



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Honorable David C. Hespe
Commissioner of Education
New Jersey Department of Education
PO Box 500
Trenton, NJ 08625

May 20, 2015

Dear Commissioner Hespe:

I am writing in response to the New Jersey Department of Education's (NJDOE) request to amend its approved Race to the Top grant project, including revisions to the project period to implement a portion of its plan. Between February 12, 2015, and March 9, 2015, the State submitted documentation to and held conversations with the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to support an amendment request to its approved Race to the Top plan. ED has the authority to approve amendments to your plan and budget, provided the revisions do not change the overall scope and objectives of the approved proposal. In October 2011, ED issued *Grant Amendment Submission Process*, indicating the process by which amendments to accomplish the reform goals and deliverables it committed to in its Race to the Top application and approved Scope of Work would be reviewed. To determine whether approval could be granted, ED 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, as described below.

- Use \$2,703,054 in unallocated funds to expand work for sub-criterion (B)(3), "Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments." Funds are available due to lower-than-expected expenditures needed to complete grant activities, primarily in the contractual and personnel budget categories, as well as the termination of the Model Lesson Awards project. The State believes the goals of this project will still be met with the NJCore project, an online collaborative resource exchange. According to the State, projects where unallocated funds were identified have completed the planned scope and objectives successfully or were allocated more funds than necessary and expect to be completed with a revised budget. New Jersey will shift funds from Year 3 to expand work taking place during Year 4 in five projects, as follows:
 - Utilize \$1,730,000 of the total unallocated funds spent in Year 4 towards the ongoing development of the online professional development modules for twenty-five (25) identified, vetted, and approved Common Core topics for teachers. \$462,254 of this total was allocated in Year 3 and \$112,598 has been spent. The remaining \$1,617,402 will build upon the original application plan including the design and execution of professional development for teachers, and the design and execution of a

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professional development series. New Jersey will work towards the development of modules and will bring in five consultants on four-month contracts. New Jersey plans on a rolling out dissemination of the professional development modules with completion of the project in December 2015.

- Utilize \$140,000, during the remainder of the grant to develop Common Core State Standards leadership academies for superintendents, principals and curriculum and instruction leaders. This work will build upon the original application plan including developing and executing professional development for instructional leadership and principals and developing and executing a professional development series for instructional leadership and principals. This project will help districts and schools to build strong leadership teams able to support their staff with professional development, standards-aligned curriculum, job-embedded coaching, and a climate and culture for sustainable implementation of the Common Core State Standards. The first year of this project will be completed within the timeline of the original scope of work and the second year of the project will be completed by September 30, 2016.
- Utilize \$300,000 of the unallocated funds, \$200,000 of which was expended in Year 3 for the continuation of the development of New Jersey's Model Curriculum. The remaining \$100,000 will be expended in Year 4 for contractual and training expenses. In this proposed project, which encompasses work that has already begun, New Jersey will budget \$250,000 towards working with several organizations to develop an exemplar of a complete curriculum including curriculum maps, instructional resources, and assessments that will cover an entire grade span (e.g., middle school) and one subject, with the choice of mathematics, English/language arts, or social studies. This project will support teaching and learning across New Jersey. The remaining \$50,000 will go towards training educators on the application of the guidance document.
- Utilize \$233,054 for a Common Core Memorandum of Understanding with Rutgers University. To date, expenditures for this project have totaled \$159,175, leaving \$73,879 to be expended in Year 4. Currently, Rutgers University is under contract to conduct research regarding the effectiveness of Common Core implementation on New Jersey with specific focus on the professional supports needed by educators. The project will help New Jersey allocate its professional development funds to targeted areas proven effective through research and data. The project is underway with an original completion date of December 31, 2014. Rutgers University requested from New Jersey a no-cost extension to extend this work and continue to gather supplemental data. Allowing more time to gather and process data will provide New Jersey with a larger sample size and a wider range of feedback.
- Utilize \$300,000 towards support for the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards. Funds will be used to contract with a mathematics consultant for work related to the mathematics Common Core State Standards, to contract with a science consultant for the Next Generation Science Standards, and to develop and host a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics Conference Series which will facilitate and support the implementation

of the Next Generation Science Standards. The STEM conference will be coordinated in conjunction with Liberty Science Center and other interested stakeholders. The audience will be teachers and administrators.

It is ED's 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.

If you need any assistance or have any questions regarding Race to the Top, please Zaid Abuhouran at (202) 453-6440, Lisa Sadeghi at (202) 453-6465, or OSS.NewJersey@ed.gov. Thank you for your continued commitment to enhancing education for all of New Jersey's students.

Sincerely,

/s/

Monique M. Chism, Ph.D.
Director
Office of State Support

cc: James Palmer, New Jersey Department of Education