



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # CO-5004

Peer Reviewer:
Lead Monitor:
Support Monitor:
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/16/2011 - 11:55 AM

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: Criterion, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 20. Includes sub-points (a) through (d) describing financial investment, participation numbers, and existing legislation/practices.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

The applicant has strongly meet this criterion by clearly showing the financial investment in early learning and development programs from 2007 to present. The narrative and Table (A)(1)-4 shows increased funding for Early Learning Development programs, increasing by approximately 52% from 2007-2010; and Table (A)(1)-5 shows an increase in state-funded slots available for high needs children, increasing by approximately 48% from 2007-2010. The applicant demonstrates a commitment to early learning and development through the presentation of the various statewide programs serving high needs children (Federal Early Head Start/Head Start, IDEA programs, Title I Preschool Programs, Home Visiting Programs, the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program), early childhood programs (The Denver Preschool Program, Kids First Child Care Resource Center, Summit County Right Start), and promoting high quality early childhood care and education. The applicant discussed the creation of Colorado's Early Childhood Councils (ECCs), developed in 1997, which consist of 30 councils statewide. These councils are made up of a variety of local representation from each community that houses a council. This system was expanded statewide by state statute in 2007. The applicant states that the councils are charged with increasing the access, quality, and equity of early childhood services. The Councils use the Early Childhood Colorado Framework, which the applicant presents as the comprehensive, coordinated service delivery system for children ages birth-age 8. The applicant presented several strategies for funding support. The councils are co-administered by the Department of Human Services and Department of Education through Child Care and Development Block Grant quality dollars. In addition, Philanthropic and business community partners have joined local and state government in support of evaluation, direct service grants, and building early learning infrastructure, such as: • Qualistar Colorado (TQIRS program) • Clayton Educare School - Established in 2006 and designated as a National Center of Excellence in 2010 • Statewide advocacy - Colorado Children's Campaign - champions policies and programs that improve child health, Early childhood experiences, and k-12 education. • Executives Partnering to Invest in Children - EPIC - A group that champions policies and practices to support high need children and support the work of the local councils. Other programs supporting high needs children and quality improvement strategies include: • Colorado Preschool Program - State funded preschool; • Early Head Start/Head Start; • Early Intervention Programs - IDEA programs; • Title I Preschool Program; • Child Care

Licensing; • Home Visiting Programs; • The Colorado Child Care Assistance Program; • The School Readiness Quality Improvement Program - focuses on children with high needs in low performing schools; • Inclusion of Children with Disabilities - Technical support and training for teachers; The applicant gives a strong presentation of the building blocks leading to a quality system. The Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K) is the umbrella program for developing guidelines and requirements for defining school readiness, developing new methods of assessment, including implementation of a statewide Kindergarten assessment by 2013, the development of individual readiness plans, development of early childhood educators, family support and engagement strategies, health promotion practices, and effective data practices. The applicant gives great detail in each of these areas, describing how they impact early learning development and focus on Children with High Needs. The applicant presented a High-Quality State Plan demonstrating legislation, policies, and practices that were identified and acted upon to improve services to Children with High Needs and Early Learning and Development Programs, long before the RTT-ELC grant was released.

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

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 strongly meets this criterion by presenting a plan to further the state's progress on early learning and development and inclusion of children with high needs. Demonstrating a strong foundation and building upon that, the state has set ambitious, yet achievable goals. The applicant demonstrates a commitment to achieving certain goals by 2015 (including Improving program quality, Improving outcomes for children with high needs, and closing the readiness gap between children with high needs and their peers) and further goals by 2017 (after completion of the grant). The applicant lays out a detailed vision along with activities, key milestones, and dates for completion. This appears to be a well thought-out plan building on existing work already in place. The applicant sites four key principles that guided the selection of the Focused Investment Areas included in the state plan - System foundation (building infrastructure with an emphasis on local system capacity to help raise the quality of all Colorado early learning programs as well as to align and coordinate programs and services to better serve Children with High Needs and their families), Urgency and Impact (capitalize on momentum around key work already underway and fast-tracks that work - this will impact school readiness outcomes now), Feasibility (targets resources, focus, and efforts where positive impact can be decisive and transformational for Children with High Needs and their families), and Sustainability (immediate, targeted mobilization with the greatest potential to raise quality of the early childhood system overall - investments in systemic changes and capacity building will continue to yield benefits in programmatic areas long after the grant period ends). The applicant also gives great detail (table A-D) on the Early Childhood Colorado Framework, showing the work to date in detail and explaining how progress in each of the focused investment areas of the RTT-ELC grant has been started but varies in progress, and will be accelerated in quality, depth, and pace with RTT-ELC funding (Table A-E).

