



## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

September 21, 2015

The Honorable Bruce Rauner  
Governor  
Office of the Governor  
207 State House  
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Rauner:

I am writing in response to the Illinois's request to amend its approved Race to the Top grant plan. Between June 30, 2015 and August 18, 2015, the State submitted documentation and held conversations with the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to support amendment requests to its approved Race to the Top plan. ED has the authority to approve amendments to your plan and budget, provided the revisions do not change the overall scope and objectives of the approved proposal. In October 2011, ED issued the *Grant Amendment Submission Process* document, indicating the process by which amendments to accomplish the reform goals and deliverables it committed to in its Race to the Top application and approved scope of work would be reviewed. To determine whether approval could be granted, ED 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.

ED approves Illinois' amended Race to the Top plan, as described below.

- In the Center for School Improvement (CSI) project under sub-criterion (A)(2), the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) amended its strategy and timeline for disseminating professional development to its LEAs on the Illinois Shared Learning Environment (ISLE) project of the (C)(3) sub-criterion.
  - First, the State originally planned to provide professional development on the ISLE through its Center for School Improvement beginning in January 2013. However, in order to secure the necessary technical expertise required for training related to ISLE, the State contracted with a professional development lead in September 2013 to disseminate training to LEAs instead. In turn, the State allocated \$158,250 from unexpended funds from other projects to Year 4 contractual line of the ISLE project budget.<sup>1</sup>
  - Second, ISBE's project plans included the provision of professional development to educators on learning maps, an application in ISLE, beginning in May 2014.

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<sup>1</sup> As part of ISBE's budget process, the State reviews its actual expenditures in comparison to its original budget and identifies any funds that are unexpended across all projects. ISBE reallocates the unexpended funds to other projects according to need, some of which are described throughout this amendment letter.

However, due to challenges with its vendor, the State terminated the contract for the learning maps application and is pursuing a State-developed plan in its place; therefore, ISBE did not provide professional development on this component of ISLE. There are no budget implications for this change as ISLE is funded this activity through non-Race to the Top sources.

- In the Report Card project under sub-criterion (A)(2), ISBE shifted a total of \$461,855 to Years 3 and 4 from unexpended contractual funds from Years 1 and 2 (\$320,000) and funds from other projects (\$141,855). Project funds were available because contractual costs to complete the State's Report Card were lower than originally budgeted. ISBE utilized funds in Years 3 and 4 to support technical maintenance of the report card. Illinois also plans to expand the elements and capabilities of the report card to further the State's goal to effectively assess the progress of the State, LEAs, and schools in meeting key goals and objectives. As a result, the State will extend the timeline to complete this project from June 1, 2014, through December 22, 2015.
- In the LEA Support and Networking project under sub-criterion (A)(2), ISBE revised the State's strategy for its delivery of supports to and oversight of its participating LEAs for Year 3 and Year 4. Based on feedback from participating LEAs, the State contracted with a regional center to provide coaches to each participating LEA. The coaches provide LEAs with targeted technical assistance, gather lessons learned to share across the State, and assist ISBE with sub-recipient monitoring. As a result, the State allocated \$120,000 to Year 3 and \$60,000 to Year 4 to support the LEA coaches and extended the timeline for this project through December 22, 2015, to ensure supports through the remainder of the grant period.
- In the STEM Learning Exchanges project of the (B)(3) sub-criterion, the State extended its timeline from June 30, 2015, to December 22, 2015, in order to complete the information technology (IT) Learning Exchange. As a result of initial contractual delays, the State needs additional time to complete the Learning Exchange functions and develop a sustainability plan for this work beyond Race to the Top.
- In the ISLE project under sub-criterion (C)(3), the State amended its timeline for completing the ISLE project and the participation requirements for participating LEAs.
  - ISBE will continue to integrate LEA data systems and work with its participating LEAs to integrate local data and fully launch the ISLE applications by December 22, 2015. The State originally anticipated to complete this work by December 31, 2014, but due to some technical challenges needs additional time to continue to work with its LEAs and contractors to ensure its systems are fully functional.
  - Additionally, ISBE will allow LEAs the option to use the ISLE applications instead of requiring them to fully participate.
- In the Induction and Mentoring Supports project under sub-criterion (D)(5), amend the State's timeline for providing induction and mentoring supports to new teachers and principals. In ISBE's original project plans, the State indicated it would select a vendor in September 2012, to: 1) provide LEAs with in-person and online differentiated technical assistance on induction and mentoring practices; 2) evaluate the impact of the induction and

mentoring activities; and 3) analyze and share best practices. However, due to significant delays throughout the procurement process and staff turnover, the State did not finalize its vendor until June 2014. ISBE reports that despite the State's contractual delays, LEAs disseminated induction and mentoring supports at the local level throughout Years 1-4 of the grant through subgrants from the State. As a result, the State will extend the work of this project through Year 4 and shifted \$492,844 in unexpended project funds to Years 3 and 4.

It is ED's understanding that this amendment will not result in a change in your State's performance measures and outcomes, nor will they substantially change the scope and objectives of the work. Please note that this letter will be posted on ED's website as a record of the amendments.

If you need any assistance or have any questions regarding Race to the Top, please contact Julie Glasier of my staff at: [OSS.Illinois@ed.gov](mailto:OSS.Illinois@ed.gov).

Thank you for your continued commitment to enhancing education for all of the Illinois's students.

Sincerely,

/s/

Monique M. Chism, Ph.D.  
Director  
Office of State Support

cc: Dr. Tony Smith  
Julie Evans