



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

March 11, 2013

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 project. Between January 23 and March 1, 2013, the State submitted amendment requests to the U.S. Department of Education (Department). 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:

- In the State and Local Capacity budget, shift \$500,000 to the Year 3 and Year 4 contractual lines to support trainings on the instructional management system (IMS) and the educator performance and support system (EPSS). These funds are available from unused Year 2 funds in the EPSS contract (a contract in the State's evaluation systems budget). Based on implementation to date, the State believes additional training will be necessary in Years 3 and 4 to promote meaningful use of these data systems. Funds are being shifted to the State and Local Capacity budget to allow the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) to allocate funds to local educational agencies (LEAs) on an as-needed basis.

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*The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.*

- In the IMS budget, shift \$988,679 in contractual funds from Year 2 to Year 3 to account for the timing of task completion and actual expenditures for the four contracts in this project-level budget. The State reports that the work remains the same and the budget shift does not involve a shift in timelines for the work. The shift includes an additional \$150,000 from Year 2 savings across the grant for professional services for data system project management.
- Shift \$807,000 in Year 2 savings from across the grant to support Year 4 induction coaches, a contractual expense. Consistent with the State's cost-sharing agreements with LEAs, this shift will allow RIDE to hire the necessary number of induction coaches to serve an anticipated 180 beginning teachers statewide in the 2013-2014 school year (SY 2013-2014). It is the Department's understanding that the State intends to sustain this program in future school years and that it is working with stakeholders and LEA leadership across the State to frame a sustainability plan.

In addition to these amendments, I acknowledge the following delays in the State's timeline:

- For the Evaluation System Design and Certification Data System Redesign project, the State committed to begin engaging with educator preparation programs between September to November 2012; revise program approval standards by August 2013; and, release effectiveness reports between September 2013 and February 2014. The State did not receive any responses to its May 2012 Request for Proposals and had to re-issue the request in October 2012. Now that vendor support has been secured, the State has requested to begin the engagement process in late spring 2012 and revise the State's program approval standards by December 2013. The State will issue a Phase 1 effectiveness report in fall 2013 and a Phase 2 report in September 2014.
- For the Early Warning System (EWS) project, the State committed to build the indicators tool with vendor support in summer 2012 and to train LEA-level leadership teams from summer 2012 through February 2013. Feedback from the training and launching of the IMS in fall 2012 revealed that LEAs prefer learning new data systems on the actual system populated with data. In addition, the State's sampling for establishing the EWS early warning indicators required more testing during fall 2012 to ensure the system did not capture too many or too few at-risk students. The State has requested to build the early warning indicators tool through March 2013 and begin training with the system in June 2013 for SY 2013-2014.
- For the Evaluation System Design and Certification Data System Redesign project, the State committed to completing the certification database component that links to effectiveness data by August 2012. The State also committed to releasing a new portal in the certification data base for use by preparation programs by February 2013. While the State has hired programmers to complete

each aspect of the redesigned database, some aspects have taken longer than expected. The State has requested to delay the completion of the database linked to effectiveness and the database for use by preparation programs to May 2013.

- For the Academy of Transformative Leadership, the State committed to develop and release four to seven in-person and virtual mini professional development modules by August 2012. The modules are targeted for LEA- and building-level leadership in persistently-lowest achieving (PLA) schools. LEAs with PLA schools requested receiving the in-person and virtual modules later in the school year because these schools were overloaded with initiatives at the start of SY 2012-2013. The State has requested to shift the release of the first in-person module to February 2013 and stagger the release of the other modules through May 2013.

It is our 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. 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 Rhode Island's Race to the Top Program Officer, Monika Bandyopadhyay, at 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  
Mary-Beth Fafard