



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

December 3, 2012

The Honorable Bill Haslam
Office of the Governor
State Capitol
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0001

Dear Governor Haslam:

I am writing in response to Tennessee's request to amend its approved Race to the Top grant project. Between November 14 and November 28, 2012, the State submitted documentation and held conversations with the U.S. Department of Education (Department) staff in the Implementation and Support Unit (ISU) to support an amendment request 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.

The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) requested and was approved on February 9, 2012, for Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility. Through its approved ESEA flexibility request, TDOE outlined a revised accountability structure which distinguishes performance based on a combination of achievement targets and gap closure targets. In this new structure, school-level accountability and State supports were identified for the lowest-achieving schools in Priority and Focus categories and the highest-achieving schools were identified as Reward Schools.ⁱ In order to align Tennessee's Race to the Top plan with its ESEA flexibility request's updated vision and comprehensive program, the State requested and was approved on September 5, 2012, to combine Race to the Top funds previously allocated in the "Renewal" and "Focus" budgets to now support Focus and Reward Schools as identified in its approved ESEA flexibility request. Consistent with the goals of the State's revised turnaround approach, the State indicated that it would submit future request(s) for the remaining total. The current request utilizes \$1,504,351 of this total to support Priority Schools.ⁱⁱ

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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.

I approve the State's request as outlined below:

- To support Priority Schools identified in the State's new accountability system, the State will create the Turnaround Principal Residency Program (TPRP).ⁱⁱⁱ According to the State, the goal of the TPRP is to support local educational agencies (LEAs) in identifying high-quality leadership for the schools most in need and providing intensive and ongoing support and training for these turnaround principals. The application process requires LEAs to nominate strong potential future school leaders (either from within or beyond the LEA, or, in limited cases, leaders that recently began a principalship at a Priority School) who, once selected, will receive support to prepare to lead a Priority School in the coming year. Based on applications submitted by LEAs in winter 2013, the first cohort of approximately 20 total principals is expected to be selected by February 2013 to begin training and strategic planning immediately for service as full-time Priority School principals in school year (SY) 2013-2014. The \$1,504,351 Year 3 and 4 budget to support this program includes:
 - A total of \$479,167 in contractual funds for ongoing in-person and online professional development for approximately 40 total principals.^{iv} As part of this preparation and with additional guidance from the State, TPRP principals will develop a strategic turnaround plan for the Priority School that they will lead in the coming year.^v
 - A total of \$794,167 in supplemental funding to LEAs to provide a training stipend to the principals selected to participate in TPRP, travel costs for the principals to participate in training, and a portion of the LEA-level cost to fund each new principal.
 - A total of \$231,018 in personnel, fringe, travel, supplies, and indirect costs to support implementation of Reward, Focus and Priority Schools. This will fund a full-time Special Assistant for Accountability Implementation who will oversee the TPRP program and provide oversight to the Focus grants and Reward School Ambassador program as well as a portion of an Accountability Fiscal Analyst. This total also includes 6.8% indirect costs in accordance with the State's approved rate.

It is our understanding that this amendment will not substantially change the Scope of Work. Please note that this letter will be posted on the Department's website as a record of the amendment. If you need assistance or have any questions regarding Race to the Top, please do not hesitate to contact Tennessee's Race to the Top Program Officer, Jessie Levin, at 202-453-6651 or Jessie.Levin@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

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

Cc: Commissioner Kevin Huffman
Meghan Curran, Director, First to the Top

ⁱ According to the State's approved ESEA flexibility plan, Priority Schools are schools in the bottom five percent of overall performance; Focus Schools are defined as the ten percent of schools with the largest achievement gaps, subgroup performance below a 5 percent proficiency threshold, or high schools with graduation rates less than 60 percent; and Reward Schools are defined as Schools in the top 5 percent of overall performance and schools in the top 5 percent of fastest growth— a total of 10 percent of schools in all.

ⁱⁱ The State will propose additional amendments for the remaining \$15,563,106 of the \$56,395,089 in the original "Renewal" and "Focus" budgets for Department review.

ⁱⁱⁱ According to the State's TPRP application, an LEA would be eligible to apply for a principal to participate in TPRP if the school in which the principal would serve: 1. Has been identified as a Priority School; 2. Is not currently placed in the ASD; 3. Is not a member of SIG Cohort 1 or 2; and, 4. Is eligible for SIG funds but has not received a SIG grant yet (i.e., is eligible to become a SIG cohort 3 recipient).

^{iv} The State indicated a commitment to use State funds to support costs for TPRP in August 2014 given that this is beyond the grant period.

^v TPRP principals will also prepare SIG applications for the Priority Schools they are preparing to lead. The State expects that a portion of TPRP principals will lead schools that are granted SIG cohort 3 awards in spring 2013.