



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

June 26, 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 June 24, 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 to June 30, 2015, as described below.

- In Federal Project 5, Sub-project C2.A-IT (Educator Data Warehouse Capacity): Shift a total of \$1,132,412 of unspent Year 3 and Year 4 funds to Year 5. The State is approved to shift \$364,422 to Year 5 in this sub-project to support the continued expansion of existing data sets in Edwin Analytics and to provide access to the system for non-traditional organizations that serve public school students.

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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 has requested to shift the remaining funds (\$767,990) to another project; this amendment is currently under Department consideration. The funds are available as a result of the Executive Office of Education's (EOE) indirect cost being significantly less than originally budgeted and unspent personnel funds.

- In Federal Project 5, Sub-project C2.A3-IT (Enhanced Web): Shift unspent Year 3 funds to Year 4 (\$425,361) and Year 5 (\$129,911) in this sub-project to make modifications and improvements to the public profiles web page. In April 2014, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) received recommendations from the project vendor which will inform the modifications to be made to the web page. Massachusetts reported that additional time is needed to complete this project as a result of its decision to delay making modifications to its public profiles web page until the State implemented changes to all State websites. The State has requested to shift the remaining Year 3 funds (\$344,886) to another sub-project; this amendment is currently under Department consideration. The funds are available as a result of EOE's indirect cost being significantly less than originally budgeted and unspent personnel funds.
- In Federal Project 12, Sub-project C2.B (Schools Interoperability Framework - SIF): Shift unspent funds from Years 2 through 4 to Year 5 (\$369,860) in this sub-project to complete LEA implementation and to allow the State to develop a framework through which to collect LEA student discipline data through SIF, and to collect student discipline data from all LEAs by the end of SY 2014-2015. The funds will be used to support LEA efforts in this sub-project through SIF Implementation Grants and to support travel costs for the State to provide technical assistance regarding SIF to LEAs. The SIF project has experienced significant delays due to challenges with the State's initial vendor and implementation strategy. The funds are available because of these delays and the State overestimated costs for technology needed to support LEA SIF implementation and unspent personnel funds. The State reports that it expects all Race to the Top participating LEAs to be using SIF by fall 2014 and the remainder of LEAs in the State to be using SIF by the end of SY 2014-2015. Remaining unspent funds (\$1,290,476) are shifted to other sub-projects, as described below.¹
 - Since EOE performs the IT work for all Massachusetts' State agencies, ESE entered into an Interagency Service Agreement (ISA) with EOE to complete the SIF-IT work. The EOE is contracting with a vendor to support the onboarding of a considerable number of LEAs into SIF in a short time frame in order to reach the goal of all participating LEAs submitting data through SIF by fall 2014. The funds for this work will now be accounted for in sub-project C2.B-IT. Under the terms of the ISA, the

¹ The State also shifted funds from sub-project C2.B to sub-project E2.F as described in the amendment letter dated April 16, 2014.

State will shift \$1,190,476 from Years 3 and 4 of C2.B to Years 4 and 5 of C2.B-IT.

- The State has requested to shift \$100,000 to another project; this amendment is currently under Department consideration.
- In Federal Project 5, Sub-project C2.B-IT (Implement SIF IT): Shift \$367,713 of unspent Year 3 funds to Year 5 in this sub-project to support the completion of the SIF IT work. The funds are available due to the significant delays in the SIF project implementation.
- In Federal Project 10, Sub-project D4.A (Preparation Program Effectiveness): Shift \$425,971 from Years 3 and 4 to Year 5 to support the implementation of new preparation program approval regulations, including refinement and completion of tools designed to conduct and support preparation programs through the new approval process, and finalize the processes for collecting data elements to be included in the State's Preparation Program Profiles. The funds are available due to unspent personnel funds and lower than expected contractual costs. While the State piloted some elements of its new program approval regulations in the program approval process in SY 2013-2014, additional time is needed to implement comprehensive reviews with the new approval process in SY 2014-2015. ESE plans to complete a total of 17 reviews by June 2015. Additionally, while preparation programs have submitted and the State has published some data elements in its Preparation Program Profiles, which were released for the first time in summer 2013, the State plans to expand the data elements included in the Profiles in the future. The Profiles currently include data on candidate enrollment, program completion, Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL) pass rates, and employment and retention of program completers. In future releases, the State will include State-administered survey data, more detailed information regarding preparation program completion rates, and information on preparation program completers' educator evaluation ratings.

The following amendment is approved with the conditions outlined below:

- In Federal Project 4, Sub-project B3.C (College- and Career-Readiness Staff and Operations), the Department conditionally approves Massachusetts to adjust its Scope of Work related to MassCore, Massachusetts' recommended high school course of study.² Originally, the State intended to make MassCore the required high school course of study for all Massachusetts students beginning with the class of 2016. In order to establish this requirement, Massachusetts' Scope of Work called for a State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) vote in Year 2 (SY 2011-2012) of the Race to the Top grant period. Additionally, the State planned to align four-year State college admission requirements to MassCore.

² MassCore includes a minimum of four years of mathematics, three years of lab-based science, four years of English language arts, three years of history and social science, two years of foreign language, a year of the arts, and five additional "core" courses such as business education, health, and technology.

Based on additional consideration and feedback from the field, Massachusetts determined that a statewide requirement to implement MassCore is no longer the best course of action at this time. The State has not in the past enforced a statewide high school course of study and believes that local decision-making is important to meet unique needs and characteristics of LEAs across the State. Further, Massachusetts believes that additional research is needed to understand how MassCore might be enhanced in the future and the work required of LEAs to institute this course of study.

Instead, the State will continue to encourage local educational agency (LEA) adoption of MassCore through technical assistance and professional development. Given that the State reports that the percentage of high school graduates who complete the MassCore course of study has increased from 50 percent in SY 2009-2010 to nearly 70 percent at the end of SY 2012-2013, the State believes that with support, additional LEAs will adopt MassCore as a part of their efforts to ensure students are college- and career-ready. Further, the Massachusetts' Department of Higher Education has adjusted its college admission requirements to include four years of high school mathematics, a minimum of three years of lab-based science, and two years of foreign language.

Approval of this amendment is conditioned on the State completing and providing to the Department by September 19, 2014 a report evaluating current and exploring future MassCore implementation, including:

- 1) A comprehensive list of LEAs in Massachusetts that have made MassCore the required course of study for their high school students;
- 2) An analysis of the LEAs that are using MassCore, including the following factors: geographic location, LEA status (i.e., Levels 1 through 5), and student population characteristics (e.g., socioeconomic status, racial and ethnic background);
- 3) How the State will use the information gathered to inform future MassCore implementation, including consideration of future BESE action; and
- 4) A progress update on and plan regarding the State's efforts to research possible enhancements to MassCore and to understand the work required of LEAs to institute this course of study.

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.

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, Cindy Savage, at 202-453-5998 or Cindy.Savage@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

//s//

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

cc: Commissioner Mitchell Chester
Carrie Conaway
Helene Bettencourt
Matt Wilder