



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

April 10, 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 February 15, 2012 and March 15, 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 and budget. 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:

Budget Amendments: The State submitted documentation regarding revisions to its entire Race to the Top budget based upon redistribution of savings and unspent funds from Year 1. Rhode Island's budget yielded savings in Year 1 partly because the State engaged in planning and budgeting activities, and procurement preparation, which did not incur the anticipated fringe and personnel costs across most project-level budgets. The State also achieved some savings in Year 1 through the competitive bid process, which produced contractual costs less than the anticipated amount. Please see the attached table for a description of these shifts.

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Student Learning Component of Educator Evaluation System: For the “Educator Evaluation System” project, use Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), instead of RIDE-developed statewide assessments, for the student learning measure of an educators’ summative effectiveness rating. The State’s original budget included \$728,000 in State funds and \$4,872,000 in LEA funds to support the following assessment work: develop assessments for 16 core high school subjects; develop math and reading New England Comprehensive Assessment Program (NECAP) “complement” assessments for grades 2-8; and, purchase the Developmental Reading Assessment for K-2 students. As initially envisioned, these assessments would contribute to the student learning measure for teachers’ summative effectiveness rating (in combination with NECAP growth, where appropriate).

The State will now will use SLO attainment in conjunction with NECAP growth for educators in tested grades and subjects, and use SLOs as the sole measure for student learning for educators in non-tested grades and subjects. Currently, the State is revising v.1.0 of the Rhode Island Model to support high quality implementation of v.2.0 in SY 2012-2013. Based on a collection of SLOs from early adopter districts, the State is refining guidance to set expectations on assessment selection and how to establish rigorous SLOs. Additionally, in consultation with its Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the State is revising the matrix that combines NECAP growth and SLO attainment for math and reading teachers in grades 2-8. Finally, the State believes that its standards and assessment work will support this change in approach by helping educators create SLOs that have a rigorous measure.

To support quality implementation of the educator evaluation system with fidelity, funds formerly assigned to assessment development or purchase will be redirected to other aspects of educator evaluation implementation. These activities include creation of online observation tools; calibration training and assessment for evaluators; more evaluator training in Years 2 and 3; additional access to Intermediary Support Professional (ISP) supports in early adopter districts in Year 2; and, production of guidance and tools that support LEA implementation of the revised educator evaluation system. The proposed redirection of funds will also, in part, support intensive trainings on v.2.0 in Summer 2012 and Summer 2013 for evaluators and a four-day training for educators in Summer 2012.

The approval of the amendment to the SLO component of the educator evaluation system is conditioned on the following actions:

- (1) By June 2012, submission of a detailed plan and timeline indicating milestones for professional development and other trainings related to implementation of v.2.0 of the Rhode Island Model educator evaluation system.
- (2) Submission of quarterly progress updates during SY 2012-2013, including data and evidence of quality of implementation of v.2.0.
- (3) By January 2013, submission of a plan and timeline detailing the process by which the State will analyze the relationship between the NECAP growth model rating and the SLO attainment rating that make the student learning rating; and, a plan and timeline for soliciting ongoing input and advice, including review of the plan just described, from the State TAC. Finally, the State will submit a final report at the end of SY 2012-2013 showing alignment between the NECAP growth model rating and the SLO attainment

rating, and any recommendations for ongoing improvement of the Rhode Island Model educator evaluation system in SY 2013-2014.

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

Sincerely,

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

Cc: Commissioner Deborah Gist  
Mary-Beth Fafard  
Carolyn Dias

Grant project area affected	Specific project	Description of change
All areas	All projects	The original application included projected salaries and the assumption of a 3% cost of living allocation (COLA) increase across grant years. The revised budget includes fluctuating COLA amounts for Years 2-4 that align with State budget planning figures for those years.
All areas	All projects	The original application included a projected personnel fringe rate of 49.5%. The revised budget includes a personnel fringe rate based on the State's known benefits and health care rates, which will vary annually.
(A)(2)	State and Local Capacity	Savings of \$167,356 were achieved as a result of late hiring in Year 1. Base salaries change and go into effect in Year 2. Contractual costs increase by \$780,486 to include a Race to the Top Program Coordinator; completion of Collaborative Learning for Outcomes and EdStat work; and, legal, fiscal and management services. These services reflect the State's realization early in the grant period that successful management of the Race to the Top grant would require full-time personnel with expertise in grant and fiscal management, and not part-time personnel as initially planned. Supplemental Funding for Participating LEAs increases by \$43,577.
(B)(3)	Standards and Curriculum	Shift \$286,000 from the Other category of this project-level budget to the Contract line in the State and Local Capacity project-level budget, as was approved in an April 8, 2011 amendment letter. Increase contractual costs by \$320,845 to support West Bay Collaborative to assist the Dana Center (under an existing contract) in recruitment and training of Intermediary Service Providers (ISPs). Supplemental Funding for Participating LEAs increases by \$160,097 to support model curriculum development. These increased costs are supported by Year 1 savings across other project-level budgets.

