



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

January 22, 2013

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 August 15, 2012, and January 17, 2013, the State submitted documentation to and held conversations with the U.S. Department of Education (Department) staff in the Implementation and Support Unit (ISU) 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:

- The State will shift the \$4,764,768 "Electronic Learning Center (ELC)" budget to the "Common Core Standards Professional Development" budget. In its initial application, the State included funds to expand an existing repository of online professional development resources. Over the first two years of the grant, the State determined that this was not the most strategic means of supporting educators' instructional practices and that the budget could be leveraged to more

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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.

purposefully prepare and train teachers to implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

- The State will shift \$2,055,998 of the “Integrating PBS into ELC” budget to the “Common Core Standards Professional Development” budget. In its initial plan, the State included funds to contract with PBS for digital instructional content and courses. Based on implementation to date, it is the Department’s understanding that the State is in the process of making adjustments to the contract scope that will be completed by February 28, 2013. Following this contract adjustment, the State will shift \$2,055,998 of this project budget to support educators’ instruction through other training and development activities described below.
- The State will shift \$395,838 from the “Education Delivery Unit” (EDU) budget to the “Common Core Standards Professional Development” budget. As discussed in an amendment approved on May 24, 2012, the functions of the EDU are now being carried out by other teams at the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE). The funds remaining in the EDU budget for implementation support staffing costs will now be shifted into the “Common Core Standards Professional Development” budget.
- In addition to the aforementioned \$7,216,604, the State will redirect \$1,939,867 of the funds remaining from the original “Renewal” and “Focus” budgets, as discussed in an amendment approved on December 3, 2012, to support “Common Core Standards Professional Development” based on the State’s refined priorities.
- The reallocated total of \$9,156,471 from the aforementioned sources will enable the State to expand its support for transitioning to the CCSS in Years 3 and 4 based on further planning and lessons learned from implementation to date. Specifically, these funds will support additional:
 - Large-scale training in summer 2013 for between 20,000 and 30,000 teachers (*i.e.*, between one-third and one-half of the total number of teachers in the State) on English language arts and mathematics to prepare for full implementation of CCSS in SY 2013-2014, including materials, space, supplemental staff support, and approximately 700 “Core Coaches” for specific grade and subject bands;
 - Professional development to school leaders, including a regionally-delivered face-to-face leadership course in spring 2013 and SY 2013-2014 to provide support to administrators for the transition to CCSS and common, high-quality assessments and approximately 80 administrator “Core Coaches” to facilitate course sessions and summer training;
 - Support for lower grades reading, including a new K-3 reading course and regional support to be delivered in SY 2013-2014 and follow up training in SY 2012-2013 for K-2; and

- Engagement of school and district leaders in the Common Core Leadership Council in Year 4 and new English language arts and math-specific Common Core Leadership councils in Years 3 and 4 to build ownership and capacity for the standards transition at the local level.

The State will also shift a total of \$1,734,104 from within the previous budget for this project from Year 2 to Years 3 and 4 due to timing of contractor billing and summer 2012 training.

It is the Department's understanding that the State is collecting various sources of data to analyze implementation and inform continuous improvement of this initiative including survey results from Constructed Response Assessments (CRAs) being administered statewide in grades three through eight three times in SY 2012-2013, surveys from training participants, and anecdotal feedback from Core Coaches, CCSS leadership councils, and classroom tours by TDOE staff.

- Tennessee's approach to building data systems to improve instruction includes several enhancements to the State's existing prekindergarten to grade 12 (P-12) system. In its plan, Tennessee committed to creating an Early Warning Data System (EWDS); improving the overall data system infrastructure; and establishing a system for educator evaluation data. Based on initial implementation and additional planning, the State has worked to refine the plan for these activities over the last year.