	Available	Score
(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State	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 strongly meets this criterion by clearly demonstrating the collaboration and roles/responsibilities of each partnering state agency and community partner involved with this funding. The applicant adequately describes in detail the governance structure, which identifies the Office of Early Childhood, under the Department of Human Services, as the Lead Agency, with other state agencies playing major leadership roles due to their expertise and roles in shared work already underway. The purpose of establishing the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC), is to advise the Office of Early Childhood to ensure continued collaboration among state agencies and the private sector and to review the overall governance system, including how different types of decisions are made and disputes are resolved, but does not give detail regarding the methods or processes used. The applicant has provided detailed narrative and a table outlining the participating state agencies and their roles and responsibilities (table (A)(3)-1). Also included are the MOUs with the participating agency's scope of work, with five partner agencies and letters of support from 70 support agencies who will be indirectly involved with the program, demonstrating commitment to the State Plan from a broad group of stakeholders that will assist the State in reaching the ambitious yet achievable goals by 2015 (including Improving program quality, Improving outcomes for Children with High Needs, and closing the readiness gap between children with high needs and their peers) and further goals by 2017 (after completion of the grant). The applicant has established strong participation and commitment in the State Plan by Participating State Agencies and other early learning and development stakeholders. The applicant presented a plan that is fully-implemented with a high-quality response overall, however, the response to (a)(3) was lacking in detail in regards to the methods and process for decision making.

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

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 strongly meets this criterion by detailing each strategy and the funding stream that supports it, giving adequate information to show support for the individual activities in the State Plan (as evidenced by tables A-H through A-M). Federal, state, private, and local funds will all be applied to the efforts identified in the State Plan, as evidenced in Table (A)(4)-1. In addition, the applicant identifies the plan for RTT-ELC funds giving a detailed adequate narrative complemented by tables A-H through A-M, outlining the necessary initial investment and giving detailed information on future sustainability, with other funding, 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. The applicant has included budget tables - Budget Table I-1, giving an overall budget for the four year grant period; Budget Table I-2, giving a budget summary of all participating state agencies; and Table I-3, giving a budget summary by project. The applicant provides a clear, detailed narrative section providing strong evidence for each of these tables, supporting the efficiency and sustainability of this High-Quality State Plan, through continued state, local, and private funding.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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 presents a currently implemented TQRIS that is lacking some of the components of the system required by the RTT-ELC grant. For instance, the current system is voluntary and funding is limited; it does not include Early Learning and Development Standards; a Comprehensive Assessment System; Early Childhood Educator qualifications; or Health promotion practices (as determined by results of an evaluation performed by RAND). The applicant clearly details creating the new TQRIS as a rated-licensed system that will offer a unifying set of 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 all children, including Children with High Needs, which will be validated by an evaluator selected through an RFP process. The applicant presents a High-Quality plan for developing and implementing a "next generation" TQRIS, which includes a milestone plan for the 4 year grant period, a table outlining the

