



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

February 26, 2014

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 24, 2013 and January 29, 2014, 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 the timeline for developing and implementing the IIS from between summer and fall 2013 to between spring and fall 2014. Due to considerable delays in the State's contract procurement process, it was not able to secure a qualified vendor to create the IIS in time to launch in SY 2013-2014 as originally planned. The State awarded a contract to a vendor in December 2013 and will implement the system as follows:
  - In spring 2014, launch the IIS in a pilot of selected schools and classrooms in three LEAs. The pilot period will include a kick-off meeting, informational webinars, in-person training sessions, teacher-course-student data transfers and State-facilitated focus groups to gain feedback about pilot implementation. Pilot districts will have full access to the IIS by fall 2014.

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- In summer 2014, launch the system in an expanded cohort of 32 additional LEAs that include all of the State's priority and two thirds of its focus schools. Implementation of the IIS in these LEAs is mandatory and all associated costs to LEAs will be covered by the State. This phase of implementation will also include professional development trainings and data transfers in summer and fall 2014. LEAs in the expanded cohort will have full access to the IIS in fall 2014.
- In spring 2014, release a Notice of Grant Opportunity to LEAs statewide that will award two-year subgrants to 15 LEAs for up to \$150,000 each. Subgrantees may use the funds to cover technology upgrades and subscription fees associated with local implementation of the IIS. These LEAs will participate in the professional development and data transfer activities as described above in summer 2014 and have full access to the IIS in fall 2014.
- Shift Contractual funds of \$1,305,585 from Years 1 and 2 to Years 3 and 4 to support the development and implementation of the IIS. These funds are available because of the procurement delay described above.
- Shift Contractual funds of \$300,000 from Years 2 and 3 to Funding for Involved LEAs in Years 3 and 4 to support the IIS subgrants described above. These funds were allocated for a team of contractors to assist with State level support and operation of the IIS. However, the State never hired the contractors because it found internal staff capacity to do this work using other funds.<sup>1</sup>

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](mailto: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

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, see Amendment 3: April 29, 2013

