



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

July 12, 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 June 12, and July 3, 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 "STEM Professional Development" project, shift funds based on actual costs. In accordance with its Scope of Work, the State established a grant competition for institutions of higher education (IHE) to provide STEM Professional Development to K-12 educators. Through competitions in Years 1 and 2, the State funded 29 projects for a total of \$5.2 million. The State believes it met its Scope of Work goals with these investments and does not intend to run an additional competition. The State will shift the remaining \$1,058,343 to support other projects in its plan involving IHEs and STEM as described below.
  - In the "STEM Innovation Network" project, add \$908,343 of the \$1,058,343 from "STEM Professional Development" to Year 4 to expand activities, as follows: (1) \$743,343 to support opening a sixth Platform School and establishing a supporting Hub in the Network in school year 2013-2014. In [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)

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accordance with its Scope of Work, the State previously ran competitions to establish five Platform Schools and Hubs in Years 1-3. The State determined that establishing an additional Platform School and Hub in the western region of the State was a priority to ensure statewide impact of the Network; and (2) \$165,000 to expand support across the STEM Innovation Network and the State's Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiatives. Specifically, the additional funds will support refinement for CCSS-aligned CTE curriculum and awareness of STEM career pathways.

- In the "Integrating TVAAS into Pre-Service" project, add \$150,000 of the \$1,058,343 from "STEM Professional Development" to expand the analyses conducted of preparation programs graduates' performance. Additionally, the State will shift \$550,000 contractual funds within the project budget based on work obligated in Year 2 but paid in Year 3.

Tennessee also submitted a request to revise the project period for local educational agencies (LEAs) to implement their Scopes of Work. In March 2013, the Department issued "Amendment Requests with No Cost Extension Guidance and Principles" indicating the process by which amendments containing requests to provide additional time for a grantee to accomplish the reform goals and deliverables it committed to in its Race to the Top application and approved Scope of Work would be reviewed and approved or denied. In order to consider amendment requests with no cost extensions, the Department indicated that States must address the timelines and implications of the amendment on the 50 percent LEA subgrants (i.e., allocations to participating LEAs), as well as the process the State will use to review LEA subgrant requests to obligate and liquidate funds after the current project period. To determine whether approval could be granted, the Department has applied the conditions and elements specific to no cost extensions noted in the document, and compared it with the Race to the Top program *Principles* included in the "Grant Amendment Submission Process" document issued to Governors of grantee States in October 2011.

Through conversations with Tennessee and documentation submitted as part of this amendment request, we understand that the State will begin to review requests from participating LEAs to extend the project period to complete Race to the Top activities on a case-by-case basis in coordination with the State's Year 4 Scope of Work review process. The Department generally approves the State's process as described in appendix 1. Prior to June 30, 2014, the Department expects the State to submit a record of each participating LEA project approved by the State for a no cost extension and the total funding approved for LEAs' Year 5 Scopes of Work.

Additionally, the State will shift \$337,981 unspent funds from Years 2-4 within the State's First to the Top Oversight budget based on actual costs and refined estimates to Year 5 to maintain the Oversight Team's support for LEAs work toward the State's reform agenda during the extended performance period.<sup>i</sup>

It is our understanding that this amendment and no cost extension 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 we are expecting grantees to liquidate all funds by September 1, 2015, given that by law all Race to the Top funds revert to the U.S. Department of Treasury as of October 1, 2015. The State must request and receive approval to move forward with no cost extensions for any additional projects. 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 Tennessee's Race to the Top Program Officer, Jessie Harteis, at 202-453-6651 or [jessie.harteis@ed.gov](mailto:jessie.harteis@ed.gov).

Sincerely,

//s//

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

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

Appendix 1: Process the State will use to review LEA subgrant requests to obligate and liquidate funds after the current project period, as described by the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE)

*Tennessee will review LEA requests on a case-by-case basis, with a primary focus on the extent to which the LEA has demonstrated that the extension:*

- *Demonstrates a clear and compelling rationale for what the additional time will enable the district to accomplish that it wouldn't otherwise be able to*
- *Aligns to the work the district has done previously through its Scope of Work, as well as the state's Race to the Top priorities*

*The state will also consider in its process the extent to which the LEAs request:*

- *Supports the district's ability to meet its student achievement goals, as demonstrated by the activities' alignment with the LEAs goals, areas of need as identified by missed AMOs, and ePlan needs assessment*
- *Addresses the LEAs rationale and plan for considering sustainability of the work beyond June 30, 2015*

*All LEA extension requests will be approved for a maximum time period of July 28, 2014 through June 30, 2015.*

*If an LEA's extension request is not approved, it will be granted an additional window to revise their year four Scope of Work so that they can plan to spend all remaining funds within the year four window.*

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<sup>i</sup> Based on actual staffing costs and refined estimates for Years 4 and 5, the State does not anticipate spending \$396,865 in the First to the Top Oversight budget. It is the Department's understanding that the State will submit an additional amendment(s) for \$396,865 for Department review.