components and activities that need to occur, and narrative that describes and supports the planned improvements which will include Early Learning and Development Standards; A Comprehensive Assessment System; Early Childhood Educator qualifications; Family engagement strategies; Health promotion practices; and Effective data practices. The applicant demonstrates the link between the state licensing system and the TQRIS by identifying that the state has recently revised family child care regulations to meet the minimum standards for Level 1 of the new TQRIS. The state will have revised child care center regulations to do the same, by November 2012. The applicant currently has a partially-implemented QRIS and has adequately presented a high-quality response to improve the current system.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	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 strongly demonstrates a High-Quality plan to maximize program participation in the State's TQRIS. Under the current TQRIS, participation is voluntary for most programs, but meets this criterion by requiring programs receiving public funds or programs that are in an adverse licensing situation to participate. The new TQRIS will require 100% participation of all licensed programs by 2014 and will provide training and technical assistance to help transition programs into the new system. The applicant identifies an inequitable tiered reimbursement program currently in place, as it is determined by each individual county. Under the High-Quality State Plan presented, the new system will investigate and implement a statewide tiered reimbursement system making accessibility and affordability available for more children (through current funding streams such as CCDF certificates, Colorado Preschool Program, and the Colorado Child Care Contributions Tax Credit). This will include currently revised policies and rules that are in place to support programs in providing high-quality care for Children with High Needs and their families. The applicant has set very ambitious goals which are achievable but challenging. The plan set forth in the narrative supports the ability to achieve high targets for the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. The applicant is awarded points for this criterion based on the partially-implemented TQRIS. The applicant has provided a High-Quality Plan with comprehensive details for implementing the "new generation" TQRIS.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs	15	10

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 provides a high-quality response to this criterion. The applicant clearly demonstrates the use of a rating and monitoring system for Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. Adequate details are provided on the current use of the Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) for programs participating in the TQRIS. The ERS tool has a reliability process that requires trained raters and an inter-rater reliability of 85% or higher. The applicant states that they have developed an extensive ERS reliability system by training and supporting Qualistar raters and certifying coaches in the ERS tool. However, because this tool is only used for programs participating in the voluntary QRIS, it is only partially-implemented. The applicant does not discuss the frequency with which this tool is used. Head Start programs are currently using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) tool to measure classroom quality based on adult-child interactions, in addition to the ERS. The CLASS tool measures 10 dimensions of classroom quality across 3 domains of interactions and does require extensive rater training. The applicant discusses the plan to pilot the use of CLASS in the Denver Preschool Program as a "spring-board" to rolling it out statewide under the new TQRIS (again, no frequency of use is stated). The applicant addressed the availability of public information in the roll-out of the new TQRIS system. The applicant proposes to build a system that will ensure parents have timely access to key data and reports, including information about early childhood development, information on standards and guidelines, TQRIS rating information, and comprehensive assessments. The applicant states that system functionality will be designed with families of Children with High Needs in mind and programs will receive training and coaching to support their families in using the system. The applicant provides a clearly detailed High-Quality Plan to roll out the new TQRIS and availability of public information. The applicant will receive points based on the partially-implemented rating and monitoring system for Early Learning and Development Programs and having a High-Quality State Plan in place for providing publicly available information to the families.

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

The applicant has developed and implemented an adequate system for improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. However, the current system in place varies widely by community. Some of the communities have effective plans in place which act as models for the statewide high-quality plan proposed. The applicant has set the following ambitious, yet achievable targets for promoting access to high-quality programs: •26% of Early Learning and development programs will be rated in the top two tiers of the TQRIS by December, 2015; •An estimated 49,000 children will be served by high-quality (rated in top two tier of the TQRIS) Early Learning and Development Programs; •Incentives and supports will be in place to encourage programs to continuously improve their services and increase their quality ratings; •Reduce providers back office costs in communities where large concentrations of high-need families reside; The applicant clearly details a comprehensive proposal for incentives and supports that will provide a vehicle for driving system quality overall and also reinforce program standards in the higher tiers related to parent involvement, workforce preparation and other priorities associated with improved outcomes for Children with High Needs. Some considerations are: •Quality bonus awards - offered at the beginning to assist providers in transitioning to the TQRIS or to reward providers as they achieve higher levels of quality improvement, •Infrastructure awards - one time quality improvement awards to allow programs to purchase equipment to improve quality; •Scholarships and loan forgiveness - prioritization of TEACH and other scholarships for providers striving for higher quality ratings; •Opportunities for additional coaching; •Education and retention awards; •Access

to health consultation; These supports and incentives, identified by the applicant, will encourage programs to participate and strive for high quality even before implementing a statewide system for tiered reimbursement. In response to supports to help working families, the applicant proposes a unique approach of shared services among providers to help smaller programs manage costs and therefore provide a more stable, efficient program for the children in their care. The applicant describes a plan to pilot this approach aimed at spurring the development of center based hubs of Early Learning and Development Programs in communities where large numbers high-need families live. The applicant has provided a High-Quality Plan to achieve the detailed targets and goals for promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs. Points are awarded for this Criterion based on a partially-implemented System.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	15

