



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

March 5, 2012

The Honorable Lincoln Chafee  
Office of the Governor  
State House  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-1196

Dear Governor Chafee:

I am writing in response to Rhode Island's request to amend its approved Race to the Top grant projects. Between January 9, 2012 and February 10, 2012, the State submitted documentation to and held conversations with the U.S. Department of Education to support amendment requests to its approved Race to the Top plan. As you are aware, the Department has the authority to approve amendments to your 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 amendments, as described below:

For the "Academy of Transformative Leadership" project, adjust timelines, budget and activities to reflect the State's response to the need to increase capacity at the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) to implement this project. As originally proposed, the State will create an Academy based at RIDE that will administer three initiatives within this project: the Turnaround Leaders Program; the Summer Institute; and professional development modules and mini-modules to improve the quality of school leadership. This project includes the following changes:

- For the "Turnaround Leaders Program," shift timelines, approach and budget. As originally proposed, RIDE will partner with a nationally recognized leadership preparation provider by May 2012 to create a training program that

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offers a principal credential. Candidates will participate in a year-long intensive leadership training program and then receive job-embedded supports and professional development in their second year. This project includes the following changes:

- RIDE will execute a contract in mid-Year 2 rather than the beginning of Year 1 to deliver the Turnaround Leaders Program.
  - RIDE will now recruit and train cohorts of 6 leaders in each of Years 3 and 4, rather than cohorts of four leaders in each of Years 2-4. The program will still result in a total of 12 leaders.
  - Unspent funds from Year 2 will shift to Years 3 and 4 to reflect the timeline change for program implementation. The overall budget for the Turnaround Leaders Program remains \$1,537,650, which will still be shared equally between the State and local educational agencies (LEAs).
- For the “Summer Institute,” change the delivery schedule to align State activities with already-existing efforts. In partnership with nationally recognized experts, and in collaboration with the affected LEAs, the Academy will offer training on research-based elements of school redesign to leadership teams from PLA schools. While the State was prepared to execute a Summer Institute in 2011, the affected LEAs requested to receive those services throughout the 2011-2012 school year. This project includes the following changes:
    - Rather than provide a four-week Summer Institute in summer 2011 and summer 2012 as originally proposed, use an existing contract to offer services during the 2011-2012 school year and offer a 2012 Summer Institute. In addition, RIDE will execute a new contract to provide a two-week Summer Institute in summer 2013 and summer 2014, with an additional five days of services during each school year after the Summer Institute.
    - As originally proposed, the Summer Institute was to offer a two-week training to PLA school leadership teams and an additional two-week training for all educators at PLA schools. Now, the Summer Institute will offer a two-week training for five person leadership teams from each PLA school, with an additional five days of differentiated services available to the school during the school year after the Summer Institute.
    - The Summer Institute will now be available to Rhode Island’s 13 Tier I persistently lowest achieving (PLA) schools. This represents an expansion of efforts to include the eight Cohort 2 PLA schools, rather than only the five Cohort 1 schools. Both Cohort 1 and 2 schools will have access to the Summer Institutes in 2012, 2013 and 2014. All PLA schools will be involved in the program’s development.

- Adjust the contractual budget of this project to reflect a total of \$314,407 for services, rather than \$650,000, to develop and execute the Summer Institute. This amount will still be shared equally between the State and affected LEAs, now over Years 2-4 rather than Years 2-3. The decrease in this contractual item reflects the adjusted length of the program, the number of persons served by the Summer Institute, and a better sense of the costs associated with this type of contract.
- For the “professional development modules” initiative, adjust the delivery timeline and budget, and refine the products to include mini-modules. As initially proposed, these modules will provide school leadership and educators with quality professional development opportunities. The new mini-modules, in particular, will be available to leaders and educators at all Rhode Island schools. This portion of the amendment includes the following changes:
  - With the vendor, RIDE will create four to seven three-day professional development modules by August 2012. These longer modules will be delivered to PLA school leadership teams throughout Years 3 and 4, rather than in Years 2-4. As a new addition to this initiative, RIDE will develop six virtual mini-modules in Years 3 and 4 to supplement the Summer Institute program.
  - Both the longer modules and the mini-modules will now be targeted to leadership and educators at Rhode Island’s 13 Tier I PLA schools. Rather than support only the five Cohort 1 schools, this represents an expansion of efforts to include the eight Cohort 2 PLA schools.
  - Rather than budget for the professional development modules in Years 3-4, adjust the budget for Years 2-4. The \$293,400 now associated with the longer modules will still be shared equally between the State and LEAs over Years 2-4. RIDE will execute a contract for this initiative in mid-Year 2, rather than at the end of Year 1. This contract may be combined with the contract to develop and deliver the Turnaround Leaders Program. In addition, RIDE will use \$120,000 from unspent Year 1 funds in this project-level budget to add the mini-modules to this contract.

The following projects have been delayed because of changes in LEA and municipal leadership and changes in the number and timing of identifying additional PLA cohorts. In response, RIDE has revised their approach and adjusted timelines to reflect a collaborative effort between the State and affected PLA schools, and the LEAs that support them. RIDE will also expand these projects to serve all 13 PLA schools in Cohorts 1 and 2, rather than provide services only for the five Cohort 1 schools.

- For the “School Achievement Specialists” project, shift hiring and day-to-day management of these personnel to the affected LEAs, rather than hire and manage them at the State level. School Achievement Specialists will provide

building-level support in PLA schools as those schools implement their reform plans. The School Achievement Specialists will, among other things, assist with professional development design and delivery, monitor performance, and provide direct support for leadership and educators. This project also includes the following changes:

- The number of PLA schools receiving support will expand from 5 to 13, and the number of LEAs from 2 to 4.
  - School Achievement Specialists will be assigned to targeted schools in Cohort 2 by June 2012, rather than in September 2011.
  - LEAs will use LEA Race to the Top funds to support hiring and management of these new personnel. RIDE will use \$100,000 in unspent Year 1 contractual funds to contract with a vendor to provide program evaluation and quality assurance services for the School Achievement Specialist services, rather than support a contract to train the School Achievement Specialists.
- For the “Evaluation Implementation” project, revise the approach to provide supports for educator evaluations in Years 3 and 4 at PLA schools. Formerly, the State was to hire and manage additional personnel to support implementation of the educator evaluation system, and to procure vendors to conduct an external needs assessment in Years 2-4. In light of varying levels of support already in place in the affected LEAs as initiated by those LEAs, RIDE has refined its approach to shift recruiting and hiring of these personnel to the LEA level. These new personnel will provide intensive support to leadership and educators as they implement the educator evaluation system. The State believes that in developing the school reform plan with RIDE, all of these schools have conducted the necessary needs assessment to continue with implementation. This project includes the following changes:
    - The number of schools involved in this project will expand from 5 to 12 Tier I PLA schools. (RIDE has indicated that one PLA school is already receiving intense educator evaluation supports.)
    - LEAs will use LEA Race to the Top funds to recruit and hire a 0.5 full-time equivalent to provide intensive building-level support to implement the educator evaluation system. These new personnel will be hired by August 2012 for the 2012-2013 school year and by August 2013 for the 2013-2014 school year.

In addition, RIDE will use \$182,000 in shifted contractual funds for temporary services to manage and execute the contracts associated with these amendments to ensure they are implemented in a timely manner.

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 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, Monika Bandyopadhyay, 202-260-2531 or [monika.bandyopadhyay@ed.gov](mailto:monika.bandyopadhyay@ed.gov).

Sincerely,

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

Cc: Commissioner Deborah Gist  
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