



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

April 8, 2011

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS 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 February 22, 2011, and April 8, 2011, the State submitted amendment requests to the U.S. Department of Education (the Department). As you are aware, the Department has the authority to approve amendments to your plan and budget, provided that such changes do not alter the scope or objectives of the approved proposal. On January 6, 2011, the Department sent a letter and "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 am pleased to approve the following amendments:

- In "Project B3: Development of Formative and Interim Assessments," the approved application proposed to develop statewide formative and interim English and language arts (ELA) and math assessments. The State believes this is a redundant and unnecessary activity, given its involvement in the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), which will now be developing interim assessments in ELA and math, as well as formative assessment tasks for K-2 ELA and math. Additionally, similar tools and supports will be made available through activities in a closely related project, "Project B1: Development of PreK-12 Curriculum Models" (described below). As a result of this redundancy in work, the following changes will be made to the State's plan:

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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.

- Repurposing project funds to develop new middle-school assessments for Grades 6-8 in Social Studies and Grades 6-7 in Science.¹ These tests will be used as formative evaluations of student performance and as data source for the State's Teacher and Principal Evaluation System. The State estimates that with these assessments, an additional 9,000 teachers will be able to have student growth measures included as part of their teacher evaluation.
 - Reducing this project budget from \$41.5M to \$20M.²
 - Changing the name of this project to "Project B3: Development of Assessments."
- In "Project B1: Development of PreK-12 Curriculum Models," the State will expand on its current plan to develop and disseminate statewide PreK-12 curriculum models based on the Common Core Standards and to create related professional development content. The State notes that, since the initial application was created, it has developed more detailed implementation plans and realized that its initial budget was not sufficient to address the goals of this project. The State will make the following changes:
 - Expanding this project in the following manner: (1) adding resources to the Curriculum Model project (\$8.7M), in order to fully fund the development of curriculum models, on-line tools, formative assessments, and related PD statewide in a broad set of content areas;³ (2) adding a Formative Assessment Data System Application (\$5.1M) to provide teachers with access to an array of assessments/performance tasks created both by the State and by other local or peer authors; and (3) creating an evaluation tool (\$4.4M) to be used by New York State Education Department administrators to evaluate this new type of work and stay on track with its goal to raise student achievement.
 - Using \$18.3M of funds previously proposed to carry out "Project B3: Development of Formative and Interim Assessments," resulting in a new project total of \$44.9M.
 - Adjusting the timeline to implement curriculum models by one year. The State will fully implement ELA and Math curriculum models in the 2012-13 school year and the other subject areas in the 2013-14 school year.⁴ Accordingly, this change will necessitate moving the associated professional development activities back one year as well, but the State certifies that this will not impact other professional development activities planned to be provided in the 2011-12 school year (i.e., content related to the Common Core, preparation related to local implementation of the Teacher/Principal Evaluation System, and data tools).
 - Changing the RFP process for this project to enable, consistent with the State procurement process and laws, multiple winning bidders, resulting in specialized

¹ The State also intends to re-align its existing Grade 8 science examination accordingly, but will use State or other funds for this component because Race to the Top funds may not be used for examinations required under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

² \$18.3M will be used for Project B1: Development of PreK-12 Curriculum Models. The use of the remaining \$3.2M will be described in future amendments.

³ ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies, Economics, Technology, and the Arts.

⁴ This is later than its initial goal, to implement the curriculum models in September 2011. The original application did not specify which content areas would be covered by the curriculum models, if any, beyond ELA/math. The revision request notes that funding will provide additional resources to sequentially add additional content areas, hence the two-year phase in.

expertise across content areas, at competitive prices. Each contractor would be required to meet the same set of metrics, deliverables, cost expectations, and other contractual terms.

It is our understanding that the amendments will not result in a change in your State's performance measures and outcomes, nor will they substantially change the scope of work.

Please note that letter will be posted on the Department's website as a record of the amendments.

I am confident that New York will continue its bold, comprehensive reform efforts. If you have any questions regarding Race to the Top, please do not hesitate to contact your Race to the Top Program Officer, Rachel Vessey, at 202-453-5545 or rachel.vessey@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

//s//

Ann Whalen
Deputy Director, Implementation and Support Unit

Cc: David Steiner
John B. King Jr.
Rebecca Kennard