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 a High-Quality Plan to design and implement evaluations. The applicant provided detailed information regarding a multi-year external evaluation that was used for the current TQRIS, the process and the outcomes. The applicant identified both the successes and the opportunities for improvement that were discovered using this evaluation and will use that information to insure that the design of the next generation TQRIS includes research-based measures. The applicant described in detail, the process for selecting the evaluator and the scope of work for the RFP process. The scope of work will include validating whether the tiers in Colorado's TQRIS accurately reflects differential levels of quality and assessing the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in learning, development, and school readiness, particularly for Children with High Needs. The applicant has provided a comprehensive description of the external study performed to validate the effectiveness of the current TQRIS and the results of that study. The applicant also has provided a high-quality plan on the development and implementation of the new expanded TQRIS, based on the results of that study.

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
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	30	24

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 demonstrates significant, thoughtful progress in putting in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs. Presenting a process that began in the early 2000's, the applicant discussed the development and use of two extensive guides that detailed preschool expectations in relation to K-12 content standards. Since those guides only covered Reading and Mathematics, the applicant described the progress and changes over the next 10 years as Colorado recognized the need to stay current on research and best practices. By 2011, the state selected a contractor to manage the development of Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines. The applicant states that the new guidelines will be developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate for all children, including high need children, and will be appropriate for each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness and aligned appropriately across age groups. The applicant identifies the comprehensive plan to "test" the guidelines by having them reviewed by a national panel with expertise in cultural and linguistic sensitivity, a variety of early learning domains and children with developmental delays. The applicant provides clear details of the High-Quality Plan that is organized to meet the goals of developing and implementing Early Learning and Development Guidelines (birth-8) and aligning those guidelines with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, professional development activities, the Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the TQRIS, and family engagement and public awareness activities. As part of the State's plan to implement the new Early Learning and Development Guidelines, the applicant has presented a final comprehensive plan to effectively and efficiently disseminate the Guidelines statewide, to Early Learning and Development Programs, Early Childhood Educators, and higher education institutions. Once the guidelines are finalized, they will be distributed in both electronic and hard copies through state agencies, child care resource and referral agencies, Early Childhood Councils, Head Start Programs and other partner organizations. The applicant is awarded points based on presenting a High-Quality plan, which has been partially-implemented, to address developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	28

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to support the effective implementation of developmentally appropriate Comprehensive Assessment Systems by--

- (a) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to select assessment instruments and approaches that are appropriate for the target populations and purposes;
- (b) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purposes and uses of each type of assessment included in the Comprehensive Assessment Systems;
- (c) Articulating an approach for aligning and integrating assessments and sharing assessment results, as appropriate, in order to avoid duplication of assessments and to coordinate services for Children with High Needs who are served by multiple Early Learning and Development Programs; and
- (d) Training Early Childhood Educators to appropriately administer assessments and interpret and use assessment data in order to inform and improve instruction, programs, and services.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

The applicant clearly and strongly meets this criterion by demonstrating a plan that supports effective implementation of a developmentally appropriate Comprehensive Assessment System. The applicant currently uses the Teaching Strategies GOLD and the HighScope Child Observation Record - giving providers a choice of two strong instruments under the statewide system of formative assessment for children birth to 5 years old, called Results Matter. The applicant presents The Results Matter child outcomes program as the foundation of Colorado's early childhood system, providing child monitoring tools and supports that are easily accessible by all of the State's early care and education programs. Results Matter is open to all early childhood programs and required of preschool programs receiving government funding. Results Matters offers supports and extensive training to equip Early Childhood Educators to use the specific assessment systems and resulting data with fidelity and effectiveness. The applicant proposes to use RTT-ELC funding to focus on scaling the existing program to reach more children and families with high needs. The applicant presents clear goals and project timelines for increasing and improving screening tools and increasing the number of providers using the assessment system. The applicant is awarded points based on a high-quality response of a substantially-implemented Comprehensive Assessment Plan.

