



**Higher Education
Services Corporation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

GUILLERMO LINARES, Ed.D
President

June 11, 2020

Mr. Mark Ren
Audit Director
Office of the State Comptroller
110 State Street
Albany, New York 12236

RE: Oversight of the STEM Incentive Program
Report 2019-F-56

Dear Mr. Ren:

Enclosed please find the New York Higher Education Services Corporation's (HESC) comments on the Office of the New York State Comptroller's Report 2091-F-56, Oversight of the STEM Incentive Program, Follow Up.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Should you have any questions, please contact Christine Konsistorum, HESC's Audit Director at 518-474-4671.

Sincerely,

Dr. Guillermo Linares
President

Recommendation 1

Take steps to strengthen oversight of Program recipient eligibility requirements and ensure receipt of required documentation, including:

- *Establish control procedures and practices to ensure recipients are eligible for payment; and*
- *Providing colleges with guidance and assistance on an as-needed basis.*

Status – Partially Implemented

HESC's comments:

HESC continues to proactively work with high schools and colleges to ensure that STEM eligibility is accurately determined. HESC still plans to develop an online STEM certification video. Currently, HESC is focusing on priorities that have emerged in response to COVID-19. Once those activities are no longer emergent, and therefore a priority, HESC will focus on development of the online STEM certification video.

Recommendation 2

Review the \$81,198 in ineligible award payments and make recoveries, as appropriate.

Status – Implemented

HESC's comments:

HESC confirms that this recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 3

Take steps to ensure that HESC policies and procedures comply with the regulations governing the Program

Status – Implemented

HESC's comments:

HESC confirms that this recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 4

Take steps to strengthen the database systems used to administer the Program, including:

- *Re-evaluating existing database systems, and where needed, taking steps to strengthen their abilities and controls; and*
- *Providing training to HESC staff regarding capabilities and functionality of different HESC database systems.*

Status – Partially Implemented

HESC's comments:

Despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting NY PAUSE order, HESC continues to work toward the issuance of a Request for Proposal to modernize its application processing environment. Once the PAUSE order is lifted and all agency functions are returned to normal, HESC will continue its plan to issue the RFP during State Fiscal Year 2020-2021.