



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

August 20, 2012

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
New York State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

I am writing in response to New York's request to amend its approved Race to the Top grant project. Between June 26, 2012 and August 10, 2012, the State submitted an amendment request and supporting documentation to the U. S. Department of Education (Department); the State provided additional clarification as requested. As you are aware, the Department has the authority to approve amendments to your State's 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 amendment:

For project E2, Systemic Supports for District and School Turnaround, add \$3,860,000 to the "contractual" portion of this project-level budget to support the statewide implementation of the Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness (DTSDE). The DTSDE is a new tool that synthesizes varied diagnostic tools currently used by the New York Department of Education (NYSED) into a single tool that measures performance against the optimal conditions for effective schools and local educational agencies (LEAs).

The State shifts the funds into this project from "supplemental funding to participating LEAs" in project E4, School Innovation Fund. These funds were budgeted to support awards for large-scale change projects to schools that were at risk of becoming

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identified as a persistently lowest-achieving (PLA) school, but were not Title I designated or eligible. The School Innovation Fund project is included in the State's Race to the Top plan, but is primarily funded by Title I funds. As a result, such schools would otherwise not have been able to receive funds under this program.

However, in the State's accountability structure as approved on May 29, 2012, under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility, these types of schools would be designated Priority Schools and would be eligible for Title I funds. Thus, the State no longer needs a separate funding stream to support projects at these schools.

The State plans to use the DTSDE in school year 2012-2013, and has indicated that additional support is needed for implementation. The State plans to issue a statewide procurement contract to a vendor who would assist with implementation through the following: designing and presenting monthly professional development sessions for DTSDE reviewers, partnering with NYSED to establish and train a State and District Calibration Assurance Team to oversee the work and fulfill a quality assurance role, and providing job-embedded coaching, guidance, and support during the DTSDE site visits. New York plans to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for this work by the end of August 2012, and begin the project in December 2012.

The State has indicated that this support for the DTSDE supports the State's commitment in its Race to the Top plan to make State and federal accountability efforts more cohesive and to align school turnaround efforts. Implementation of the DTSDE will allow the State to provide clearer and more consistent direction to LEAs regarding the actions they must take in order to comply with State and federal accountability requirements and improve student performance. Thus, LEAs with low performing schools should be better able to develop coherent strategies that address student performance issues.

It is our understanding that this amendment will not result in a change in your State's performance measures and outcomes, nor will it substantially change the scope of 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 your Race to the Top Program Officer, Bridget Kelly, at [bridget.kelly@ed.gov](mailto:bridget.kelly@ed.gov) or 202-453-5534.

Sincerely,

//s//

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

cc: Dr. John B. King, Jr., Commissioner of Education  
Ken Slentz, Deputy Commissioner, Office of P-12 Education  
John Delaney, Director of Operations, Office of P-12 Education