



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

August 13, 2015

Dear Commissioner Hespe:

I am writing in response to New Jersey's 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 May 11, 2015, and June 8, 2015, the State submitted documentation to and held conversations with the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to support amendment requests 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 June 2014, ED issued *Amendment Requests with No-cost Extension Guidance and Principles*, indicating the process by which amendments containing request to provide additional time for a grantee 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 amendments, including timeline extensions, as described below.

- In the (B)(3) *Supporting the Transition to Enhanced Standards and High-Quality Assessments* grant budget area, New Jersey will extend the performance period for three projects through September 30, 2016, as described below.
 - New Jersey will shift a total of \$175,000 in unexpended grant funds to Year 5 to continue the State's facilitated, online feedback portion of the Common Core Blended Learning Modules. This will allow the State to properly support the facilitation component of the Blended Learning Modules by piloting the modules with a group of educators in the summer of 2015. The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) will sustain this program beyond the period of the grant by training expert educator users to become facilitators of the modules.
 - New Jersey will shift a total of \$70,000 in unexpended grant funds to Year 5 to continue development of the State's Common Core Leadership Academies. This will allow the State to properly support the development and execution of leadership academies to provide professional development for a minimum of five cohorts of superintendents, principals, and directors of curriculum and instruction. This program will be sustained beyond the period of the grant through the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, the New Jersey

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Association of School Administrators, and the Educational Information and Resource Center, all of which are collaborating with the NJDOE on this project.

- New Jersey will shift a total of \$110,025 in unexpended grant funds to Year 5 to support high-quality implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards, which includes a science consultant and the State’s planned STEM conference in fall 2015. The schools provided support at the conference will serve as models to the State for implementation of high-quality STEM programming beyond the grant.
- In the (C)(3) *Instructional Improvement System: Instructional Support Tools* grant budget area, New Jersey will shift a total of \$259,334 in unexpended grant funds to Year 5 to continue to provide program management and implementation support for the edConnectNJ system at the State, district, and classroom level through December 30, 2016. Specifically, funds will continue to provide for two implementation managers and one content manager of edConnectNJ at NJDOE.
- In the (D)(2) *Improving Teacher and Principal Effectiveness Based on Performance: A Consistent, Transparent System for School Leaders and Teachers* grant budget area, New Jersey will shift a total of \$139,300 in unexpended grant funds to Year 5 to support the Statewide expansion of EE4NJ, the State’s evaluation pilot, and to launch a principal evaluation pilot modeled after EE4NJ through September 30, 2016. This will allow the State to continue funding two implementation managers and one project manager to ensure that the State’s highest-need local education agencies can independently implement the statewide evaluation system by the end of the grant period.

It is ED’s understanding that this amendment 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 we expect grantees with no-cost extensions to liquidate all funds by September 30, 2017, given that by law all Race to the Top funds revert to the U.S. Department of Treasury as of October 1, 2017. This letter will be posted on ED’s website as a record of the amendments.

If you need any assistance or have any questions regarding Race to the Top, please contact Zaid Abuhouran or Lisa Sadeghi at: OSS.NewJersey@ed.gov. Thank you for your continued commitment to enhancing education for all of the New Jersey’s students.

Sincerely,

/s/

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

cc: James Palmer, Race to the Top Director, New Jersey Department of Education