



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

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

DEC 22 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 September 14, 2015, and December 18, 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 requests 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, with the condition described below.

- In the (C)(3) *Instructional Improvement System: Instructional Support Tools* grant budget area, New Jersey will extend the performance period for one project through December 30, 2016. New Jersey will shift a total of \$762,000 in unexpended grant funds from Year 3 and Year 4 to Year 5 contractual to continue to fund the Instructional Improvement System (IIS). These funds are available due to initial project delays for the IIS and cost savings across projects. Of this amount, the State will use \$645,000 to cover the per student cost of the IIS system through June 30, 2016. After this date, local educational agencies (LEAs) will cover the per student cost of the system. New Jersey will use the remaining \$117,000 to cover the costs associated with program management and system maintenance of the IIS through December 30, 2016. Extending the performance period will allow the State additional time to continue to implement and build support for the IIS.
- In the (F)(2) *Ensuring Successful Conditions for High-performing Charters and Other Innovative Schools* grant budget area, New Jersey will extend the performance period of two projects through June 30, 2016 and April 30, 2016, respectively.
 - New Jersey will shift up to \$55,000 from unexpended grant funds from Year 3 and Year 4 contractual to Year 5 contractual to continue to fund a web-based software system for charter

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school authorizers through June 30, 2016. These funds are available due to initial project delays. Maintaining the software system will allow the State to continue to streamline and automate oversight activities for charter schools.

- New Jersey will shift up to \$15,000 in unexpended grants funds from Year 3 and Year 4 contractual and administrative cost categories to Year 5 contractual to continue to fund consultants for probation and renewal visits for charter schools through April 30, 2016. These funds are available due to cost savings on the development of the model curriculum. Extending the performance period will allow the State to fund six additional probation and renewal visits to support the work of charter schools.

It is ED's understanding that New Jersey will continue to work with ED to review and approve updated budget tables that clearly identify the availability of and detailed plans for funding this work.

ED understands 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 Megan Oberst 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/

Patrick Rooney
Acting Director
Office of State Support

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