



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

April 16, 2014

The Honorable Deval Patrick  
Office of the Governor  
State House, Room 360  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Patrick:

I am writing in response to Massachusetts' request to amend its approved Race to the Top grant project, including revisions to the project period to implement a portion of its plan. Between January 24, 2014 and April 9, 2014, the State submitted documentation to and held conversations with 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 the revisions do not change the overall scope and objectives of the approved proposal. In March 2013, the Department issued "Amendment Requests with No-cost Extension Guidance and Principles" indicating the process by which amendments containing requests to provide additional time for a grantee 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 and approved or denied. To determine whether approval could be granted, the Department has applied the conditions and elements specific to no-cost extensions noted in the document, and compared it with the Race to the Top program *Principles* included in the "Grant Amendment Submission Process" document issued to Governors of grantee States in October 2011.

I approve the following amendments, including an extension to the time period for implementation of several sub-projects, as described below.

- In Federal Project 12, Sub-project E2.A (Build District Capacity – Improve District Governance): Shift \$647,703 in unspent Year 3 and Year 4 funds to Year 5 to extend plan manager support for identified districts to continue to implement robust continuous improvement systems and to support other E2 sub-projects (see below). The funds are available in this sub-project due to lower than expected contractual costs.

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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.*

- 1) According to the State, the districts currently working with a plan manager are making good progress with implementing an Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP) for building internal capacity to implement continuous improvement systems that result in improved student outcomes. In order to allow identified districts to continue to work with district plan managers and to implement continuous improvement systems and practices, the State is approved for a no-cost extension of \$316,354.
  - 2) The State will shift a total of \$331,349 to support sub-projects E2.B (Teacher and Leader Turnaround Teams), E2.D (Supports for Struggling Schools), and E2.F (Turnaround Partners), as described below.
- In Federal Project 12, Sub-project E2.B (Teacher and Leader Turnaround Teams): Shift a total of \$410,679, comprised of \$99,808 from E2.A (as described above) and \$14,422 from E2.E (as described below), in addition to a total of \$296,449 in unspent Year 3 and Year 4 funds from this sub-project to Year 5 to continue to recruit, train, place, and provide professional development support to aspiring turnaround teacher and leader teams. The funds in this sub-project are available due to unspent personnel funds.
    - 1) According to the State, placing teacher and leader turnaround teams in struggling schools has resulted in a culture shift that positively impacts student outcomes and districts have a desire to continue these turnaround efforts to build expertise and capacity at the school level. The State plans to continue its partnership with the Teach for America and Teach Plus programs to recruit, train and place an additional 25 turnaround teachers in Level 3 and Level 4 schools. The State reports it has encountered challenges recruiting leaders and has not yet met its goal of training and placing 45 turnaround leaders. The State is partnering with a vendor to develop new recruitment strategies and plans to financially support LEAs in sending five to ten participants to Cohort 3 of the Turnaround Leadership Academy during the no cost extension time period. The State plans to continue to partner with the Turnaround Leadership Academy to develop aspiring leaders for Level 3 and Level 4 schools. Additionally, the State plans to expand the use of the Turnaround Principals Network, a website where turnaround leaders can discuss high-interest topics and share strategies and support for turning around low-performing schools, to other underperforming schools including newly designated Level 4 schools and interested Level 5 schools. In order to continue placing turnaround aspiring teachers and leaders in low-performing schools, the State is approved for a no-cost extension of \$410,679 in this sub-project.

