



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

January 18, 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. Between August 30, 2012, and January 11, 2013, the State submitted documentation and clarifying information 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, 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:

- The State determined that it no longer wants to charge indirect costs to the Race to the Top grant and will repurpose approximately \$3 million budgeted for this purpose across

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 overall grant budget. Of this total, the State will shift approximately \$400,000 to Years 3 and 4 “Other” in Project 29: Project Management for rent and auditing expenses. The remaining funds will be used to support activities in Project 9: GaDOE Specific Technology Projects, described below.

- For the project area of Using Data to Improve Instruction, Georgia had approximately \$2.5 million in unexpended Year 2 funds from Project 9: GaDOE Specific Technology Projects in Year 2 from its \$7 million Year 2 project budget. These funds were initially budgeted for the development of the Instructional Improvement System (IIS), which is being built on top of the state-wide longitudinal data system. This work has ramped up in the last few months and will continue to increase throughout the remainder of the grant period. Although the State had unexpended project funds, it reports that there is no delay in the completion of the IIS work.
- Georgia will use the funds initially budgeted for indirect costs and the cost savings from Project 9 in Year 2 to support its existing IIS work and the electronic platform for its teacher and leader evaluation systems in Years 3 and 4 of the grant. Based on revised cost estimates, the State expects that the teacher and leader evaluation system electronic platform will cost more than originally anticipated in Year 3 (\$2,587,000) and Year 4 (\$643,000). Therefore, additional funds are needed to support the existing work outlined in Georgia’s Scope of Work. Georgia will increase travel by \$164,500 per year in Years 3 and 4. This will support additional local trips throughout the State to design the system requirements and train teachers and administrators. Finally, Georgia will increase equipment funds by \$385,000 in Year 4 for additional servers, data storage, and other network building infrastructure.

It is our understanding that these amendments will not result in a change in your State’s performance measures and outcomes, nor will they substantially change the Scope of Work. Please note that 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 Program Officer, Melissa Siry at Melissa.Siry@ed.gov or 202-260-0926.

Sincerely,

//s//

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

cc: Superintendent John Barge
 Dr. Susan Andrews
 Clara Keith
 Kristin Bernhardt
 Erin Hames