



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

APR - 6 2015

The Honorable Bill Haslam
Office of the Governor
State Capitol, 1st Floor
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Governor Haslam:

I am writing in response to Tennessee's request to amend its approved Race to the Top (RTT) grant project, which included revisions to the project period to implement a portion of its plan. On March 3, 2015, the State submitted documentation to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to support amendment requests to its approved RTT plan. ED has the authority to approve amendments to your plan and budget, provided the revisions do not change the overall scope and objectives of the approved proposal. In March 2013, ED issued *Amendment Requests with No-cost Extension Guidance and Principles*, indicating the process by which ED reviews amendments containing a request to provide additional time for a grantee to accomplish the reform goals and deliverables to which it committed in its RTT application and approved Scope of Work. To determine whether to approve this request, ED applied the conditions noted in the document and compared your request with the RTT program *Principles*, which are also included in that document.

I approve the following amendments, as described below:

- Shift a total of \$1,210,499 in unallocated funds from Year 4 of multiple RTT projects to expand work underway in Year 5 for sub-criteria (C)(3): "Integrating Data to Improve Instruction," and (D)(2): "Integrating Public Broadcasting Systems." Funds are available due to lower-than-expected expenditures needed to complete grant activities, primarily in the contractual category. According to the State, it completed projects and identified excess funds.¹ Tennessee will shift these excess funds from Year 4 to expand work taking place during the no-cost extension year in various projects, as described below:

¹ The total of \$1,210,499 is derived from actual expenditures in the following projects: (D)(1): "Teacher and Leader Residency Programs," (D)(5): "Oak Ridge STEM Academy," and (E)(2): "School Turnaround Initiatives."

- Use \$1,160,000 of the total unallocated funds discussed above based on actual Year 4 costs to expand work underway in Year 5 in sub-criterion (C)(3): “Integrating Data to Improve Instruction,” and extend the time period for implementation through June 30, 2015. The State will use these funds to continue contractual support delivering direct training to staff at Tennessee’s regional offices (Centers of Regional Excellence or COREs) to bolster their ability to facilitate strategic data use at the local level; and
- Use \$50,499 of the total unallocated funds discussed above based on actual Year 4 costs to pay for work related to sub-criterion (D)(2): “Integrating Public Broadcasting Systems.” According to the State, it anticipates completing development of all 86 planned digital instructional content modules by June 30, 2015.
- Shift \$536,880 from Year 4 to Year 5 in sub-criterion (E)(2): “School Turnaround Initiatives.” Funds are available based on actual expenditure costs and use of other federal funds to complete planned activities in the “Reward Schools” and Focus Schools” sub-projects within (E)(2): “School Turnaround Initiatives.” The State will use available funds to extend activities related to its “Priority Schools” sub-project to support local educational agencies (LEAs) in which newly identified Priority Schools reside as they develop and implement recruitment, hiring, and planning initiatives in order to be better prepared for full implementation in the 2015–2016 school year.
- Due to contracts coming in under budget in Year 4, \$25,614 of the State’s total grant award is currently unallocated. Tennessee will submit an amendment request to ED by April 30, 2015 to propose how to best use the remaining unallocated funds.

As described in a July 12, 2013, amendment approval letter, ED indicated that it generally approves the Tennessee’s process to review LEA subgrant requests to obligate and liquidate funds after September 23, 2014. On June 27, 2014, Tennessee submitted a record of each participating LEA project approved by the State for a no-cost extension and the total funding approved for each LEAs’ Year 5 Scopes of Work.

It is ED’s understanding that these amendments will not result in any change in the State’s performance measures and outcomes, nor will they substantially change the scope and objectives of the work. Please note that ED expects grantees with no-cost extensions to liquidate all funds by September 1, 2015, given that by law all RTT grant funds will revert to the U.S. Department of Treasury as of October 1, 2015. This letter will be posted on ED’s website as a record of these amendments.

If you need any assistance or have any questions regarding the RTT program, please contact Victoria Hammer at (202) 260-1438 or at: OSS.Tennessee@ed.gov.

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Thank you for your continued commitment to enhancing education for all of Tennessee's students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Deborah S. Delisle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary

cc: Dr. Candice McQueen, Commissioner
Sam Percy, Director, First to the Top