from Project 19, Relocation Incentives. In accordance with its approved Scope of Work,

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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 Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) released the Relocation Bonus Grant application on January 20, 2012. Only four systems applied for the grant; GaDOE awarded one relocation grant for \$360,000.

The State will redirect the remaining funding from the relocation grant program to build capacity for the teacher and leader effectiveness systems and to provide additional project management support to participating school districts in Project 16, Evaluation Training and Evaluation Process Feedback and Project 29, Project Management, as follows.

- For the project area of State Success Factors, Georgia will eliminate two budget analyst positions and hire four Education Research and Evaluation Specialists that will be able to provide program management and technical assistance, as well as financial oversight for its participating local educational agencies (LEAs) in Project 29, Project Management. GaDOE is reorganizing the Race to the Top Implementation Office to improve the support and technical assistance provided to the 26 participating LEAs and to improve the rigor of implementation of activities in local districts' scopes of work. To support this work, Georgia will use \$436,153 from Project 19 (described above) to support personnel, fringe and equipment.

For the project area of Great Teachers and Leaders, Georgia will fund eight additional staff positions as part of an organizations change within the School Improvement Department at GaDOE. The new organization structure creates an Associate Superintendent for Teacher and Leader Effectiveness that reports directly to the Deputy Superintendent for School Improvement. In total, Georgia will use approximately \$2 million dollars from Project 19, Relocation Incentives, to support personnel, fringe, equipment, and travel expenses for the positions outlined above for the remainder of the grant period. Georgia will hire:

- *Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Director* will be responsible for the management and oversight of the three program managers who have the responsibilities to coordinate, design, and implement quality programs to improve teacher and leader effectiveness.
- *Program Manager for Evaluation, Data, and Documentation* will ensure increased focus on the management and oversight procedures and routines to ensure appropriate project implementation.
- *Evaluation Specialist* (2 positions) will focus on the interpretation, analysis, reporting, and communication of data and implementation status that will support the Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Division to monitor implementation quality and progress and to make data-informed decisions.
- *Professional Development Specialists* (2 positions) will provide adequate staff capacity for the identification, design, development, and implementation of training modules within the electronic platform to support effective utilization of the platform itself, to support teachers in effectively understanding and meeting the expectations of the teacher evaluation system standards, and to support leaders in effectively understanding and meeting the expectations of the leader evaluation system standards.

- *Student Learning Objective Specialists* (2 positions) will provide increased capacity for the Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Division to support additional districts, as the effectiveness systems are piloted and implemented, to ensure capacity to understand, develop, and implement student learning objectives.

The Department approves the following amendment with the condition outlined below:

- For the project area of Great Teachers and Leaders, Georgia will use \$844,245, from Project 19, Relocation Incentives, to support contractual work in Project 16, Evaluation Training and Evaluation Process Feedback, to build the capacity of the GaDOE and provide content expertise related to the teacher and leader evaluation systems.

The Department approves this request under the condition that the State, submit to the Department the following information prior to obtaining services:

- a. Specific details for each contractual activity, including how the services will support the State's work plan, in accordance with the conditions associated with high-risk status designated in the Department's July 2 and July 30, 2012 letters, and assist the State in meetings its goals; and
- b. A process for how it will ensure that it obtains high-quality services that will meet the needs specified in its request.

If you need any assistance or have any questions regarding Race to the Top, please do not hesitate to contact me. As is our practice with all Race to the Top amendments, this letter will be posted on the Department's website.

Sincerely,

//s//

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

Cc: Superintendent John Barge
Teresa MacCartney
Kristin Bernhardt
Erin Hames