



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # AZ-5001

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 12:50 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

States must address in their application all of the selection criteria in the Core Areas.

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 14. Includes detailed text about the state's commitment to early learning and development programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

--It is a very positive sign that existing legislation guarantees American Indian Tribes the right to participate in decisions regarding early childhood systems. Furthermore, another positive step in this state's efforts towards improving early care and education and supporting Children with High Needs is that in November 2006 voters passed Proposition 203, a citizens' initiative that created the Early Childhood Development and Health Board, also known as First Things First (FTF). This Board, FTF, exists to increase the quality of, and access to, the early childhood development and health system to ensure all children enter school healthy and ready to succeed.

child care providers in Empower, the state's healthy child initiative for early care and education programs. In addition, Child health consultants and mental health consultants provide technical assistance to child care staff; in FY 2011, child care health consultants were providing assistance to nearly 900 providers and FTF has allocated \$4.7 million toward oral health and \$1.3 million for nutrition, obesity, and physical education in FY 2012. The state is part of the prestigious Irving B. Harris infant mental health professional development network and home to one of only 17 intensive Harris training programs for mental health clinicians and has a AZ High Risk Perinatal Program that has contributed to having an infant mortality rate that is lower than the national average. --While the applicant states that they are connecting the health system to the early learning system through initiatives including Reach Out and Read, which provided 240,000 books to 124,000 children in FY 2011, no evidence of the effectiveness of Reach Out and Read is given. --This state has made a positive commitment to family engagement strategies with numerous supports in place including community-based family support centers; home visiting programs; and evidence-based programs like Healthy Families, Nurse Family Partnership, Parents and Teachers, and Early Head Start. In FY 2010, \$60 million was spent for home visiting and the state was recently awarded a \$36 million grant in Sept 2011 to develop a systematic approach for planning, funding, and collaborating to provide accessible, high-quality home visiting services. On Tribal lands there are native language enrichment programs that help families preserve heritage and culture for their children. --The state makes an effort to aid in development of Early Childhood Educators, by providing professional development for early learning providers on how to integrate Early Learning standards. In addition, efforts are underway to increase access to early childhood certificates and degrees and to retain these highly trained professionals. TEACH scholarships give access to higher education and support tuition and books as well as travel and substitutes; TEACH AZ is the only state to concentrate efforts to remove barriers to participation by tribal communities. The Professional REWARDS program promotes retention of early care and education professionals by providing financial awards based on educational achievement, wages earned, and hours worked per week, with 1,783 stipends awarded to date. --The state has made a financial investment to its young children via a 2006 voter approved tax increase on tobacco products that raises approximately \$130 million annually for a statewide early childhood development system and to expand early education and health services to all children, with an emphasis on Children with High Needs. On the other hand, the applicant does not provide information on these investments in relation to the size of the state's population of children with high needs. --It is impressive that, in spite of the economic downturn, state investments in early learning and development increased by more than \$46 million from 2007 to 2011, due to tax revenues directed by AZ voters. However, it is unfortunate that rather than an increase in the number of children participating in early learning and development programs, the number has remained relatively steady over the last five years during these times of severe economic downturn. There has been a very small increase in Head Start enrollment, a slight decline in children in programs funded by IDEA Part B, and a slightly larger increase in number of children in programs funded by IDEA Part C. The number of children participating in the Child Care subsidy program has declined by more than 15,000 children over the last 4 years. The state has invested First Things First (FTF) funds in Pre-Kindergarten since 2009, and in 2011 this program funded public preschool for 2,407 children; FTF also provides scholarships to children from low-income families who receive child care and education in Quality First settings, funding 3,764 scholarships in 2011 for Children with High Needs. --While AZ adopted Early Learning Standards for ages 3-5 in 2005 it has not yet adopted Standards for Infants and Toddlers. It has plans to finalize Infant & Toddler Developmental Guidelines by January 2012. It is good that the applicant plans for both of these sets of standards to align with the state's K-12 curriculum standards. --The state does not have a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) but is committed to the use of Kindergarten assessments in the future to support college and career readiness, and is developing a K-2 assessment; for example, the FTF Board approved 10 school readiness indicators in Aug 2011. However, it should be noted that there is currently no common kindergarten assessment. --In regards to effective data practices, the applicant states that since the inception of FTF in 2006, the state has built a data system from the ground up and has invested \$6 million in building a comprehensive data warehouse system that facilitates grant management, finance, and accounting and the storage and use of Quality First participation and rating data. The state has also invested \$14.7 million in comprehensive research and evaluation on studies. AZ's Statewide Longitudinal Data System houses a small amount of early childhood data, and the next step is to align data on children starting in preschool, with building of the AZ Early Childhood Education data system and AZ Early childhood professional development data system. The AZ State Longitudinal Data System will soon house and offer for analysis and usage data on children from preschool to the workforce. The applicant has plans to integrate data systems to develop effective practices, but does not have a past commitment to such practices.

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>

The extent to which the State clearly articulates a comprehensive early learning and development reform agenda that is ambitious yet achievable, builds on the State's progress to date (as demonstrated in selection criterion (A)(1)), is most likely to result in improved school readiness for Children with High Needs, and includes--

- (a) Ambitious yet achievable goals for improving program quality, improving outcomes for Children with High Needs statewide, and closing the readiness gap between Children with High Needs and their peers;
- (b) An overall summary of the State Plan that clearly articulates how the High-Quality Plans proposed under each selection criterion, when taken together, constitute an effective reform agenda that establishes a clear and credible path toward achieving these goals; and
- (c) A specific rationale that justifies the State's choice to address the selected criteria in each Focused Investment Area (C), (D), and (E), including why these selected criteria will best achieve these goals.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

--The state has six ambitious goals; however, the ability to achieve these laudable goals is questionable. These goals include: 1) Expand TORIS to raise the quality of settings serving Children with High Needs and increase the number of Children with High Needs in the highest quality programs; 2) expand the effective use of current Early Learning Standards and Infant Toddler guidelines; 3) invest in parental engagement and language and literacy development within early learning and community-based programs; 4) remove structural barriers to higher education and start statewide technical assistance centers; 5) develop the capacity to collect and use data system-wide to inform decisions that affect children's lives by implementing a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment and a statewide interoperable data system; and 6) strengthen system integration, governance, and public support for early care and education. --The State Plan attempts to articulate how the proposed High-Quality Plans constitute an effective reform agenda that establishes a clear and credible path toward achieving its goals. For example, in response to RTT-ELC guidelines, in FY 2013, the Comprehensive Assessment System will move to a tiered differentiation between incentives and supports offered at each star level. Programs at lower quality levels will receive more intensive coaching to aggressively support a move to higher star levels and programs at higher quality levels will receive less intensive coaching but larger financial incentives to motivate programs to move up in levels of quality. The state's efforts to increase access among Children with High Needs to Quality First programs are laudable. The state will increase the number of and funding for Quality First scholarships, with higher quality programs receiving a greater number of scholarships than lower quality programs; starting in 2013, AZ will phase out Quality First scholarships after two years in settings that earn only 1 star and after 4 years in settings that earn only 2 stars so children with the highest needs are in the highest quality programs. This is concerning to this reviewer because the applicant plans to engage Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) providers who are currently unlicensed; it seems unlikely that these programs can move from being unlicensed to at least 3 stars so that they will be able to obtain Quality First Scholarships; thus it appears that the applicant will expend funds on FFN programs initially and then abandon those programs later. --In FY 2013 the state will also require 3, 4, and 5 star programs to reserve 10% of their spaces for Children with High Needs. This does not seem like an ambitious goal; 90% of the spaces in the 3, 4, and 5 star programs could still be used for children who do not have high needs. Thus, even though the state is expending a great amount of funds on these programs, they will only increase the number of child care spaces for a small number of Children with High Needs. --To promote increased participation in Quality First by publicly funded programs, the state is developing a rating-only Quality First option. This rating-only option is not clearly defined and thus it is not clear how this is will positively impact Children with High Needs. --The applicant states that it plans to increase the number of Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) providers that are licensed, certified, and enrolled in Quality First, yet no feasible plan to accomplish this goal is provided. --The state has not made a commitment to tiered Child Care Development Funds (CCDF) reimbursement. The state has proposed strategies to link CCDF to Quality First and states that this may include tiered CCDF reimbursement, alignment of quality set-aside funding with Quality First, and collaborating to align state and tribal policies and practices. --The applicant's specific rationale that justifies the State's choice to address Focused Investment Area (C)(1) is that (C)(1) will allow the state to leverage prior work to develop an aligned set of early learning standards birth to five and program guidelines to ensure their widespread dissemination and use among diverse providers. According to the applicant, these selected criteria will best achieve these goals because the High Quality Plan will expand the effective utilization of early learning standards and infant toddler guidelines in all early care and education settings across the state. The applicant is not leveraging prior work in regards to early learning standards for infants and toddlers as they have not yet adopted infant and toddler guidelines as of the writing of this grant. --The rationale for addressing Focused Investment Area (C)(4) is that this area builds on the state's strong existing framework of family engagement and support services to focus on language and literacy acquisition for English Language Learners and children in tribal communities. The state has a proposed a good rationale for (C)(4); the applicant plans to invest resources to improve family literacy and reinforce the confidence of parents as their child's first and best teacher. According to the applicant, these selected criteria will best achieve these goals because the High Quality Plan will build of current partnerships in order to have a positive impact on school readiness. -- The applicant has a weak and questionable rationale that justifies the State's choice to address Focused Investment Area (D)(1) to revise, adopt, and implement Arizona's Early Childhood Knowledge and Competency Framework (CKEC) and Career Ladder to align the tiers with a progression of career levels and credentials. According to the applicant, these selected criteria will best achieve these goals because it will remove structural barriers to opportunity by developing a seamless Child Development Associate (CDA) to associate's to bachelor's degree progression. This reviewer is concerned that the barriers to achieving a college degree may be insurmountable for many of the early childhood providers and the applicant does not address this issue at all. -- The applicant has a good rationale that justifies the State's choice to address Focused Investment Area (E)(1) in that the state is committed to using assessment to monitor students' progress from the early years to college and career. According to the applicant, these selected criteria will best achieve these goals because it will phase-in a common statewide kindergarten entry assessment beginning in school year 2014. -- The applicant has a mediocre rationale that justifies the State's choice to address Focused Investment Area (E)(2). The state is committed building a statewide early learning data system connecting participating state agencies and programs through a federated data entry process that will be interoperable with the statewide longitudinal K-12 data system. However, it is of concern that it will not implement this system until the final year of the grant. According to the applicant, these selected criteria will best achieve these goals because it will plan in year 1, design in years 2 and 3, and implement the system in year 4.

	Available	Score
(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State	10	6



The extent to which the State has established, or has a High-Quality Plan to establish, strong participation and commitment in the State Plan by Participating State Agencies and other early learning and development stakeholders by--

(a) Demonstrating how the Participating State Agencies and other partners, if any, will identify a governance structure for working together that will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability and describing--

(1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;

(2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;

(3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and

(4) The plan for when and how the State will involve representatives from Participating Programs, Early Childhood Educators or their representatives, parents and families, including parents and families of Children with High Needs, and other key stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant;

(b) Demonstrating that the Participating State Agencies are strongly committed to the State Plan, to the governance structure of the grant, and to effective implementation of the State Plan, by including in the MOU or other binding agreement between the State and each Participating State Agency--

(1) Terms and conditions that reflect a strong commitment to the State Plan by each Participating State Agency, including terms and conditions designed to align and leverage the Participating State Agencies' existing funding to support the State Plan;

(2) "Scope-of-work" descriptions that require each Participating State Agency to implement all applicable portions of the State Plan and a description of efforts to maximize the number of Early Learning and Development Programs that become Participating Programs; and

(3) A signature from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency; and

(c) Demonstrating commitment to the State Plan from a broad group of stakeholders that will assist the State in reaching the ambitious yet achievable goals outlined in response to selection criterion (A)(2)(a), including by obtaining--

(1) Detailed and persuasive letters of intent or support from Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, and, if applicable, local early learning councils; and

(2) Letters of intent or support from such other stakeholders as Early Childhood Educators or their representatives; the State's legislators; local community leaders; State or local school boards; representatives of private and faith-based early learning programs; other State and local leaders (e.g., business, community, tribal, civil rights, education association leaders); adult education and family literacy State and local leaders; family and community organizations (e.g., parent councils, nonprofit organizations, local foundations, tribal organizations, and community-based organizations); libraries and children's museums; health providers; and postsecondary institutions.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

#### Comments on (A)(3)

--A great commitment to Children with High Needs is shown by the applicant's commitment to funding and the governance model that is protected by law. According to the applicant, Arizona is the only state with a dedicated early childhood funding stream and governance model that is protected by law. The Statute requires the FTF Board to extensively overhaul the early childhood arena -- in policy, program, financial investment, and governance -- with a focus on intense integration and coordination with other agencies and organizations. --The applicant states that the FTF Board is comprehensive and inclusive. This reviewer questions if this is a High-Quality Plan that establishes strong participation and commitment by Participating State Agencies. While the FTF Board is composed of nine governor-appointed and Senate-approved voting members, plus, as ex officio members, executive leaders from the three state agencies that administer public funds related to early childhood development and health, this reviewer questions if this is adequate for strong participation and commitment by all agencies. The governance structure also includes 31 local Regional Partnership Councils, each with 11 volunteer community members who either live or work in that region, including parents, tribal leaders, educators, health professionals, business leaders, philanthropists, and leaders of faith communities. Allocations to each regional council are calculated through a formula based on the number of children birth to five in each community, with weighted consideration for children living in poverty. Regional councils allocated for FY 2012 range from \$83,784 to \$15,502,513. --The state will build on existing governance infrastructure, and has proposed the creation of two new advisory structures linked directly to FTF Board that complement and enhance existing structures. State agency directors from Arizona Department of Education, Department of Health Services, and Department of Economic Security agreed in MOU's to become active members of the new Interagency Directors' Coordinating Council. --It is ambitious for the FTF Board Chairperson to establish and convene a System Integration Taskforce, responsible for setting strategic policies and program direction for RTT-ELC initiatives through a coordinated

planning process, but this reviewer questions if this is achievable given that one person, the Board Chairperson, is establishing and convening the Taskforce instead of a group of professionals or leaders making the decisions. The applicant states that this Taskforce will monitor progress against goals stated in grant and subsequent planning and will recommend mid-course corrections and resolutions as new, unforeseen issues and challenges arise, and will serve as the conduit to external stakeholders to help spread to local level all important collaborative approaches and relationships formed at state level. --It is impressive that in 2008, the FTF Board adopted Responsible Governance Statement to guide their work. Key tenets and expectations include practicing transparency and open dialogue, respecting other's opinions, being responsive to cultural differences, and making decisions constructively. --The Early Childhood Strategic Plan Roadmap is guided by involving public and private partners and communities and focusing on desired outcomes for all children. --FTF staff has developed a statement of Actions, Beliefs, and Performance. --Ambitious previous achievements of the FTF include the efforts to include local voices in decision making. It is impressive that the FTF includes local voices in decision making. Letters of support from all 31 councils in state are included in the application. There are local voices on all FTF Board committees and Boards, with three policy advisory committees for early learning, family support, literacy, and health. --While the applicant includes information that the state agencies are strongly committed to the State Plan, these agencies' presence on the Board seems limited. Table A3-1 and Attachment PPP provide the "scope of work" descriptions indicating that the state agencies are strongly committed to the State Plan, governance structure of the grant, and to effective implementation of the State Plan, by including in the MOU or other binding agreement between the State and each Participating State Agency. --Impressively, Table A3-2 and Attachment EEE through OOO include 138 letters of support from a broad group of stakeholders that will assist the State in reaching the ambitious goals. These letters include detailed and persuasive letters of intent or support from Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, local early learning councils; and letters of intent or support from such other stakeholders as Early Childhood Educators or their representatives; the State's legislators; local community leaders; State or local school boards, representatives of private and faith-based early learning programs; other State and local leaders (e.g., business, community, tribal, civil rights, education association leaders); adult education and family literacy State and local leaders; family and community organizations (e.g., parent councils, nonprofit organizations, local foundations, tribal organizations, and community-based organizations); libraries and children's museums; health providers; and postsecondary institutions. --It should be noted that while the applicant states that 47% of its young children are Latino and 64% of those Latino are Children with High Needs, it does not address this population in detail.

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>

The extent to which the State Plan--

(a) Demonstrates how the State will use existing funds that support early learning and development from Federal, State, private, and local sources (e.g., CCDF; Title I and II of ESEA; IDEA; Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program; State preschool; Head Start Collaboration and State Advisory Council funding; Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program; Title V MCH Block Grant; TANF; Medicaid; child welfare services under Title IV (B) and (E) of the Social Security Act; Statewide Longitudinal Data System; foundation; other private funding sources) for activities and services that help achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, including how the quality set-asides in CCDF will be used;

(b) Describes, in both the budget tables and budget narratives, how the State will effectively and efficiently use funding from this grant to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, in a manner that--

- (1) Is adequate to support the activities described in the State Plan;
- (2) Includes costs that are reasonable and necessary in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of the activities described in the State Plan and the number of children to be served; and
- (3) Details the amount of funds budgeted for Participating State Agencies, localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, or other partners, and the specific activities to be implemented with these funds consistent with the State Plan, and demonstrates that a significant amount of funding will be devoted to the local implementation of the State Plan; and

(c) Demonstrates that it can be sustained after the grant period ends to ensure that the number and percentage of Children with High Needs served by Early Learning and Development Programs in the State will be maintained or expanded.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

**Comments on (A)(4)**

--The applicant has developed a budget that it states will implement and sustain the work of this grant. The state plans to use existing funds that support early learning and development along with RTT-ELC funds to meet the goals it has set. The applicant demonstrates how the state will use existing funds that support early learning and development from various sources by providing information on expenditures by the state and the amount of funds that came from the federal government. For example, in FY 2010, AZ spent \$2,750,892,100 on early care and education, with the majority of these funds coming from federal sources. State funding included \$448,011,800, \$319,925,400 of which was from the state's general fund and \$128,086,400 from other state sources, primarily FTF. --Further examples of commitments by the state include a total of \$761,907,202 throughout the 4-year grant period. This includes FTF: \$582 million; AZ Department of Education: \$30.9 million; AZ Department of Health Services: \$52.7 million; AZ Department of Economic Security: \$93 million. Thirteen philanthropic organizations have committed through letters of support. 10% of FTF's revenue is for Administrative expenses. The state has

\$2.5 million from grants awarded to State Advisory Council from Head Start and to FTF through Health and Human Services (HHS) grants. FTF's financial commitment includes investments to increase public awareness of the importance of early childhood, as required by a citizen's ballot initiative that created FTF. --The state clearly describes the amount of funds that the state will have from various funding streams. It is unclear if these amounts will be adequate to support the proposed activities, include reasonable and necessary costs, and details the amounts budgeted for various partners considering the number of children to be served. --The applicant details the amount of funds budgeted for Participating State Agencies, localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners and the specific activities to be implemented with these funds consistent with the State Plan and demonstrates that a significant amount of funding will be devoted to the local implementation of the State Plan. Moreover, the applicant lists a host of funding from a variety of agencies in the state; however, it is unclear how this "kitchen sink" approach helps the applicant to achieve the outcomes in the state plan. For example, the applicant lists the CCDF Quality Set Aside (\$7.4 million), Quality First, Quality First Scholarships, Preschool Expansion, and related FTF Strategies (FY 2012 allocations of \$52.1 million), Quality First Child Care Health and Infant/Toddler Mental Health Consultations (\$12 million in FY 2012), Quality Child Care Expansion (\$2.2 m), Family, Friend and Neighbor Care (\$2.6 m) and Inclusion of children with special needs (\$1 m), among others. --The applicant expects to be able to sustain FTF funding in perpetuity as FTF is statutorily obligated to invest resources in improving quality of early childhood development and health programs; increasing access to quality early childhood and health programs; increasing access to preventative health care and health screenings; offering parent and family support and education; providing professional development and training; and increasing coordination of early childhood and health programs. FTF has planned to use an accumulated balance of \$435 million to create a sustained funding stream of \$4 million annually. --The Coaching academy will continue as the core professional development model under FTF after the grant ends. With AZ Early Learning Standards and Infant/Toddler Guidelines and Program Guidelines integrated into all components of the high quality plan, early care and education programs will have the tools and resources to implement effective and robust parent engagement strategies at the end of the grant period. Infrastructure development, including curriculum development, print materials including books and DVD's and professional development for early childhood educator will be achieved for tribal language preservation programs. The Raising a Reader program costs will be reduced with the completion of the train-the-trainer model implemented during the grant period. One time start up costs will build infrastructure for the professional development system, --After successful aligning of the degree programs and curricula across post-secondary institutions, reformed degree progression will be sustained through ongoing revenue infrastructure built into the higher education system. Once statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment is adopted and initial training of teachers and administrators is complete, AZ Department of Education will have responsibility for annual administration. It is unclear if this will be sustainable as the funding stream is not yet definitively set.

#### B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and adopted, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and adopt, a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System that--

(a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--

- (1) Early Learning and Development Standards;
- (2) A Comprehensive Assessment System;
- (3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications;
- (4) Family engagement strategies;
- (5) Health promotion practices; and
- (6) Effective data practices;

(b) Is clear and has standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children; and

(c) Is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

#### Comments on (B)(1)

--The applicant has developed and adopted a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS). This system was first implemented as a pilot in 2009 and is now a statewide initiative. As a very recently implemented program, the validity and reliability of the TQRIS is unknown and therefore presents a potential pitfall for this applicant. The statewide TQRIS includes: --(1) Early Learning and Development Standards that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate, covering all essential domains of school readiness; --(2) A Comprehensive Assessment System with screening measures incorporated at 3-5 star tiers; formative assessment at 3-5 star tiers; measures of environmental quality in all star levels; measures of adult-child interactions via CLASS at 3-5 star levels; and a Quality First Points Scale that measures staff qualifications,



administrative practices, curriculum and child assessment; --(3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications, which are standards based on National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) recommended staff qualifications; and increased educational requirements that are being phased in over a 4-yr period so that by July 2015, 50% of early childhood educators will meet baseline requirements and 25% must have an AA or AAS in Early Childhood. --(4) Family engagement strategies with standards based on the Social Studies Standard in AZ Early Learning Standards and Family Engagement and Support, and Linguistic and Cultural Integration Guidelines in the Program Guidelines for High Quality Early Education; --(5) Health promotion practices with standards integrated across all tiers, and EMPOWER standards that are recognized as scoring among the highest 3 states for health promotion areas; and --(6) Effective data practices with standards incorporated at the 3-5 star tiers. --The levels of the system are determined by combination of scores on Environmental Rating Scales (ECERS, ITERS and FCCRS), the CLASS (beginning at 3 star level), Quality First Point Scale (beginning at 3 star level), and meeting program standards at 1-2 stars, which indicates a commitment to improving environmental quality beyond basic regulatory requirements, but does not indicate a program has met quality standards. --While the AZ regulatory system addresses basic health and safety standards, it does not include standards for high-quality practices that achieve school readiness. Thus, the state has developed Quality First, which builds on licensing regulations to define essential quality indicators. However, as Quality First is a young and as yet unproven system, it cannot be determined if it will indeed define essential quality indicators. --AZ has a long history of Quality Rating Systems since the local program improvement program called Upgrading Preschool Programs in the early 1980s. However, the roll out of Quality First was much more recent. In 2009, with 300 programs participating, Quality First began, the number of programs participating doubled in 2010. Now 750 programs, including 20% of state-regulated Early Childhood programs and 11% of family child care homes, participate. Beginning July 1, 2012 Quality First will also include specialized technical assistance in areas of early childhood mental health, inclusion of children with special needs, and targeted instructional support. Quality First has a customized data collection and reporting system that provides timely information and data analysis. --It is of concern that this applicant's TQRIS is relatively young and therefore unproven, having only been initiated in 2009.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>

The extent to which the State has maximized, or has a High-Quality Plan to maximize, program participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Implementing effective policies and practices to reach the goal of having all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate in such a system, including programs in each of the following categories--

- (1) State-funded preschool programs;
- (2) Early Head Start and Head Start programs;
- (3) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA;
- (4) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of the ESEA; and
- (5) Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program;

(b) Implementing effective policies and practices designed to help more families afford high-quality child care and maintain the supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs (e.g., maintaining or increasing subsidy reimbursement rates, taking actions to ensure affordable co-payments, providing incentives to high-quality providers to participate in the subsidy program); and

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by type of Early Learning and Development Program (as listed in (B)(2)(a)(1) through (5) above).