Based on development and piloting of the EWDS in SY 2011-2012, the State determined that its initial plan was not structured to deliver the kind of system needed by local educational agencies (LEAs). The State delayed delivery of an EWDS in fall 2012 and began developing a plan with a broader scope, including additional data elements such as State and formative assessment data, and more flexibility to address varied needs among LEAs.ⁱⁱ Additionally, the State determined that the EWDS needed to be more closely connected to the enhancement and sustainability of the overall data system infrastructure. The State now plans to use the development of the EWDS as a foundation to establish other components within a centralized P-12 data system platform. Furthermore, based on development and implementation of an educator evaluation data system in SY 2011-2012, the State determined additional contractual and supplies support is needed in SYs 2012-2013 and 2013-2014.

The State will shift a total of \$5,871,878 unspent Year 2 funds to Years 3 and 4. Of this total, \$3,444,205 will shift due to timing of billing for existing contracts, including those related to activities for the State's prekindergarten to postsecondary (P-20) system, which are also included in the State Longitudinal Data Systems project budget. The remaining amount will be shifted to support the revised P-12 and EWDS strategies discussed above.

In addition to redirecting unspent Year 2 funds in the State Longitudinal Data Systems overall budget, the State will also shift funds from across other cost categories to contractual in the State Longitudinal Data Systems Years 3 and 4 budget due to revised cost estimates and to align with the revised strategy discussed above.

Based on the State's refined priorities around data systems, the State will redirect \$458,336 of the funds remaining from the original "Renewal" and "Focus" budgets, as discussed in an amendment approved on December 3, 2012, to support this revised plan.

A total of \$7,432,303ⁱⁱⁱ will be added to the contractual and supplies budgets for Years 3 and 4 to support the revised approach as follows:

- \$3,958,100 in contractual funds will support stakeholder engagement, development, a phased release, and hosting of an EWDS. As discussed above, the initial development of the EWDS application will also inform the design and development for an overall centralized data platform structure;
- \$2,878,203 in contractual funds will support full-time and on-demand supports for strategic planning as well as technical oversight, design, and programming;
- \$536,000 in contractual funds will expand support for the statewide educator evaluation data system; and
- \$60,000 in supplies funds will support additional State personnel and information technology contractor positions as well as expanded project management software needs.

Based on conversations with the State, it is the Department's understanding that the revised EWDS will be developed iteratively and released through several phases to allow educators access to certain components while others are being refined. Additionally, the State has indicated that it needs additional time to clarify the scope and sequence for development of the overall data systems platform elements given that the initial phases of the EWDS development in winter 2013 will inform this integrated plan. Due to the need for additional planning time to fully implement this revised approach, the approval for this amendment is conditioned on the State submitting as soon as possible but no later than March 15, 2013:

- 1) An updated Scope of Work for the State Longitudinal Data Systems project that contains:
 - a. the sequence of major activities and significant milestones during the next 16 months to ensure the State is able to design and release an EWDS, maintain and continuously improve an educator evaluation data system,

and establish the foundation for an enhanced overall data systems platform during the grant period; and

- b. mechanisms the State will use to build awareness and determine quality and usability of the EWDS and educator evaluation data system among LEAs.

Additionally, the Department expects the State to include updates about progress of the activities in this project in each of the monthly reports the State submits to the Department beginning in January 2013. Based on these progress updates and the submission of an updated Scope of Work, the Department will finalize approval of the \$5,219,939 Year 4 funds budgeted for this project.

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 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,

/ /s/ /

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

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

ⁱ "Core Coaches" are Tennessee educators who were selected through a rigorous application process to lead their peers in the CCSS transition. Core Coaches maintain their current school-based positions and receive a stipend to facilitate summer training sessions and build regional capacity for ongoing support. The State indicated that all SY 2011-2012 Core Coaches will reapply for positions in SY 2012-2013.

ⁱⁱ While the broadened EWDS is in development, the State indicated that it plans to continue to provide LEAs with PDF reports containing attendance, behavior, course completion, and demographic information.

ⁱⁱⁱ This total includes the \$581,237 for which the Department indicated in amendment 8 that the State would be required to submit an additional amendment.