April 29, 2013

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

Governor Christie:

I am writing in response to New Jersey's request to amend its approved Race to the Top grant project. Between December 13, 2012 and March 25, 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.

I approve the following amendments to the Instructional Improvement System (IIS) project:

- The State will shift a total of $1,229,803.75 from Years 2-4 of the Funding for Involved LEAs category to fund a team of employees and contractors who will manage the development and implementation of the IIS. These funds were originally intended to provide sub-grants to involved LEAs for technology upgrades and incentives to support subscription to the IIS. However, based on lessons learned from the implementation of a smaller scale version of the IIS in Year 1, as well as best practice research on other States' IIS implementation, the State determined it required significantly more capacity to complete the approved IIS projects on time and with high quality. The approach change does not preclude any Involved LEAs from subscribing to the IIS. The State will support involved LEAs with $270,196 that remains in the budget category in Years 2-4.

The positions and budget implications are described in the attached table.

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

Description of the Positions and Budget Implications

Description of Change	Budget Implication
Hire a Solutions Architect to ensure that the functional and technical requirements of the IIS contract are reached. These tasks include creating infrastructure, data integration, and providing technical support to districts.	Shift a total of $523,260 from Funding for Involved LEAs in Years 2-4 to Personnel ($360,000) and Fringe ($163,260) in Years 2-4.
Hire a Product Specialist to oversee product development and implementation of the IIS. These tasks include communications, branding and professional development for districts.	Shift a total of $381,543.75 from Funding for Involved LEAs in Years 2-4 to Personnel ($262,500) and Fringe ($119,043.75) in Years 2-4.
Procure a part time team of contractors including a project manager, a financial analyst and project scheduler, to provide support to the two FTEs. These tasks include logistics, business analysis, requirements management and professional development.	Shift $150,000 from Funding for Involved LEAs in each Year 2 and 3 to Contractual in Years 2 and 3.
Procure a consultant to carry out a gap analysis of the technology infrastructure of LEAs. The analysis will identify those districts whose technology infrastructure is in need of improvement, and recommend local vendors who can assist LEAs in making upgrades.	Shift $25,000 from Funding for Involved LEAs in Year 2 to Contractual in Year 2.