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

#### Comments on (B)(2)

--On August 29, 2011 the State Advisory Council/FTF Board approved 10 School Readiness Indicators, four of which specifically measure progress through Quality First in achieving results in essential domains of readiness, program quality, program and child participation, and affordable access. This recent achievement is ambitious. --The applicant states that Quality First is one of the most comprehensive and highly incentivized TQRIS models in the country; direct supports include individualized asset-based coaching, child care health consultation, TEACH scholarships, and financial incentives and rewards. Recall, though, that Quality First is fairly new and untested. --According to the applicant it was a bold policy decision to link Quality First Scholarships and PreKindergarten (PK) Scholarships to TQRIS. Quality First Scholarships are available to providers serving low-income families; PK Scholarships and Expansion provide financial support for low income children to participate in high quality early care and education in center- or classroom-based settings during the two years prior to kindergarten entry. These are funded at 100% of median market rate based on the most recent survey. --Payments from CCDF subsidy dollars allowed more than 30,300 children to enroll in early care and education programs in FY 2010. The applicant makes the effort to achieve the state match for CCDF funds by Quality First funding providing the state match necessary to draw down all federal CCDF dollars to AZ. --According to the applicant, to advance the state's plan, AZ must substantially increase the number of participating programs in TQRIS, and especially target all publicly funded programs. The applicant does not indicate why it must target all publicly funded programs or how it knows that these programs are of sufficient quality to go on the state's proposed fast-track. --Ambitiously, the

state plans to increase the number of children with high needs in high quality settings by increasing the number and diversity of programs certified or licensed and enrolled in Quality First with an emphasis on serving low income children, children with special needs, children residing on tribal lands, and English Language Learners. However, as these newly licensed programs are likely to be 1 or 2 star programs, their funding will be phased out when the applicant phases out funding Scholarships for 1 and 2 star programs. --The state has a strategic plan to achieve reaching this ambitious goal. This plan includes: ----Increasing the number and funding amount of Quality First scholarships and linking them on a tiered basis to Quality First; and ----Developing and implementing a Quality First Rating Only option that targets state and federally funded programs to provide fast track to rating without extensive coaching and other supports. --The majority of low income children, English language learners and children on tribal lands receive unregulated family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) care, so AZ will invest in improving knowledge, capacity, and competencies of these programs and will first prepare FFN programs to be certified or licensed to meet the goal of having more children with high needs in certified, licensed, and rated programs. This is an ambitious goal but it may not be feasible to increase the quality of care given the language and cultural barriers that must be overcome. Furthermore, it is concerning that the applicant does not provide any local data on English language learners and instead relies solely on national data.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs</b>	15	9

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency; and

(b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (e.g., displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(3)**

--The applicant has developed and begun to implement a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs that are participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. For example, the state has chosen valid and reliable tools for monitoring programs including ECERS/ITERS environmental rating scales and the CLASS. It is only 1 of 3 states to use CLASS with TQRIS. However, CLASS has been extensively studied and found to be a reliable and effective tool to measure teacher-child interactions. There is some concern regarding the use of CLASS with non-English speaking early childhood providers. --In this applicant's TQRIS, programs that are rated at 1 and 2 stars are assessed annually and 3, 4, or 5 star programs are assessed every two years. There is no explanation provided for these choices of assessment calendars. --The Quality First Points Scale was initially drafted and thoroughly vetted by partners, stakeholders, early care and education educators. The draft was tested beginning in November 2010 in a pilot study with 32 participating home and center-based providers. The applicant does not provide evidence about the results; without such evidence the validity and reliability of the Scale is unknown. --AZ has 50 trained, reliable Quality First assessors who receive 12 weeks of rigorous training to ensure reliability. They must maintain a reliability rating of .85 on the Environment Rating Scales and .80 on the CLASS. No evidence is provided to determine if this is an adequate number of assessors. --The applicant will make licensing and Quality First Rating information accessible via a public website and information system linked to Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) and develop a full Quality First marketing plan, aimed primarily at families, to include awareness of components of quality and the ratings. No evidence is provided about the feasibility of making this information available via the web. The applicant indicates that almost 50% of the children in the state are English language learners but does not indicate if the web site will be available in multiple languages or if families with Children with High Needs have access to the web. --The applicant states that the new public website will be linked with CCR&R and DHS to make licensing, child care subsidy, and Quality First rating information easily accessible and understandable for parents, yet it does not provide evidence that this population has easy access to the web or the literacy and numeracy skills to understand the data they are able to access.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs</b>	20	12

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Developing and implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve (e.g., through training, technical assistance, financial rewards or incentives, higher subsidy reimbursement rates, compensation);



(b) Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs (e.g., providing full-day, full-year programs; transportation; meals; family support services); and

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing--

(1) The number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and

(2) The number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(4)**

--In FY 2013, the applicant will implement the Coaching Academy to develop and deliver an ongoing intentional educational scope and sequence through a blend of didactic, case-study observational/modeling and supervised field-based experiences. The Academy is intended for all Coaches and mentoring services for Early Childhood professionals throughout the state. The applicant does not indicate the location of this Academy; therefore its accessibility is unknown. Furthermore, the applicant does not indicate the efficacy of a Coaching Academy. --It is impressive that programs will receive financial incentives to support and maintain improvement efforts according to the size of program. Currently, participating programs receive assistance with payment of licensure fees; every center-based program receives two TEACH scholarships and every family child care home receives one scholarship; the Professional REWARDS program offers compensation bonuses of \$300 to \$2000 depending on educational qualifications, to reduce turnover. --Also impressive is that Child Care Health Consultants, including nurses, nutritionists, and public health professionals, provide information, guidance, and support. The applicant has plans for highly qualified specialists in I/T mental health, early intervention, special education and instructional support to provide training and phone support to all coaches and programs, focusing on early language and literacy for ELLs, numeracy, problem solving, other cognitive development, and inclusion of children with special needs. Furthermore, early childhood mental health consultation to build capacity and improve service to children will be offered, with inclusion consultation to assist programs with including children with special needs. --The applicant plans to invest funds in the Coaches to be successful. For instance, AZ will invest \$5.8 million in FY 2012 and \$10.5 million in FY 2013 to continue to build knowledge and capacity of 75 Quality First coaches, who will deliver intensive coaching services to almost 1,000 participating programs. Coaches will have a caseload of 9-12 programs, spending 4-8 hrs each month with each program, providing on-site and electronic coaching. Despite this investment, considering the low education levels of the current early childhood educators, this does not appear to be an adequate dosage of coaching. --To help working families who have Children with High Needs, Quality First Scholarships and Prekindergarten Scholarships and Expansion help families whose income is 200% of FPL or less and are not eligible for CCDF support. Beginning in FY 2013 the applicant will phase out Quality First Scholarships after two years for programs earning only 1 star and after 4 years for programs earning only 2 stars, so participating programs have additional incentives to improve quality and to ensure that children with highest needs are in highest quality programs. --The applicant has set ambitious targets for increasing the number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. The applicant includes a chart that shows goals for increasing the number of programs in top tiers. It appears ambitious, as there are no current 5-star programs, but the state anticipates having 117 by FY 2015. There are 461 3-star programs currently and 817 are projected for FY 2015. This reviewer questions if these targets are achievable given that the applicant only has a record of less than two years of providing a Quality Rating System. --The applicant will shift to the Quality First model in FY 2013 to provide a tiered differentiation between incentives and supports offered at each star level. Low quality level programs will receive more high intensity coaching, supports and incentives while higher quality programs will receive less support and the state will develop a fast track to rating with Quality First Scholarships attached for high quality programs that do not need or desire coaching or other improvement services. This reviewer questions the impact of tiered differentiation of supports and incentives on programs at the 3-5 star levels. Moreover, the fast track to rating is not described and thus its use is questionable. --By July 2013, Quality First programs with a 3, 4, or 5 star rating will be required to reserve 10% of their slots for children from families with income below 200% FPL or children with a delay or disability. This does not appear to be an ambitious goal given the amount of funds spent on Quality First programs and the number of Children with High Needs.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.</b>	15	10

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to design and implement evaluations--working with an independent evaluator and, when warranted, as part of a cross-State evaluation consortium--of the relationship between the ratings generated by the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and the learning outcomes of children served by the State's Early Learning and Development Programs by--

(a) Validating, using research-based measures, as described in the State Plan (which also describes the criteria that the State used or will use to determine those measures), whether the tiers in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality; and

(b) Assessing, using appropriate research designs and measures of progress (as identified in the State Plan), the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness.

**Comments on (B)(5)**

--In order to validate the effectiveness of the state's TQRIS, the applicant will conduct a validation study of Quality First's Rating Scale. The applicant does not mention specific information about how it will validate the Rating Scale; instead, it merely outlines a basic scope of work. Moreover, the applicant does not discuss the reliability or validity of the Quality First Rating Scales. --It is impressive that the applicant's TQRIS has selected measures that are commonly used and widely known (i.e., ECERS, ITERS, FCCRS, and CLASS). In selecting measures to gauge the quality of Early Learning Development Programs and services for children from birth to age five, three criteria have been selected: 1) must be comprehensive and integrated in terms of assessing quality and changes in quality programs and settings within diverse communities; 2) must have sound empirical support and strong validity and reliability; and 3) must accurately reflect differential levels of program quality. --Furthermore, the measurement of quality early learning environments and instruction is based on the early childhood research and best practices literature. For example, the measures used include the 1) Classroom Assessment Scoring System Pre-K, 2) three Environmental Rating Scales (ECERS, ITERS, and FCCRS), and 3) the Quality First Points Scale Assessment consisting of measures of staff qualifications (SQ), administrative practices (AP) and curriculum assessment (CA). The reliability and validity of the Quality First Points Scale Assessment is unknown. It is unclear what will happen if the validation study determines this scale is invalid and unreliable. --The majority of the scores on the Quality First Rating Scale are based on the ERS and CLASS scores, which are valid and reliable assessments of the quality of early care environments. --A major component of the Quality First Validation Study will assess the reliability and validity of the newly constructed Quality First Rating Scale, which integrates the ERS, CLASS and Quality First Points Scale Assessment. --The applicant's validation study has a two-fold purpose: first, to validate the Quality First scale as a measurement of quality, and second, to understand the relationships between early childhood program changes as they move through quality tiers and child outcomes. --Baseline Activities will include: • A FTF Quality First Data Monitoring System, including the creation of scoring rubrics and data-collection procedures with inter-rater reliability requirements, and the capacity for coaches and assessors to upload Quality First data into a secure data system. • Dedicated funding of Quality First Assessors, who receive rigorous training in the administration and scoring of the ERS and CLASS assessments • A strong, 10 person FTF Research and Evaluation Team, with specialized doctoral-level expertise in research and evaluation design and methodologies, and the capacity to conduct in-house data analyses • Collection of statewide baseline data in three related studies-the Arizona Kindergarten Readiness Study, the Longitudinal Child Study of Arizona, and the Family and Community Studies with more than 7,000 children • A 12 member national advisory panel, to be chaired by Dr. John Love, established to provide direction in developing methodology and recommendation for the FTF External Evaluation Study and the Quality First Validation Study. --FTF will procure external research and evaluation services to complete the Quality First Validation Study. The basic scope and methodology of the study will include the following: • The study will combine research and evaluation. The main purpose of the study will be to examine the influence of improved quality of early childhood care and education on child development and school readiness. The applicant will also examine Quality First processes implementation and systemic factors such as socioeconomic, geography, and demographics within and across communities, regions, and the state, and will carefully track factors that influence or predict movement of programs from lower to higher quality tiers. • The evaluation portion of the study will assess changes over time in child development and school readiness factors. We may compare readiness factors for children participating in programs with higher Quality First ratings, and those participating in programs with higher Quality First ratings, and those participating in programs with lower ratings and may track developmental improvements in children over time as programs go up or down on the quality ratings. The evaluation portion of the Validation Study will also consider: 1) contextual conditions; 2) input and output factors; 3) implementation and process factors; and 4) multilevel outcomes and impacts, both intended and unintended. --Activities related to initial reviews of existing Quality First data and collection systems will begin in January 2012, with the Request for Proposal release targeted in September 2012. The final study results are beginning March 2015. This indicates that the study results will not be available to make any formative changes during the grant period. This is very concerning as the entire grant period could be spent using an invalid or unreliable Scale.

**Focused Investment Areas (C), (D), and (E)**

Each State must address in its application--

- (1) Two or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (C);
- (2) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (D); and
- (3) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (E).

The total available points for each Focused Investment Area will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address in that area, so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points.

**C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children**

The total available points that an applicant may receive for selection criteria (C)(1) through (C)(4) is 60. The 60 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address all four selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 15 points. If the applicant chooses to address two selection criteria, each criterion will be worth up to 30 points.

The applicant must address at least two of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (C), which are as follows:

Available

Score

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--

(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;

(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;

(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and

(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (C)(1)**

--The applicant first developed Standards in 2003 and the AZ Early Learning Standards (AzELS) for children three to five years old have met the NIEER quality requirements since 2005. It is most impressive that the AzELS reflect the most current research on what young children need to know and be able to do to be ready for school. For example, the Standards include 43 indicators of social and emotional development, and also include mathematics indicators for data analysis, geometry measurement, patterns, structure, and logic in addition to number sense and operations, which are consistent with the foundational math content described. The AzELS language and literacy standards contain early literacy indicators such as producing rhymes, syllable segmentation, phonemic awareness, and print awareness. --The applicant states that both the AzELS and Infant/Toddler (I/T) Guidelines are universally designed to support all children including those with high needs and varying abilities; however, it should be noted that the I/T Guidelines have not been adopted at this date. It is anticipated that they will be adopted in January 2012. The AzELS specifically describe how they should be used with children who are English language learners and children with developmental delays or disabilities. The applicant does not address dual language learners, yet 47% of the state's young children are dual language learners. The standards offer multiple examples of children who have special needs, live in tribal communities, and who may not speak English as their first language. --It is a thoughtful plan to align the AzELS with the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework and the Arizona Academic Standards for Kindergarten to facilitate curricular and assessment alignment from preschool through grade 3. --It is impressive that the Program Guidelines for High Quality Early Education: Birth through Kindergarten is a comprehensive set of recommended, evidenced-based practices for all statewide early care and education programs birth through kindergarten. The program guidelines are broken out to reflect the development and needs of infants and toddlers, identified as "Infant-Toddler Supplemental Indicators," and the development and needs for infants through Kindergarten age children are identified as "Indicators for all Early Learning Education Programs and Kindergarten Supplemental Indicators." --Although the applicant states that the AzELS and Infant Toddler Guidelines are strongly aligned with the state's current core competencies, again, it must be pointed out that these I/T guidelines are not yet adopted. --The applicant recognizes that ongoing training and professional development is essential for early care and education programs to effectively integrate and align standards across the continuum. In partnership with FTF, the AZ Department of Education uses a train-the-trainer model to disseminate the standards and the developmentally appropriate instructional strategies and environments that support them. Each early learning standard requires between four and eight hours of active training. --In FY2011, 145 training sessions were held for the AzELS, reaching 4,036 early childhood educators across all early learning programs, with concentrated focus on rural communities and Arizona tribal lands. This represents about one-fifth of the 20,000 early childhood educators statewide. The applicant does not indicate the status of training on AzELS for the remaining 80% of the state's programs, which is of considerable concern. --To advance Arizona's High-Quality Plan, the applicant will promote early learning outcomes for children with High Needs by expanding the number of early care and education programs that effectively integrate the AzELS and Infant/Toddler Guidelines (which, again, are not yet adopted). This will be achieved through three key activities such as: 1. Department of Economic Security (DES) certification staff and Department of Health Services (DES) licensing inspectors understanding and promoting AzELS and Infant/Toddler Guidelines. 2. DES and DHS integrating the use of Infant/ Toddler Guidelines into home visiting programs. The Home Visiting Taskforce focuses on professional development of home visitors and improved coordination of home visiting standards of practice. FTF has established a Home Visitation Standards of Practice which aligns with the Arizona Infant and Toddler Development Guidelines to help home visitors and families alike understand what infants and toddlers are learning and doing and how adults can support development in the first three years life. FTF standards of practice require home visitation programs to provide families with information and education on domains of child development, including understanding when to have concerns related to children's development while home visitors ensure children receive regular developmental screening. 3. FTF is scheduled to launch the Coaching Academy in FY2013. The Academy will align and integrate all professional development for coaches and mentors across Arizona. Training includes: 1. TQRIS program assessments; 2. All program and child-level standards; 3. Coaching theory, models, and skills; and 4. Early childhood health, mental health, and developmental delays including screening and referral. --With RTT-ELC funding, the AzELS and Infant/Toddler Guidelines will be integrated as a core component of the Coaching Academy curriculum so that coaches and mentors achieve significant depth and specialization, and are able to use the standards. --The applicant anticipates that there will be more than 240 highly skilled coaches and mentors by December 2015 serving the early care and education programs across Quality First, ADE and Head Start, so that Arizona's high quality plan will reach 1500 programs that are demonstrating effective application of the AzELS and Infant/Toddler



Guidelines. This will allow more than 60,000 children to have access to early learning programs that promote their knowledge and skills so they are ready for school. This is a very ambitious goal that seems improbable to achieve. --The state will leverage prior work to develop an aligned set of early learning standards birth to five and program guidelines to ensure their widespread dissemination and use among diverse providers statewide. --The applicant states it will expand the effective utilization of early learning standards and infant toddler guidelines in settings across the early childhood landscape. It also states that it will increase the number of providers of all types using the early learning standards, assessments, and program guidelines. To accomplish this goal it will invest in a statewide coaching academy to increase the AZ Department of Education, Head Start, and Quality First coaching cadre's ability to provide direct training, assistance, and support to early learning providers' use of the state's birth to five standards. It is concerning that a small number of coaches have a large caseload and a great deal of responsibilities and thus may not be able to make the progress needed given the number of low educational level providers in this state. --It is of concern that the applicant does not provide details on how the AzELS or I/T guidelines will connect to CDA, AA, or BS degrees.

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>22</b>

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information and support to families of Children with High Needs in order to promote school readiness for their children by--

- (a) Establishing a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement across the levels of its Program Standards, including activities that enhance the capacity of families to support their children's education and development;
- (b) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported on an on-going basis to implement the family engagement strategies included in the Program Standards; and
- (c) Promoting family support and engagement statewide, including by leveraging other existing resources such as through home visiting programs, other family-serving agencies, and through outreach to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (C)(4)**

--The applicant has a long and impressive history of engaging and supporting families. Arizona's Program guidelines contain dedicated sections for family engagement and support and linguistic and cultural integration. The guidelines also contain indicators for how early childhood educators can meet the linguistic, cultural, and learning needs of English language learners, including attending to the social, emotional, and cognitive skills of children, ensuring young children are provided English-speaking role models, and instructional strategies to support English language acquisition. --The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) has established a two-year implementation plan to increase the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported on an on-going basis to implement the family engagement strategies included in the Program Standards. The applicant does not state how many providers will be trained at the end of this 2-year implementation plan; therefore, it is unknown if this is a feasible, achievable, or ambitious goal. --The Coaching Academy will be the primary vehicle for advancing the knowledge and professional competence of Arizona's coaches who are working with providers statewide in high English language learner (ELL), geographically isolated, and tribal communities. The applicant does not provide details about the Coaching Academy. The development of an evidence-based training curriculum and identification of specific resources and tools for the coaches will prepare ELL's for academic success. RTT-ELC funds will allow the applicant to develop a parent companion book to the AzELS and I/T guidelines. It is concerning that the applicant does not state how many languages this parent companion guide will be translated into and if it will be presented in other forms, such as via audio recording for those with limited literacy skills. --The applicant states that it will build on AZ's strong existing framework for ELL's and children in tribal communities; strategies will invest significant resources toward improving coordinated, community-wide interventions that promote family literacy practices for Children with High Needs and reinforce the confidence of parents as their child's first and best teachers. Details of how this will be accomplished are not provided. --Furthermore, the applicant will advance effective family support and engagement models for ELL's and children who live on American Indian lands, reinforcing the importance of parent engagement at home, in early learning and development programs, and across the community by using AZ's Coaching Academy. However, the details of this plan are not provided. Moreover, it is of concern that the applicant does not have a greater focus on Latino children, given the high number of Latino Children with High Needs. --To help ELLs the applicant will use "Raising a Reader" to reach 5,000 families annually. FTF will conduct evaluations to determine if the scope and scale of services has an impact on school readiness. As there are 300,000 Children with High Needs, this program seems far too small. It also seems ineffective given it is only focused on literacy and not the whole child. --Very impressively, the applicant will partner with tribes to expand home visitation programs to integrate a community-based early literacy program. The applicant will also partner with tribes to expand tribal language preservation programs. The whole child is also not considered in this plan, causing concerns for improving school readiness. --The state will engage in standard-based activities to reach 11,000 parents annually, supporting their very young children's education and development; train and support 5,000 early childhood educators annually in effectively engaging families to be their child's first teacher; expand FTF's current \$40 million investment in family support strategies; and leverage tribal partnerships and philanthropic investments to meet the state's goals. --While it is impressive that the applicant attempts to address a very large sector of early care and education providers - Family, Friends, and Neighbors - the efficacy of the plan is questionable. --The applicant has an ambitious plan to leverage current family support system components to advance evidence-based parent support and engagement models. These efforts will promote English language and literacy development in the home, in early learning and development programs, across community-based settings for young English language learners.

and throughout Arizona Indian lands. This will be accomplished by the following: 1) providing onsite, individualized targeted coaching to advance the integration of the Program Guidelines for High Quality Early Education, which include indicators of family engagement and linguistic and cultural integration; 2) delivering the culturally and linguistically appropriate parent education materials that enhance families' capacity to engage in early literacy and math activities with their children in the home through an evidence-based national model; and 3) advancing the language and literacy development of English language learners and children on tribal lands.

#### D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

The total points that a State may earn for selection criteria (D)(1) and (D)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points.

The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (D), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--</p> <p>(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;</p> <p>(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)
<p>--The applicant has a feasible plan to revise, adopt, and implement its early childhood knowledge and competency framework and career ladder so that indicators are tiered to align with a progression of career levels and credentials. In order to support these efforts, the state has reconvened a reconstituted Professional Development Workgroup to begin the revision process. RTT-ELC funds will support this work and provide resources to ensure the revised Core Knowledge and Competencies (CKEC) is widely distributed and used. --In accordance with the ambitious goals of the applicant, the revised CKEC will be used to advance the professional development system in strategic ways, including: Coaching early childhood educators at all levels of the career ladder; aligning college coursework; designing and disseminating relevant credit and non-credit bearing community-based professional development; reinforcing the use of the AzELS, I/T Guidelines, and Program Standards; instilling knowledge and competencies required in Quality First program standards; and evaluating the efficacy of the professional development system. --The applicant sets up a plan to engage postsecondary institutions to remove structural barriers to opportunity by developing an accessible Child Development Associate (CDA) to associate's to bachelor's degree progression. While the applicant has an articulated progression of degrees, this degree progression does not effectively meet the early childhood system's needs. A structural barrier that is historically an issue is that early childhood educators unknowingly opt for two paths that do not provide a seamless progression to a four year university degree. To remove this historical obstacle to establish a seamless CDA to associate's to bachelor's degree progression FTF will convene workgroups of faculty and administration from collaborating postsecondary institutions to create a plan for developing the reformed degree progression, develop a scope and sequence of courses at the CDA, associate's and bachelor's degree levels aligned to the proposed tiered CKEC framework, and develop high quality, culturally responsive, curriculum materials. This reviewer questions the ability of the applicant to remove these historical obstacles due to the difficulty engaging postsecondary institutions in working together to make effective changes.</p>

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to improve the effectiveness and retention of Early Childhood Educators who work with Children with High Needs, with the goal of improving child outcomes by--</p> <p>(a) Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities that are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;</p> <p>(b) Implementing policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) that promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that is aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and that are designed to increase retention;</p>		

(c) Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention; and

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

(1) Increasing the number of postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and the number of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and

(2) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (D)(2)**

--The applicant has an ambitious plan to expand successful scholarship and wage enhancement programs that incentivize higher levels of education and encourage retention in programs and in the field more generally. To ensure sustainability of RTT funded professional development projects, FTF will expand investments in these programs, providing financial support so more early childhood professionals can progress to higher levels of education and credentials. --Furthermore, the applicant will also invest RTT funds to start a statewide network of regional professional development technical assistance centers that will deliver community-based education and provide practical, academic, and social support to EC educators enrolled in degree programs. --Impressively, the applicant will attempt to maximize the impact of financial support for students by also providing them with practical, social, and academic support, including high quality community-based professional development, dedicated advising, and educational planning. Tutors for general education course will be provided. --While these are quite ambitious goals, they may not be achievable as the applicant states that a substantial majority of early childhood educators serving Children with High Needs are from populations that traditionally encounter challenges to enrolling in and completing college degree programs. It seems improbable that these early childhood educators with multiple barriers preventing college entry and or completion will be successful even with the proposed supports. While the applicant cites a study of AZ early childhood educators who received supports, this study has a very small sample -- 9 participants.

**E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress**

*The total points an applicant may earn for selection criteria (E)(1) and (E)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points.*

*The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (E), which are as follows:*

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.</b>	20	8
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (E)(1)**



--A relatively brief period of time has passed since the convening of a taskforce to examine Kindergarten readiness in this state. On July 6, 2011 the AZ Department of Education convened a taskforce to begin defining Kindergarten readiness and determining appropriate ways to understand the status of children's learning and development as they transition to Kindergarten. On August 29, 2011 the AZ Early Childhood Development and Health Board/FTF adopted 10 School Readiness Indicators, which will be used to evaluate AZ's progress on closing the readiness gap for Children with High Needs. The applicant does not address the appropriateness of the KEA indicators for the target population. --The applicant states the AZ Department of Education will lead efforts to identify a common Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA). The KEA will not be used to prevent children from entering Kindergarten or to label children. The applicant does not address the validity and reliability of the KEA for the target population or any group. --The applicant proposes a phased-in plan with at least 1/3 of the school districts entering each year beginning no later than 2014-2015 with full implementation by 2016-2017. --The applicant states that the AZ KEA will comply with the AZ Data Commission requirements and data will be reported as part of the AZ Statewide Longitudinal Data System. --Funds for the KEA will come from Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant. --The applicant has worked with state agencies to collaboratively develop a plan to adopt a phased-in implementation of a common statewide KEA beginning in school year 2014. Ultimate authority to approve and adopt KEA lies with the AZ State Board of Education, which will be deeply involved with all stages of the planning process. --The applicant does not indicate whether the KEA will be valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English language learners and children with disabilities.

