



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

October 3, 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 July 1, 2014 and September 10, 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 (C)(3) in the Illinois Collaborative for Education Policy Research (ICEPR) project, adjust the approach and budget to implement the ICEPR project. The State reported that in 2012 the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) contracted with ICEPR, a partnership with several education research and policy agencies, to complete a statewide research agenda and develop a system for outside research entities to access and gather education data. Due to challenges with the contractor, ISBE will now contract with a lead research entity to perform the responsibilities of the ICEPR project including: (1) performing all of the functional responsibilities of the project; (2) maintaining a research copy of the State's data warehouse and disseminating applicable research findings to local education agencies (LEAs); and (3) modifying the current research agenda. The State plans to support the ICEPR research activities by procuring non-Race to the Top grant funding and charging user fees for data requests. As such, ISBE will shift \$402,641 unspent Year 1 through Year 3 contractual funds out of the ICEPR project budget.<sup>i</sup>

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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.*

- For section (A)(2) in the Center for School Improvement (CSI) project, adjust the approach to implement the CSI project. CSI is a partnership between ISBE, the American Institutes for Research, and the Regional Offices of Education (ROE). CSI was established to: (1) provide support in low-performing schools and districts; and (2) to support Race to the Top participating LEAs with their continuous improvement planning and transition to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). ISBE will now redirect CSI staff to focus on providing support to all of the lowest-achieving LEAs, including the participating LEAs that are identified as the lowest-achieving LEAs. The State will support all LEAs, including Race to the Top participating LEAs, with statewide systems of supports for CCSS implementation and continuous improvement processes through the ROEs. Participating LEAs also receive specific support for their implementation of the Race to the Top grant through the LEA Support and Regional Capacity meetings held quarterly throughout the State. As CSI is not funded through Race to the Top grant funds, the shift in approach for the CSI implementation has no budget implications.

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//

Patrick Rooney  
Acting 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 \$402,641 in a separate amendment request.