



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

February 10, 2012

The Honorable Neil Abercrombie  
Office of the Governor  
State Capital, Executive Chambers  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Governor Abercrombie,

I am writing in response to Hawaii's request to amend its approved Race to the Top grant project. As you are aware, the U.S. Department of Education (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 December 21, 2011, the Department placed Hawaii's Race to the Top grant on high-risk status because the State had not demonstrated adequate progress implementing its approved plans in the first year of the grant as evidenced by the Department's on-site program review in June 2011, monthly reports, and the amendments requested by the State between July and December, 2011. In that letter, the Department indicated its concern regarding the State's ability to fulfill its commitments within the grant period. As a condition of high-risk status, the State was placed on cost reimbursement basis. Additionally, the Department indicated that it would conduct an extensive on-site program review. At that time, Hawaii must provide clear and compelling evidence that demonstrates it has made substantial progress across its Race to the Top plan. After the review, the Department will reevaluate Hawaii's high-risk status. That review will occur in March 2012. Please note that in addition to the principles mentioned above, the Department considers Hawaii's high-risk status when reviewing amendments including those amendments previously approved on February 7, 2012.

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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 following amendment is approved:

- In the area of Turning Around the Lowest Achieving Schools, in the Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE) Assistance and Oversight project, shift \$1.6 million from the Hawaii Partnership for Educational Research Consortium project (approved on February 7, 2012) to provide free Extended Learning Opportunities for students in the Zones of School Innovation during the summer in years 2-4 of the grant. It is the Department's understanding that this is an extension of existing Race to the Top initiatives for Extended Learning Time and wraparound services. The summer program will target students at risk of failure and will provide academic services to students in grades K-12.

The following amendment is approved with the condition outlined below:

- For the Evaluation Systems project, use \$3 million dollars in years 2-4 of the grant for a contract(s) to support the *development* of the teacher evaluation system. At this time, the State is working to design a teacher evaluation system in accordance with their approved application. Therefore, the State may use Race to the Top funds to support the development of that system.

However, the Department did not approve Hawaii's proposed amendment for *implementing* the teacher evaluation system in the December 21, 2011 letter because the State did not have the authority to fully implement a teacher evaluation system that is consistent with the system described in Hawaii's approved Race to the Top application. Therefore, the State may only use these funds for activities associated with implementing the teacher evaluation system as described in its current approved State scope of work. It is the Department's understanding from HIDOE that it still does not have authority to fully implement a teacher evaluation system that includes all the elements included in the approved application. As a condition of this approval and cost reimbursement status, the State must submit a justification and sufficient documentation to demonstrate that expenses incurred against this contract are supporting activities only related to the development of the system.

As a requirement of Hawaii's high-risk status, the State must submit an updated State scope of work and budget that reflect the amendments approved in this letter by March 2, 2012.

If you need any assistance or have any questions regarding Race to the Top, please do not hesitate to contact your Race to the Top Program Officer, Melissa Siry. 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 Kathryn Matayoshi  
Tammi Chun  
Stephen Schatz