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.</b>	20	16

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to enhance the State's existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System or to build or enhance a separate, coordinated, early learning data system that aligns and is interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and that either data system--

- (a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;
- (b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;
- (c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data;
- (d) Generates information that is timely, relevant, accessible, and easy for Early Learning and Development Programs and Early Childhood Educators to use for continuous improvement and decision making; and
- (e) Meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (E)(2)**

--The applicant is committed to data collection that is critical for effectively monitoring and measuring programs serving young children. The applicant and its entities already collect many of the Essential Data Elements and have a feasible plan to collect all Essential Data Elements. However, the applicant and other entities collect data independently and do not adequately address how they will share data; specifically, interoperability is not addressed adequately. --The applicant envisions moving beyond mere compliance and monitoring to analyzing data for trends and program impacts. The goals for RTT-ELC funds are achievable and ambitious. They include: • Developing consistent standards, policies, and procedures for data collection, access, security, storage, and data architectures; • Designing and implementing a plan to collect and store all Essential Data Elements, with a focus on developing mechanisms for collecting and storing Essential Data Elements currently not collected by any data system; • Developing a secure, interoperable data network; • Establishing pathways for data sharing and exchange that pull in data sets from varying sources and allow for analytic views; • Designing and deploying a common, secure, web-based portal that end users can enter using a valid username and password, so that end users such as providers, educators, and parents can assess the information they are permitted and authorized to view, thereby aligning with the values of accountability, transparency, and parental controls; and • Developing valid and integrated means for end users to efficiently synthesize and analyze relevant data in a consistent manner across multiple data. --Participating state agencies have committed to a collaborative data system-building effort outlined in the attached MOU's (Attachment PPP) and Gantt chart (Attachment KK). The applicant states that data sharing and analysis will focus on preschool age children; however, this reviewer questions the linkability as child identifiers are not given to specific children until the KEA in most instances. --In addition to being available to parents, the public web portal will allow early learning providers to view and understand data on their programs and will link to the web resource tool for early childhood educators. --Outcomes can be linked to program services voluntarily accessed at varying points, and from this trends can be identified and efforts with programming can be adjusted accordingly. --The Data System will be in a secure network, open only to those who are permitted and is focused on ease of use and accessibility. Through the proper adherence to data governance policies, security protocols, and legal protections for data, the appropriate and secure access and sharing of data will occur.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	179

**Priorities**

Competitive Preference Priorities

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry</b>	0 or 10	No
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
<b>Comments on (P)(3)</b>		
<p>The applicant has not earned a score of at least 70% of the maximum points available for this section and does not have a KEA.</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
<b>Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.</b>	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
<b>Comments on Absolute Priority</b>	
<p>--The State's application comprehensively and coherently addresses how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed. Although the applicant has not yet developed its KEA, it has demonstrated strong leadership and collaboration dating back through several governors and myriad state agencies, and has demonstrated the capacity to build a strong infrastructure. --This application has demonstrated the goals of improving quality, integrating and aligning resources, designing and implementing a comprehensive TQRIS, and the ability to make strategic improvements in reform areas that will most significantly improve quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs.</p>	



# Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



## Technical Review Form Page

Application # AZ-5001

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]  
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]  
Support Monitor: [Redacted]  
Application Status: **Reviewed**  
Date/Time: **11/17/2011 - 2:44 PM**

### **CORE AREAS (A) and (B)**

States must address in their application all of the selection criteria in the Core Areas.

#### **A. Successful State Systems**

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>

The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--

(a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;

(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;

(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and

(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

#### **Comments on (A)(1)**

A statewide, voter-protected funding stream for early childhood through a tax on tobacco products is described. The applicant describes how collaborative effort among all key stakeholders in Early Learning and Development Programs in the State lead to establishing a statewide organization (First Things First), the purpose of which is to build an integrated and effective system of early childhood programs. This activity across the State demonstrates past commitment to early learning. It appears that expenditures for State-funded preschools, state contributions for special education and related services for children with disabilities through kindergarten entry, total state contributions to CCDF, and TANF spending on Early Learning and Development Programs all declined in FY 2009 and 2010 (and were projected to do so in 2011). Although the creation of the First Things First program may have resulted in reallocation of funding, this is not explained clearly in the footnotes or the narrative and the figures for total state expenditures do not appear to add up to the totals provided by the applicant. The numbers of children with high needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs also declined from January 2007 to the present. This decline raises questions about how the State's financial investment in relation to the size of the States' population of children with high needs demonstrates past commitment to early learning and development. The applicant describes progress and provides evidence of the current status of many important foundations to an integrated and high quality system of Early Learning Childhood Programs. Early Learning Standards are provided that are comprehensive and have been adopted by the State Board of Education in 2005. Although the state does not yet have a comprehensive assessment system, the Quality First initiative developed by the First Things First organization has developed a classroom and program rating system, the validation of which is in process. The State has also developed a cross-system professional development system for early childhood professionals. First Things First as the lead agency has begun some of the ground work needed to develop statewide kindergarten entry assessments. Also, First Things First has invested in building a statewide data management system. These activities suggest the state is currently highly committed to early learning. Many of the family engagement strategies described in the narrative and Table focus on one-way relationship between programs and parents and do not especially acknowledge parent's expertise about their own child.



	Available	Score
<b>(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.</b>	20	14

The extent to which the State clearly articulates a comprehensive early learning and development reform agenda that is ambitious yet achievable, builds on the State's progress to date (as demonstrated in selection criterion (A)(1)), is most likely to result in improved school readiness for Children with High Needs, and includes--

(a) Ambitious yet achievable goals for improving program quality, improving outcomes for Children with High Needs statewide, and closing the readiness gap between Children with High Needs and their peers;

(b) An overall summary of the State Plan that clearly articulates how the High-Quality Plans proposed under each selection criterion, when taken together, constitute an effective reform agenda that establishes a clear and credible path toward achieving these goals; and

(c) A specific rationale that justifies the State's choice to address the selected criteria in each Focused Investment Area (C), (D), and (E), including why these selected criteria will best achieve these goals.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

#### Comments on (A)(2)

The narrative provides a rationale for the goals that the applicant has chosen for improving program quality. These goals build on previous efforts. For example, conducting a validation study of the Quality First rating system seems to be an important next step and likely to be achievable. The applicant proposes to create a rating only system for Head Start and Part B and C programs that will expedite the participation of these key stakeholders in a comprehensive system to rate program quality. This raises questions about whether the reform agenda described is sufficiently broad. The applicant describes steps to expand the accessibility of information about licensing and the quality of care providers so as to enable parents to make good choices for their family. These strategies seem likely to be achievable and necessary to enable high need children to access high quality care. The applicant proposes to make additional scholarships available to more high need children so that their families can choose higher quality placements for them. The applicant proposes to increase the availability of coaching for child care settings that have previously been rated as low. They propose to require higher quality settings to set aside 10% of their enrollment slots for high need children. These policies seem likely to increase the number of high need children who receive higher quality care and appears achievable. The applicant proposes to use a nationally recognized family literacy program Raising a Reader to increase family engagement in children's literacy skills and the use of English for English language learners. Although the applicant cites evidence that the program was effective in other states with Spanish-speaking children, the program focuses on literacy alone and lacks a more wholistic approach to improving child outcomes. Further, as the program is described as already being used in some Arizona counties, this does not seem an especially ambitious strategy for addressing the states' goals or closing the readiness gap between high need children and their peers. Although the applicant describes how Head Start, Part B and Part C programs will be provided the opportunity to participate in the ratings only part of the Quality Rating System (instead of participating in the more time consuming coaching aspects of the program) little detail is provided about how Part B or Part C programs would be incentivized to participate. Methods for supporting early childhood educators in improving their knowledge, skills and abilities focus on improving access to higher education and establishing regional professional development technical assistance centers. While this may be a laudable goal and is probably achievable, given that the state identifies reaching child care providers in friends, family and neighbor settings as especially important these two strategies do not seem most effective in reaching the targeted population. The applicant provides the rationale for selecting their criteria in focused investment areas C, D and E. A detailed breakdown of proposed activities complete with target dates for milestones makes it clear that the plan builds on previous state initiatives related to Early Learning and Development Programs. In particular, the plan for building a statewide data system seems likely to enhance progress toward goals.

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State</b>	10	8

The extent to which the State has established, or has a High-Quality Plan to establish, strong participation and commitment in the State Plan by Participating State Agencies and other early learning and development stakeholders by--

(a) Demonstrating how the Participating State Agencies and other partners, if any, will identify a governance structure for working together that will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability and describing--

(1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;

(2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;

(3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and

(4) The plan for when and how the State will involve representatives from Participating Programs, Early Childhood Educators or their representatives, parents and families, including parents and families of Children with High Needs, and other key stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant.

(b) Demonstrating that the Participating State Agencies are strongly committed to the State Plan, to the governance structure of the grant, and to effective implementation of the State Plan, by including in the MOU or other binding agreement between the State and each Participating State Agency--

(1) Terms and conditions that reflect a strong commitment to the State Plan by each Participating State Agency, including terms and conditions designed to align and leverage the Participating State Agencies' existing funding to support the State Plan;

(2) "Scope-of-work" descriptions that require each Participating State Agency to implement all applicable portions of the State Plan and a description of efforts to maximize the number of Early Learning and Development Programs that become Participating Programs; and

(3) A signature from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency; and

(c) Demonstrating commitment to the State Plan from a broad group of stakeholders that will assist the State in reaching the ambitious yet achievable goals outlined in response to selection criterion (A)(2)(a), including by obtaining--

(1) Detailed and persuasive letters of intent or support from Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, and, if applicable, local early learning councils, and

(2) Letters of intent or support from such other stakeholders as Early Childhood Educators or their representatives; the State's legislators; local community leaders; State or local school boards; representatives of private and faith-based early learning programs; other State and local leaders (e.g., business, community, tribal, civil rights, education association leaders); adult education and family literacy State and local leaders; family and community organizations (e.g., parent councils, nonprofit organizations, local foundations, tribal organizations, and community-based organizations); libraries and children's museums; health providers; and postsecondary institutions.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (A)(3)**

The applicant describes how the State has used funds from tobacco tax as a steady stream to establish an early childhood council (First Things First) attached to the Governor's Office whose charge is to coordinate statewide early childhood programs. These actions illustrate the State's commitment to early childhood. The applicant provides a clear explanation of the organizational structure for managing the grant. First Things First as the lead agency provides an interagency governance structure, the work of which has already laid a foundation that appears to have effectively brought together many of the key stakeholders at the State level. The applicant provides MOUs that describe the scope of work, roles and responsibilities of the lead agency and each participating agency. These are described in detail in the narrative. The role of the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for Part C of IDEA is not clearly described. The applicant explains in some detail how the lead agency (First Things First) has engaged in assessment of organizational culture, leadership and decision making and developed a responsible governance statement that establishes expectations for group behaviors. Other documents describe the procedures that have been established for resolving conflicts and improving internal culture of the organization and performance. This important work provides a needed foundation for additional efforts in the State. The applicant describes how local voices are involved in decision making through a system of local councils. This already established system provides the opportunity for representatives from participating programs, early childhood educators, parents and families and other key stakeholders to participate in the implementation of the activities of the grant. The applicant describes in detail how existing funding will be leveraged to support the State Plan. The scope of work described appears unlikely to maximize the number of Early Learning and Development Programs that become participating programs because the applicant does not provide detail how Part C and Part B programs will be included. The applicant provides detailed and persuasive letters of intent from Early Learning Intermediary organizations and local early learning councils. The applicant provides many letters of support indicating that key stakeholders across the state including community leaders, state legislators' local school boards and tribal organizations support the state plan.

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.</b>	15	12
The extent to which the State Plan--		
(a) Demonstrates how the State will use existing funds that support early learning and development from Federal, State, private, and local sources (e.g., CCDF; Title I and II of ESEA; IDEA; Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program; State preschool; Head Start Collaboration and State Advisory Council funding; Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program; Title V MCH Block Grant; TANF; Medicaid; child welfare services under Title IV (B) and (E) of the Social Security Act; Statewide Longitudinal		

Data System; foundation; other private funding sources) for activities and services that help achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, including how the quality set-asides in CCDF will be used;

(b) Describes, in both the budget tables and budget narratives, how the State will effectively and efficiently use funding from this grant to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, in a manner that--

- (1) Is adequate to support the activities described in the State Plan;
- (2) Includes costs that are reasonable and necessary in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of the activities described in the State Plan and the number of children to be served; and
- (3) Details the amount of funds budgeted for Participating State Agencies, localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, or other partners, and the specific activities to be implemented with these funds consistent with the State Plan, and demonstrates that a significant amount of funding will be devoted to the local implementation of the State Plan; and

(c) Demonstrates that it can be sustained after the grant period ends to ensure that the number and percentage of Children with High Needs served by Early Learning and Development Programs in the State will be maintained or expanded.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

**Comments on (A)(4)**

The applicant provides detail about how existing funds will be leveraged for activities and services that help achieve outcomes in the state plan. In particular, the applicant documents how philanthropic contributions will be used to support the goals of the state's plan. Methods to enhance these private funds are described. The applicant provides detail about how investments in public awareness will contribute to this effort. This plan seems sufficient to ensure that an ongoing stream of funding will be generated to support the grant activities. The applicant describes in detail how CCDF and CCDF quality set asides, Quality First, Quality First Scholarships, Preschool Expansion and related strategies funding will be used to support the activities described in the state plan. The applicant provides detail about how funds will be budgeted for Participating State agencies, localities, early learning intermediary organizations and other partners. Although activities are described that demonstrate a significant amount of funding will be used to support local implementation of the State plan, it is not always clear that the budgeted funds support the activities planned. (For example, it is not clear how kindergarten teachers will receive training in order to implement the newly developed statewide kindergarten assessment.) The applicant describes plans to conduct research to guide how funds will be used throughout the grant project. The applicant does not provide detail about how funds in the proposed budget are targeted to the specific needs of high needs groups (children served in part B programs of IDEA). The applicant provides detail about how First Things First, the lead agency, has planned for sustainability of effort that will ensure that the number and percentage of Children with High Needs served by Early Learning and Development programs in the state will be maintained after the grant period. In particular, the applicant explains how First Things First will maintain effort after tobacco funds decline.

**B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs**

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and adopted, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and adopt, a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System that--

(a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--

- (1) Early Learning and Development Standards;
- (2) A Comprehensive Assessment System;
- (3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications;
- (4) Family engagement strategies;
- (5) Health promotion practices; and
- (6) Effective data practices;

(b) Is clear and has standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children; and

(c) Is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**



**Comments on (B)(1)**

The applicant describes how the State adopted and implemented a common, statewide Tiered Quality Improvement and Rating System (TQRIS) that is based on Early Learning and Development Standards, includes a comprehensive assessment system, is based on research about quality indicators of high quality care, addresses early childhood educator qualifications, family engagement strategies, health promotion practices and effective data practices. The applicant explains that the standards are measurable and appear likely to differentiate program quality levels. The applicant describes using nationally recognized standards (NAEYC and the work of prominent researchers in the field) that lead to improved learning outcomes for children. The TQRIS described by the applicant includes measures of child-caregiver interaction (CLASS) as important to quality. This emphasis appears especially likely to meaningfully differentiate program quality that leads to improved learning outcomes for children because research demonstrates the importance of child-caregiver interactions as essential to children's development. The applicant explains how the TQRIS links to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs currently.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	15	9

The extent to which the State has maximized, or has a High-Quality Plan to maximize, program participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Implementing effective policies and practices to reach the goal of having all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate in such a system, including programs in each of the following categories--

- (1) State-funded preschool programs;
- (2) Early Head Start and Head Start programs;
- (3) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA;
- (4) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of the ESEA; and
- (5) Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program;

(b) Implementing effective policies and practices designed to help more families afford high-quality child care and maintain the supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs (e.g., maintaining or increasing subsidy reimbursement rates, taking actions to ensure affordable co-payments, providing incentives to high-quality providers to participate in the subsidy program); and

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by type of Early Learning and Development Program (as listed in (B)(2)(a)(1) through (5) above).

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(2)**

The applicant provides detail about how previous state efforts have led to increased participation in the TQRIS across the State including in family child care homes and tribal communities. The applicant provides a description of activities, milestones and proposed target dates related to the state plan for increasing the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the TQRIS. The applicant describes a number of policies that have served to incentivize the participation of many Early Learning and Development Programs in the state. These include early childhood educator compensation and retention packages and scholarships, which appear to have been successful in increasing participation in the TQRIS. The applicant describes providing scholarships for high need children to participate in TQRIS participating programs. These strategies appear likely to be successful in increasing the numbers of families with children in high need who participate in TQRIS participating programs. The applicant describes the status of participation of children with high need who are English Language Learners or members of tribal communities in Early Learning and Development Programs by referencing national data. Given the high percentages of children with high needs who are either English language learners or members of tribal communities in the State, it is probably important to have data that captures the status of these special groups of children and their families and caregivers locally. The applicant does not propose to do so as an initial first step. This omission seems likely to interfere with progress towards increasing the participation of the children and families in participating in high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs participating in TQRIS. The applicant describes developing and implementing a ratings only system for participating in the TQRIS for Early Head Start, Head Start and Part B and C programs. The applicant does not make clear why these programs do not require a similar set of resources related to improving quality as other Early Learning and Development Programs. Further, the applicant does not provide incentives for participation in the TQRIS for these Early Learning and Development Programs. Under these circumstances it does not appear likely that these programs will increase their participation in TQRIS.

	Available	Score
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**(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs**

15

12

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency; and

(b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (e.g., displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(3)**

The applicant describes the development of a robust system for rating and monitoring the the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs. This includes the use of a well-recognized reliable and valid tool and a well-developed cadre of individuals to rate and then monitor the progress of programs with an appropriate frequency. A description is provided of the progress that has been made in implementing the system across the state. This data indicates that Early Learning and Development Programs across the state have improved their ratings at a similar rate as programs in other states. Progress in implementation of the TQRIS system appears to have been achieved. The applicant describes how it plans to make program ratings available to families via a public website and information system linked to the States' CCR&R website and the Department of Health Services- Bureau of Child Care Licensing website. The applicant also proposes to develop a marketing plan to include awareness of the components of quality in Early Learning and Development Programs as well as the ratings themselves. These strategies seem likely to increase family awareness of rating and licensing information. The State's plan to make program rating information available to families does not provide detail about how these strategies might be adapted in order to make them more easily accessible for families of high need children who are English language learners or are members of tribal communities. The applicant provides detail about how the State has conceptualized the development of the TQRIS and the work they have already accomplished suggests that the instrument appears likely to be valid and reliable. However, the applicant does not provide any detail about whether the tool has actually been used and, if so, what the reliability and validity of the proposed rating system is.

**(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs**

Available

Score

20

12

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Developing and implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve (e.g., through training, technical assistance, financial rewards or incentives, higher subsidy reimbursement rates, compensation);

(b) Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs (e.g., providing full-day, full-year programs; transportation; meals; family support services); and

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing--

(1) The number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and

(2) The number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(4)**

The applicant describes how the State's plan uses evidence-based supports including on-site individualized coaching, training and technical assistance to improve participation of Early Learning and Development Programs in TQRIS and help programs engage in continuous improvement. Detail is provided about the progress that has been made and the state describes plans to increase the capacity of the coaches who work with programs. A Coaching Academy is described and a table and the narrative provides information about the financial incentives provided to programs that participate. The applicant describes how specific expertise related to children's mental health needs, the needs of children with disabilities, child care health issues and other specialized technical assistance is provided to programs participating in TQRIS. The applicant describes how policies and practices related to providing financial support to families of high need children are provided and describes how grant activities will assist them in aligning CCDF payment rates to tiered levels in the TQRIS. The applicant describes how the TQRIS prioritizes participation to full-day, year-round programs. The applicant describes how the TQRIS system will incentivize programs that engage in improvement efforts and earn an improved rating by providing more intensive support to lower quality programs and more substantial supports to improving programs. These are effective strategies likely to lead to progress. The applicant provides baseline data about the numbers and percentages of TQRIS participating programs as well as yearly improvement targets. Given past performance the goals described by the state seem achievable. The applicant describes requiring Early Learning and Development Programs scoring in the top tiers of the TQRIS to reserve 10% of their enrollment slots for high need children including children with disabilities. This strategy seems likely to increase the numbers of children with high needs in high quality programs but does not seem especially ambitious. The applicant does not provide detail about incentives to increase the participation of Early Head Start, Head Start or Part C and B programs in the TQRIS. Given that these programs already are serving a large number and percentage of children with high needs throughout the state, the omission of these programs and the children in them in the overall state plan for improvement does not demonstrate a State Plan that is particularly ambitious.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.</b>	15	8

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to design and implement evaluations--working with an independent evaluator and, when warranted, as part of a cross-State evaluation consortium--of the relationship between the ratings generated by the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and the learning outcomes of children served by the State's Early Learning and Development Programs by--

(a) Validating, using research-based measures, as described in the State Plan (which also describes the criteria that the State used or will use to determine those measures), whether the tiers in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality; and

(b) Assessing, using appropriate research designs and measures of progress (as identified in the State Plan), the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

#### Comments on (B)(5)

The applicant provides details about previous research and evaluation data that has been collected regarding the state's TQRIS as well as other related early childhood research studies in the state. They also reference the national research literature regarding components of high quality early childhood education and care settings. This provides important background for planning a research and evaluation study. The applicant explains that a national evaluation advisory board comprised of recognized experts in the field of Early Learning and Development Programs will lead the effort to evaluate the state's TQRIS. This advisory board will design research that measures the relationships between quality ratings and child outcomes and appears likely to bring the needed expertise to research and evaluation. Aside from the advisory board and some preliminary research and evaluation questions, the description of the research and evaluation plan lacks detail. Although the applicant describes potential studies that might be used to evaluate the TQRIS, the descriptions do not explain how they might measure whether the instrument is able to capture differences in program quality. Further, the applicant does not describe how they propose to conduct research to capture whether differences in TQRIS ratings are associated with child outcomes.

### **Focused Investment Areas (C), (D), and (E)**

Each State must address in its application--

- (1) Two or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (C),
- (2) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (D), and
- (3) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (E)

The total available points for each Focused Investment Area will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address in that area, so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points.

### **C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children**

The total available points that an applicant may receive for selection criteria (C)(1) through (C)(4) is 60. The 60 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address all four selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be



worth up to 15 points. If the applicant chooses to address two selection criteria, each criterion will be worth up to 30 points.

The applicant must address at least two of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (C), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>24</b>
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--</p> <p>(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;</p> <p>(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and</p> <p>(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: <b>Quality and Implementation</b></p>		
<b>Comments on (C)(1)</b>		
<p>It is clear that the State has developed useful Early Learning and Development Standards. The applicant provides documentation that the State's approved standards for preschool are comprehensive, developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate and cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness. A Table is provided that explains how the standards have appropriate depth and scope. Infant Toddler guidelines are presented in draft form but are also well-developed and scheduled for final approval in Spring 2012. The applicant provides examples of how the standards may be used across Early Learning and Development Programs and explains how the standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards, particularly with the State's literacy plan. The applicant does not provide detail about how the standards are to be used to guide curriculum. Although the applicant describes how universities received credential approval for how the Early Learning and Development Standards are infused into early childhood coursework, how the standards are related to training for individuals completing an associate's degree or child development associate credentialing is not made clear. The applicant provides detail about how the infant-toddler guidelines will be integrated into the Coaching Academy that is already in place as a support to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs. This plan builds on the work of a Home Visitor Task Force. A report included in the appendices illustrates that the group has accomplished work that can guide the planned initiatives of the grant.</p>		
	Available	Score
<b>(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>15</b>
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information and support to families of Children with High Needs in order to promote school readiness for their children by--</p> <p>(a) Establishing a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement across the levels of its Program Standards, including activities that enhance the capacity of families to support their children's education and development;</p> <p>(b) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported on an on-going basis to implement the family engagement strategies included in the Program Standards; and</p> <p>(c) Promoting family support and engagement statewide, including by leveraging other existing resources such as through home visiting programs, other family-serving agencies, and through outreach to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: <b>Quality and Implementation</b></p>		
<b>Comments on (C)(4)</b>		

The applicant presents a plan that focuses on the needs of families who are Spanish-speaking or from tribal communities. This plan builds on work that has already begun in the regional councils and uses a nationally recognized program Raising a Reader. The applicant describes how the program will be adapted to the local circumstances of the State's families who have special needs, establishing a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement. The applicant explains how training for the Coaching Academy will be used to advance the knowledge and professional competence of the coaches who work with child care providers in communities having high numbers of English language learners, are geographically isolated or are tribal communities. The applicant provides detail about the numbers of individuals who have already received training to implement the family engagement included in the Program Standards as well as those targeted for training in the future. Building on this foundation appears likely to increase the numbers and percentages of early childhood educators trained and supported to implement family engagement strategies. The applicant describes how the resources from the grant will be used to leverage existing resources and expand current home visiting efforts, particularly in communities identified as having large numbers of English language learners and tribal communities. The applicant does not provide detail about how the proposed program (Raising a Reader) will collaborate with the efforts of other programs in the communities targeted, particularly Part B and C, early Head Start and Head Start. These programs already engage in outreach to families and other caregivers. The omission of these details raises questions about the effectiveness of the plans. The applicant proposes to use grant funding to support preservation of Indian languages. Yet the applicant does not provide detail about how similar efforts in targeted communities might preserve Spanish in the targeted communities, raising questions about the culturally appropriate nature of the proposed activities.

**D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce**

The total points that a State may earn for selection criteria (D)(1) and (D)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points.

The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (D), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.</b>	20	12

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--

- (a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;
- (b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and
- (c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (D)(1)**

The applicant provides a history of the state efforts that have led to the current proposed plans to support early childhood educators in improving their knowledge and skills. The applicant makes clear how previous efforts have informed the proposed plan. The applicant outlines in the narrative how a system of supports has been developed across the state to improve the professional development of the state's early childhood workforce. The applicant proposes to use RTT-ELC funds to increase the outreach of this network to additional individuals who deliver services to children with high needs across the state. The strategies described appear likely to contribute to developing a common statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The applicant proposes to revise the current Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework so that common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees are more closely aligned with the RTT-ELC indicators. This will assist in providing a more comprehensive and up to date Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to improve children's learning and development and improve child outcomes. The applicant describes how various child development associate and associate's degree programs fail to matriculate with four year degree programs in early childhood education and proposes to lead an effort to overcome the historical barriers to establishing a CDA to bachelor's degree progression. Letters of support from education school deans and community colleges across the state are provided, illustrating statewide support of the plan. There is little evidence presented that illustrates how important teaching competencies related to the learning and development of young children with disabilities are to be included in the revision process of the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The letters of support provided are not specific with regard to the needs of this population. This omission raises questions about whether the State plan addresses the unique needs of the State's population of these children and will improve outcomes for these children.

