UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

Brian Rowan
Burke A. Hinsdale Collegiate Professor in Education
Research Professor, Institute for Social Research
Professor of Sociology
610 E. UNIVERSITY AVE., 3117 SEB
ANN ARBOR, MI 48109
734-615-0286
browan@umich.edu

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Dennis Schornack
Special Advisor for Strategy
Office of the Governor
State of Michigan

Dear Denny,

I am writing to request a ***no-cost extension*** to the Interlocal Services Agreement (ILA) between the University of Michigan (U-M) and the State of Michigan to conduct pilot research on the MCEE educator evaluation project (Contract #B2200305). Unlike my previous request (of March 20, 2013), which asked to extend the pilot work to tasks not previously included in the ILA, this is a request for a no-cost extension to complete tasks that were part of the original agreement.

Since filing the March, 2013 request, our budget projections remain unchanged (we project an under-run of about $825,000 by the end of December 31). However, between March and November of 2013, researchers at the U-M Institute for Social Research (ISR) have experienced a number of difficulties that have prevented us from completing the entire scope of work assigned to us by the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness. These difficulties have occurred as a result of several factors, including: (a) delays in receipt of required state data; and (b) complications in data analysis. These delays mostly affect our work on value-added modeling, a central issue of concern in the state. In particular:

(1) ISR needs additional time to analyze the accuracy of state procedures for linking students and teachers for the purposes of value-added modeling. This analysis is absolutely critical to an understanding of the feasibility of using current state data systems for the purposes of value-added modeling and will shed important light on potential revisions to state data systems (and potential costs of such revisions) should the state decide to deploy value-added modeling in the teacher evaluation process. This has always been a central goal of the MCEE pilot project. The delay in completion of this task, however, is due to several constraints. First, we did not receive EOY 2013 MSDS and REP data until December of this year, yet such data are required for this analysis. In essence, our approach to examining the accuracy of state data involves first using state data and procedures typically used by VAM vendors to link teachers and students for the purposes of VAM modeling and then comparing these procedures to ones based on data generated from ISR's rostering project. The analysis will provide state decision makers with a good sense of the accuracy of current state procedures for linking students to teachers, as well as a sense of any steps that might be required (and costs that might need to be expended) to improve on the accuracy of those linkages going forward. No other group in the state has the time or data to conduct this analysis, and it would be a shame to end ISR's ILA without completing this work.

(2) ISR needs additional time to "audit" VAM vendor work. ISR received completed VAM analyses from vendors in October 2013. ISR's preliminary work with vendor data has surfaced a number of issues that require additional scrutiny of these analyses. Some examples include: (a) VAM vendors do not generally include the same students in VAM analyses for the same teacher; (b) VAM vendors generally use different numbers of teachers in VAM analyses for the same teacher/grade/ subject combinations; (c) VAM vendors make different attributions about school locations for the same teachers. To address why this is the case, and to generally assess the quality of vendor work (a central task of the MCEE pilot), ISR researchers need to engage in a much more detailed "audit" of each vendor's work. In work of this sort that we have conducted for state education agencies in the past, this has involved actually replicating vendor analyses. This is complex work, involving data sets provided to us from: (a) the state; and (b) the vendors. It is also absolutely necessary that ISR complete this work if it is to be in a strong position to report to state decision-makers about procedures for value-added analyses moving forward.

(3) ISR needs additional time to complete the "validation" research questions posed by MCEE as central to their evaluation of different observation protocols. Again, this work was delayed by the late date at which ISR received EOY REP and MSDS data. As discussed, these data are needed to conduct VAM analyses with the student test data collected as part of the MCEE pilot. To conduct this work, we need state MSDS and EOY REP data in order to construct teacher student linkages as VAM vendors would do and then compare results from these analyses to VAM analyses conducted using linkage data provided through ISR's rostering system. This analysis was discussed under point (1) above as a means of assessing the accuracy of state data used in VAM vendor analyses. But, once this step of the analysis is completed, we can examine correlations of teacher observation data to VAM data (using both types of linkages), thereby assessing the "concurrent" and "consequential" validity of both forms of data. This was a central research question that MCEE asked ISR to address.

(***4) ISR requests additional time to complete a full technical report of its activities.*** Currently, we are preparing an interim report that will be shorter in length than a "full" technical report and ready for release to state decision makers for review by December 31, 2013 (as required by the ILA). Such a report, however, will not include the level of detail typically reported by ISR researchers about their work, including: (a) details about sampling and response rates; (b) details about the statistical and measurement models on which reported results are based; and (c) detailed discussions about the issues described above. These latter (more detailed) discussions will not be of wide interest to the public, but they will be of very high interest to any state employees charged with using data as part of the teacher evaluation process. As examples, our detailed report will include technical information on various statistical/measurement models that can be used to create and report teacher observation data, technical information on value-added data from VAM vendors and ISR researchers, and technical information on statistical procedures that can be used to classify teachers into effectiveness ratings using procedures developed in the scientific community. We request an extension until March, 2014 to complete this technical reporting.

I sincerely hope you can support this request for a no-cost extension of the ILA so that ISR can complete the scope of work requested by MCEE and described in the ILA. To support this request, I am attaching three additional documents:

- The first attachment is my letter to you of March, 2013—the original request by ISR for a no-cost extension. Please note the differences in scope of work proposed for the extension in that letter vs. the current one. In the original request, we asked to complete tasks not included in the original ILA. In the current request, we ask for additional time only to complete work included in the original ILA.

- The second attachment is a table mapping research questions posed by MCEE to coverage in the interim and final reports that ISR would prepare under a no-cost extension. You will see from both these documents that ISR is making good progress on the work scope. However, a no-cost extension is absolutely critical to the production of data analyses of high relevance to state decision makers, the education policy and practice communities more generally, and to the scientific community, which will want much more technical detail on ISR's work than can be provided in our interim report.

- The third attachment is a draft of the initial chapters of the "interim" report, which we plan to deliver to you by December 31, 2013 as required by the ILA. I am attaching this draft to give you an initial look at how the interim report will be structured and solicit your feedback

I would appreciate an opportunity to discuss this request with you in more detail, as well as to discuss how you would like ISR to proceed in terms of reporting the results of its work to state officials, the public, and the scientific community.

Sincerely,



Brian Rowan
Burke A. Hinsdale Collegiate Professor in Education
Research Professor, Institute for Social Research