



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

July 25, 2014

The Honorable Patrick Quinn  
Office of the Governor  
207 State House  
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Quinn:

I am writing in response to Illinois's request to amend its approved Race to the Top grant project. Between May 20, 2014 and July 1, 2014, the State submitted amendment requests to the U.S. Department of Education (Department) and additional clarification as requested. 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. The Department provided grantees with a copy of the "Grant Amendment Submission Process" document. 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.

I approve the following amendment:

- For section (B)(3) in the (LAS) project, shift the scope of work timeline to delay the activities (tasks 6.1.2 through 6.1.11) executed by the LAS management entity by one year. The State reported this delay is due to its lengthy procurement process and difficulty it faced identifying the LAS management entity. A vendor was identified through the third round of the request for sealed proposal (RFSP) process, after two previous releases which the State reported did not attract qualified vendor proposals. The contract negotiations were finalized and the vendor contract was signed in May 2014, approximately one year later than planned. Additionally, the State had planned to develop, pilot, and finalize assessment items for non-tested grades and subjects in three year cycles. Due to the timeline delay, the State will now complete the activities in one year.

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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 State plans to make publically available all of the training materials used to support the educator workgroups so that districts have the ability to replicate the assessment item development process for additional grades and subjects, as needed.

- In the LAS project budget, shift \$160,880 of a total \$656,021 unspent Year 2 funds to Year 3 to support the development of an assessment literacy training and to facilitate educator workgroups in the process of assessment item development, review, and pilots for non-tested grades and subjects.<sup>i</sup> The funds are available as a result of unspent contractual funds.
- For section (D)(3) in the Teacher Preparation project, adjust the approach to implement the Teacher Preparation project. Illinois was previously approved to identify six to eight secondary teacher preparation programs to completely align their English Language Arts (ELA) and/or mathematics curriculum to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) before the first cohort of students began the program in order to prepare the students who would graduate in June 2015 to provide classroom instruction aligned to the CCSS. Because the project will begin later than anticipated, the State plans to institute a phased-in approach for six teacher preparation programs which allows students graduating in January 2015 to obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to implement CCSS aligned instruction. The teacher preparation programs will supplement their current curriculum with new information and resources aligned to the CCSS as their program redesign is proceeding. Illinois plans to implement a peer review process that will provide institutions with frequent and immediate feedback on its redesign efforts. The State expects that the teacher preparation program redesigns will be completed by fiscal year 2016.
  - In the Teacher Preparation project budget, shift \$24,100 of a total \$362,000 unspent Year 1 funds to Year 2 and shift \$3,756 of a total \$54,234 unspent Year 3 funds to Year 4 to support six public institutions, which have teacher preparation programs for secondary teachers in the English language arts and/or mathematic content areas, to redesign and align curriculum and resources to the CCSS.<sup>ii</sup> The funds are available due to adjustments to the Teacher Preparation project which delayed implementation and the State's decision to forego indirect cost charges.<sup>iii</sup>

It is our understanding that this amendment will not result in a change in your State's performance measures and outcomes, nor will it 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 Illinois's Race to the Top Program Officer, Cindy Savage, at 202-453-5998 or [Cindy.Savage@ed.gov](mailto:Cindy.Savage@ed.gov).

Sincerely,

//s//

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

cc: Christopher Koch  
Peter Godard  
Julie Evans

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<sup>i</sup> The State indicated it will propose its use of the remaining \$495,141.34 in a separate amendment request.

<sup>ii</sup> The State indicated it will propose its use of the remaining \$388,378 in a separate amendment request.

<sup>iii</sup> Previous amendments to the Illinois Teacher Preparation project can be found at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/amendments/index.html>