	Available	Score
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The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to improve the effectiveness and retention of Early Childhood Educators who work with Children with High Needs, with the goal of improving child outcomes by--

- (a) Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities that are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;
- (b) Implementing policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) that promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that is aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and that are designed to increase retention;
- (c) Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention, and
- (d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--
  - (1) Increasing the number of postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and the number of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and
  - (2) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (D)(2)**

The applicant provides detail about how they will substantially increase wage and scholarship incentives and build a support infrastructure using existing state funds to support a career ladder in which early childhood educators are encouraged to enroll in an undergraduate program. This includes plans to use the revised Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and builds on successful regional efforts and is likely to contribute to improving the effectiveness and retention of early childhood educators. The applicant also describes how they will work with postsecondary institutions and professional development providers to support alignment of their work with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and increase the number of early childhood educators who receive credentials from them that are aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. New investments in support described by the applicant includes the development of technical assistance centers across the state that will offer tutoring to keep individuals in baccalaureate programs. The applicant proposes to use a community of practice model which, if well-established, has been shown to be an effective way to support professional development and expand the numbers of early childhood professionals that are progressing to higher levels of credentials. The applicant proposes to develop curriculum modules that might use a variety of delivery mechanisms including face-to-face workshops and webinars delivered electronically. This will serve to expand accessibility to professional development for a variety of early child care providers, thus increasing the number and percentages of early childhood educators progressing to higher levels of credentials. The applicant proposes to leverage federal educational opportunity programs such as Upward Bound, TRIO etc. to help increase the numbers of early childhood educators and improve the quality of their preparation through targeted outreach efforts. These strategies are likely to increase the numbers and percentages of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentialing. The applicant proposes to collect survey and population-level early childhood workforce data and produce annual reports on the status of early childhood professional development, contributing to a system of continuous improvement across the state. These are ambitious but achievable goals. The applicant proposes to increase the number and percentage of early childhood educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework to 1000 by 2014. This target seems overly ambitious and not easily achievable, given the amount of collaborative work that remains to be accomplished before that time.

**E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress**

The total points an applicant may earn for selection criteria (E)(1) and (E)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points.

The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (E), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	20	12



The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that—

- (a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;
- (b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;
- (c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation.
- (d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and
- (e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (E)(1)**

The applicant describes how the State has established a long standing commitment to understand children's school progress that established the foundation for their plan to develop a common kindergarten assessment that is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all essential Domains of School Readiness. The applicant does not provide sufficient explanation of how children with disabilities will participate in the common Kindergarten assessment nor how the assessment process has been adapted to accommodate them. The proposed plan is described as beginning a phase-in for the 2014-2015 school year as requested. The applicant provides little detail about how key stakeholders in the proposed assessment system will be provided training and support. The applicant describes how the assessment data will be reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System ensuring that the data is useful for statewide program planning. The applicant provides an explanation of the costs of the implementation plan that ensures funding beyond the duration of the grant.

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.</b>	20	10

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to enhance the State's existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System or to build or enhance a separate, coordinated, early learning data system that aligns and is interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and that either data system--

- (a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;
- (b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;
- (c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data;
- (d) Generates information that is timely, relevant, accessible, and easy for Early Learning and Development Programs and Early Childhood Educators to use for continuous improvement and decision making; and
- (e) Meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (E)(2)**

The applicant describes a plan that includes all the essential data elements and shows a thoughtful build up of a data system from existing programs and structures. The proposed plan details how existing programs and resources will be used to build a system that will address the needs of the state for a coordinated data system. The applicant currently does not have a system in place to obtain data from local Head Start grantees and does not provide detail about how this would be assured in the proposed plan. As Head Start programs serve a significant number of children with high needs in the State, the omission of these important stakeholders in the State's plan will likely interfere with uniform data collection across the state. The applicant describes a plan for data collection and management that will ensure that the data can be exchanged among Participating State Agencies. The applicant describes how they will use standard data structures, data formats and data definitions. These strategies appear likely to enhance usability of the system. The applicant explains how the proposed plan will generate information that is timely, relevant and accessible and easy for Early Learning and Development Programs and early childhood educators that participate to use for continuous improvement and

decision making. The applicant provides insufficient detail about how or whether individual children will be identifiable across data systems. Although this may not be a goal for the State, it is not clear how issues of interoperability across systems will be managed. The applicant explains how the data oversight system requirements of Federal, State and local privacy laws will be assured.

	Available	Score
<b>Total Points Available for Selection Criteria</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>186</b>

**Priorities**

Competitive Preference Priorities

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry</b>	<b>0 or 10</b>	<b>No</b>
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
<b>Comments on (P)(3)</b>		
<p>The State does not indicate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Although the applicant outlines a plan to begin development of a common Kindergarten Entry Assessment, the plan lacks detail about how children with disabilities will participate in the Kindergarten Entry Assessment, raising questions about the ability of the plan to address issues of reliability and validity of the instrument for this group of children.</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
<b>Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
<b>Comments on Absolute Priority</b>	
<p>The applicant describes a plan that reflects the current status of the State's efforts to build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for children with high needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed. The State's plan describes integrating and aligning resources and policies across participating state agencies and proposes a plan to design and implement a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System, building on work that has already begun in the State. The plan also outlines specific reform areas that are likely to improve program quality and outcomes for children with high needs. Although there are significant gaps in how the State's plan has been developed related to the needs of specific populations of children, particularly those currently served in Early Head Start and Head Start programs and children and their families currently served in Part B and C programs, the State's plan provides detail about how it will continue to build stakeholder buy-in from groups that may have been under represented in past efforts, notably tribal communities.</p>	







Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # AZ-5001

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/16/2011 - 5:56 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

States must address in their application all of the selection criteria in the Core Areas.

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Criteria, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 15

The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--

(a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period,

(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;

(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and

(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

Arizona has made important progress in recent years in terms of commitment to and investment in early learning and development program. Successes include the tobacco tax to fund early childhood programs, a QRIS program with a relatively high participation rate for a young program, and comprehensive Early Learning and Development standards for children ages 3 to 5, with standards for younger children in development. However, the financial commitment on the part of the state is relatively low (\$118,000,000 in 2011 for 300,981 low income children). The state's financial commitment has increased steadily since 2007, but remains too low to serve large numbers of children. Not surprisingly, the number and proportion of low income children served is also low. And, almost every program has shown a decline, or a very small increase, in the number Children with High Needs served since 2007. This decline might be explained by the economic downturn, but does not meet the application requirement (A1b) that the state demonstrate an increase in number of children with high needs participating. Many of the key areas that form the building blocks of a strong early learning systems are in place include: Early Learning and Development Standards (finalized for ages 3-5, in draft form for infants/toddlers), a Comprehensive Assessment System for Quality First programs at the higher levels of quality, programs to encourage health promotion practice and family engagement, and some supports for the development of Early Childhood Educators. A Kindergarten Entry Assessment is not in place and the current data system does not include young children. In sum, this response is on the upper end of the medium/high quality range.

Table with 3 columns: Criteria, Available, Score. Row 2: (A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals, 20, 10

The extent to which the State clearly articulates a comprehensive early learning and development reform agenda that is ambitious yet achievable, builds on the State's progress to date (as demonstrated in selection criterion (A)(1)), is most likely to result in improved school readiness for Children with High Needs, and includes--

- (a) Ambitious yet achievable goals for improving program quality, improving outcomes for Children with High Needs statewide, and closing the readiness gap between Children with High Needs and their peers;
- (b) An overall summary of the State Plan that clearly articulates how the High-Quality Plans proposed under each selection criterion, when taken together, constitute an effective reform agenda that establishes a clear and credible path toward achieving these goals; and
- (c) A specific rationale that justifies the State's choice to address the selected criteria in each Focused Investment Area (C), (D), and (E), including why these selected criteria will best achieve these goals.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

**Comments on (A)(2)**

This section summarizes Arizona's plan for improving program quality, improving outcomes for children with high needs, and closing the readiness gap. The goals appear both ambitious and achievable and the summary provides a good introduction to the plan. The timeline in the appendix seems to be well thought out and attainable. However, the section is almost entirely a summary of later sections, with little attention paid to rationale or integration across sections. For example, in the section summarizing B4, there is a description of the state's plan to alter their current incentive vs. support balance for programs of different quality levels. This may be an effective strategy, but no explanation is given for why this change is likely to increase quality. In general, the state seems to be building on existing strengths, but little additional rationale is provided for choices made within the plan. Likewise, this section does not provide a strong case for how the various components will work together to create a cohesive plan. In sum, this response is at the low end of the medium/high quality range.

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State</b>	10	7

The extent to which the State has established, or has a High-Quality Plan to establish, strong participation and commitment in the State Plan by Participating State Agencies and other early learning and development stakeholders by--

(a) Demonstrating how the Participating State Agencies and other partners, if any, will identify a governance structure for working together that will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability and describing--

(1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;

(2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;

(3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and

(4) The plan for when and how the State will involve representatives from Participating Programs, Early Childhood Educators or their representatives, parents and families, including parents and families of Children with High Needs, and other key stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant;

(b) Demonstrating that the Participating State Agencies are strongly committed to the State Plan, to the governance structure of the grant, and to effective implementation of the State Plan, by including in the MOU or other binding agreement between the State and each Participating State Agency--

(1) Terms and conditions that reflect a strong commitment to the State Plan by each Participating State Agency, including terms and conditions designed to align and leverage the Participating State Agencies' existing funding to support the State Plan;

(2) "Scope-of-work" descriptions that require each Participating State Agency to implement all applicable portions of the State Plan and a description of efforts to maximize the number of Early Learning and Development Programs that become Participating Programs; and

(3) A signature from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency; and

(c) Demonstrating commitment to the State Plan from a broad group of stakeholders that will assist the State in reaching the ambitious yet achievable goals outlined in response to selection criterion (A)(2)(a), including by obtaining--

(1) Detailed and persuasive letters of intent or support from Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, and, if applicable, local early learning councils; and

(2) Letters of intent or support from such other stakeholders as Early Childhood Educators or their representatives; the State's legislators; local community leaders; State or local school boards; representatives of private and faith-based early learning programs; other State and local leaders (e.g., business, community, tribal, civil rights, education association leaders); adult education and family literacy State and local leaders; family and community organizations (e.g., parent councils, nonprofit organizations, local foundations, tribal organizations, and community-based organizations); libraries and children's museums; health providers; and postsecondary institutions.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (A)(3)**

A3a: The current First Things First (FTF) Board has ex-officio (non-voting) members from the Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS), the Department of Economic Security (DES), and the Arizona Department of Education (ADE). Additionally, FTF's current governance structure includes 31 local Regional Partnership Councils (RPC), with participation from 19 of the state's 22 tribes. The RPCs are a major strength of this state's existing organizational structure. Two additional advisory structures are proposed for RTT-ELC. The application does not specifically state how the two advisory structures will relate to the FTF Board with regard to ultimate decision making authority. There are some statements about "decisions and recommendations" and "setting the strategic policies and program direction." However, the lack of specifics around how decisions will be made implies that the FTF Board will continue to hold ultimate decision making authority, accepting recommendations and guidance from the two new advisory boards. This is concerning because the voting members of that board are governor-appointed and Senate-approved, rather than representatives of the agencies who are more likely to fully understand and prioritize the RTT-ELC goals. A3b: All MOUs and Scopes of Work appear to be properly executed and contain most of the required information. A3c: The application includes a large number of letters of support, including one from each Regional Partnership Council, many Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, institutions of higher education, K-12 school districts, educational advocacy organizations, businesses, tribes, elected official, faith organizations, libraries, and departments of health. It is clear that a broad group of stakeholders are supportive of the state's RTT-ELC application. Taken together, AZ has partially implemented a plan for aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the state. The current proposal is of high quality range.

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>

The extent to which the State Plan--

(a) Demonstrates how the State will use existing funds that support early learning and development from Federal, State, private, and local sources (e.g., CCDF; Title I and II of ESEA; IDEA; Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program; State preschool; Head Start Collaboration and State Advisory Council funding; Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program; Title V MCH Block Grant; TANF; Medicaid; child welfare services under Title IV (B) and (E) of the Social Security Act; Statewide Longitudinal Data System; foundation; other private funding sources) for activities and services that help achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, including how the quality set-asides in CCDF will be used;

(b) Describes, in both the budget tables and budget narratives, how the State will effectively and efficiently use funding from this grant to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, in a manner that--

(1) Is adequate to support the activities described in the State Plan;

(2) Includes costs that are reasonable and necessary in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of the activities described in the State Plan and the number of children to be served; and

(3) Details the amount of funds budgeted for Participating State Agencies, localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, or other partners, and the specific activities to be implemented with these funds consistent with the State Plan, and demonstrates that a significant amount of funding will be devoted to the local implementation of the State Plan; and

(c) Demonstrates that it can be sustained after the grant period ends to ensure that the number and percentage of Children with High Needs served by Early Learning and Development Programs in the State will be maintained or expanded.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

**Comments on (A)(4)**

As noted in A1, the state has made strides in recent years toward improving the early childhood system, despite relatively low financial inputs from the state. The existing funds have been deployed to support many aspects of the State Plan, including development of the Early Learning Standards and development and implementation of the TQRIS. The First Things First, voter protected tobacco revenue is a major strength in terms of sustainability. The state has even projected future declines in tobacco revenue and has built-up a reserve accordingly. Additionally, the strong commitment of AZ's philanthropies represents a budgetary strength. The breakdown of dollar amounts in the budget section appear to match with both the plans and the current needs of the various projects. For example, Section C will receive relatively small amounts of funds in comparison to other sections because AZ's TQRIS is already well developed. On the other hand, the Workforce Competencies will need to be revised entirely, resulting in greater costs. The budget section does not break out costs for specific projects within each section, as requested in the application and the budget table instructions. That type of breakdown would have been very helpful in order to see specifically where the money will be deployed and ensure that sufficient planning for each project has already taken place to ensure its success. The budget narrative for the overall statewide budget does specify individual projects and management structures, but not dollar amounts. In sum, this response is of medium/high quality.

**B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs**

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	10	10

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and adopted, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and adopt, a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System that--

(a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--

- (1) Early Learning and Development Standards;
- (2) A Comprehensive Assessment System;
- (3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications;
- (4) Family engagement strategies;
- (5) Health promotion practices; and
- (6) Effective data practices;

(b) Is clear and has standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children; and

(c) Is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(1)**

The Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) is substantially implemented in AZ. In looking at the definition of Tiered QRIS it appears that AZ's current system has (a) program standards with multiple rating categories that clearly differentiate program quality levels, (b) monitoring to evaluate program quality, (c) supports to help programs improve in the form of coaches who use the Quality First data to develop improvement plans and financial incentives, and (d) some past validation of the system. The only component that does not appear to be implemented yet is making the information available to the public. That piece is slated for July 1, 2012. Additionally, AZ's TQRIS is of high quality. Strengths of the system include the fact that 1) all Early Learning and Development Programs are eligible, including family child care, 2) it is based on well-developed Early Learning and Development Standards and national research, 3) the state has prioritized inclusion of programs that serve high proportion of children with high needs, and 4) the program has ramped up quickly, and is projected to include one-third of all early learning and development programs in its third year of implementation (by June of 2012). The only apparent weaknesses are the fact that the infant/toddler guidelines have yet to be finalized and adopted, but the draft is excellent.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	15	10



The extent to which the State has maximized, or has a High-Quality Plan to maximize, program participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Implementing effective policies and practices to reach the goal of having all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate in such a system, including programs in each of the following categories--

- (1) State-funded preschool programs;
- (2) Early Head Start and Head Start programs;
- (3) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA;
- (4) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of the ESEA; and
- (5) Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program;

(b) Implementing effective policies and practices designed to help more families afford high-quality child care and maintain the supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs (e.g., maintaining or increasing subsidy reimbursement rates, taking actions to ensure affordable co-payments, providing incentives to high-quality providers to participate in the subsidy program); and

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by type of Early Learning and Development Program (as listed in (B)(2)(a)(1) through (5) above).

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(2)**

The current incentive structure for program participation in TQRIS is quite strong. Specific strengths include coaching, financial incentives, and automatic Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) scholarships for all enrolled programs. However, some mention is made of the Quality First waiting list, so apparently there are not enough resources to serve all interested programs at the current time. Families are helped to afford child care through scholarships aimed at low-income families that are not currently receiving CCDF supports. However, to be eligible for these scholarships, the family only has to select a program that participates in Quality First. The program does not have to attain a certain level of quality or improvement within the Quality First structure. Thus, these scholarships do not necessarily help parents afford high-quality programs as required by the application. Three key strategies are proposed for further increasing the number of programs participating in the TQRIS: 1) increasing the number of scholarships and linking them to the star ratings, eventually phasing out scholarships for low-tier programs, 2) developing and implementing the Quality First Rating Only option, and 3) helping family, friend and neighbor (FFN) programs become certified and licensed, so they can become eligible to participate in Quality First. The first of these strategies has a high probability of success and addresses a weakness in the current incentive structure. The second strategy, the rating-only option, is not well articulated. The application has never specified the exact steps a program must take to participate in Quality First and which steps are omitted for the rating-only option. Likewise it is unclear why such an option would encourage state and federal program participation. The third strategy — the plan to help FFN care providers to participate in Quality First — is one of the application's strengths. The application identifies improving FFN care as a key step in improving the overall quality of settings that enroll high numbers of High Needs Children and identifies the financial cost of licensing as a major barrier to FFN participation in the TQRIS. Table B2c lays out very ambitious goals. Whereas 30% participation by 2015 for programs receiving CCDF funds may not appear ambitious at first glance, it is ambitious given that almost 70% of those programs are home-based or FFN, types of care that have very low participation rates in most states' QRIS systems. Additionally, these goals appear achievable in light of the strategies outlined and success the state has had so far in quickly expanding its program. In sum, AZ has partially implemented the plan for promoting participation in the TQRIS and the response is of high quality.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs</b>	15	11

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency; and

(b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (e.g., displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(3)**

B3a: The current rating system is excellent. The Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) are well validated and reliable tools. The state-constructed Quality First Rating Scale appears to be a worthwhile addition. Using the ERS in all programs and the CLASS only in those that attain a certain ERS score is logical given the content of the two scales. The ERS have a heavy focus on health, safety and provision of appropriate materials. Deficits in those areas must be addressed before assessment using the CLASS makes sense. The ratings required to attain the various star ratings are relatively rigorous, with the possible exception of a 3.00 to 3.99 on the ERS to attain 3 stars. Elsewhere the application indicates that 3 stars is considered high-quality, but the ERS' authors refer to a 3 as "minimal" quality. However, these levels make pragmatic sense in arraying programs along a continuum. As noted in the application, the majority of programs are at a 2 star level, meaning that their ERS scores are below a 3. Inter-rater reliability standards reflect current standards in the field. The frequency of rating is excellent and a very high bar for the state to meet. B3b: The website that is proposed to provide quality rating and licensing information to parents sounds like it will provide needed information for families, but the internet remains unavailable or difficult to navigate for many low-income families. A low-tech strategy that includes things like displaying quality rating information at the program site and providing pamphlets in multiple languages to help parents understand the rating system is needed in addition to the website. The reference to "branded signage" and "quality ratings made public" might address this issue, but those strategies are not defined or elaborated. In sum, the rating and monitoring system is partially implemented. Highly reliable and valid tools are in use, but the system for providing information for parents is not yet implemented. The response is of high quality, with the primary weakness being the lack of a detailed description of low-tech way to disseminate information.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs</b>	20	12

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Developing and implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve (e.g., through training, technical assistance, financial rewards or incentives, higher subsidy reimbursement rates, compensation);

(b) Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs (e.g., providing full-day, full-year programs; transportation; meals; family support services); and

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing--

(1) The number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and

(2) The number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(4)**

B4a: Many of the current and proposed policies and practices for encouraging continuous improvement are strong. Strengths include intensive (4-8 hours per month) coaching, a planned Coaching Academy, sizable financial incentives that are linked to the improvement plan for the lower levels of quality, assistance with licensure fees that will be linked to star rating next year, TEACH scholarships, and specialized technical assistance. Other programs listed, such as REWARDS, Child Care Health Consultants, Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, and Inclusion Consultation do not appear to have a direct tie to the TQRIS. The application also presents a change in the balance of coaching versus financial support for programs at different star-levels as a means of improving quality. However, no rationale is provided for this change and it is unclear why this would be an effective strategy. Likewise, the Quality First Rating Only option appears to be one way the state intends to engage more programs, but this option is poorly described and there is no explanation for why this should appeal to certain programs. B4b: The current scholarships outlined in B4b do not have any incentive for quality, aside from programs needing to enroll or be on the waiting list for Quality First, however, the application includes a plan to change the system to one of tiered reimbursement. The proposal to require that 10% of slots in 3 to 5 star programs for Children with High Needs is an excellent idea that is likely to result in a significant increase in the number of Children with High Needs in such programs. However, no real plan is presented to address the special needs of working families with Children with High Needs (full day/full year, meals, home visitation). Some current programs are outlined, but those programs are not cohesive or comprehensive, and no plan is presented to improve them. B4c: The targets set in table B4c1 are undoubtedly ambitious. It appears that AZ programs are currently of fairly low quality, with 97% at 1 or 2 stars. The response indicates that by 2015 only 44% will be in the two lowest groups. The largest planned increase appears to be at the 3-star level, which currently accounts for just 3% of programs and is slated to account for 40% by 2015. It seems reasonable and attainable to focus on moving the programs from 1 or 2 stars to 3 stars during this time. In sum, the plan is partially implemented, with the policies and practices that provide support for continuous improvement fully implemented and the supports to help working families with children with high needs access high-quality not yet implemented. The proposal is of medium quality and the goals are ambitious and achievable.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.</b>	15	6

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to design and implement evaluations--working with an independent evaluator and, when warranted, as part of a cross-State evaluation consortium--of the relationship between the ratings generated by the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and the learning outcomes of children served by the State's Early Learning and Development Programs by--

(a) Validating, using research-based measures, as described in the State Plan (which also describes the criteria that the State used or will use to determine those measures), whether the tiers in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality; and

(b) Assessing, using appropriate research designs and measures of progress (as identified in the State Plan), the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

#### Comments on (B)(5)

B5a: The primary tools used for the TQRIS (ERS and CLASS) are well established, valid tools. They are excellent choices for the TQRIS. However, no proposal is presented for validating whether the tiers in the TQRIS accurately reflect differential levels of program quality, as required by B5a. The fact that the underlying tools are valid does not mean the resulting tiers of quality are valid. The application does propose a study to validate the Quality First Scale, but again that is not a specific study to validate whether the tiers accurately reflect differential levels of program quality and the plan is not detailed. B5b: The proposed validation study includes interesting and important components such as tracking factors that predict movement in program quality and assessing differential impacts on children with high needs. However, the proposed plan is quite vague. No mention is made of critical issues (e.g., sampling, assessing children multiple times), presumably because the specifics of the plan have not yet been formulated. Because the plan lacks such important details, it is not possible to ascertain how likely it is to succeed. In sum, the plan for validating the effectiveness of the TQRIS is of medium/low quality, because no proposal is put forth for validating the levels of quality and the validation study lacks details.

### **Focused Investment Areas (C), (D), and (E)**

*Each State must address in its application--*

- (1) Two or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (C).*
- (2) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (D); and*
- (3) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (E)*

*The total available points for each Focused Investment Area will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address in that area, so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points.*

#### **C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children**

*The total available points that an applicant may receive for selection criteria (C)(1) through (C)(4) is 60. The 60 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address all four selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 15 points. If the applicant chooses to address two selection criteria, each criterion will be worth up to 30 points.*

*The applicant must address at least two of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (C), which are as follows:*

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.</b>	30	21

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--

(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;

(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;

(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and

(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (C)(1)**

C1a: The Arizona Early Learning Standards (AzELS) meet all components in the application's definition of Early Learning and Development Standards, but are only for children ages 3 to 5. The state has done an excellent job of creating standards that are broad and deep, with excellent coverage of almost all the Essential Domains of School Readiness. The draft Infant/Toddler Guidelines also appear to be comprehensive and cover the Essential Domains of School Readiness. However, they are not yet adopted. As required in the application, in both the AzELS and the Infant/Toddler Guidelines, AZ has paid careful attention to cultural and linguistic appropriateness of the standards and provided appropriate guidelines and examples to caregivers for applying these guidelines to support all children. C1b: The AzELS standards are aligned with state's Kindergarten standards in all domains, as evidenced by the tables at the end of each section of the standards themselves. No mention is made of alignment with the 1st through 3rd standards and no mention is made of aligning the Infant/Toddler Developmental Guidelines. AZ has recently adopted the Common Core of Standards so re-alignment of the AzELS standards with that content is planned. C1c: As required in the application, the Early Learning and Development Standards for ages 3-5 are incorporated with the Program Standards and the Comprehensive Assessment Systems. They are not incorporated in the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, but a plan for updating that Framework and incorporating the standards is presented later in the application. A set of professional development modules are proposed, but it is unclear if they are the same as or different from the professional development modules proposed later in the application (see D2). They appear to be separate from the other proposed modules, indicating a significant weakness in proposal which is meant to coordinate various parts of the early childhood system. C1d: The strategies outlined in this section for promoting understanding of and commitment to the Standards form a cohesive plan, primarily targeted at the correct audiences (certification/licensing staff and Quality First Coaches). Additionally, as outlined in C1c, the plans for creation and deployment of the modules surrounding the standards to 40% of early childhood educators is ambitious. Taken together, AZ has partially implemented a plan for promoting early learning and development standards. The various components of the Early Learning Standards for ages 3-5 are substantially implemented, but the Early Learning Standards for infants and toddlers are not yet implemented, resulting in partial implementation overall. The plan itself is of high quality. Strengths include the fact that the current Early Learning Standards for ages 3-5 are comprehensive and thoughtful with regard to special populations, and the proposed infant/toddler guidelines meet the definition of Early Learning and Development Standards. Weaknesses include lack of plan for clearly articulating alignment between infant/toddler standards and standards for older children and the appearance that two separate sets of professional development modules are being created (see D2), indicating a lack of cohesion within the plan itself.