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
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	20	12
<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 strongly met this criterion by describing the development of a comprehensive, research based Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, that will bridge two state professional development systems and a voluntary credentialing system in the state. The High-Quality plan presented lays out the goals for meeting this criterion, in what the applicant identifies as phase 1. The goals are: •Completing the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, including culturally relevant measurements, and creating alignment among existing competency frameworks for Early Childhood Educator Professionals; Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement system; Educator Effectiveness Standards P-12; and Colorado's Early Learning and Development Guidelines; •Defining an aligned targeted progression of credentials and related degrees; •Aligning the new competencies with all institutions and professional development providers and resulting credentials and degrees; •Applying the Framework statewide for Professional development programs for Early Childhood Educators; •Integrating the Competency Framework into culturally responsive coaching, mentoring, practicums and career planning advising; •Actively use the Framework and credentialing in recruiting, hiring, training, advancement and retention decisions; Figure D-2: Project Timelines for Workforce, details each step of the process from defining and developing the Learning Management System to taking it "live" in 2015. Table D-2: High-Quality Plan for Workforce Development outlines specific activities for phase 1, complete with start dates, time-frames and end dates, and who will have the lead role in the process. The applicant identifies the alignment of programs for credentialing teachers, with the focus being on entry level students and community college level courses. The applicant states that the state has no Early Education degree available and therefore has no progression of coursework leading from a credential to a 4-year degree. The applicant is awarded points based on the medium-quality response describing a partially-implemented Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and the aligned progression of credentials and degrees.</p>		
	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	10

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 successfully meets this criterion by demonstrating a detailed 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. The applicant identifies current programs that offer a range of Professional Development opportunities across the state, for Early Childhood Educators. These opportunities are primarily coordinated at the local level and are program specific. Therefore, the applicant proposes as part of their High-Quality plan, Phase II with the following goals: •To implement the Learning Management System that will allow the workforce to track, manage, and progress toward workforce competencies and credentialing. This Learning Management System will be web-based and will allow Early Childhood Educators to readily access training and professional development opportunities, track progress on their learning and career plan, and allow professionals to independently participate in professional development and track their progress across work settings; •Roll-out new professional learning opportunities that fill current gaps in the system, including modules aligned with the Competency Framework, online coaching and training opportunities, and itinerant training programs; •Provide training on the applicant's quality initiatives; •Create professional development opportunities that address and support the needs of ethnically and linguistically diverse adult learners; •Expand policies and incentives that accelerate professional learning and career advancement, building on best practices; •Expand and further integrate the coaching network; •Produce public reports for all stakeholders on the aggregate quality of educators and their development, advancement and retention; Table D-2: High-Quality Plan for Workforce Development clearly and comprehensively outlines specific activities for phase II, complete with start dates, time-frames and end dates, and who will have the lead role in the process. The applicant has set ambitious, yet achievable 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. Table (D)(2)(d)(2) demonstrates the expected increase in the number of Educators by grant year and by Tiered level in the TORIS. The applicant documents that the state does not currently have an Education degree program, therefore does not address targets for increasing the number of post secondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The applicant is awarded points based on the medium-quality response describing a partially-implemented plan for supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

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.	40	32

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 gives a comprehensive response regarding understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry by illustrating Teaching Strategies GOLD, a Kindergarten Assessment that is already developed and being piloted in 15-16 classrooms in the current school year. The applicant identifies this assessment system as being observation-based, appropriate for use with all children, birth through kindergarten, including English-language learners, children with disabilities, and children who demonstrate competencies beyond typical developmental expectations, with the purpose being to document children's development and learning over time, to inform instruction, and to facilitate communication with families and stakeholders. Table (A)(1)-12 demonstrates that this assessment addresses all Essential Domains of School Readiness. The applicant included a Technical Summary of Teaching Strategies GOLD, Appendix T, which details the validity and reliability testing for this assessment system. The applicant's narrative and Figure E-1: Project Timelines for Kindergarten Readiness, outline the plan beginning with the pilot program already being implemented, with the use of Private Funds; the expanded pilot beginning in June 2012, proposing to use RTT-ELC funds; and moving to statewide implementation beginning in September 2013, proposing to partially fund with RTT-ELC funds and largely funded by LEAs, sustaining future use of the assessment with state and local funding. The applicant also identifies the goal of linking the Kindergarten Entry Assessment to the TQRIS data systems and the State Longitudinal Data System, to study the extent to which changes in program quality ratings reflect progress in children's school readiness. The applicant has provided a high-quality response regarding the State's partially-implemented Kindergarten Entry Assessment.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	230