- 2) Additionally, the Department acknowledges adjustments to the State’s approved Scope of Work related to partnering with higher education and residency programs to launch training and induction in Springfield and greater Boston school districts. The State determined that the allotted funding was not sufficient to support a new program with national recruiting and a new university partner. Instead, the State leveraged a partnership with Cambridge College and Worcester Public Schools to develop a residency program with a focus on training and placing teachers for English Language Learners in Worcester. Additionally, the State partnered with two organizations, Teach for America and Teach Plus, to train and place aspiring turnaround teachers in schools in the Greater Boston area. Through these partnerships the State has exceeded its target of training and placing 200 turnaround teachers.
- In Federal Project 12, Sub-project E2.D (Support for Struggling Schools): Shift a total of \$231,516 in unspent Year 3 and Year 4 funds from Sub-project E2.A (as described above) to Year 5 in this sub-project to continue providing targeted support in struggling schools by pairing them with identified partners that have a demonstrated track record of effectiveness in accelerating school improvement. In order to enable the State to expand its current Network of Priority Partners, the State is approved for a no-cost extension of \$231,516 in this sub-project. Because the State is aware that there may be other organizations that have developed expertise in assisting schools to develop conditions for turning around low-performing schools, it plans expand its current network of Priority Partners by adding up to five new partners.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the State plans to continue to convene the Network on a regular basis to allow Partners to collaborate with each other and share ideas for effective partnering with schools.
  - In Federal Project 12, Sub-project E2. E (Wraparound Zones): Shift a total of \$318,184 in unspent Year 2 through Year 4 funds to Year 5 to continue to provide support through a combination of district-tailored technical assistance and cross-district seminars regarding Wraparound Zone related topics and to support other E2 sub-projects. The funds are available in this sub-project due to lower than expected contractual costs.
    - 1) According to the State, struggling schools that have implemented Wraparound Zones are making progress towards creating a climate and culture that promotes positive social, emotional, physical, and intellectual growth for students. However, external evaluation results identified areas at the district level where additional technical assistance and networking opportunities would increase the likelihood

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<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts currently has a core network of 24 Priority Partners to address the following conditions: 1) demonstrated effectiveness in working with schools to address students’ social, emotional and health needs; 2) effectiveness in maximizing learning time; 3) effective use of data; and 4) district systems of support – leadership, human resources, and financial management.

that districts with Wraparound Zones can support schools to successfully embed and sustain systems to meet students' non-academic needs. In order to enable the State to continue to provide district level assistance for building capacity to sustain Wraparound Zones, the State is approved of a no-cost extension of \$303,762 in this sub-project.

- 2) The State will shift a total of \$14,422 to support E2.B (Teacher and Leader Turnaround Teams), as described above.
- In Federal Project 12, Sub-project E2.F (Turnaround Operators): Shift a total of \$1,157,624 comprised of \$11,100 unspent Year 3 and Year 4 funds from this project and a total of \$1,146,524 unspent Year 3 and Year 4 funds from various sub-projects to Year 5 to continue to provide support for high need districts and schools.<sup>2</sup> The funds in these sub-projects are available largely due to lower than expected contractual costs and reduced indirect costs, as well as, some unspent personnel funds.
    - 1) Massachusetts has vetted and selected six turnaround operators to build organizational capacity to manage chronically underperforming schools. Additionally, the State has partnered with the District Management Council to develop protocols, timelines and management tools to support the process of designing and restarting Level 5 schools and named the first cohort of four Level 5 schools in fall 2013. In order to enable the State to expand the portfolio of turnaround operators and refine the systems of identifying and intervening in chronically underperforming schools, the State is approved of a no-cost extension of \$1,157,624 in this sub-project.
    - 2) Additionally, the Department acknowledges that the State adjusted its approved Scope of Work related to establishing a nonprofit school improvement intermediary to increase turnaround operator capacity. After convening a panel of experts, the State concluded that creating a nonprofit intermediary was not a viable strategy to accomplish the State's objective. Instead, the State determined that it had internal capacity to recruit, vet, and support a portfolio of turnaround operators.
  - In Federal Project 8, Sub-project D2.A1 (Improve Teacher and Principal Effectiveness through Educator Evaluation):
    - 1) Shift \$195,000 in unspent Year 3 funds in projects D4.A (Prep Program Effectiveness – Staff and Operations), D2.A (Educator Effectiveness – Staff