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>15</b>
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information and support to families of Children with High Needs in order to promote school readiness for their children by--</p> <p>(a) Establishing a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement across the levels of its Program Standards, including activities that enhance the capacity of families to support their children's education and development;</p> <p>(b) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported on an on-going basis to implement the family engagement strategies included in the Program Standards; and</p> <p>(c) Promoting family support and engagement statewide, including by leveraging other existing resources such as through home visiting programs, other family-serving agencies, and through outreach to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (C)(4)**

C4a: AZ Program Guidelines do a nice job of describing family engagement and supports that are culturally and linguistically sensitive. The program standards encourage use of the child's primary language (as well as English) and translation of written materials for parents, both of which are essential for culturally sensitive programs. There are also guidelines for appropriate supports around second language learners. However, no mention is made of a progression of standards, as requested in the application. Additionally, no documentation is provided that the standards include activities that enhance families' capacity to support their children's education and development, as requested in the evidence section. C4b: The strategies presented for increasing early childhood educators' training and support around the family engagement strategies—namely creating a training module and the Coaching Academy—should be effective. However, no information is provided about the number of teachers currently receiving such support (if any) and no targets are presented for future participation so it is impossible to know if the numbers will increase as specified in the application. Section C1 does have targets, but it is not possible to tell how many will participate in which modules. C4c: In general, the strategies presented for promoting family support and engagement statewide appear to reach a small number of children. For instance, the Raising a Reader model appears to be a culturally sensitive strategy for engaging families in early educational



activities with their children. However few details of the program itself are provided, the evidence of its effectiveness is limited, and it will reach 5,000 families at most. Overall, Arizona's plan for engaging and supporting families is partially implemented. The plan includes a solid set of program guidelines, but no progression exists. Further, the trainings for Early Childhood Educators in this area are in the planning stages. The response is of the medium quality. The plans for increasing training and support for Early Childhood Educators are likely to be successful, but no plan is presented for creating a progression of levels and the plans for promoting family support and engagement statewide are not projected to reach many children.

**D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce**

The total points that a State may earn for selection criteria (D)(1) and (D)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points.

The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (D), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--

- (a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;
- (b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and
- (c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (D)(1)**

D1a: The state of AZ does have Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. However, as illustrated in attachment XX it does not meet all the components defined in the application (e.g., not aligned with Program Standards or TQRIS because it pre-dates those). The plan presented in the application to revise and update the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework is excellent. It lays out specific areas where the current Framework is weak and strategies for improvement. Additionally, the planned revision aims to create a tiered Framework. D1b&c: This portion of the application does an excellent job of describing the weaknesses in the current degree progression and articulation system, as well as the barriers many early childhood professionals face in increasing their formal education. The types of problems presented in the AZ system are widespread across the United States, and AZ is to be applauded for recognizing these deficiencies. That said, the plan for addressing these shortcomings is brief and provides little detail. It appears that the state is in the very early stages of addressing these issues and it is unclear that they can be successful. The letters of support from the Institutions of Higher Learning do demonstrate an awareness of the issue and interest in improvement, but again, the plan does not contain enough detail to ensure that it will be successful. In sum, D1 is partially implemented because AZ does currently have a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, but it does not fully meet the definition. Further, AZ describes some progression of credentials, but readily admits it is far from fully implemented. The plan is on the upper end of the medium quality range, with D1a being well articulated and likely to succeed, but D1b & c being somewhat vague and therefore having a lower probability of success.

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to improve the effectiveness and retention of Early Childhood Educators who work with Children with High Needs, with the goal of improving child outcomes by--

- (a) Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities that are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;
- (b) Implementing policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) that promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that is aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and that are designed to increase retention;
- (c) Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention; and

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

(1) Increasing the number of postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and the number of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and

(2) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (D)(2)**

The expansion of the TEACH and REWARDS programs are likely to positively affect the number of students who advance on the educational continuum and stay in the field. Those programs are well-established with a solid reputation for success. The Technical Assistance (TA) Center approach appears to be a comprehensive way of addressing the wide-ranging professional development needs of the early childhood educators. Academic and social supports for students working on college coursework is likely to result in increased graduation rates. However, as earlier, both this section and C1 discuss the creation and implementation of professional development modules with similar content, but the purposes are different. If these are two separate professional development systems that is problematic because it duplicates effort and goes against the proposal's larger purpose creating a unified and coordinated early childhood system in AZ. If they are in fact the same, that should have been made clear. Ambitious targets are provided in tables for increasing the number of post-secondary institutions and professional development provider with programs aligned to the new competencies. However, there is little description of activities for meeting these targets. The notes at the bottom of table D2d1 indicate a timeline for aligning the post-secondary programs with the new tiered Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, but again, no activities are described so it is unclear how these targets will be achieved. In sum, the plan for improving educators' knowledge, skills and abilities is currently partially implemented and the response is on the upper end of medium quality.

**E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress**

*The total points an applicant may earn for selection criteria (E)(1) and (E)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points.*

*The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (E) which are as follows.*

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.</b>	20	5
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (E)(1)**

The proposal to create a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) is ambitious and lists many admirable goals, such as providing information to kindergarten teachers about individual children's progress and being valid for children of all ethnic, racial, and linguistic backgrounds. The interest expressed by the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust in funding part of this work is a strength. However, the stated purposes and goals of this KEA (Table 7 and the surrounding text) are too numerous and broad to be attainable; no single assessment exists or could be created that could meet them all. For instance, the response indicates that the assessment will use data from a variety of authentic classroom sources on multiple occasions. It also states that all assessments will be done within 3 months of the start of school and teachers will implement it validly. This means every kindergarten teacher in the state will have to receive intensive instruction in conducting assessments that involve a high degree of inference and judgment. For the tool to be meaningfully applied to all children and the data used in a centralized data system, teachers would have to be tested on repeated occasions to ensure they were scoring reliably. Even if the requirement for authentic classroom sources on multiple occasions were removed, it would not be possible to create a tool that meets all the other requirements listed in the proposal (e.g., serves multiple purposes including informing instruction, screening for disability, and providing valid group-level statistics; has documented predictive validity for grades 1-3 literacy; has validity evidence for multiple sub-group, etc.). Additionally, the timeline is unattainable. The timeline provides a good amount of time (18 months) to prepare the RFP, but then gives the selected contractor an unreasonably short amount of time to move to implementation (one-third of all K classes are slated to participate only 14 months after the RFP is issued), especially given the very intensive level of training that will be required of all teachers. In sum, statewide KEA is currently minimally implemented and the response is of medium quality.

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.</b>	20	11

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to enhance the State's existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System or to build or enhance a separate, coordinated, early learning data system that aligns and is interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and that either data system--

- (a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;
- (b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;
- (c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data;
- (d) Generates information that is timely, relevant, accessible, and easy for Early Learning and Development Programs and Early Childhood Educators to use for continuous improvement and decision making; and
- (e) Meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (E)(2)**

In general, the steps outlined for improving the multiple data systems that currently exist for early childhood are logical and should lead to a much more usable and comprehensive system. However, it is not clear what data will and will not be linkable. For instance, children will not receive a Student Accountability Information System (SAIS) number until they enter school (age 3 for children in Title I Preschool or Preschool Special Education, later for most Children with High Needs) so it would appear that data for most children prior to kindergarten entry will not be linkable. The application mentions that DES and ADHS both have unique child identifier, but there is no plan presented for children being assigned a single identifier that would work across systems. That said, there is discussion of the ability to link Quality First Center data to children who received child care subsidies. This would necessitate some type of unique child identifier across data systems. Creation of such an ID is difficult and would require careful planning. Aside from the issue of linkability, the proposal is strong. It includes ways of streamlining existing systems and capturing data that will be useful in planning for program improvements. In sum, the early learning data system is currently partially implemented with some children and some elements currently represented. The plan for enhancing the system is on the upper end of medium quality.

	Available	Score
<b>Total Points Available for Selection Criteria</b>	280	167

**Priorities**

Competitive Preference Priorities

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
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**Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry**

0 or 10

No

To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--

(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or

(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.

**Comments on (P)(3)**

CPP3a. AZ does not currently have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA). Many districts have selected to implement their own KEA, but there is nothing in place on a statewide basis. CPP3b. The response to E1 earned 25% of the maximum points so does not meet this competitive preference priority.

**Absolute Priority**

**Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.**

**Met?  
Yes/No**

**Yes**

To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.

**Comments on Absolute Priority**

The State's application does seek to build a system that promotes school readiness for children with high needs. The State already has many strong elements in place, such as Early Learning Standards for children ages 3-5 (plus draft standards for younger children) and a well developed, thoughtful TQRIS. In the application, the State acknowledges areas where coordination among agencies has been lacking and seeks ways to work collectively toward the common goals. The selection of the Focused Investment Areas make sense given the current status of the State's early learning system.





Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # AZ-5001

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/16/2011 - 3:30 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

States must address in their application all of the selection criteria in the Core Areas.

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 16. Row 2: (A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals, 20, 15.

The extent to which the State clearly articulates a comprehensive early learning and development reform agenda that is ambitious yet achievable, builds on the State's progress to date (as demonstrated in selection criterion (A)(1)), is most likely to result in improved school readiness for Children with High Needs, and includes--

(a) Ambitious yet achievable goals for improving program quality, improving outcomes for Children with High Needs statewide, and closing the readiness gap between Children with High Needs and their peers;

(b) An overall summary of the State Plan that clearly articulates how the High-Quality Plans proposed under each selection criterion, when taken together, constitute an effective reform agenda that establishes a clear and credible path toward achieving these goals; and

(c) A specific rationale that justifies the State's choice to address the selected criteria in each Focused Investment Area (C), (D), and (E), including why these selected criteria will best achieve these goals.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

**Comments on (A)(2)**

The applicant has provided a rationale for the State's early learning reform agenda and goals. More explanation of the rationale would have provided a clearer picture of the State's path toward achieving the proposed goals. A focus of the plan's efforts will be on English Language Learners and children living on tribal lands, children that the applicant has identified as being among the highest need in the State. The State has outlined six goals for improving program quality, child outcomes and closing the readiness gap. Some of the goals build upon programs and initiatives that are planned or already in place, others address areas where reforms will be initiated. The goals of the State plan are appropriate, comprehensive and ambitious. Because of this there is a high probability that they will result in improved school readiness for children with high needs. The Summary of the Plan provides milestones/activities and proposed targets which are ambitious. The narrative includes a rationale for how the targets were determined. The State's Goal #5 (E1 – Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry) is not addressed in the Summary of the Plan. Although it is addressed in the narrative, in the response to Section E1 and other parts of the proposal, the omission of this component from the Summary of the Plan is a concern. The budget narratives for the Lead Agency and the Participating State Agencies adequately describe tasks, timelines, responsibilities and costs for the implementation of the State Plan. Because the budget is clearly aligned with the plan's goals, proposed activities and targets, there is high probability that the proposed reform agenda is achievable. A rationale is provided for the selection of the criteria to be addressed in each of the focused investment areas based upon current strengths, priorities and areas of need. In Section C the choices were made in order to build upon existing program strengths. Both parts of Section D were selected because this has been identified as an area of high priority for the State. Both parts of Section E were chosen because both have been identified as areas that need to be addressed.

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State</b>	10	7

The extent to which the State has established, or has a High-Quality Plan to establish, strong participation and commitment in the State Plan by Participating State Agencies and other early learning and development stakeholders by--

(a) Demonstrating how the Participating State Agencies and other partners, if any, will identify a governance structure for working together that will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability and describing--

(1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;

(2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;

(3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and

(4) The plan for when and how the State will involve representatives from Participating Programs, Early Childhood Educators or their representatives, parents and families, including parents and families of Children with High Needs, and other key stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant;

(b) Demonstrating that the Participating State Agencies are strongly committed to the State Plan, to the governance structure of the grant, and to effective implementation of the State Plan, by including in the MOU or other binding agreement between the State and each Participating State Agency--

(1) Terms and conditions that reflect a strong commitment to the State Plan by each Participating State Agency, including terms and conditions designed to align and leverage the Participating State Agencies' existing funding to support the State Plan;

(2) "Scope-of-work" descriptions that require each Participating State Agency to implement all applicable portions of the State Plan and a description of efforts to maximize the number of Early Learning and Development Programs that become Participating Programs; and

(3) A signature from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency; and

(c) Demonstrating commitment to the State Plan from a broad group of stakeholders that will assist the State in reaching the ambitious yet achievable goals outlined in response to selection criterion (A)(2)(a), including by obtaining--

(1) Detailed and persuasive letters of intent or support from Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, and, if applicable, local early learning councils; and

(2) Letters of intent or support from such other stakeholders as Early Childhood Educators or their representatives; the State's legislators; local community leaders; State or local school boards; representatives of private and faith-based early learning programs; other State and local leaders (e.g., business, community, tribal, civil rights, education association leaders); adult education and family literacy State and local leaders; family and community organizations (e.g., parent councils, nonprofit organizations, local foundations, tribal organizations, and community-based organizations); libraries and children's museums; health providers; and postsecondary institutions.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (A)(3)**

The applicant has proposed a comprehensive plan to align and coordinate early learning and development across the State. The applicant has provided evidence of a well organized existing governance structure that has been in place since 2006 and that statutorily requires integration and coordination among agencies and organizations as well as 31 regional partnership councils. The applicant has described how the proposed State Plan will build upon the existing structure. MOUs and Scope of Work from each of the Participating State Agencies specifically define roles and responsibilities related to governance and oversight. Because there is strong alignment between the existing governance structure and the goals of the proposed plan, building upon the existing governance structure is a reasonable approach. The creation of two new advisory structures is important in order to ensure the active involvement of participating agency representatives and other stakeholders who have a key role in the proposed plan. The plan for the involvement of the tribal communities is a strength of the proposal and addresses one of the State's target populations of children with high need. However, the omission of a plan to involve the State's Hispanic community is a concern because English Language Learners have also been identified as among the highest need children in the State. There is evidence of commitment to the State Plan by a broad group of stakeholders: 38 intermediary organizations and regional partnership councils have provided letters of intent or support and an additional 138 partner letters or letters of support have been received from a wide range of the community including philanthropic organizations, early childhood organizations, business leaders, tribal leaders and faith leaders. While the applicant has provided an impressive number of letters of support, most indicate support for the improvement of the early care and development system and the proposed RTT-ELC application, far fewer include a specific, tangible commitment to providing financial support or other resources to the proposed plan. Much of the organizational structure needed to support the alignment and coordination of efforts statewide has been initiated and in some areas is already in place. The proposed plan is based upon a comprehensive strategic plan developed through a strategic planning process over the past eighteen months. Because of these factors, the State's plan for aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State is considered to be high-quality and partially implemented.

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>

The extent to which the State Plan--

(a) Demonstrates how the State will use existing funds that support early learning and development from Federal, State, private, and local sources (e.g., CCDF; Title I and II of ESEA; IDEA; Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program; State preschool, Head Start Collaboration and State Advisory Council funding; Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program; Title V MCH Block Grant; TANF; Medicaid; child welfare services under Title IV (B) and (E) of the Social Security Act; Statewide Longitudinal Data System; foundation; other private funding sources) for activities and services that help achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, including how the quality set-asides in CCDF will be used;

(b) Describes, in both the budget tables and budget narratives, how the State will effectively and efficiently use funding from this grant to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, in a manner that--

(1) Is adequate to support the activities described in the State Plan;

(2) Includes costs that are reasonable and necessary in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of the activities described in the State Plan and the number of children to be served, and

(3) Details the amount of funds budgeted for Participating State Agencies, localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, or other partners, and the specific activities to be implemented with these funds consistent with the State Plan, and demonstrates that a significant amount of funding will be devoted to the local implementation of the State Plan; and

(c) Demonstrates that it can be sustained after the grant period ends to ensure that the number and percentage of Children with High Needs served by Early Learning and Development Programs in the State will be maintained or expanded.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

**Comments on (A)(4)**

The applicant has proposed an ambitious plan that builds on existing programs and resources and has developed a comprehensive budget for accomplishing the work. A rationale for the reasonableness of the budget is based upon work in the area that has been done to date. The applicant has clearly described how existing funds will be leveraged to support the State Plan by outlining how programs and activities funded by existing grants and funding streams are aligned with the goals and components of the State Plan. Because a statewide early childhood system has been a priority for some time, the applicant has been able to demonstrate how existing funds are being used to support or incubate components of the State Plan. The proposed budget outlines how funds from several different sources, including the CCDF quality set-aside dollars, Head Start State Collaborative and State Advisory Council, Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program, will continue to be used to support elements of the State Plan. The programs and activities funded through these sources appropriately address the objectives of the State Plan. Aligning the focus of multiple funding streams with the proposed reform efforts is a cost effective budgetary strategy that should also help to ensure program sustainability. The budget narratives for the Lead Agency and the Participating State Agencies make clear roles, responsibilities, activities, timelines and costs for the implementation of the State Plan and show commitment of each partner to the Plan. A description and explanation of other funds that will be used to support the projects of the State Plan is also included. Based upon the information that has been provided, the costs are reasonable and necessary to accomplish the objectives. The applicant has addressed a sustained commitment to the State Plan through the established statewide revenue stream, an accumulated fund balance, a plan to step down expenditures to match revenue levels, and the creation of a private gifts account. Collectively these strategies should help to ensure that the proposed reform efforts will be sustained after the grant period ends. Letters from the State's philanthropic community demonstrate strong support for the proposed State plan but give no firm commitment to sustaining the work when the grant period ends. One philanthropic organization will consider making a significant commitment to ensure successful implementation of a statewide kindergarten assessment over the next five years if RTT-ELC funding is received. The applicant has addressed all areas of this criterion in a comprehensive manner, linking proposed activities to work that is in progress and cost estimates based upon work that has been done to date.

**B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs**

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and adopted, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and adopt, a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System that--

(a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--

- (1) Early Learning and Development Standards;
- (2) A Comprehensive Assessment System;
- (3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications;
- (4) Family engagement strategies;
- (5) Health promotion practices; and
- (6) Effective data practices;

(b) Is clear and has standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children; and

(c) Is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(1)**

The applicant has provided evidence that the State has developed, adopted and implemented a common statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in order to make high quality early childhood programs accessible to help all children under five, especially children ages 3 to 5 with high needs, prepare for school. The Quality First Tiered Program Standards clearly delineate a continuum of benchmarks of quality through five levels of increasing program quality. The Quality First Tiered Program Standards outline the benchmarks for each of the levels based on: knowledge and application of the State's Early Learning Standards for Ages Three to Five and Infant Toddler Development Guidelines; a comprehensive assessment system that includes screening measures and formative assessments, measures of environmental quality (ECERS, ITERS, FCCERS), and measures of adult-child interactions (CLASS); early childhood educator standards; family engagement strategies; health



promotion practices; and effective data practices. The State has provided evidence that the standards and benchmarks are based upon research about the characteristics of programs that produce positive child outcomes and they appropriately address and encompass the five common elements around which a quality rating and improvement system should be built. The Quality First Rating Scale describes the five levels as a progression to program quality, with the lowest two levels described as demonstrating a commitment to program improvement and the three highest levels specifying a continuum of higher quality based upon a point system. Programs participating in the State's TQRIS are required to be licensed or certified by State, tribal or military systems. Such licensing or certification is considered to be the eligibility level for the TQRIS. Defining a starting point for the system and then building upon that through incremental progressions to the highest level of quality is an appropriate approach to establishing a tiered quality rating and improvement system. Quality First and the licensing systems collaborate on professional development on the TQRIS and Quality First provides supports to the programs by paying some or all of the licensing fees. This type of program and practitioner support is an important component of a quality rating and improvement system. As described, the State's TQRIS is being substantially implemented and includes measures of program quality that have been shown to matter most for positively impacting children's learning and development. For these reasons the response to this criterion is considered to be high quality and substantially implemented.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	15	12

The extent to which the State has maximized, or has a High-Quality Plan to maximize, program participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Implementing effective policies and practices to reach the goal of having all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate in such a system, including programs in each of the following categories--

- (1) State-funded preschool programs;
- (2) Early Head Start and Head Start programs;
- (3) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA;
- (4) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of the ESEA; and
- (5) Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program;

(b) Implementing effective policies and practices designed to help more families afford high-quality child care and maintain the supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs (e.g., maintaining or increasing subsidy reimbursement rates, taking actions to ensure affordable co-payments, providing incentives to high-quality providers to participate in the subsidy program); and

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by type of Early Learning and Development Program (as listed in (B)(2)(a)(1) through (5) above).

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

#### Comments on (B)(2)

The applicant has described a comprehensive and ambitious plan for increasing the number and diversity of programs in Quality First, the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and has outlined appropriate strategies for achieving their targets. In the selection of programs to participate in the TQRIS priority was given to programs serving children with high needs (low income, developmental delay in an inclusive setting, ELL, homeless, teen parent) and programs serving tribal communities. Policies, incentives and supports such as scholarships for staff credentialing and scholarships for children to attend a high quality program are in place to encourage participation in the TQRIS. Programs must participate in the TQRIS in order to receive scholarships for children. The type of incentives and supports described in the plan are appropriate strategies for motivating participation in the tiered quality rating system and are an important component of a quality rating and improvement system. An outline of the steps a program will go through when beginning to participate in the TQRIS would have provided a clearer picture of how the system will be operationalized. The applicant has stated that accountability measures will be implemented to maximize participation of state-funded preschool programs, Early Head Start and Head Start programs, programs funded through IDEA and CCDF, and Title I programs. This will include the development of benchmarks and performance measures for the established school readiness indicators which will be used for monitoring at the state and local levels. In order to meet their comprehensive and ambitious targets of programs participating in the TQRIS the applicant proposes two focused strategies. One is to develop a TQRIS option that specifically targets state and federally funded preschool programs and provides a fast-track to rating without some of the improvement supports. Programs selecting this option must be rated at one of the three highest levels on the TQRIS. Cost of enrollment will be paid by the grant and supports will be provided by the SDE, as part of their role as a Participating State Agency in the grant. The other is to provide incentives and supports to improve the knowledge, capacity and competency of unregulated Family Friends and Neighbors (FFN) care providers with the goal of preparing and supporting them to become licensed and to then participate in the TQRIS. Both of these proposed strategies offer an effective method of addressing the needs of two very different kinds of providers of early care and development. This is an effective approach to tailoring entrance to the system to specific levels of early child care and development programs and thereby encouraging their participation in the TQRIS. Strategies and targets for increasing the number and diversity of programs

participating in the TQRIS are ambitious and comprehensive which indicates that they are also achievable. Because some of the strategies for increasing participation are proposed but not yet implemented, the response was rated as high quality and partially implemented.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs</b>	15	12
<p>The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--</p> <p>(a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency; and</p> <p>(b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (e.g., displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)
<p>The applicant has provided evidence that the State's TQRIS is soundly tied to reliable indicators of quality for rating and monitoring the quality of early learning and development programs. The State's TORIS employs a version of the Environmental Rating Scale (ECCERS, ITERS or FCCERS) as well as the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) for rating and monitoring programs and the applicant has provided a sound rationale for the appropriateness, reliability and validity of these assessments. Additionally, the Quality First Point Scale Assessment was developed to address three evidenced-based areas not considered to be completely addressed by the other assessments (staff qualifications, administrative practices and curriculum and child assessment) through a review of portfolio documentation. Procedures have been established for the selection of classrooms to be assessed in center-based programs. Criteria have been specified for whether or not the CLASS and Quality First Point Scale Assessment will be used in a program based upon the program's ERS score. The applicant has described a comprehensive plan to determine how well programs meet the Quality First standards and for assigning ratings. The assessments selected are appropriate for the purposes described. The development of the Quality First Point Scale Assessment to supplement the two other scales demonstrates a concerted effort to attend to components of program quality in assessing and rating programs. Assessors receive twelve weeks of monitoring training covering the instructional content of the assessment tools, assessment report preparation, and practice observations. Reliability levels have been established for assessors and a plan is in place for ongoing supervision and reliability checks. This plan for intensive training for assessors and the system for monitoring the assessment process is ambitious and comprehensive. Because of this, a high level of inter-rater reliability in the assessment and monitoring processes is assured. Baseline assessment data is being used to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the TQRIS model and has shown 92% of the providers to date have either maintained or improved their star rating. The applicant has outlined a plan (including key milestones/activities and proposed targets) to make licensing and quality rating information accessible to parents through a public website and information system linked with the Child Care Resource and Referral website and the DHS- Child Care Licensing website. However, the applicant does not address how this information will also be available to families who do not have access to or know how to use a computer. Easy and widespread access to information about quality programs and ratings is an important element of a quality rating system and it is equally important to ensure that this information is accessible to all families of children with high needs. The applicant has described the comprehensive manner in which programs are reliably assessed, rated and then monitored for progress. The rating component of the State's TQRIS was initiated in July, 2011, prior to that assessment scores were used for improvement only. Therefore this criterion is considered to be substantially implemented.</p>

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs</b>	20	14
<p>The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--</p> <p>(a) Developing and implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve (e.g., through training, technical assistance, financial rewards or incentives, higher subsidy reimbursement rates, compensation);</p> <p>(b) Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs (e.g., providing full-day, full-year programs; transportation; meals; family support services); and</p> <p>(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing--</p>		

- (1) The number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and
- (2) The number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(4)**

The applicant has described a comprehensive and ambitious plan to provide support and incentives for the continuous improvement of early learning and development programs and to increase the number of children with high needs who have access to and are enrolled in the highest quality programs. Performance measures and targets for both increasing the number of early learning and development programs in the top tiers of the TQRIS and increasing the number of children with high needs who are enrolled in programs that are in the top tiers of the TQRIS are extremely ambitious. Considering that the TQRIS has been operational for two years and the comprehensiveness of the plan for supporting program improvement and scholarships for children of high need, they may also be achievable. The State TQRIS has focused on improving quality during the first two years of implementation and has added the rating component in 2011. This is an appropriate progression towards full implementation of a tiered quality rating and improvement system. A plan is in place to begin to differentiate incentives and support whereby programs at the lower levels (1 & 2) will receive high-intensity coaching, supports and incentives to address improvement and programs at the higher levels (3, 4 & 5) will have less intensive coaching and substantial financial incentives and more flexibility in using them. This is an appropriate approach to tailoring technical assistance and supports to match the needs of programs at the different quality rating levels. By taking this approach there is a higher likelihood of meaningful participation by individual programs and greater opportunity for the program to move to a higher quality level. To ensure children with high needs increased access to higher-quality early learning and development programs the number of scholarships and the amount of the scholarships assigned to a participating program will increase commensurate with the program's quality rating. This is a sound strategy to provide incentives to programs to attain higher levels of quality. Strategies to support the improved quality of programs include: intensive, individualized coaching and program supports based upon a program's Quality Improvement Plan; financial incentives to support and maintain quality efforts; financial support for licensing fees; scholarships to increase staff credentials; focused compensation bonuses; support from child care health consultants; specialized technical assistance; early childhood mental health consultation; and inclusion consultation. The applicant has outlined a comprehensive array of strategies to promote participation and help programs achieve higher levels of quality. A system of scholarships designed to augment child care subsidies and help low-income children access quality early care and education programs is already in place. The applicant proposes to both increase the number of scholarships and to plan a more direct link between child care subsidies and the State's TQRIS with the goal of increasing the number of children with high needs in high quality programs to 10,000 by July, 2015. In order to assist working families who have children with high needs in accessing high quality programs, full-day, year-round programs are given priority for selection into the TQRIS. Other supports to families with children of high needs include family support services such as home visitation programs, community-based parent education and family literacy programs, and family resource centers. However, the description of these supports to families does not demonstrate how these types of supports are an integral part of the tiered quality rating scale. The plan as described is partially implemented, very ambitious and potentially achievable.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.</b>	15	6

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to design and implement evaluations--working with an independent evaluator and, when warranted, as part of a cross-State evaluation consortium--of the relationship between the ratings generated by the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and the learning outcomes of children served by the State's Early Learning and Development Programs by--

- (a) Validating, using research-based measures, as described in the State Plan (which also describes the criteria that the State used or will use to determine those measures), whether the tiers in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality; and
- (b) Assessing, using appropriate research designs and measures of progress (as identified in the State Plan), the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

**Comments on (B)(5)**

The applicant has addressed this criterion by outlining the components of a plan to validate the effectiveness of the State's TQRIS through reliability and validity issues that have been addressed and are in place as well as the procurement of external research and evaluation services. According to the applicant, one of the three criteria for selection of research-based measures is that they "accurately reflect differential levels of program quality". However, there is no further discussion beyond this statement of the differential levels in the State's tiered quality rating and improvement system and how they potentially accurately reflect differential levels. An outline of the rating process is provided in the response to section (B)(3)(a) and the actual rating scale, including a description of the different levels, is included in Appendix D. Neither is referred to in this section of the proposal. A rationale is



provided to support the selection of the ERS and CLASS assessments including the validity and reliability levels of each measure. The purpose of developing and including the Quality First Points System is explained, citing support from research. Reliability and validity of the instrument are not addressed. The use of highly trained assessors and a system for on-going reliability checks assures a high level of inter-rater reliability in the assessment of programs. A 12-member national advisory panel has been established to provide direction on developing methodology and recommendations for the External Evaluation Study and the Quality First Validation Study. The purposes of the validation study will be to: 1) validate the Quality First Rating Scale as a measurement of quality, and 2) to understand the relationship between early childhood program changes as they move through quality tiers and child outcomes. The study will assess the reliability and validity of the TQRIS Rating Scale, which integrates the assessments of quality that are being used (ERS, CLASS and the Quality First Points Scale Assessment). The study will include a solid foundation of baseline data to facilitate the tracking of changes in program levels over time and then will attempt to identify factors that influence or predict movement of programs on the quality scale. The applicant states that the study will assess changes over time in child development and school readiness factors, but provides no specific information as to how this will be accomplished. The applicant has described the intent of validation efforts but has only outlined a basic scope of the work with a few suggestions of what might be addressed. More specific information in response to this criterion would have provided a clearer picture of the plan to address this criterion. As a result this response has been rated as medium quality.