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	9

Competitive Preference Priority 2 is designed to increase the number of children from birth to kindergarten entry who are participating in programs that are governed by the State's licensing system and quality standards, with the goal that all licensed or State-regulated programs will participate. The State will receive points for this priority based on the extent to which the State has in place, or has a High-Quality Plan to implement no later than June 30, 2015--

(a) A licensing and inspection system that covers all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State and that regularly care for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting; provided that if the State exempts programs for reasons other than the number of children cared for, the State may exclude those entities and reviewers will score this priority only on the basis of non-excluded entities; and

(b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

The applicant presents a clear, detailed High-Quality Plan to increase the number of children from birth to kindergarten entry who are participating in programs that are governed by the State's licensing system and quality standards, with the goal that all licensed or State-regulated programs will participate. The applicant proposes to implement activities using RTT-ELC funds, to include non-licensed providers in the TQRIS, especially focusing on Family Friend and Neighbor caregivers. The applicant describes a process of studying, designing, and then implementing an incentive program to encourage voluntary participation of all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. The applicant has provided a high-quality response for this criterion demonstrating full implementation of criteria (a) and partial implementation of criteria (b) - overall this is a substantially-implemented plan.

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	Yes
<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>		
Comments on (P)(3)		
<p>The Applicant met Competitive Preference Priority 3(b). The applicant chose to address selection criterion (E)(1) and has earned a score of 80% of the maximum points available for that Criterion, for a high-quality partially-implemented plan.</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	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>	
Comments on Absolute Priority	
<p>The applicant comprehensively and coherently addresses a statewide system for promoting school readiness for Children with High Needs, throughout the application. The applicant provides clear, detailed plans for ensuring every child is ready for Kindergarten and has access to high quality programs and has addressed all criteria from the Focused Investment Areas.</p>	



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # CO-5004

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 11:10 AM

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, 17. Includes sub-points (a) through (d) describing financial investment, participation numbers, existing legislation, and current status in key areas.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

This state does show increasing financial commitment from 2007-2010. This commitment can be seen in funding level increases for programs serving Children with High Needs across this four-year span and the fact that ARRA funds were used to replace district decisions not to use Title I funding for preschool. However, in many instances funding levels for 2011 are not reported. The numbers of Children with High Needs served in the state are substantial, but still only represent about half of the total number of low-income children from birth-kindergarten entry even when possible duplication of services is not factored. Evidence is provided of increasing the numbers of Children with High Needs served from 2007-2010. All types of Early Learning and Development programs except one (HIPPI) increased the numbers of Children with High Needs served during this four-year period. Numbers of children served in 2011 only are reported for state-funded pre-K and Head Start categories, which do show substantial increases. Other categories are reported as "data not available." The state has passed legislation related to Early Childhood Learning and Development and has effective policies in place. For example, local Early Childhood Education Councils were created through legislation, and these councils strongly implement control over local fundraising efforts and provide coordination across many categories of Early Learning and Development categories. This state has developed a strong foundation for development of quality early childhood infrastructure. A comprehensive state framework has been developed that articulates state goals for equity, quality and access across dimensions that address children, families and early childhood professionals. Local early childhood councils serve almost all programs and geographical areas, are strongly representative of the range of stakeholders; are established through legislative mandate; and have stable funding that includes both use of CCDF funds and substantial funding from local governments and private sources. The state has demonstrated the ability to obtain increasingly substantial amounts of funding for early childhood initiatives from private foundations. The state has in place strong systems that address all of the building blocks necessary for quality early childhood infrastructure. For example, existing Early Learning and Development Standards address all Essential Domains of School Readiness and are currently under revision to address all age groups. The revision due in January 2012 will align to P-12 common core standards and will be incorporated into the existing Common Assessment Systems and the existing Workforce Knowledge and Competency system. The alignment