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<sup>2</sup> The sub-projects include: A2.A-IT, B1.A-IT, B3.A1, B3.B, B3.C1, B3.C2, C2.A-IT, C2.A2-IT, C2.B, C3.A-IT, D2.A1-IT, D3.A, D3.A-IT, D4.A, D5.A2, E2.A, and E2.A-IT.

and Operations), and D4.A4 (Preparation Program Effectiveness - Grants) to Year 4 supplemental funding for participating LEAs in this sub-project. Funds will be used for Professional Practice Innovation Grants to LEAs, to support initiatives that build the capacity of teachers, specialized instructional support personnel, and administrators to implement the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks in alignment with Massachusetts' educator evaluation system. The State reports that this grant opportunity will build on professional development it has already been provided on CCSS and educator evaluation implementation and build LEA capacity to integrate implementation of these key initiatives.

- In Federal Project 8, Sub-project D2.C (Create an Improved Performance-Based Licensure system):
  - 1) Shift \$964,290 in unspent Year 3 contractual funds to Year 4 to support continued development of the State's principal performance assessment (the Performance Assessment for Leaders). Year 3 costs for the vendor contract were lower than expected. Additionally, in order to continue piloting and implement the assessment in SY 2014-2015, the State is approved for a no-cost extension.<sup>3</sup> Due to delays in developing the Performance Assessment for Leaders, the State needs additional to time complete planned pilot activities and to rollout the assessment.
  - 2) Adjust the timeline for development of a teacher leader performance assessment and accomplish this work using a revised strategy. Massachusetts initially expected to develop a teacher leader performance assessment in Years 2 and 3, but will now complete this work in Years 4 and 5. Through a grant, the State will partner with other States in SY 2013-2014 to conduct research and develop recommendations to adopt, adapt, or build a teacher performance assessment. Additionally, the State is approved to shift \$858,223 in unspent Year 3 funds from Sub-project D4.A4 (Preparation Program Expansion Grants) to Years 4 and 5 in D2.C to support the State in re-envisioning its current teacher licensure policies and implementing a teacher licensure performance assessment, as approved by the Commissioner. The State is approved for a no-cost extension to continue this work.
  - 3) Adjust the State's approved Scope of Work related to the development of teacher career ladder endorsements. Originally, the State intended to adopt licensure regulations to establish teacher career ladder endorsements. Based on feedback from the field, Massachusetts determined that LEAs did not support the development of such statewide regulations. As a result, the State will partner with and learn from LEAs

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<sup>3</sup> The State does not anticipate that Race to the Top funding will be needed to support this work during the no-cost extension period.

that are currently implementing local career ladder initiatives to make determinations about how best to promote differentiated careers for teachers across the State. It will develop a policy brief including lessons learned from local initiatives and disseminate this information statewide to support LEAs in the development of local career ladder initiatives for teachers.

As described in a September 17, 2013, amendment approval letter, the Department indicated that it generally approves the State's process to review LEA subgrant requests to obligate and liquidate funds after September 23, 2014. Prior to June 30, 2014, the Department expects the State to submit a record of each participating LEA project approved by the State for a no cost extension and the total funding approved for the LEAs' Year 5 Scopes of Work.

It is our understanding that this amendment and no-cost extension 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 we are expecting grantees with no-cost extensions to liquidate all funds by September 1, 2015, given that by law all Race to the Top funds revert to the U.S. Department of Treasury as of October 1, 2015. The State must request and receive approval to move forward with no-cost extensions for any additional projects. This letter will be posted on the Department's website as a record of the amendment.

If you need any assistance or have any questions regarding Race to the Top, please do not hesitate to contact Massachusetts' Race to the Top Program Officer, Ashlee Davis, at 202-401-9501 or [Ashlee.Davis@ed.gov](mailto:Ashlee.Davis@ed.gov).

Sincerely,

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

cc: Commissioner Mitchell Chester  
Carrie Conaway  
Helene Bettencourt  
Saeyun Lee