



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

February 20, 2014

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, including revisions to the project period to implement a portion of its plan. Between January 8, 2014 and February 4, 2014, 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. 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. 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.

I approve the following amendments, including an extension to the time period for implementation of two projects, as described below:

- In the "Rural Literacy" project, shift funds from Year 4 to Year 5 to extend the project period for three activities. Consistent with its Scope of Work commitment, the State provided literacy supports to approximately 2,000 students in three schools. In order to provide adequate time to offer programming to schools and training to educators during summer 2014 and to continue sustainability planning, the State is approved for a no-cost extension for up to \$110,849 to June 30, 2015.

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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 “STEM Innovation Network” project, revise the approach to one activity and shift \$5,011,179 from Year 3 based on actual expenditures to Years 4 and 5 to extend implementation of the revised approach and support a STEM Leadership Council.
 - Update the approach for the \$2,400,000 budgeted to support the development of a virtual school and hub. Currently, the State has met its goal of funding up to six Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Regional Hubs and up to six Platform Schools, with a total of six hubs and ten schools participating in the network. The State determined that in order to offer high-quality courses and instructional tools through a virtual platform, it must first develop local educational agencies (LEAs’) ability to create the personalized learning environments in which students can take advantage of virtual course work. In order to build local capacity, the State will recruit educators in spring 2014. The State will provide these educators with support to create personalized learning environments, including virtual course work throughout school year (SY) 2014-2015. During this time, these educators will document their use of technology in the classroom, and create models for other schools and districts to utilize in their own implementation of personalized learning. The funds supporting this project will provide stipends for teachers and host schools as well as for an advisory council for the project; additionally, funds will be used to contract with a vendor that will provide technical support to educators and content for workshops to train educators. The State is approved for a no-cost extension for up to \$1,554,623 to provide adequate time for the State to implement this revised approach to meeting the virtual commitment in the STEM Innovation Network project. This extension includes supporting a Director of Personalized Learning’s (formerly known as the Director of Virtual Strategy) to recruit educators and staff to support the implementation of personalized learning.ⁱ
 - As of amendment 14 the State budgeted \$120,000 to convene a CTE Leadership Council to develop, align, and increase the rigor of STEM programs of study. Instead, the State met this goal by hiring consultants to develop the programs of study, using a total of \$12,000 of the budget. The State is approved for a no-cost extension of \$108,000 of unexpended funds to June 30, 2015, to fund a STEM Leadership Council to support sustainability planning for the State's STEM strategy.

As described in a July 12, 2013, amendment approval letter, the Department indicated that it generally approves the State’s process to review LEA subgrant requests to obligate and liquidate funds after September 23, 2014. 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.

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 Tennessee's Race to the Top Program Officers, Jessie Harteis and Rachel Provencher, at 202-453-6651 and 202-453-6404 or Jessie.Harteis@ed.gov and Rachel.Provencher@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

ⁱ Based on the changes to the STEM Innovation Network, \$845,377 is being added to those funds discussed in a January 9, 2014 amendment, with a total of \$2,205,208 in the State's overall budget requiring additional amendment(s) for Department review.