**Focused Investment Areas (C), (D), and (E)**

Each State must address in its application--

- (1) Two or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (C);
- (2) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (D); and
- (3) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (E)

The total available points for each Focused Investment Area will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address in that area, so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points.

**C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children**

The total available points that an applicant may receive for selection criteria (C)(1) through (C)(4) is 60. The 60 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address all four selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 15 points. If the applicant chooses to address two selection criteria, each criterion will be worth up to 30 points.

The applicant must address at least two of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (C), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>25</b>

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--

- (a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;
- (b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;
- (c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and
- (d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (C)(1)**

The applicant has provided evidence that the State's early learning standards for children birth through kindergarten are comprehensive, of high quality, and developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate and has described a comprehensive plan including goals, key milestones/activities and targets to promote the understanding of and commitment to the standards at all program levels across the State. Evidence of the quality and appropriateness of the State's early learning standards for children three- to five-years-old includes: • A description of the scope and depth of the content to illustrate that all essential domains of school readiness are addressed. • An explanation of how the standards meet the National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER) quality standards. • A description of how the standards are consistent with and reflect current research and national content area standards. • The manner in which the standards support all children and specifically address the use of the standards for English language learners and children with delays or disabilities. • A



description of how a matrix is included at the end of each standard section illustrating alignment with the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework and the State's academic standards for kindergarten. Guidelines for children birth to age three have been developed consistent with the State's standards for children three to five and are slated for State Board adoption April, 2012. Looking through the scope, sequence and content of these two documents verified that they are in fact developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate and they address all essential domains of school readiness. A plan is in place to align the State's early learning standards with the English Language Arts and Mathematics Common Core State Standards K-12 and the revised Head Start Outcomes Framework in 2012. It is critical that the applicant does this in order to ensure that the alignment of the early learning standards is up to date with the State's K-3 academic standards. The State's Program Standards for High Quality Early Education, Birth through Kindergarten describe program standards and indicators that align early learning and development programs with K-12. The program standards provide a comprehensive set of recommended practices for all statewide early care and education programs birth through kindergarten. The Early Childhood Standards for Ages 3-5 and the Infant Toddler Guidelines are infused throughout the program standards which are intended to form the basis of curricular planning for programs for young children. All school-based, federal and state funded programs administered by the State Department of Education and all programs participating in the State's TQRIS must align their program practices with these program standards. Requiring compliance with the State's program standards for participation in the tiered quality rating and improvement system is both appropriate and necessary for establishing a foundation for building quality programs. Universities have been required to provide documentation that the State's early learning standards for children 3 to 5 are infused in courses which lead to a bachelor's degree in early childhood education in order to receive State Board of Education credential approval. This will also be addressed for the Infant/Toddler Guidelines following their formal adoption. A comprehensive implementation plan using a train-the-trainer model has been established to ensure that the State's early learning standards and infant/toddler guidelines are communicated to and used by the early childhood field at all program levels throughout the State. A Coaching Academy is proposed to align and integrate professional development for all early childhood coaches and mentors across the State including staff from Quality First (TQRIS). The State Department of Education and Head Start. The strategies outlined by the plan are ambitious and inclusive of all forms of programs serving young children. The plan appropriately starts by ensuring that certification and licensing staff understand and promote the standards. The inclusion of home visiting program staff is also an important component. Using the proposed Coaching Academy as a vehicle for training a cadre of mentors across programs is an excellent strategy for ensuring a common message throughout the State about early learning standards and high quality programs. The applicant has outlined strategies and activities that link early learning standards with program standards and practitioner standards, some of which are already implemented, in providing a high quality response to this criterion.

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>23</b>

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information and support to families of Children with High Needs in order to promote school readiness for their children by--

- (a) Establishing a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement across the levels of its Program Standards, including activities that enhance the capacity of families to support their children's education and development;
- (b) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported on an on-going basis to implement the family engagement strategies included in the Program Standards; and
- (c) Promoting family support and engagement statewide, including by leveraging other existing resources such as through home visiting programs, other family-serving agencies, and through outreach to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (C)(4)**

The applicant has described a plan to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information and support to families of children with high needs by expanding the State's current investment in family support strategies, providing training and support to early care and education providers, and by focusing family support efforts in communities with high numbers of English language learners and tribal children. The applicant has provided a description of the family support strategies currently being implemented by the regional councils and their funding levels. These include parent kits, family resource centers, family support for children with special needs, native language enrichment, home visiting, and community-based parent education programs. Family support strategies in targeted English language learner communities are also described including the number of families served through home visiting and family resource centers. The applicant has indicated that these existing resources will be leveraged to develop a set of coordinated, community-wide interventions that promote family literacy practices for children with high needs. However, specific information is not provided as to how this collaboration will occur. A description of the strategies that will be used to promote collaboration with existing resources and other programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start would have illustrated the level of collaboration that is being proposed. The State's program guidelines for birth through kindergarten include a set of standards and specific indicators and activities addressing family engagement and support and linguistic and cultural integration. These standards and guidelines provide a framework for providing family support across all early childhood environments and are the foundation of the TQRIS program quality standards. The applicant proposes concentrating family support activities in communities with a high density of English language learners and tribal children and provides a research-based rationale for this approach. Because the applicant has demonstrated that a large proportion of the State's children of high need comprise these two populations, the focus on implementing

culturally responsive family support approaches that promote language proficiency and English language acquisition is a sound strategy to impact the school readiness of high need children in the State. The progression of training and support for early childhood educators in implementing family engagement strategies is outlined beginning with a two year plan already in place to ensure early childhood educators understand and use the program guidelines. Following this, a training module will be developed and delivered to address the family engagement and cultural and linguistic guidelines. The proposed Coaching Academy will address the knowledge and competence of coaches and mentors who are working with providers statewide in high English language learner, geographically isolated and tribal communities. A culturally and linguistically appropriate parent companion book to the early learning standards and infant/toddler guidelines will be developed for coaches to use with their programs as a tool and resource in helping programs to effectively partner with families. Target goals are to reach 5,000 early educators annually. The applicant proposes expanding and building on a program that is currently being implemented in one county to reach other specifically targeted communities with a high population of English language learners. Because the Raising a Reader program is a well established community collaborative program, the plan to replicate it in similar communities has a high likelihood of success in impacting families' engagement in supporting their young children's school readiness. The applicant also describes strategies for working collaboratively with tribal communities to integrate community-based, native language and early learning development programs into the tribal communities. Goals, milestones/activities and proposed targets are specified to address this criterion. Target numbers include reaching 11,000 parents annually. Because the proposed plan builds upon and expands successful programs and strategies that are already in place and focuses on supporting families of children with high needs, the plan to address this criterion is considered to be partially implemented and of high quality.

#### D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

The total points that a State may earn for selection criteria (D)(1) and (D)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points.

The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (D), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.</b>	20	12

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to—

- (a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;
- (b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and
- (c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

#### Comments on (D)(1)

The applicant has outlined the plan to revise the existing statewide core knowledge elements and competencies to address all elements defined in the Workforce Knowledge and Framework by describing what currently exists for each indicator and what will be done to address each element in the revised framework. The revised framework will become the basis of the professional development system reform. A comprehensive set of six strategies for accomplishing this are described. Based upon the information provided about the current framework the revisions are both appropriate and necessary. Accomplishing this work is primary to all other reform efforts to address this criterion. Evidence is provided that a disproportionately low number of early childhood educators in the State who serve children with high needs have a college degree and the challenges that exist for these teachers in enrolling, staying in and completing college degrees. To address this issue the applicant is proposing a plan to establish a seamless CDA to associate's to bachelor's degree progression. Workgroups of faculty and administrators from collaborating postsecondary institutions will develop a plan for developing the reformed progression, develop a scope and sequence of courses at each level, and develop syllabi, resources and other materials. However, strategies have not been discussed for how the proposed plan will specifically assist early childhood educators who serve children with high needs, particularly those at lower education and credential levels, will be supported in overcoming barriers to participation. This is an ambitious proposal and one which has the potential of significantly impacting the quality and credentials of the State's early childhood workforce. A plan is provided which outlines key milestones and proposed targets to address both the revision of the core knowledge elements and competencies and the progression of credentials and degrees. Targets are ambitious and potentially achievable. Because the plan for revision of the current core knowledge elements and competencies includes a description of what will be done to ensure that the resulting framework will adequately address the elements outlined in the definition of workforce knowledge and competencies and the plan for developing a statewide progression of credentials will be aligned with the new framework and will engage postsecondary institutions, the applicant's plan to address this criteria is considered to be of high quality and partially implemented.

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.</b>	20	12

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to improve the effectiveness and retention of Early Childhood Educators who work with Children with High Needs, with the goal of improving child outcomes by--

(a) Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities that are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;

(b) Implementing policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) that promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that is aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and that are designed to increase retention;

(c) Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention; and

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

(1) Increasing the number of postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and the number of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and

(2) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

#### Comments on (D)(2)

The applicant has provided evidence of increasing expended and budgeted funds over the past four years to provide scholarships, wage enhancement financial supports, community-based professional development and recruitment and coaching strategies, as well as the corresponding actual and anticipated enrollment increases. Data and study findings are provided indicating that a substantial number of early childhood educators serving children with high needs are from populations that traditionally encounter challenges to enrolling in college and completing degree programs. Thus attention to this criterion is particularly important in positively impacting the school readiness of children with high needs. However, the applicant has not described specifically how support will be provided to early childhood educators in overcoming these challenges. The State plan proposes leveraging the success and lessons learned from one county's innovative professional development project, which combined increased scholarship funds with a professional development technical assistance center (TA center). The proposed plan is to replicate this model and create a coordinated statewide system which would include a centralized technical assistance center and six regional technical assistance centers aligned with already established First Things first regional councils. A description of the core functions of both the centralized and regional technical assistance centers is provided. A major function of the centralized technical assistance center will be to convene intensive learning communities with the goal of creating focused learning modules and a mechanism for the delivery of the training through the regional TA centers. An outline of the knowledge areas to be addressed and a timeline for development and delivery are provided. Performance measures for increasing the number of early childhood educators receiving credentials from post secondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned with the workforce knowledge and competency framework are reasonable considering that the current framework must be revised before this goal can be implemented. The targets set are ambitious but given the complexity of the work to be accomplished it is not clear that they are also attainable. The applicant has made an admirable attempt to provide the data for Table (D)(2)(d)(2) despite the fact that data currently exist in disconnected data systems. An appropriate explanation is provided for setting modest targets for increasing the number and percentage of early childhood educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the workforce knowledge and competency framework based upon necessary start-up times and undetermined number of duplicates. Once a coordinated data system is established, accurate tracking of increases will be possible. The applicant's current and past commitment to supporting early childhood educators in improving their knowledge, skills and abilities will provide a strong foundation for the proposed plan. Basing the plan on an existing successful model will potentially reduce the development and implementation phases. This will be helpful since it will take time to appropriately revise the workforce knowledge and competency framework and align coursework and professional development with the revised framework. Because addressing this criterion is dependent upon a comprehensive and up-to-date Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework which is not yet in place, the proposed plan is considered to be high quality and partially implemented.

#### E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

*The total points an applicant may earn for selection criteria (E)(1) and (E)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points.*



The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (E), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.</b>	20	7
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that—</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)
<p>The applicant has outlined a plan to implement a common statewide kindergarten entry assessment that begins with developing a definition of kindergarten readiness. According to the applicant recent actions related to the issue of kindergarten readiness have laid a foundation for addressing this criterion: • The convening of a task force in July 2011 to begin defining kindergarten readiness and determining appropriate ways to understand the status of children's learning and development as they transition to kindergarten. • In August, 2011 the State Early Childhood Development and Health Board adopted ten school readiness indicators which will be used to evaluate progress on closing the readiness gap for children of high needs. The State Department of Education, a RTT-ELC participating agency, will lead the collaborative efforts to identify a common kindergarten entry assessment that will be recommended to the State Board of Education for adoption. The applicant has provided a chart outlining the criteria that will be used in the selection of the kindergarten entry assessment and has indicated that the criteria are consistent with the National Resource Council's Report on Early Childhood Assessment as well as the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing. Beyond listing them as criteria for the assessment selection, the applicant has not addressed the manner in which the proposed kindergarten entry assessment will be valid and reliable, appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities. The outline of the proposed assessment lacks specificity. The issue of ensuring inter-rater reliability across schools and across the State, which is a very important consideration, is not addressed. The plan includes an outline of the steps that will move the State from a conceptual framework and commitment to an adopted, implementable statewide kindergarten entry assessment with a phase-in timeframe beginning 2014-2015 and full implementation by 2016-2017. Considering that the State is just beginning to initiate the planning process, the timeframe for accomplishing this reform is probably realistic. The applicant has indicated that the data from the kindergarten entry assessment will be reported as part of the State Longitudinal Data System. A philanthropic organization will consider providing funding for the start-up costs and to ensure that resources are available for a successful kindergarten entry assessment. First Things First, the State's dedicated early childhood funding stream, and the State Department of Education will contribute funds to offset part of the costs to school districts. Because the State is in the very beginning stages of addressing this criterion and the proposed plan lacks specific information about the process beyond outlining the selection criteria and anticipated timeframe, the proposed plan is considered to be a medium quality response and not yet implemented.</p>

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.</b>	20	12
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to enhance the State's existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System or to build or enhance a separate, coordinated, early learning data system that aligns and is interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and that either data system—</p> <p>(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;</p> <p>(b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;</p> <p>(c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data</p>		



formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data;

(d) Generates information that is timely, relevant, accessible, and easy for Early Learning and Development Programs and Early Childhood Educators to use for continuous improvement and decision making; and

(e) Meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (E)(2)**

The applicant proposes a four year plan to create an early childhood learning data system that connects participating State agencies, the broader learning community and the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). The proposed plan will align current data systems and structures in order to integrate, analyze and use data more effectively and efficiently. The First Things First (the State dedicated funding stream agency) data system will provide the foundation upon which the Early Childhood Learning Data System (ECLDS) will be built. First Things First will coordinate the ECLDS development efforts. The Participating State Agencies will support the ECLDS development efforts as specified in their MOUs. The ECLDS will be designed to collect and store all essential data elements with a focus on developing mechanisms for collecting and storing essential data elements not currently collected by any data system. The initial stages data will include families and children who are voluntarily receiving child care subsidy, a TQRIS scholarship or participating in a First Things First funded program or service. Early childhood educator data will focus on those who are enrolled in a First Things First funded program, and provider data will include programs that are certified, licensed or participating in the TQRIS. Data sharing and analysis will focus on preschool age children. However, it is not clear at what point a child will be assigned to the proposed data system. The proposed data collection system will have the capacity to analyze data on any differential impact of programming on children of high needs. A public web portal will be available to parents and early learning providers will be able to access data on their programs and will link to the web resource tool. The data system will be a secure network open only to those who are permitted and will adhere to data governance policies, security protocols and legal protections. The description of the data collection system does not indicate whether the system will be interoperable with the State Longitudinal Data System. Key milestones/activities and proposed targets are outlined for the goal of creating and supporting an early childhood longitudinal student data system and the goal of ensuring compliance with data oversight requirements and relevant federal, state and local privacy laws. Although the proposed data collection system will build upon what is already in place through First Things First, significant time and work will be needed before implementation takes place. Therefore the plan is considered to be high quality and partially implemented.

	Available	Score
<b>Total Points Available for Selection Criteria</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>194</b>

**Priorities**

Competitive Preference Priorities

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry</b>	<b>0 or 10</b>	<b>No</b>

To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--

(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or

(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.

**Comments on (P)(3)**

The applicant does not currently have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment in place that meets the selection criterion. The applicant addressed selection criterion E1. The response was rated medium quality and not implemented which did not place it in the scoring range (at least 14 of the possible 20 points) to receive competitive preference points.

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No

**Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.****Yes**

To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.

**Comments on Absolute Priority**

The applicant has proposed a comprehensive plan to develop and transform early learning and development programs throughout the State into an integrated system that increases the quality of early learning and development for all children, in particular children with high needs, so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed. In describing the State's past commitment to improving early learning and development programs the applicant has also illustrated how the proposed plan builds upon successful, high quality initiatives to create a seamless statewide system of support for the improvement of all levels of early childhood programs. The State has already developed and implemented a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and proposes to use this as a vehicle for improving the quality of early learning and development programs as well as increasing the access of children with high needs to high quality programs. A well articulated rationale is provided for the design of the proposed system which will integrate and align resources across participating State agencies. Throughout the description of the plan the applicant has identified how each proposed reform will improve outcomes for children with high needs. Performance measures are ambitious and evidence is provided that suggests they are also achievable. The applicant has described how existing funds will be used to support the proposed plan and has developed a comprehensive budget for accomplishing the work including a rationale for the reasonableness of the budget based upon work that has been done to date. Additionally, the State's proposal also addresses both invitational priorities, describing the plan to sustain early learning outcomes and ensure children reach critical benchmarks by third grade, and demonstrating strong philanthropic support for early childhood development and health in the State.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # AZ-5001

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 1:39 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

States must address in their application all of the selection criteria in the Core Areas.

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 15

The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--

- (a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;
(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;
(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and
(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

a) The applicant's governance structure and partners were astute in their legislative and policy direction to secure (Proposition 203) the approval of a state law that "increased a tax on tobacco products", which raises approximately \$130 million per year. This level of dedicated resources to supporting a statewide ECE system and expand ECE and health services to children has a voter appeal, easily understood by all sectors of the voting block community. It is a "win-win" strategy and a long time fund-able endeavor even during the eventual decline of dollars. Additionally, in 2010 Arizona passed Proposition 100 a ballot initiative that authorizes temporary revenue to increase funds to K-12 public education, health, and safety with two-thirds of the revenues dedicated for Public education. These dollars are another example of the political intelligence that the applicant has. b) The applicant provides tables that support a strong mixed delivery system for children in both public and private preschool settings. However it does not show any hard data for children who are cared for as defined by the Family Friend & Neighbor definition, rather it cites a Friend & Neighbor report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation of 2006, stating that 42% of children needing care are cared for outside of their home, and continues to say that that the number of children with High Needs in its state has remained relatively steady over the past five years. This information or lack thereof points to an important element within its structure that needs to be reexamined. i. The applicant's large Latino population, which the state says is a high priority for them, has traditionally used informal networks and FFN to care for their children. This segment of providers are not being assessed or survey to determine how this impacts the number of children that would otherwise be consumers and counted for. c) The applicant's most notable statutory accomplishment has been the creation and passage of Proposition 203 to coordinate and oversee the development of a statewide, high quality early childhood development and health system. This funding stream puts in place a statewide governance structure with diverse representation and a local delivery mechanism for ECE in Arizona. Another legislative and public policy effort that the state has been successful in achieving is the P-20 Education Reform Agenda. Success will require ensuring that young children in Arizona have strong early childhood experiences - rich in literacy and language acquisition and a strong social emotional foundation. While the state has made some headway into some legislative placements, it has not successfully included the ELL priority in any of this legislative language though it cites a 47% ELL population within the

application. d) In 2005 the applicant adopted the Arizona Early Learning Standards to provide a framework for children ages three to five in learning environments. The unique strength of the standards are that they align with Arizona's academic standards for Kindergarten and Head Start standards, and in the future it is the intent of the state to align them with English Language Arts and Math Common Core State Standards in Kindergarten. The state of Arizona uses two validated classroom and program assessment tools, the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). Arizona also has adopted a common child level formative assessment system for early childhood programs funded by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) (but there was no other reference to this in the document) - First Things First (FTF) has allocated over \$22.3 million for health and mental health consultations since 2007; - The applicant was bestowed an award from the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in CC and Early Education, one of only 3 states in the country utilizing high impact obesity prevention regulations in cc licensing. 90 % of licensed providers participate. - FTF has committed to improve oral health and nutritional outcomes for children and has allocated \$4.7 million toward health, \$1.3 million on nutrition, obesity and physical education for FY 2012. - The applicant's national recognition of its infant mental health professional development network (1 of 17 nation wide), speaks to its commitment to combating the mortality rate by strategically working to connect the health system to the early learning system. Another significant strength lies across home visiting programs that support and enhance family engagement. On Tribal Lands, it has native language enrichment programs and also is currently funding a Fathers project. It also has programs like Health Families, Nurse Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers and Early Head start among others. In looking through supplemental materials to support the review of The Vision for Early Childhood Home Visiting Services in Arizona, the applicant's Plan of Action 2010- 2015 states that the linguistic isolation of families in the state (supported by US Census estimates), with a primary language of Spanish amounted to over 121,289 households. The applicant further goes on to state in its Goals & Objective section for the home visiting program, that they will conduct outreach through individual contact with materials printed in the primary language of the families in that community. In 2009 the state initiated a scholarship program to support educators to obtain credit coursework, tuition-book reimbursement, travel stipend and time off to attend classes. The applicant states it is concentrating efforts on removing barriers to participation for tribal communities, but does not stipulate what those may be. To further support the retention of high-quality early care and education professionals, it is providing financial awards based on educational achievement, wages earned and hours worked per week. This strategy is necessary to support the elevation of worth of the field in the pipeline of educators and consumers as well get leachers through the process of obtaining the necessary academic requirements. The applicant has demonstrated a strong commitment to Kindergarten entry assessments. It holds a structure of PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career) which is developing a K-2 assessment, and there was legislation which created kindergarten reading assessment language into state stature in 2010. This is a critical piece of structure which will be formative to the effective integration of an instructional strategy. Currently school districts do not have a common kindergarten assessment process, this statewide assessment will support the programmatic links. The applicant is both in a unique and disadvantaged position in regards to data. For the most part, it has very little information prior to 2006 on children and the demographic information to inform policy and funding, and on the other hand the state is unique that it has begun building a data system from the "ground up" that is not hampered by years of un-integrated systems. In partnership with Arizona's Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) which houses a small amount of early childhood data, they will align data on children starting in preschool and linked to K-12 at kindergarten entry. They will also do a unique "statewide child identifier" which will be able to link Kindergarten entry data back to a child's information at 3 years old if he/she was in the system. FTF has also invested \$14.7 million in comprehensive research and evaluation in there statewide, longitudinal external evaluation, a child care demand and capacity study, a child care compensation and credentials survey and early care workforce study, and regular statewide and regional needs and assets assessments. Overall the applicant provides a medium high quality response to support its structure that demonstrates past commitment to early learning and development.

