



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



June 10, 2015

Deborah Gist  
Commissioner  
Rhode Island Department of Education  
255 Westminster St.  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist:

This letter is in response to Rhode Island's request to amend its approved Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant, including revisions to the project period to implement a portion of its plan. On April 27, 2015, the Rhode Island Department of Education sent an amendment request to its Project Officers indicating the grantee would like to extend its grant period by one year by reallocating unspent funds in the amount of \$9,081,100 from its Year 4 budget to Year 5.

As you are aware, the Departments have 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 March 3, 2015, the Departments 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 RTT-ELC application and approved Scope of Work would be reviewed and approved or denied. To determine whether approval could be granted, the Departments have applied the conditions noted in that document and compared it with RTT-ELC program requirements and conditions. In reviewing this request, project officers considered the State's explanation and plan for how the work will be sustained (or, if appropriate, completed) after the timeframe of the no-cost extension.

Based on the documentation submitted, Rhode Island has fulfilled the conditions specified. Under the approved amendment, the State will complete the implementation of the RTT-ELC grant by December 31, 2016. None of the changes proposed in this amendment change the scope or objectives of the grant.

The following no-cost extension amendment is approved, as described below:

Project 1 (Overall Grant Management): Rhode Island will spend up to \$566,421 in Year 5 of the grant to ensure oversight of grant deliverables for Projects 2, 5, and 6, and to support interagency collaboration, fiscal management, and implementation of the sustainability plan.

Project 2 (Improving the Quality of Early Learning Programs): Rhode Island will spend up to \$5,946,425 in Year 5 of the grant in order to support key activities related to increasing the quality of early learning programs participating in its TQRIS. Specifically, these funds will be used for: RIELDS training through the end of 2016; facilities grants and program quality improvement grants; technical assistance and professional development for providers; achievement awards for providers reaching a higher rating; access to college courses at the Community College of Rhode Island and the Institute for Teaching and Learning; access to

TEACH Scholarships; assessment of programs in the TQRIS; and completion of the validation study of the TQRIS.

Project 5 (Developing and Supporting Effective Early Childhood Assessment): Rhode Island will spend up to \$1,574,437 in Year 5 of the grant to support the development and implementation of early childhood assessment systems. These funds will support developmental screening and implementation of evidence-based grants; data systems modifications; development of a comprehensive assessment system for Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education; training for educators to administer assessments; technology grants to support assessment; and development and piloting of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment.

Project 6 (Building an Early Learning Data System): Rhode Island will spend up to \$993,817 in Year 5 of the grant to support the development of the early learning data system. Primary activities in this extension will include ongoing systems development, development of user interfaces, training and grants to support the use of the data system, and data governance. In 2014, Rhode Island hired a full time consultant to coordinate the business engagement and data governance. This consultant has worked with RI to restructure the process and develop a new timeline that will complete the basic system development by the end of 2015, with enhancements, modifications, and user training in 2016.

The Departments approve Rhode Island's request to obligate funds through December 31, 2016 for the purposes described in this letter. The State must request and receive approval to move forward with no-cost extensions for any additional projects.

It is our understanding that this amendment request will not change Rhode Island's overall RTT-ELC goals, plans, outcomes, or performance measures, but will ensure that Rhode Island can continue to make progress on its RTT-ELC scope of work activities. Please note that we expect grantees with no-cost extensions to liquidate all funds by March 31, 2017, given that by law all RTT-ELC funds revert to the U.S. Department of Treasury as of October 1, 2017. This letter will be posted to ED's website as a record of the amendments.

We are confident that Rhode Island will continue its comprehensive efforts towards building successful state systems of early learning. If you need any assistance regarding RTT-ELC, please do not hesitate to contact your Project Officer, Deborah Spitz, at (202) 260-3793 or [Deborah.Spitz@ed.gov](mailto:Deborah.Spitz@ed.gov) or your co-project officer Amy Spates, at (617) 565-3772 or [Amy.Spates@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:Amy.Spates@acf.hhs.gov).

Sincerely,



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Deputy Assistant Secretary  
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