



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



May 15, 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 projects. The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (the Departments) approved Rhode Island's grant projects and scope of work on November 14, 2012. On August 24, 2015, the Rhode Island Department of Education submitted an amendment request, whereby it proposes to move funds within Project 2, Improving the Quality of Early Learning Programs, to assist programs with indoor and outdoor environment concerns.

As you are aware, the Departments have the authority to approve amendments provided that such a change does not alter the scope or objectives of the approved proposal. On July 18, 2012, the Departments sent a document to Project Directors describing the process by which amendments 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.

The following amendment to the State's budget is approved, as described below. Please note that no changes have been made to grant activities:

In 2013, Rhode Island conducted a Facilities Needs Assessment to identify barriers for early learning providers in meeting regulatory standards and attaining higher ratings in its Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS). The resulting report indicated that more than 50% of Rhode Island's early learning providers have some indoor or outdoor environment issues that require technical assistance and financial support to resolve.

To address these needs, Rhode Island procured a vendor in 2014 to provide specialized assessment and technical assistance related to facilities concerns, and to award aligned program improvement grants specific to improving early learning facilities. Due to the high demand for these awards, and the importance of helping early learning providers improve program quality, this amendment will move \$1.1 million from Line 11 (Funding for Localities) to Line 8 (Contractual), to be spent on additional awards and technical assistance in Year 4 of the grant.

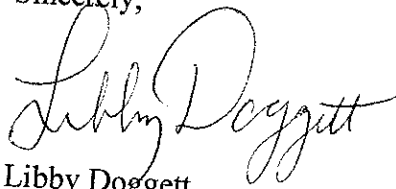
These funds were initially allocated for Quality Awards to reward providers with high TQRIS ratings. However, due to delays in determining ratings, and a lower number of eligible providers than anticipated, Rhode Island cannot spend these funds on Quality Awards as originally budgeted.

We understand that this amendment request will not impact Rhode Island's overall RTT-ELC goals, plans, outcomes, or performance measures, but will ensure Rhode Island can continue to make progress on its RTT-ELC scope of work activities.

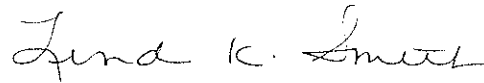
Please note that this letter will be posted on the Department of Education's website as a record of the amendment request and our approval. All budget changes are recorded in the GRADS 360 system and the detailed budget request is saved in the official grant file.

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 or your co-project officer Amy Spates, at (617) 565-3772 or Amy.Spates@acf.hhs.gov.

Sincerely,



Libby Doggett
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Early Learning
Office of Elementary and Secondary
Education
U.S. Department of Education



Linda K. Smith
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early
Childhood Development
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human
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