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>

The extent to which the State clearly articulates a comprehensive early learning and development reform agenda that is ambitious yet achievable, builds on the State's progress to date (as demonstrated in selection criterion (A)(1)), is most likely to result in improved school readiness for Children with High Needs, and includes--

(a) Ambitious yet achievable goals for improving program quality, improving outcomes for Children with High Needs statewide, and closing the readiness gap between Children with High Needs and their peers;

(b) An overall summary of the State Plan that clearly articulates how the High-Quality Plans proposed under each selection criterion, when taken together, constitute an effective reform agenda that establishes a clear and credible path toward achieving these goals; and

(c) A specific rationale that justifies the State's choice to address the selected criteria in each Focused Investment Area (C), (D), and (E), including why these selected criteria will best achieve these goals.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

**Comments on (A)(2)**



a) The applicant clearly states its achievable goals, however they do not articulate an ambitious plan for improving and closing the readiness gap for children with High Needs. The applicant focused primarily on FFN, which is important but did not speak to the Head Start or IDEA B or C programs. Additionally, it was also evident that the only model the applicant spoke about was the Raising the Reader which by itself does not make for a school readiness agenda. The application readily acknowledges the large "block" of providers in FFN that will need to be prioritized. This information is critical to decipher since a large number of ELL children would fall into this category. An engagement strategy that will build on the commitment that FFN takes on as providers of this segment of children needing care was not evident in the application. The applicant's design of the "coaching academy" has the anticipated goal of bridging the gap of home environments to be effective learning pods and to realize this goal in a community based environment. Nowhere in the application was the issue of how the informal economy of providing care within FFN impacts the decision of choice for parents. Incentivizing participation in the program will be critical as many of the FFN or unregulated providers are unclear why the state would be involved in what would otherwise be considered an economic issue rather than a child outcome need. In reading this section and the Milestone document, it is evident that the applicant will work at several levels. It will work both broad and deep in constructing a structure that scaffolds and develops and aligns governance and policy; developing system leadership and coordination (administration and management); develop and align standards, processes, regulations focusing on college matriculation and navigating for certification of degrees and developing a statewide data collection and evaluation to support a statewide kindergarten assessment with an effective measure that supports individualization. The applicant's proposal to improve outcomes for Children with High Needs statewide by increasing participation in Quality First (the state's TQRIS) while implementing strategies that will enroll children in programs supported by scholarships funded by FTF is enormous but achievable. In making this a seamless effort for parents, the "lifting" of the program components in implementation should run more smoothly. The applicant's approach to incentive program to participate and hold them accountable, is achievable as the plan includes the appropriate state agency as stakeholders for ensuring that this strategy moves from conceptual design to actualization. The proposed alignment between subsidies by working collaboratively with DES (a current state partner) to link CCDF to Quality First is a natural progression of program and policy integration. The tired reimbursement and alignment of set aside funding and collaboration and alignment of state and tribal policies and practices is a model for an equitable approach to resources. By directly targeting the state/national programs (Head Start, IDEA, Title I and FFN) with incentives of scholarships and simultaneously working on aligning subsidies at the state level it will begin the process of activating a seamless system for families to access services more easily. By putting in place a 1-5 point value on rating under the TQRIS system and offering the lower scoring programs with more supports and a lesser incentive monetarily and offering less support to higher rating programs but more monetary return, seems logical but there really is no explanation as to the reasoning for this decision. The applicant's plan addresses Engagement and Support for families, in particular ELL and limited language households. It will use the Raising A Reader model by utilizing the established FTF family resources centers across four counties to reach 5,000 families and will partner with the Hualapai and Havasupai Tribes to expand home visitation programs and a literacy program annually; and will align an evaluation component to this effort to determine if a well designed family based literacy strategy impacts school readiness indicators in a positive manner. The applicant proposes to focus on building a Great Early Childhood Education Workforce that career pathway is aligned with a statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, which will include increasing the number of postsecondary institutions and professional development providers to progress to higher levels of education and obtain credentials. This will happen by revising, adopting and implementing the Arizona Early Childhood Knowledge and Competency Framework and Career Ladder to align with a progression of career levels and credentials. One strategy is to remove structural barriers to opportunity by developing an accessible CDA to associates to bachelor's degree progression. This issue has been a long and entrenched problem for states as "training" with no college units had been the acceptable mode of capacity building. The applicant proposes to support the high number of non-traditional students to achieve success at the higher education institutions by offering community based professional development and a pathway for degree and credentials, but identifies no concrete analysis of the many specific problems facing this community or specific interventions to counteract them. They currently have a "Pilot" program track for a BA attainment which is supported by The Boeing Company. The Regional Professional Development Technical Assistance Centers model is designed to support the workforce throughout the state in a linguistically and practical and academic manner to ensure participants can have a successful college bound experience, and again the applicant is vague on how this is going to happen. While the applicant proposes to achieve a cohesive information data system that supports and improves classroom instruction, outcomes and an interagency interoperable system statewide it does not speak to the lack of an in-house evaluator nor does it specify how this evaluation will meet the needs of ELL and Tribal children. c. The applicant provides a strong rationale of selecting the Focused Investment Areas of C 1 & 4; D 1 & 2 and E 1 & 2. By building on its funding and policy strategy, the state's plan supports the target of high risk children, including English Language learners and Native American children.

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State</b>	10	7

The extent to which the State has established, or has a High-Quality Plan to establish, strong participation and commitment in the State Plan by Participating State Agencies and other early learning and development stakeholders by--

(a) Demonstrating how the Participating State Agencies and other partners, if any, will identify a governance structure for working together that will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability and describing--

(1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;

(2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;

(3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and

(4) The plan for when and how the State will involve representatives from Participating Programs, Early Childhood Educators or their representatives, parents and families, including parents and families of Children with High Needs, and other key stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant.

(b) Demonstrating that the Participating State Agencies are strongly committed to the State Plan, to the governance structure of the grant, and to effective implementation of the State Plan, by including in the MOU or other binding agreement between the State and each Participating State Agency--

(1) Terms and conditions that reflect a strong commitment to the State Plan by each Participating State Agency, including terms and conditions designed to align and leverage the Participating State Agencies' existing funding to support the State Plan;

(2) "Scope-of-work" descriptions that require each Participating State Agency to implement all applicable portions of the State Plan and a description of efforts to maximize the number of Early Learning and Development Programs that become Participating Programs; and

(3) A signature from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency; and

(c) Demonstrating commitment to the State Plan from a broad group of stakeholders that will assist the State in reaching the ambitious yet achievable goals outlined in response to selection criterion (A)(2)(a), including by obtaining--

(1) Detailed and persuasive letters of intent or support from Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, and, if applicable, local early learning councils; and

(2) Letters of intent or support from such other stakeholders as Early Childhood Educators or their representatives; the State's legislators; local community leaders; State or local school boards; representatives of private and faith-based early learning programs; other State and local leaders (e.g., business, community, tribal, civil rights, education association leaders); adult education and family literacy State and local leaders; family and community organizations (e.g., parent councils, nonprofit organizations, local foundations, tribal organizations, and community-based organizations); libraries and children's museums; health providers; and postsecondary institutions.

#### Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

#### Comments on (A)(3)

a)(1) The applicant's organizational structure is based on the governance model already in place enacted by the passage of Proposition 203 in 2006 and the agreement of the Participating State Agency included in the application. This structure is helpful that it allows for quick action and also has the fiduciary safeguard for an accountable system. The orchestration of the plan is the responsibility of FTF. Providing reasonable assurance the model is operating as intended the structure of work at the committee level contributes to ongoing model improvement to maintain effectiveness, promote better management and understanding of the limitations, minimizing the risks early enough for corrective measures to be timely and achievable. This is key as the transparency of involvement and accountability will take on an ownership of each of the participating groups. This allows for shared achievements. (2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State's Inter-agency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, builds upon the applicant managing the grant and how it builds upon existing inter-agency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, that are already in place. Because of the overarching governing structure of the State Board and FTF, the Regional Partnership Councils have a significant amount of influence in supporting and driving the local goals for children that are based on overall agreed upon outcomes that the applicant proposes. While the final authority for determining program service strategy, council priorities and funding is the responsibility of the FTF Board, local responsibility and accountability are critical as the state moves away from centralized decision making and flattens the authority of this investment. To further the support of the activities and investments proposed in the plan, the applicant will build on the existing system of governance and infrastructure and proposes two new advisory structures that will be linked directly to the FTF board and complement the existing structure. The first will be the Interagency Directors Coordinating Council whose purpose will be to make decisions and recommendations about policy and data issue, grant finance and program services. The second will be a System Integration Taskforce which will be responsible for setting the strategic policies and program direction the RTT-ELC initiatives. It will serve as a conduit to external stakeholders. These two committee structures assist the applicant in solidifying the appropriate state system "players" to accelerate the necessary changes in directives, policy, systems integration, funding (re-) allocation and recommendations. It recognizes the value and importance that center directors have to offer and wants to create a venue for their voice and expertise to be heard from a practitioner perspective. Secondly, the System Integration Task force will take on a monumental task of taking a relational base industry design and converting it into a structure that is technologically capable. By becoming current, it will allow for the gathering of outcome data to be accounted for and also to create policies based on the utility and results of this information. (3) The applicant proposes a Governance and Dispute Resolution format that includes key tenets and expectations of practicing transparency and open dialogue, respecting others opinions, being responsive to cultural differences, and making decisions constructively. The Early Childhood Strategic Plan Road map, revised July 2008 supports the premise of which the involvement of public and private partners and communities operate

under. (4) The applicant has designed a structure for representation and participation from the vested stakeholder community by structuring governance-related roles and responsibilities that builds upon the applicant managing the grant and how it builds upon existing inter-agency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, that are already in place. The applicant has in place a FTF Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board – Arizona Tribal Government Consultation Policy that recognizes Tribal Sovereignty. The applicant has 19 of 22 tribes committed to participating in the process. This is a testament to the hard work of bringing in different governmental entities that are unique to our structure of governance and that have equal voice. (b) The applicant demonstrates the agreement and commitment of the Participating State Agencies to the State Plan, to the governance structure of the grant, and to effective implementation of the State Plan. Their MOUs, with signatures and Scope of Work (SOW) demonstrate the commitment to RTT-ELC alignment and coordination. 1) The applicant has met the requirement of including the terms and conditions that reflect a strong commitment to the State Plan by each Participating State Agency, including terms and conditions designed to align and leverage the Participating State Agencies' existing funding to support the State Plan; (2) The applicant has met the requirement of listing out the "Scope-of-work" descriptions that require each Participating State Agency to implement all applicable portions of the State Plan and a description of efforts to maximize the number of Early Learning and Development Programs that become Participating Programs; and (3) The applicant has met the requirement of having a signature from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency included in this application. (c) The applicant has demonstrated the community commitment to the State Plan from a broad group of stakeholders. (1) The applicant has secured detailed and persuasive letters of intent or support from: i) the philanthropic community that commits an investment that aligns with the RTT-ELC to support early literacy as a funding priority which aligns with the common statewide Kindergarten assessment in RTT-ELC grant; ii) Several philanthropic foundations have expressed strong considerations to support: early learning/literacy; the development of Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, and, if applicable, local early learning councils; continue RTT-ELC for sustainability; and expanding the Exemplary Teacher Initiative to recognize Early Childhood educators. The response of commitment from the philanthropic community points to the opportunity of increased dollars that could support increased number of high need children identified in the proposal as well as a starting point for sustainability as RTT-ELC dollars are spent (if the applicant would be awarded). (2) the applicant has received letters of intent and support from other stakeholders that pledge a commitment to working cooperatively and collaborative with FTF to ensure the goals to support an integrated approach to service delivery, that is accountable to the linguistic and cultural needs of families and children. Key letters included are from: the Arizona Head Start Association; The Arizona Association for the Education of Young Children; the state CCRR; the largest provider of early childhood services; the Advisory Council on Indian Health Care; Arizona Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics; Arizona Council for Exceptional Children; prevention/crisis/abuse saving agencies; Chicanos Por La Causa, the faith community; superintendents of schools throughout the state; housing/ medical/business. What is a clear omission in this proposal is the lack of a substantial relationship with the Spanish speaking community and venues within it that are not included in the proposal. The applicant speaks to "transparency" in its approach to the community of the highest need of native and English language learners, but offers very few concrete examples of working with the Spanish speaking community, which would be both consumers and advocates of this application. The applicant goes deep and broad in using the existing governance structure and creating the two new advisory structures to interface with FTF state board. Establishing the governance structure provides an ongoing venue and vehicle for facilitating inter-agency coordination, prioritizing, streamlining decision-making and breaking down any future barriers. his supports and gives direction to a reform agenda. Overall the the System Integration Taskforce will offer the mechanism for the state and local agency representatives, higher education, key stakeholders and advocates to monitor progress of the goals, and subsequent planning and recommendations and corrections unforeseen issues. The broadness of this design will assist the applicant with achieving its goal because the "right" partners were included in the strategy. Everyone will want to be part of the "achievement" outcome. The transparency of structuring this State Plan to achieve an effective reform agenda has been accomplished in the application.

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>

The extent to which the State Plan--

(a) Demonstrates how the State will use existing funds that support early learning and development from Federal, State, private, and local sources (e.g., CCDF; Title I and II of ESEA; IDEA; Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program; State preschool; Head Start Collaboration and State Advisory Council funding; Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program; Title V MCH Block Grant; TANF; Medicaid; child welfare services under Title IV (B) and (E) of the Social Security Act; Statewide Longitudinal Data System; foundation; other private funding sources) for activities and services that help achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, including how the quality set-asides in CCDF will be used;

(b) Describes, in both the budget tables and budget narratives, how the State will effectively and efficiently use funding from this grant to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, in a manner that--

- (1) Is adequate to support the activities described in the State Plan;
- (2) Includes costs that are reasonable and necessary in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of the activities described in the State Plan and the number of children to be served; and
- (3) Details the amount of funds budgeted for Participating State Agencies, localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, or other partners, and the specific activities to be implemented with these funds consistent with the State Plan, and demonstrates that a significant amount of funding will be devoted to the local implementation of the State Plan; and

(c) Demonstrates that it can be sustained after the grant period ends to ensure that the number and percentage



of Children with High Needs served by Early Learning and Development Programs in the State will be maintained or expanded.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

**Comments on (A)(4)**

(a) 1. The applicant has proposed an ambitious and comprehensive investment and allocation structure to support the early learning and development strategy. The cross integration agreements from State Partnerships and the designated resources that are tied to policy and outcomes are broad and lack details to substantiate understanding of the entire cost allocation. The applicant understands this undertaking and the enormity of this structure and provides a detailed year by year break down of the existing investment and allocation from the State Partnership Agencies, which include Federal, State, private and local resources totaling \$761,907,202 and what each entity will cover of the program details. One of the philanthropic community funders will contribute an additional \$2.9 million to support the development of a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment, which will align with the goals of the applicant, but this is only if the grant is funded. The applicant has the commitment from the Arizona Department of Education as a full collaborative partner who will, in addition to committing state resources, commit to the development of an interconnected data system for the project. 2. By virtue of the First Things First State Statute, the lead agency cannot spend or allocate more than 10% of its budget from the early childhood development and health fund on administrative overhead. This safeguards that the applicant must have in place an administrative structure that can be supported well enough to meet its deliverable and also get dollars out to programs to implement services. The state Advisory Council commits through HHS Maternal and Child Health Bureau ECE Comprehensive Systems \$2.5 million for the development of a statewide model system to achieve desired outcomes for the next 5 years, which support the on-going efforts. A strategic Communications Plan focused in 2010 on increasing public awareness and result indicate targeting more efforts at the K12, faith and business community and expand the social media venues. What the applicant omits to include here is the intentional media strategy that focuses on ELL. This omission continues throughout the proposal and does not support a transparent process, nor is this accounted for in the budget. b-2) The applicant has a sound knowledge of the CCDF and CCDF Quality Set Aside resources, which are the basis for the state's child care subsidies and has listed the amounts and lists of agencies these go to. FTF's infusion of resources since 2009 has continually augmented the subsidy resources and is expected to add another \$52.1 million dollars to this pool during the four year cycle of the RTT-ELC. Additionally, the structure of the FTF Regional Councils allows them to locally fund programs to specific populations. Examples of 2012 allocations are Quality Child Care Expansion, Capital Expansion \$2.2 million; FFN \$2.6 million; Inclusion 1 million and Summer Kindergarten Transition \$333,652. b-3) The applicant provides details of the budgeted amount of participating partners and all stakeholders with a combined commitment of \$761,902,167 million for the entire four year RTT-ELC period. This amount is further detailed by each department specifically. The applicant provides budget narratives that define the designated funds and the program allocations for the implementation strategies devoted to this program. With a caveat that federal appropriations for future funding have not been made, the application outlines a commitment linking the Title I and II of ESEA of \$40,635,871 for the four-year grant period of RTT-ELC. This agreement supports a substantial policy, system and funding commitment to ensure resources are committed that align with the goals outlined in RTT. (c) The applicant articulates a thoughtful strategy by carefully planning and long range forecasting to ensure sustainability as part of the commitment to continue services to children. Currently, the FTF agency has an accumulated \$435 million fund balance which was intentionally built up during its first years to promote the sustainability of its programs and strategies. While a very thought out approach to sustainability is presented and merits a medium high response, what is difficult to ascertain is the numbers of services per recipient(s) and the cost analysis associated with it to determine a baseline unit and budget needed for sustainability.

**B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs**

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	10	8
<p>The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and adopted, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and adopt, a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System that--</p> <p>(a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Early Learning and Development Standards;</li> <li>(2) A Comprehensive Assessment System;</li> <li>(3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications;</li> <li>(4) Family engagement strategies;</li> <li>(5) Health promotion practices; and</li> <li>(6) Effective data practices;</li> </ul> <p>(b) Is clear and has standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children; and</p> <p>(c) Is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs.</p>		



**Comments on (B)(1)**

The applicant and its partnering entities have both a vision and model (including a current structure) to institute a statewide equitable Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. They have in place a standards continuum that is for Infant/Toddlers, for preschoolers and also for kindergartners, specific to English language arts and mathematics. This continuum or pipeline approach will measure a comprehensive assessment system, standards for screening measures, formative assessments, environmental quality and quality of adult-child interactions. Three of these tools are commercial products, they are constantly being scrutinized and thus evolving measured against evidence based research to ensure they are free from bias and interpretation and that they support the consumer in meeting the developmental needs of children. The applicant is acting responsibly in structuring the Improvement Systems with these instruments. To support its success, the applicant is aware that it can only be as successful as the validity of those individuals implementing it are. To that end, the applicant's internal monitoring will include a School Readiness Indicator instrument, training on inter-rated reliability and program assessors who will monitor quality standards. This design provides a 360° look at a structure from beginning to end allowing for changes and improvements as measures are being evaluated. This is on-going and should be as it reflects the changes of the interactions amongst human beings. (a) The applicant has adopted and already implemented a common, statewide Tiered Quality Improvement and Rating System (TQRIS), called Quality First. As of July 2011 750 programs are enrolled statewide, representing more than 20% of state regulated program and 11% of Family Child Care Homes. The tiered Program Standards included in this application are aligned and included in this application and are linked to the State's licensing system. 1) Included within the standards are multiple valid and reliable assessments. Standards for screening measures are included in the 3-5 star tiers (Quality First Points Scale). 2) For formative assessment the applicant will use the Strategies Gold, which is a valid and reliable assessment tool. For measures for environmental quality they have in place the Environmental Ratings Scales for Infant/preschool/Family Child Care. The Measures of Quality of Adult Child interactions are supported by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). The applicant's assessment system is comprehensive because it includes the Quality First Points Scale which enhances the above mentioned tools as it supports three evidence based quality areas of Staff Qualifications, Administrative Practices and Curriculum and Child Assessment. This compilation of tools supports indicators with evidence of predicting quality in early learning programs. 3) The applicant provides measures early childhood educator qualifications by structuring a phase in approach over a four year period to move the early childhood educator from either an AA or AAS to a BA or BS. It will use the Quality First Points Scale as its regulatory measuring point along with college course alignment and licensing to ensure certification and degree attainment. 4) The applicant has described its program standards for family engagement strategies which are based on the Social Studies Standard in the Arizona Early Learning Standards that align with the tier criteria of the Star systems proposed by the applicant. The strategy specifies what standards must be in compliance as they are compared against the state's Star rating system. 5) The health promotion practices are integrated across all star tiers through the requirement that licensed programs meet health, nutrition, and physical activity standards in the nationally recognized EMPOWER program. 6) The applicant has provided supporting information to detail its effective data practices to be incorporated at the 3-5 Star tiers. Programs must align curriculum and instructional practices with individualized learning objectives in order for then to be measurable. (b) The applicant demonstrates that the standards it has selected to use are based on evidence based research and models of standard structures that include National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), The National Association of Early Childhood Specialist in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE) document of Early Learning Standards: Creating the Conditions for Success. Quality defined by the applicant within the Quality First Rating Scale and determined by the combination of scores of ERS, CLASS and Quality First Point Scale instruments. The result is a score that aligns with a start rating, lower level programs are differentiated from 3 plus star level programs who must meet standards. (c) By stipulating it will pay for all licensing fees, the applicant provides evidence that suggest that the Quality First outcome base framework requiring that all provides be licensed or certified by the state or by one of Arizona's 22 federally recognized tribes or military installations is both doable and attainable. Paying for the fees will incentivize providers in meeting this minimal requirement. This effort will establish new relationships to work together, where for some providers this may not have existed prior to this strategy. Overall the applicant demonstrates it has adopted a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	15	11

The extent to which the State has maximized, or has a High-Quality Plan to maximize, program participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Implementing effective policies and practices to reach the goal of having all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate in such a system, including programs in each of the following categories--

- (1) State-funded preschool programs;
- (2) Early Head Start and Head Start programs;
- (3) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA;
- (4) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of the ESEA; and
- (5) Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program;

(b) Implementing effective policies and practices designed to help more families afford high-quality child care and maintain the supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs (e.g., maintaining or increasing subsidy reimbursement rates, taking actions to ensure affordable co-payments, providing incentives to high-quality providers to participate in the subsidy program), and

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by type of Early Learning and Development Program (as listed in (B)(2)(a)(1) through (5) above).

