



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

FEB 12 2015

The Honorable Charlie Baker
Office of the Governor
Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker:

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. On January 7, 2015, the State submitted documentation to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to support an amendment request 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 March 2013, ED 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. To determine whether approval could be granted, ED 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 as described below.

- Shift \$2,851,339 from Year 4 to support personnel, fringe, and indirect costs in multiple Year 5 project budgets. In sub-project A2.A (project management), \$267,460 will support two positions working on the early warning indicator system and overseeing program evaluation efforts. In sub-project B3.A1 (model curriculum maps and units), \$708,497 will support five positions working on science, technology, engineering, literacy, humanities and mathematics curriculum development and training. In sub-project B3.A3 (interim and formative assessment system), \$113,976 will support two positions working on the virtual schools initiative. In sub-project C3.A (educator training on data use), \$265,448 will support two positions overseeing implementation of the Schools Interoperability Framework and data reporting. In sub-project D3.I (sheltered English immersion professional development), \$306,490 will support two positions working on the State's English learner programs. In sub-project E2.A (district capacity—staff), \$974,280 will support seven positions working with regional District and School Assistance Centers. In sub-project E2.F (turnaround partners for Level 5), \$215,188 will support one position to lead efforts in Level 5 schools and districts. Funds are available for this shift from the following project budgets:
 - In sub-project B3.A3 (interim and formative assessment system), \$577,190 in Year 4 contractual savings is available and in sub-project B3.A1 (model curriculum units and

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maps), \$360,252 in Year 4 contractual savings is available. The State reports that they did not need as many copyright permissions as previously estimated and the cost of permissions was less than anticipated.

- In sub-projects B3.C (college and career readiness staff/ops), B3.C2 (STEM early college high school program), and B2.C2a (STEM early college high school grants), a combined \$290,000 in Year 4 personnel, fringe, contractual, and supplemental funding for participating districts is available. These funds are available from project budgets that completed all activities planned for Year 4.
- In sub-project C3.A (educator training on data use), \$1,245,638 in unspent Year 5 contractual funds is available. The State reports that delays and limited staff capacity have prevented the State from continuing with this project in Year 5. The State is continuing with its plans to support educator use of data by developing modules within existing data systems.¹
- In sub-project D2.A1 (evaluation framework and implementation program), \$378,259 in unspent Year 4 contractual funds is available. The State is delayed in working with DSACs to support local efforts to develop evaluator skills such as conducting observations, providing feedback, and analyzing district implementation, in particular in high-needs districts. The State reports that it is unable to begin this work at this time in the grant period but that districts are engaged in calibration activities. In addition, the State reports that high-needs districts have opportunities to learn best practices through the Educator Evaluation Newsletter and the annual Educator Effectiveness Spring Convening.
- In sub-project B3.A-IT (teaching and learning system – tech side IT), shift \$499,253 from Year 4 contractual to Year 5 contractual to support Edwin Teaching and Learning subscriptions for districts. This is in keeping with the State’s commitment to fully fund use of the system during the grant period.
- In sub-project B3.A1 (model curriculum maps and units), shift \$400,000 in Year 4 savings to Year 5 supplemental funding for participating LEAs. In Year 5 these funds will support Level 3 and 4 districts to fully adapt and align model curriculum units.
- In sub-project B3.A4 (extended performance tasks), shift \$604,638 into Year 5 contractual to support pilot and post-pilot activities for Massachusetts Performance Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (MPAKS). Of these funds, \$405,034 is rolled over from Year 4 contractual in this sub-project and \$199,604 is available from contractual savings in sub-project B3.A3 (interim and formative assessment system) due to lower costs of copyright permissions.²
- In sub-project C2.A3-IT (enhanced web IT), shift \$419,974 from within this sub-project budget to support a new Year 5 contract. The quality assurance contract is a continuation of work done during the grant period to document and streamline data shared through the agency, design data architecture, analyze requirements and write applications for process improvements, write test cases and conduct usability testing.
- In sub-project C2.B-IT (Schools Interoperability Framework – SIF IT), shift \$1,581,172 from Year 4 contractual to Year 5 contractual, which includes \$900,000 from within this sub-project and \$681,172 in unspent supplemental funding for participating districts from sub-project C2.B (SIF – non IT). The State reports that district-level costs for the SIF agent were less than

¹ See Massachusetts amendment letter, dated August 6, 2014, at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/amendments/massachusetts-21.pdf>.

² The State reports that MPAKS work supported by Race to the Top funds in Year 5 continues to be in keeping with the condition described in an April 28, 2014 amendment letter, available at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/amendments/massachusetts-19.pdf>.

expected, resulting in unspent supplemental funding. After delays in Years 2 through 4, the State has demonstrated it is making progress onboarding districts in Year 5 and that it is on track to onboard 300 to 340 districts by June 2015, including all participating LEAs. In Year 5 these funds will allow the State to continue to support local efforts to comply with SIF requirements and transmit data seamlessly by fall 2015, after the grant period.

- In sub-project C3.A-IT (educator training on data use), shift \$247,366 from within this sub-project budget to support a Year 5 contract that continues existing work in this sub-project. The iPASSPORT contract integrates multiple data systems, including SIF, Edwin Analytics, Edwin Teaching and Learning, and the School and District Profiles website.
- In sub-project E2.F (turnaround partners for Level 5), shift \$548,281 from Year 5 contractual to Year 5 supplemental funding for participating LEAs. Rather than use these funds as State-level contracts with turnaround partners, one district will use these funds to support systemic interventions in its middle schools during school year 2014-2015.

As described in a September 17, 2013, amendment approval letter, ED indicated that it generally approves Massachusetts' process to review local educational agency (LEA) subgrant requests to obligate and liquidate funds after September 23, 2014. On May 27, 2014, Massachusetts submitted a record of each participating LEA project approved by the State for a no-cost extension and the total funding approved for LEAs' Year 5 Scopes of Work.

It is ED's understanding that this 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 expect 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 ED'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 Monika Kincheloe at (202) 260-2531 or Monika.Kincheloe@ed.gov or Millie Bentley-Memon at (202) 401-1472 or Millicent.Bentley-Memon@ed.gov.

Sincerely,



Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary

cc: Commissioner Mitchell Chester
Carrie Conaway
Robert O'Donnell