



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

April 4, 2013

The Honorable Chris Christie
Office of the Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Christie:

I am writing in response to New Jersey's request to amend its approved Race to the Top grant project. Between September 10, 2012 and February 27, 2013, the State submitted amendment requests to the U.S. Department of Education (Department). 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. On October 4, 2011, the Department sent a letter and revised "Grant Amendment Submission Process" document to Governors of grantee States indicating the process by which amendments would be reviewed and approved or denied. 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.

For several components of the Curriculum and Assessment Enhancement project, New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) missed its initial timelines to complete model curriculum, student learning objectives and assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and New Jersey Common Core Curriculum Standards. In creating the model curriculum for the CCSS, the State learned that the process was more time consuming and required greater attention to detail than originally anticipated. Furthermore, the State experienced difficulty in finding both internal and external expertise and capacity to complete this work on time and with high quality. NJDOE has proposed to shift funds to support activities to ensure the State has capacity to meet the goals of this project and new timelines.

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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.

I approve the following amendments for section (B)(3) in the State's Curriculum and Assessment Enhancement project:

- Shift a total of \$24,500 from unspent Year 1 Contractual funds to Year 2 to accommodate the timeline shift to the CCSS model curriculum scaffolding work described below. The consultant originally planned for Year 1 will complete the work in Year 2.
- Shift a total of \$144,623 from unspent Year 1 Contractual funds to Year 2 Personnel (\$99,500) and Fringe (\$45,123) to hire a full-time ELA assessment specialist to create formative assessments and instructional materials aligned to the State's recently developed ELA model curriculum. This position will be funded by Race to the Top for one year – the amount of time the State anticipates it will take to complete the ELA assessments and materials on the new timeline. These funds were originally intended to procure contracted model curriculum writers. However, the State used volunteer educators as curriculum writers instead.
- Shift \$50,000 of unspent Year 1 Contractual funds to Year 2 to continue the existing series of professional development for teachers and principals and send State leaders to the "Implementing the Common Core Standards Collaborative (ICCSC)" conference, hosted by the Council of Chief State School Officers. The professional development sessions focus on classroom implementation of the model curriculum and formative assessments and were identified in the State's approved plan and scope of work but did not have funding dedicated to them. In addition, the State will send leaders to participate in the ICCSC conference to inform the State's professional development offerings in the future. These funds were originally intended to procure contracted model curriculum writers. However, the State used volunteer educators as curriculum writers instead.

In addition, NJDOE has requested to adjust the timelines for delivering certain components of the model curricula and assessments so that both NJDOE and the Department can manage to these adjusted timelines moving forward. The Department acknowledges the timeline delays and missed milestones related to this part of the State's Scope of Work. It is our understanding that New Jersey will still accomplish within the grant period all of the activities and deliverables articulated in its approved application.

- I acknowledge the following changes in the State's timeline for implementation of its Curriculum and Assessment Enhancement project of section (B)(3):
 - The State will deliver formative assessments aligned to the CCSS model curricula on a rolling schedule between August 2012 and March 2013.
 - The State will deliver model curriculum and aligned formative assessments in social studies on a rolling schedule between May 2012 and November 2013.
 - The State will deliver a CCSS model curriculum with accommodations, or "scaffolding," for English language learners on a rolling schedule between August 2013 and February 2014.

- The State will deliver a CCSS model curriculum with accommodations and scaffolding for special education students a rolling schedule between June 2013 and February 2014.
- The State will deliver New Jersey Common Core Curriculum Standards with scaffolding for English Language Learners and special education students on a rolling basis between August 2013 and February 2014.

Based on information provided by New Jersey, it is our understanding that the State plans to deliver model curriculum and aligned assessments in science on a new timeline dependent on the State's adoption of the Next Generation Science Standards. The Department expects that the State will submit an amendment regarding the science model curriculum and formative assessments once the new implementation timeline is determined by the State.

It is our understanding that these amendments 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 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 New Jersey's Race to the Top Program Officer, Renee Faulkner, at (202) 205-4012 or Renee.Faulkner@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

//s//

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

cc: James Palmer, Director of Performance Management
Evan Linhardt, Race to the Top Manager
Takecia Saylor, Race to the Top Manager