to P-12 standards was established by legislative mandate. The state has an existing TQRIS, but it does not have full participation. A Comprehensive Assessment System that addresses all required elements currently exists, although not all categories of programs serving Children with High Needs currently participate nor do all categories currently address all required elements. Licensed program participation is not mandatory, but some privately funded programs do currently participate. There are existing sets of core knowledge and standards for Early Childhood Educators. Presently they are not unified or comprehensive, but they are under revision. The revision will address knowledge of special populations of Children with High Needs. A legislative mandate for Kindergarten Entry Assessment has been passed. A valid and reliable instrument has been selected that is described as addressing Essential Domains of School Readiness and being appropriate for assessing English learners and children with disabilities. However, detailed descriptions of the instrument's characteristics and elements are not provided. Establishment of effective data practices is underway. For example, legislative mandate assigns data management to an Office of Information Technology and establishes an advisory board that includes stakeholders. However, currently data related to early childhood is not included in the system. Many essential data elements are collected by many existing data systems, but the systems are not unified or linked, and none of the existing systems address all essential data elements. The state also has in place policies and structures that support family engagement and family access to community resources. For example the Family Leadership Coalition promotes family participation in a range of program, community and policy levels. An initiative is underway to develop collaborations among many entry points to services to families that will streamline access for families. Family engagement factors have been identified and are currently being incorporated into the existing TQRIS. Most elements of high quality health promotion practices currently are required by most types of programs and systems. There are gaps in the requirement for screenings (CCDF programs, TQRIS, licensing) and health literacy (IDEA Parts B & C and TQRIS). Overall, the state has demonstrated a very strong commitment to the improvement of systems and processes that contribute to quality opportunities for Children With High Needs.

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

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 provides ambitious and measurable goals for improving readiness outcomes for Children with High Needs. Short and long term objectives are clearly linked to the overall goal of all Children with High Needs being ready for kindergarten. The proposal demonstrates how the goals are achievable by linking goals to proposed RTT-ELC projects and demonstrating the foundation previously established for each goal. The proposal also demonstrates how the proposed goals and supporting projects are linked to a previously established state vision (Early Childhood Colorado Framework) that was developed with extensive community and stakeholder participation. The proposal demonstrates how the project elements including the required selection criteria and the selected Focused Investment Areas, contribute to a comprehensive reform of the existing system using a set of four unifying principles: System Foundations; Urgency and Impact; Feasibility; Sustainability. These unifying principles address aspects identified as less well developed or weak in the explanation of past commitment and development. The principles include rationales for the proposed project activities such as creating a stronger governing infrastructure with an emphasis on local capacity; maximizing work already accomplished or nearly accomplished; targeting areas likely to have the most impact on Children with High Needs; and implementing systemic changes that can continue after the end of the RTT-ECL funding ends. This state presents a strong, cohesive, and integrated plan to improve the Early Learning and Development systems in ways that build on existing strengths and address articulated needs.

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

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 organizational structure for managing this proposed grant and related projects is particularly strong. Over the past years, inter-agency collaboration has led to agency and political consensus for developing a new state agency within the Department of Human Resources. This proposed new agency will be established by legislative mandate. The legislation currently is being drafted, has strong bipartisan and inter-agency support; is identified as a legislative priority by the governor; and is expected to pass in the next legislative session. The effect of the implementation of this new agency (which is proposed as the Lead State Agency for RTT-ELC) will be to consolidate many (not all) of the existing early childhood funding streams, reduce the number of agencies involved in early childhood policy decisions, and streamline public access to services and administration. Until this new agency is in place (and in case the legislation does not pass), an existing division of the Department of Human Resources is identified as the Lead State Agency. A particular strength in this proposal is the fact that the governance structure for the grant represents a reform initiative developed outside the grant context that is based on strong collaboration among Participating State Agencies and that will endure beyond the life of the RTT-ELC project. The application proposes a reasonable, fair, and workable plan for collaboration and management in a context where there is a history of good cross-agency collaboration. A clear assignment of governance related roles and responsibilities is provided through an understandable organizational chart and detailed table of roles and responsibilities. Although several Participating State Agencies will identify project managers within those agencies, MOAs will establish supervisory authority for these project managers as the RTT-ELC Grant Director who will reside with the Department of Human Resources. This clear line of authority will reduce issues of agency disagreements. Additionally, a strong and carefully developed project management and governance process is provided that addresses planning and scheduling, communication, resource management, contract management, status reporting, management tracking and knowledge management. This careful statement of process and