Grant project area affected	Specific project	Description of change
(C)(3)	Instructional Management System (IMS)	Overall budget decreases by \$1,723,315 in part because of \$612,032 in Year 1 personnel and fringe savings due to late hiring and turnover. Also, decrease contractual costs by \$1,055,908 and redistribute to the following projects: educator evaluation system, standards and curriculum, struggling schools, and the Academy of Transformative Leadership. Participating LEAs will assume the responsibility for these IMS contractual costs. Other contractual savings were achieved due to the competitive bid process. Increase of \$5,569 in the Travel category for in-state travel for overseeing formative assessment training program.
(C)(3)	Early Warning System	Shift \$60,000 in unspent Year 1 contractual funds to Year 2. The State acquired this contract Year 1 and will incur expenses in Years 2 through 4, as opposed to over the entire period of the grant, which is consistent with the State's approved scope of work.
(D)(2)	Educator Evaluation	Year 1 savings of \$498,897 were achieved in Personnel, Fringe, Contracts, and associated Indirect Costs. Use this Year 1 savings and combine with funds shifted from the IMS project-level budget to support the following activities within this project: Rhode Island model educator evaluation system infrastructure costs in Year 2 (\$209,000); development of training materials, including a guidebook for the RI model, in Years 2-4 (\$191,637); additional professional development venues in Years 2-4 (\$225,600); and, Supplemental Funding to Participating LEAs to support Warwick and Jamestown as early adopters in Year 2 (\$361,000). Within the Contract line, increase the Student Growth Measure contract by \$359,671 to develop a student growth measure for the Rhode Island Accountability System; decrease amount for the Evaluation Data System by \$305,751 due to savings in the competitive bid process; eliminate the Assessments Development contract of \$728,000 and shift to support an increase of \$607,768 in the ISP contract, as well as other activities that will support the development and implementation of Student Learning Objectives as the student growth measure in the RI model.
(D)(2), (C)(2)	Educator Certification Program and Data System Redesign	Shift \$95,310 in contractual savings achieved through the competitive bid process to support Year 2 Indirect Costs and Equipment, as well as to support small needs in other projects.

Grant project area affected	Specific project	Description of change
(D)(2)	Compensation Reform	Shift \$200,000 in Year 2 contractual costs to Years 3 and 4 as was approved in an April 8, 2011 amendment letter.
(D)(5)	Quality Teacher PD Options	Shift savings of \$585,219 in Personnel and Fringe over Years 1-4 to contractual in Years 2-4. The FTE previously associated with this work was redirected to support standards and assessment work, thereby reducing the capacity to complete this task. Instead, shift these savings, along with small savings from the Equipment and Supplies lines, to the Contracts line for a \$607,500 contract to assess professional development opportunities across the state and design professional development performance measures that are aligned to Race to the Top efforts. RIDE believes that contracting with a vendor will ensure that this commitment is fulfilled in Years 3 and 4 as planned in the State scope of work.
(D)(1), (D)(3)	Alternative Certification	Shift \$21,870 in unspent contractual funds in Years 1 and 2 to Year 3. Shift \$26,384 in unspent contractual and indirect costs to support needs in other projects.
(D)(5)	New Teacher Induction	Savings of \$160,535 in Personnel and Fringe was achieved as a result of hiring delays. Shift these savings to increase travel for New Teacher Coaches and associated equipment and supplies.
(D)(5)	Academy of Transformative Leadership	Savings of \$214,661 were achieved due to delays in hiring for personnel with specialized skill sets. Increase Supplemental Funding for Participating LEAs by \$300,000 (\$150,000 each in Years 2 and 3) to provide support to three newly identified persistently lowest achieving schools.
(E)(2)	Struggling Schools	Savings of \$540,781 were achieved due to low spending in Year 1 and other changes approved in a March 5, 2012 amendment letter. Shift these Year 1 savings and savings from other parts of the budget to support an addition of \$556,000 in Supplemental Funding for Participating LEAs to support interventions work at three newly identified persistently lowest achieving schools.

Grant project area affected	Specific project	Description of change
(F)(2)	Charter Grants	Increase funding in the Year 1 Other category by \$3,498 for unanticipated expenses to expand and develop existing and new high performing charter schools. Increase Travel budget in Year 1 by \$3,000 to allow for annual in-state monitoring visits.
(F)(2)	Multiple Pathways Through Virtual Learning	The Contracts and Supplemental Funding for Participating LEAs lines increase by \$636,012 and \$155,434, respectively, to support online math tutors and math module professional development activities as approved in a February 3, 2012 amendment letter.