



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

June 6, 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. Between April 30, 2014 and June 5, 2014, the State submitted amendment requests to and held conversations with 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 amendments below, including no-cost extensions for four projects as described below.

- In the "State Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS)" project, shift funds based on actual costs to extend activities related to P-20 and P-12 data systems.
 - Shift \$761,035 from Year 4 to Year 5 based on cost savings from completing deliverables through existing staff rather than hiring additional contractors, to extend support for oversight and maintenance of the P-20 system through 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.

- Shift \$350,000 from Years 3 and 4 to Year 5 based on timing of hiring contractual personnel to extend technical support to local educational agencies (LEAs) in their transitions to new student information systems and to the State in its rollout of Early Warning Data System dashboards through June 30, 2015.
- In the “Leadership” project, shift funds based on actual costs and to extend the time period for implementation of one activity.
 - Shift \$384,425 from Year 4 to Year 5 based on actual costs of TNLEAD grantees to support a no-cost extension to June 30, 2015, to allow grantees to continue to provide support and develop pipelines to improve school leadership. The State believes that grantees would benefit from additional time to expand their reach and further embed their practices in the LEAs and schools with which they are partnered. Additionally, shift \$798,626 from “supplemental funding to LEAs” to “contractual” based on a change to a fiscal agent for one of the TNLEAD grant recipients.
 - Shift \$91,489 from Year 3 to “Common Core Standards Professional Development,” as described below, based on actual costs and updated estimates based on funds committed in contracts and competitive grants.
- In the “Teacher and Principal Residencies” project, shift funds from Year 3 to Year 4 and to the “Common Core Standards Professional Development” project based on based on actual Year 3 expenditures and refined Year 4 budgets.
 - Shift \$1,721,641 from Year 3 to Year 4 based on timing of LEA grantees billing for work completed in school year (SY) 2012-2013 and summer 2013.
 - Shift \$1,195,469 from Years 3 and 4 to “Common Core Standards Professional Development,” as described below, based on refined estimates of funding needed for grantees to implement their educator residency plans and discontinuation of one residency program prior to Year 4. According to the State, the available funds are no longer needed in this project because the objectives of supporting and increasing the effectiveness of school leaders are being met by other aspects of the State’s plan, including training provided to leaders in Priority Schools, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) leadership course, and the TNLEAD grants, as discussed above.
- In the “Integrating PBS” project, shift funds from Year 3 to Years 4 and 5 and to the “Common Core Standards Professional Development” project based on

progress developing digital instructional content and to provide other supports to educators in the transition to college- and career-ready standards.

- Shift \$826,333 from Year 3 to Years 4 and 5 based on delays developing online modules. It is the Department's understanding that the State implemented additional oversight routines in Year 4 to track progress and ensure quality and alignment of online resources. As of May 2014, the State reported that 34 modules were complete, 26 were under final review, 26 were in development, and 23 were not yet started. In order to provide additional time for the State to complete development of 86 modules, the State is approved for a no-cost extension to June 30, 2015, for \$140,000 of this total.
- Shift \$320,600 from Year 3 to "Common Core Standards Professional Development," as described below. According to the State, while the total number of modules is lower than previously expected, it will still meet the overall intent of providing a variety of resources to educators to support them in the transition to the CCSS in conjunction with other efforts, as discussed below.
- In the "Common Core Standards Professional Development" project, shift funds from Year 3 and other projects as indicated above to Years 4 and 5 based on timing of contractor billing and to extend support for LEAs and educators transitioning to CCSS.
 - Shift \$2,600,913 from Year 3 to Year 4 based on timing of contractors billing for activities completed in summer 2013.
 - Redirect the \$1,607,558 discussed in this letter as well as \$3,840,174 in unexpended funds discussed in a May 23, 2014, amendment approval letter to Year 5 to continue to support LEAs and educators in the transition to the CCSS through June 30, 2015. Funds will support continued: (1) engagement of school and district leaders in building local ownership and capacity for the transition to college- and career-ready standards through the Common Core Leadership Council; and (2) professional development in summer 2014 and during SY 2014-2015. Building from its experience recruiting and training "Core Coaches" to deliver training to their peers by grade and subject, beginning in summer 2014, the State plans to utilize Core Coaches to train school-level teams who will then redeliver professional development locally.

It is the Department's understanding that the State is working with its LEAs to coordinate school-level team participation in face-to-face trainings in summer 2014 and during SY 2014-2015 and to establish time

for these teams to redeliver training through professional learning communities or other schedules. The State plans to monitor LEAs' redelivery during the year, including through surveys of participants and trainers and through site visits.

As described in a July 12, 2013, amendment approval letter, the Department indicated that it generally approves the State's process to review local educational agency (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 we are expecting grantees with no-cost extensions 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. 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 Officer, Jessie Harteis at 202-453-6651 or 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