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(2)**

(a) (1-5) The applicant's policies to support the maximum program participation are relatively new. However, it does support program participation by offering different training and coaching elements, T.E.A.C.H. educator scholarships and financial incentives and rewards ranging from \$16,000 per participating program in large center based programs to \$4,000 per participating programs in small family child care homes. The TQRIS Service, Support and Incentive Package also pays for a portion of the licensing fees depending on the assessed level of quality. With state allocations for FY 2012 of combined for Quality First and quality supports, they have designated roughly \$112 million dollars for direct incentives to program at average awards of \$30,000 for centers and \$23,000 for home based programs. The "teacher stipends", or what they call the Professional REWARDS and TEACH scholarships, are in addition to this amount. This infusion of dollars at the local level to programs directly will change the programs completely. The applicant's infusion of dollars for programs will contribute to the school readiness goals since often times under achieving programs also suffer from a lack of engaging and appropriate materials that enhance a (robust) environment in which children can thrive in. Additionally, providers cannot afford to send their teachers to training, classes, or retain the more capacitated because of the lower wage range they had to offer. The current policy articulates the importance of early education experiences, it changes the view of the value of early education to the point that it will have the desired impact of bridging those gaps, reducing teacher turn over, building teacher capacity, and aligning with K-12 master plans. (b) The applicant is aware of the statistics of child care arrangements outside of the home, based on national information, and has data to substantiate the cost of care for young children in Arizona. Because of the exuberant cost associated with care for low income – high need families, FTF has made a deliberate decision to link Quality First Scholarships and Prekindergarten Scholarships and CCDF Child Care Subsidies to the TQRIS. This decision is driven by the importance of linking access to increased readiness at sites. The applicant has demonstrated that the MOUs amongst DES, Quality First, DES and the Governor's office will add clarity to policies and strategies that link CCDF payment rates to tiered levels in Quality First, increasing the number of children with high needs participant in high quality programs. (c) The applicant proposes to increase its targets by increasing the number and diversity of licensed programs who are serving low income children offering them the Quality First scholarships and linking them back to the Quality First tiered assessment. This effort will be further solidified and increased by 26% (2013) in order to ensure that each program participating is receiving an allocation of Quality First Scholarships. The applicant proposes that by 2014 50% of all providers in the DHS regulated system will participate in Quality First and receive scholarships. Simultaneously, FTF is purposing that by 2014 any program that is in its system and still receiving a score of 1 within the star rating be eliminated from participation. This decision demonstrates the applicant's awareness of a defined strategy that will impact quality in neighborhoods where children with high needs are concentrated, but not sure this is achievable due to that the majority of its high need population is in unregulated care. Overall the applicant demonstrates it has maximized program participation in its TQRIS by offering all of the supports outlined in design of a high quality child care approach.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs</b>	15	12

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency; and

(b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (e.g., displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(3)**

(a) The applicant has provided evidence that it has researched and determined the validity and reliability of tools it has selected to monitor its programs. Their structure is based on using evidence based tools and mirroring practices already in place in several other states. This is an expensive system necessary to support a relational-base validation structure which requires many on-site hours of human contact and all have inter-rater reliability safeguards. The Quality First assessors each receive 12 weeks of rigorous training to ensure reliability, and the Training of Trainers is conducted by the authors or certified personnel who are all reliable. All trainers must maintain a reliability level of .85 on ERS and .80 on CLASS, and trainers are re-evaluated on every 10th training they conduct in the field. To ensure that reliability is consistently being met, training for trainers not meeting their "point value" are offered additional training before they are able to conduct assessments again. The applicant has provided a schedule of rating frequency of centers and home base options based on the initial rating score that they reviewed. Those sites that received under a 2 score are rated annually and those above a 3 are rated every two years. The applicant states that after 12-18 months of participation, both at baseline and progress programs still remained at a 2 star rating level. While the applicant states this is a national "norm", there is still concern that both baseline and progress programs should remain at a 2 star rating and this should be further evaluated. Many variables are in place that can impact the changes in a center's score. Teacher turnover or absence; new, absent or different child behaviors; evaluator inter-reliability; change in the day routine; interruptions, and it goes on. The applicant stated that it consulted with the tribal nations who submitted the MOUs for this application to ensure that the instruments are appropriate for their programs and the feedback was included in the Trainer of Trainers training. The applicant however did not mention any information that these training tools or assessment are equally relevant for the Spanish speaking community of high need children, specifically as it relates to assessing children who do not speak English. The State does not account for the challenges around one tool, the CLASS tool, which rates adult-child interactions. The tool is currently not language specific other than English causing the need to translate observations on the spot, that can potentially interfere with rater reliability as well as objective observations. (b) The applicant proposes several avenues to provide quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs in the following ways. The CCCRR and DHS who oversees Child Care Licensing created a public website in spring 2011 that the applicant states is easily accessible and interactive and the development of a marketing plain aimed primarily at families. This system, if easily accessible, should help families access current information that will help them understand. Part of the information that is lacking and is not clearly articulated is how the applicant will demystify the reason and the interconnectedness of the ratings/assessment and how they actually impact the individual child. This information is necessary to allow the parent to become the informed consumer. The State has not provided evidence that they will account for language abilities on the web page or how it will consider reading and comprehension abilities of low income consumers. Overall the applicant has provided evidence that it has established the validity and reliability of tools to monitor its programs. While the language challenges for non English speakers is evident the revised CLASS tool for Spanish speakers will address some of these issues.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs</b>	20	16

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

- (a) Developing and implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve (e.g., through training, technical assistance, financial rewards or incentives, higher subsidy reimbursement rates, compensation);
- (b) Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs (e.g., providing full-day, full-year programs; transportation; meals; family support services); and
- (c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing--
  - (1) The number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and
  - (2) The number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)
<p>a) The applicant has articulated a developed structure for implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve. As part of its policy, low rating centers will receive more coaching and technical assistance while higher rating programs will receive lesser amounts of coaching and technical assistance but higher financial incentives with greater flexibility. The rationale that the applicant states for this formula is to ensure that families who are low income have increased access to higher quality centers. The applicant did not speak to the needs of working families who may require non-traditional hour, split shifts, evening or over nite care often are characteristics of low wage families that would fall within the eligibility of the target population. This omission seriously questions the applicant's understanding of the working profiles of low-income families. The ambitiousness of the applicant institutionalizing this change is evident with its goal of doubling the state's investment of 2012 from \$5,778,400 to \$10,536,952 in 2013. The applicant is aggressively structuring this component with the required allocation of funds for a case management model and centralized "command center". The model of the case loads for Coaches will be 9-12 with a model</p>



Coaching Academy located throughout the state with six centers fully staffed, a "one-stop shop" for providers to access the links to increased coaching, rating, scholarships and incentives, resources (that are culturally and linguistically appropriate for communities and materials). This is a very positive design and localizes the opportunity in localities that are familiar to providers and not far away in a part of the state that may be too uninviting for providers to go to. (b) The applicant has linked the state subsidies in an effort to help families whose income meets 200 percent or less of the federal poverty level to access Quality First Scholarships, and Prekindergarten Scholarships. Those parents who are eligible are able to draw CCDF support. These programs are funded two years prior to the start of kindergarten, are full or part day and range from 10 to 12 month programs depending on the need. The applicant's state system partnerships approach will support the access and the data collection to create a "seamless" system for parents that would otherwise be jumping from one system bureaucracy to another. These programs that will offer the subsidies are also linked with the Star Rating system to support the high quality commitment to the community of high need. The applicant claims that the CCDF subsidy dollars supports more than 30,300 children from families with household incomes at or below 165 and Arizona has always maintained the state match requirement to draw down all federal dollars. This is critical as the FTF strategy will go both broad and deep to provide additional spaces and create a pipeline structure for families as children grow into other program options. The applicant has designed the strategy of systems and scholarships to align with program goals that are participating in Quality First in order to priorities selection for working families. These programs all also participate in the USDA Child And Adult Care Food Program and links family support services, home visitation, community based parent education, and other services. This approach contributes to increases in educational attainment and outcomes for high risk children. c) The applicant provides evidence that it has conceptualized the design for a tiered differential structure that will systematically drop programs who are not meeting the potential of increased quality, based on the TQRIS it has established. 1) The applicant provides evidence that supports baseline projections of programs rated in the 3-5 star level, receiving extended intensive coaching and other improvements by each year of the grant period, Baseline as of 2011 in all levels shows 756 providers and programmatic projections for 2015 show 2,346 providers. These numbers account for the range of providers from 1-5 star in the TQRIS. 2) The applicant provides information that offers a projection of the different funding categories and the increase of numbers and percentage of children participating in the proposed projections. What is not clear in this table of information is the star rating categories of programs within the silos of funding. This information would help to determine strategies based on strength, weakness and quality. Overall the applicant demonstrates it has articulated a developed structure for implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve and participate in the structures and supports it has developed.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.</b>	15	9

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to design and implement evaluations—working with an independent evaluator and, when warranted, as part of a cross-State evaluation consortium—of the relationship between the ratings generated by the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and the learning outcomes of children served by the State's Early Learning and Development Programs by--

(a) Validating, using research-based measures, as described in the State Plan (which also describes the criteria that the State used or will use to determine those measures), whether the tiers in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality; and

(b) Assessing, using appropriate research designs and measures of progress (as identified in the State Plan), the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

#### Comments on (B)(5)

(a) The applicant has designed a structure and support system, that uses researched based measures to determine and increase star rating point value for providers to know the performance measures they fall within. As part of this structure the application proposes i. be comprehensive and integrated in assessing quality and changes in programs and settings within diverse communities; ii) have sound empirical support and strong validity and reliability; and iii) accurately reflect differential levels of program quality. The measures used are substantiated by the comprehensive and integrated design, have strong validity and reliability components and accurately reflect differential levels of program quality and consider both home base and center base environments. The measure of language transferability is not expounded on within the context of this rubric. It is unclear what happens to the process and results when the observer is viewing an exchange where the child clearly is not dominant in the operating language (in this case English) and is being assessed, or the teacher is being observed while speaking another language to the child and the instruments do not address this. (b) The applicant is both cognizant and has articulated their desirability to find through evaluation changes in quality ratings as they are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness. And to do this they want the findings to help them know what the short and long term impact of the Quality First system within the state's current cultural, economic and social contexts would be. This robust approach supports the tenet of community value and systems integration that align with each other and build on a strength base model rather than not. The applicant has baseline data projects and activities already in progress (4 years worth) including samplings that suggest participation in both Quality First and non-Quality First programs and a future advisory panel which will help guide the direction of the methodology and recommendations form the evaluation studies. Overall the applicant demonstrates it has considered the variability in the validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. The composition of the recommended advisory panel members speaks to the applicant's desirability for experienced researchers that have both policy and content expertise in conducting educational research in an evaluative manner.



**Focused Investment Areas (C), (D), and (E)**

Each State must address in its application—

- (1) Two or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (C),
- (2) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (D), and
- (3) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (E)

The total available points for each Focused Investment Area will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address in that area, so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points.

**C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children**

The total available points that an applicant may receive for selection criteria (C)(1) through (C)(4) is 60. The 60 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address all four selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 15 points. If the applicant chooses to address two selection criteria, each criterion will be worth up to 30 points.

The applicant must address at least two of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (C), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>25</b>
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that—</p> <p>(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State’s K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;</p> <p>(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State’s Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and</p> <p>(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)
<p>(a)The applicant presents evidence that the State’s Early Learning and Development Standards are universally designed to support all children learning and include input from a diverse group of individuals across disciplines and regional representation, ensuring that the standards and guidelines are developmentally responsive to the needs of the High Need designated population. The applicant has verified the appropriateness of the Infant/Toddler Guidelines with English Language Learners and children with delays or disabilities. The Infant/Toddler Guidelines supports the teachers to work with children who are English Language Learners and addresses individual and cultural variance of very young children, always with the tenet that the primary context is always supported by their family and by programs where the child is cared for. The applicant’s use of the Arizona Early Learning Standards reflect the most current research of what children need to know and be able to do to be ready for school, particularly around the emotional and motivations self regulations indicators for development. The applicant’s standards also include mathematics indicators, which are supported by the National Research Council report Mathematics Learning in Early Childhood: Paths towards Excellence and Equity (2009). Language and literacy standards are part of this rubric. The applicant demonstrates that it has done due diligence to secure evidenced based standards for the high need population to date. However, it is evident that a language specific tool on how to use the standards with ELL still needs to be explored. (b) As noted in other sections of this report, the applicant’s Arizona Early Learning Standards contain a matrix at the end of each standard section that makes the alignment across programs and grade levels clear. Currently the standards align with the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework and the Arizona Academic Standards for kindergarten. This structure and mechanism allows and facilitates the curricular and assessment alignments of the tools and learning outcomes for children. The applicant’s standards also include mathematics indicators which are supported by the National Research Council report, Mathematics Learning in Early Childhood: Paths towards Excellence and Equity (2009). The applicant has foreseen the need to update and align its standards with the newly adopted English Language Arts and Mathematics Common Core State Standards approved by the State Board of Education (K-12) with the Early Learning Standards and the revised Head Start Outcomes Framework in 2012. This strategy supports the applicant’s goal of ensuring that this becomes part of the state’s “master plan” which has policy and funding implications. This level of alignment creates a pathway to expand the state’s master plan from K-12 to Pre-K to 12. The applicant is forward thinking to structure this in this manner. (c)The applicant is diligent and has met the requirement of presenting a comprehensive set of program standards and indicators that align early learning</p>

development programs using and incorporating the comprehensiveness assessment systems (ECKERS, CLASS) to school readiness. The connection to curricula, assessment and professional development is evidenced by the use of the Program Guidelines for high Quality Early Education: Birth through Kindergarten, the AzEIS Infant/Toddler Developmental Guidelines, the screening and assessment practices, the on going training development and within a train the trainer model to disseminate the standards and strategies. (d)The applicant has in place the appropriate players and partners to ensure the promotion and understanding of the Early Learning and Development Standards across programs. First and foremost it has included the regulatory systems, the support systems and the colleges who will academically prepare providers by granting certificates, degrees and or credentials. A detail table which includes Key milestones/activities for each of these entities is detailed in the proposal and supports the key goals of the applicant's summary along with a realistic timeline. Overall the applicant demonstrates its understanding of the regulatory and governance protocols to support a learned community of educators by using and implementing a high quality plan of ELD Standards.

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>24</b>

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information and support to families of Children with High Needs in order to promote school readiness for their children by--

(a) Establishing a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement across the levels of its Program Standards, including activities that enhance the capacity of families to support their children's education and development;

(b) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported on an on-going basis to implement the family engagement strategies included in the Program Standards; and

(c) Promoting family support and engagement statewide, including by leveraging other existing resources such as through home visiting programs, other family-serving agencies, and through outreach to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (C)(4)**

(a) The applicant states it will concentrate its engagement strategies in communities with a high density of English Language Learners and tribal children, with the goal of creating environments rich in vocabulary, language and literacy. It further goes on to cite the specific language statistic of the largest language High Need group (Spanish speaking) to be 59% in adults, and 46% of children. (b)The applicant states it will engage standards based activities to reach 11,000 parents annually and train and support 5,000 early childhood educators annually in effectively engaging families to be their child's first teacher. The applicant will partner with Raising a Reader, the Arizona Multi-Housing Association and resource centers to serve approximately 20,000 families where mixed delivery of services in high urban areas is a model structure. Language and culturally appropriate parent engagement strategies have been considered by the applicant and relationships with the resource centers and the housing association are critical entities for reaching the population designated. This model of support addresses the issue of access, eliminating the need for transportation and encouraging social cohesion, which supports positive impacts of parental attitudes to reading to their children and other more positive behaviors. The applicant describes a targeted effort in remote areas of key tribal lands (reservations), which will expand maternal child health programs to integrate an early literacy component. This model addresses the culturally responsive needs and standards of practice which are effective early literacy programs by offering parents and children a series of classes. This approach is based on the need indicated by the outcome data for Native children. Because of the isolation in many of the reservations and the lack of materials, modeling needs to take on a more deliberate approach and will increase the participation of early childhood educators as they will be supported to do what is part of the whole continuum of parental involvement. Designated focus with several tribes will work towards preserving of Native culture and language. An initial designation of \$700,000 dedicated to preservation, and strengthening of 13,000 children has been recommended. The established MOU that the applicant has with 19 native tribes is a testament to the seriousness of ensuring that native children reach their full potential, in or outside of the reservation. (c) The applicant has made it evident by the MOU with tribes, housing, resource centers the state partnering agencies that an initial investment of \$40 million to family support strategies will help meet the goal of family support and engagement. The structures of the Regional Councils will also further this goal because local designation of resources can also be prioritized, and put into place, solidifying the mechanisms. Specifically \$19.3 million dollars are designated for the ELL literacy strategy. Raising A Reader is currently being implemented across central and north Phoenix which has a large English language learner population and that based on the applicant will support the acquisition of English for English Language learners. The applicant has also secured an agreement with the libraries as primary vehicles for implementing Raising A Reader with bilingual trainers. On Indian lands, two very isolated tribes will work to integrate a community based early literacy program, bringing print, print motivation, vocabulary, letter knowledge, phonological awareness and narrative skills. Overall the applicant demonstrates and presents a model of inclusion with adults and children alike that supports a culturally rich strategy by which extended learning is easily transferred in order to promote school readiness for children.

#### D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

The total points that a State may earn for selection criteria (D)(1) and (D)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points.

The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (D), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.</b>	20	16
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--</p> <p>(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;</p> <p>(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p>		
Scoring Rubric Used: <b>Quality and Implementation</b>		
<b>Comments on (D)(1)</b>		
<p>The applicant is clear of the investment, both human and financial capital to initiate a plan that supports the development of a statewide workforce framework that ties to improved child outcomes and attainment of credentials and degrees. It has already established that it will work with the post-secondary and other professional development providers in aligning the Knowledge and Competency Framework to accomplish this as well as the regulatory agencies that account for the degrees and the REWARDS incentives. It is evident by the proposed strategy that the applicant is cognizant of the impact that financial resources have in securing dedicated staff work on the issues that will bring along the policy, structural and programmatic changes. In doing so, the agreements in the MOU's will accelerate the proposed framework transformation at the colleges and help support the overall development of an educated workforce with credentials. Already established is the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and Career Ladder which S*CCEEDS (Statewide Child Care and Early Education Development System) uses to provide a statewide credential verification system, a registry and mechanisms to community training opportunities. Since 2006 three universities developed a BA degree program and teaching certification that aligned to ADE and NAEYC's professional teaching standards, Core Knowledge and Competencies and the Arizona Early Learning Standards. This will serve as a model for other colleges/universities to put in place at their institutions. As an earlier proponent to institutional work, the State School Readiness Board recommended in 2003 that the School Readiness Action Plan focus on four policy areas of scholarships, wage incentives, leadership development and articulation to form the work for the next decade. This significant recommendation advanced (\$39 million dollars) professional development strategies, including T.E.A.C.H., REWARDS, and other scholarship and recruitment strategies. The applicant has a pilot to advance the attainment of a bachelor's degree with a cohort of teachers, looking to revise the Core Knowledge Elements and competencies that align with ADE Professional Teaching standards and teacher certification requirements, and also bring along the CDA to associate's BA progression with common course articulation amongst the universities. This is a significant breakthrough for the field in unifying the framework from policy, to standards, to degree attainment with an evaluation component that will point to the efficacy of the professional development system. To further support the retention of high-quality early care and education professionals, it is providing financial awards based on educational achievement, wages earned and hours worked per week. To date, 1,783 awards have been handed out. This strategy is necessary to support the elevation of worth of the field in the pipeline of educators and consumers as well get teachers through the process of obtaining the necessary academic requirements. Structural obstacles for teachers in High Need communities that are still pending are: a) removing barriers to participation for tribal communities; b) terminal AAs or CDA; c) a bilingual AA or BA program. Overall the applicant offers evidence that its aggressive timeline, is both realistic and achievable. Convening work groups of faculty and administrators from collaborating post secondary institutions to: a) engage on college degree program curriculum develop and create a reformed degree progression; b) develop the scope and sequence for inter-university articulation; and c) develop a culturally responsive course content. In summary the applicant provides evidence that it has a structure and commitment in place to develop a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework along with a progression of credentials for providers.</p>		
	Available	Score
<b>(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.</b>	20	16

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to improve the effectiveness and retention of Early Childhood Educators who work with Children with High Needs, with the goal of improving child outcomes by--

(a) Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities that are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;

(b) Implementing policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) that promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that is aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and that are designed to increase retention;

(c) Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention; and

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

(1) Increasing the number of postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and the number of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and

(2) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

#### Comments on (D)(2)

The applicant is realistic in stating that many early childhood educators "comprise a 'high need' population" that routinely encounter obstacles in degree attainment. Often times they fall in the categories of low-income and high need consumers with many of the same obstacles identified for families in the programs. The applicant has set ambitious but unclear if achievable targets to assist early education providers to obtain their degrees. While the applicant understands that the road to post-secondary degrees will take longer for non traditional students it provides no information that informs the reader of the varying entry points of the many providers. There is no information to support that the applicant links the bilingual (67% proficient in a language other than English) teacher needs to any of the post secondary strategies. The lack of information on the part of the applicant does not support the reader in understanding the investment of resources, time frame to achieve a reformed articulation alignment structure at the colleges. The link of the college system to work together to "reform" a currently ineffective early childhood education degree includes: i. a cross section matriculation alignment; ii. the resources centers to support individual students/teachers; iii. and the establishment of a work group to look at models for learning communities targeted specifically for key areas of competencies, language and literacy and assessment and data use. This will be pivotal to secure a structure that will be poised and prepared to handle the influx of the numbers proposed by the applicant into a system that has not been able to be responsive. All of these changes have been proposed by the applicant with the understanding of a state wide strategic plan that aligns workforce standards and initiatives and that must consider customized regional needs for relevant culturally appropriate practices. The applicant has provided baseline data and set targets for performance measures under this category to support its investments of the professional development programs investment by fiscal years. From 2009 through 2012, FTF Investments in Workforce Professional Development has been \$12,265,935.00. This increase will support of 2000 ECE providers with T.E.A.C.H. scholarships and over 1,863 direct incentive REWARDS to teachers who are moving along the educational and professional development (trajectory) in order to obtain a degree, but no specifics listed. The applicant's model to maximize the potential impact of financial support, build infrastructure across workforce development projects will model a Technical Assistance Center for Teachers with the help of the philanthropic partners who already have committed resources for this reform. What the applicant does not elaborate on is after the incubation period of the local Technical Centers who will operate it and how much is projected to run six centers across the state. The sustainability structure for this model was not complete within the application. One of the salient obstacles that the applicant stated was students passing the general education math requirement. To off set this obstacle a tutoring program will be in place to support the re-education of basic math concepts in order to support students in passing the math requirement and to be able to be competent in math to support math learning in the early education environment. d)(1) the applicant provides ambitious but achievable targets for the 4 grant cycle of institutions that will be part of the alignment of degrees and course articulation. In so doing, the applicant has also set an ambitious and achievable number of 1000 early education teachers to be credentialed by an aligned Arizona State institutions of higher learning in four years. (2) The applicant is cognizant of the hard "lifting" work it will engage in with working with the higher education institutions. It will work with the 14 community colleges to align the CKEC and work on alignment with the 4 year institutions. Its projected goals of increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators receive credentials from post secondary institutions is 177 providers. Overall the applicant demonstrates it has in place the supports necessary to ensure that early childhood educators improve their knowledge, skills and abilities in order to increase their effectiveness and stay in the field.

#### E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

*The total points an applicant may earn for selection criteria (E)(1) and (E)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points.*



The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (E), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.</b>	20	10
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant. (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)
<p>The applicant shows evidence that it has in place a statewide High-Quality Plan to implement as part of a State strategy, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades. (a) The applicant's proposed plan does however align with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness, the Kindergarten Academic Standards and the Common Core State Standards as detailed in earlier sections of this proposal. (b) The applicant's proposed assessment will be valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population to the degree that it is evidence based, but falls short in its ability to articulate clearly how English Language Learners will be appropriately assessed. (c) The applicant proposes a phase in statewide implantation plan to initiate in at least one-third of Arizona's school districts no later than 2014-2015, with full implantation no later than 2016-1017. However, there is no reference to how teachers will be trained to administer this assessment or how the validity of the information will be secured. (d) The applicant will opt to comply with Arizona Data Commission requirements. Data will be reported as part of Arizona's Statewide Longitudinal Data System, which will include unique identifiers, and aggregated information that is inclusive of all systems/departments currently accounting for early education services and dollars. (e) The applicant's proposed plan is supported by a cross-sector collaboration including the philanthropic community. This is critical as start up dollars for the investment made by ADE (supported by RTT-ELC allotment) of \$2.9 million and on-gong sustainability will be necessary for its continued implementation. Dollars from the philanthropic community designated for this same effort (to be awarded to FTF for RTT-ELC) will be requested to be reallocated to other areas of the project. The initial burden of costs associated with KEA implementation falls on school districts, and as part of the effective public/private partnerships, so a combined allotment of state and FTF dollars of \$1.2 million will be designated to support the implementation and sustainability. What is unclear, is what the actual costs associated with start-up, phased in implementation and on-going sustainability will be. Overall the applicant does understand and shows evidence that it has in place a statewide High-Quality Plan to implement as part of a State strategy, inclusive of a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades. However, the applicant acknowledges the current limitation of its Kindergarten Entry Assessment not being statewide.</p>

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.</b>	20	14
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to enhance the State's existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System or to build or enhance a separate, coordinated, early learning data system that aligns and is interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and that either data system--</p> <p>(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;</p> <p>(b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;</p> <p>(c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data;</p>		

(d) Generates information that is timely, relevant, accessible, and easy for Early Learning and Development Programs and Early Childhood Educators to use for continuous improvement and decision making; and

(e) Meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (E)(2)**

a) The applicant has provided evidence that supports all of the Essential Data Elements that will operate a federated system. These data elements are necessary to address the issue of children not reading at 3rd grade as presented by the applicant. The correlation of what baseline information for children at Kindergarten entry and at 3rd grade will help inform intervention and teaching strategies. The applicant does outline that the system will have identifiers for child, teacher, school, and classroom to support longitudinal data collection. Additionally, this structure will produce the necessary reports that should reflect the the specific academic growth calculations. The Kindergarten Entry Assessment, which is not systemic at this time will be part of the planning to formulate the necessary evaluation efforts. The warehousing and automation of the analysis and report functions will support the policy directions and investments in other aspects of the proposed plan. The momentum that this will produce for programs will be almost immediate access and less waiting time to effectuate necessary changes. The use of the Head Start PIR, the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and the subsidy will be streamlined and available to the Participating State Agencies as they prepare policy and financial allocations. FTF has also invested \$14.7 million in comprehensive research and evaluation on studies including statewide, longitudinal external evaluation, a child care demand and capacity study, a child care compensation and credentials survey and early care workforce study, and regular statewide and regional needs and assets assessments. They will call it an Early Childhood Learning Data System (ECLDS) that connects to the participating state agencies, the broader early learning community and the P-20 Longitudinal Data System. The Kindergarten Entry Assessment, with planning started in 2009 will formulate the necessary external evaluation efforts as these children matriculate into the K-12 system. This is the pipeline strategy for information. (b) The data collection system that the applicant proposes will consist of Program and Grant Management system, Financial Accounting system, a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement data system and an early childhood data warehouse with automated analytic and reporting functions. This proposed structure will enable uniform data collection and easy entry of the essential data elements by Participating State Agencies and participating programs. An example is the T.E.A.C.H. identifier for all participating programs with teacher information, including credits earned and the Head Start PIR (Program Information Report). (c) The applicant provides evidence that support a structural development that will adhere to strict data policies and transparency through open, public discourse and will guide decisions making. The plan to facilitate the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions, such as Common Education Data Standards, to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data and are outlined by commitment outlined in the MOUS and Gantt Chart enclosed in the proposal. The applicant's proposed timeline for data systems that have consistent standards, polices and procedures will be fully operating and functioning to produce longitudinal reporting by December, 2014. The applicant has provided evidence that support the establishment of a committee, a designated budget line item and protocols to support how this feeds back to program committee work that will actualize any recommended changes based on the outcome of data. Overall the applicant has presented a plan that supports the enhancement of an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services and policies, while acknowledging that its lack of a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment will impact data results.

	Available	Score
<b>Total Points Available for Selection Criteria</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>208</b>

**Priorities**

Competitive Preference Priorities

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry</b>	<b>0 or 10</b>	<b>No</b>

To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--

(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or

(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.

**Comments on (P)(3)**

The applicant does not currently have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment system that meets the criterion above.

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
<b>Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
<b>Comments on Absolute Priority</b>	
<p>Throughout the proposal the applicant is clear and transparent in the need to support the English Language Learners and Children from Tribal Communities bridge the gap of school readiness. This statement is clear throughout the strategies and purposes of the plan in the proposal. The purposeful design of the FTF emphasis on Children with High Needs, the significant stakeholder and public engagement commitment in the early childhood system is a well thought out and locally controlled design. The young but established commitment of the already implemented Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System is a clear indication of the "readiness of the applicant to secure the programmatic information of what children are able to meet as their individual milestones. The workforce plan of action has the tenets of understanding the particulars of the non traditional student of its workforce. The relationship with the institutions of higher learning points to the evidence of what it will take for to have a workforce that is accountable and supported by a well designed training and education platform. Guidelines, standards, alignment, data collection and rating are also all part of the inclusive strategies the applicant has proposed in order to prepare its identified population of children to succeed in Kindergarten and beyond. Lastly, the subsidy increase (based on their local dollars and federal draw downs) will support parent's to access higher quality environments that will be prepared to help guide their children in a more informed and accountable manner but also assist the parents in becoming more competent educators and guides for their children.</p>	