expectations also will contribute to smoother collaboration. Additionally, a reasonable decision making process has been developed to further reduce friction and uncertainty that can result from shared governance. That decision making plan includes The Early Childhood Leadership Commission (existing body established by legislative mandate) and state leadership as components in an appeal process, if such a process would be needed. A further strength of this proposal is the clear plan for local engagement (including family engagement) that is described. The involvement of families and communities in this proposed process builds from an existing framework for addressing family participation in policy development and strong support for Early Childhood Councils in each local community. Strong evidence of the support of Participating State Agencies is provided in the application. Memoranda of Understanding from each Participating Agency are included. Each memorandum includes a detailed Scope of Work carefully linked to the required selection criteria and to the selected criteria from the Focused Investment Areas. Strong letters of endorsement and support are provided from a wide range of stakeholders including Early Childhood Educators; representatives of early learning programs; U.S. Senators and Representatives; State legislators; local community and business leaders; philanthropic foundations, representatives of higher education; education association leaders; local Early Childhood Councils; nonprofit organizations related to early education and family services; representatives of agencies and boards within state government, and four former governors of the state.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	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 application provides a clear description of how existing state, federal, local and private funding sources will be used to support project initiatives. Strengths of the plan provided include inclusion of significant funding from foundations. Another strength of the plan is that current funding for direct services (slots) in state-funded pre-K, Head Start Funds, and foundation support are not included in the figures presented using the rationale that because no increase in slots is included in the plan, these current expenditures do not directly contribute to the implementation of the projects planned. The budget presented provides an extraordinary level of detail and demonstrates careful calculations to adequately support proposed project activities. The budget for each Participating State Agency provides explanation for each line item broken down by key project. For example within the budget category of "Personnel," expenses incurred by each agency are explained for each of the six proposed reform initiatives (Governance, TQRIS, Early Learning Standards and Guidelines, Workforce Development, Comprehensive Assessment System and Kindergarten Entry Assessment). Major activities are outlined for each proposed project, and the Responsible Participating State Agency is identified. Costs are clearly related to project objectives and to the design of the proposed initiatives. Costs are reasonable for the scope of the activities described. Information is provided that explains how the budgets were developed by participation of key representatives of each Participating State Agency in collaboration with an experienced project manager. An additional strength is the inclusion of figures showing how significant levels of funds from sources other than RTT-ELC are leveraged toward project goals. Detailed information is provided about how RTT-ELC funds will be used for one-time project related expenses and for expenses that will need to be sustained when the grant period ends. For each expenditure that will be on-going after the end of the grant, a plan is provided for sustaining the effort; however, these plans for sustainability are not always detailed enough to communicate confidence in the sustainability of the project efforts. For example, resources needed to continue technical assistance to support implementation of Early Learning and Development guidelines will be sustained by federal and state funding that supports technical assistance such as Head Start, IDEA Part C and the state-funded pre-K program. This plan does not address the need for continuing technical assistance for provider categories such as licensed child care centers and family providers that do not have public funds for technical assistance. Similarly, significant ongoing

expenditures for the proposed TQRIS project are proposed to be sustained by federal and state funds that are not clearly identified. Other on-going expenses for which strong evidence of sustainability is not provided include maintenance of the proposed system of screening, technical assistance related to support of professional development aligned with the Workforce Competency Framework, and incentives for participation in career advancement.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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 state has an existing TQRIS system, but it is voluntary, not linked to licensing, and does not reflect all required aspects of RTT-ELC program standards. This existing TQRIS system is focused on workforce qualifications, family engagement, and uses a valid and reliable measure of environmental quality. The TQRIS system currently is under revision as a result of legislative mandate. This revision addresses many of the components in RTT-ELC. For example, the new TQRIS will embed licensing into the new TQRIS system and will be based on a comprehensive set of Early Childhood Standards (Department of Defense Standards). The law also mandates a public reporting of the results of a pilot implementation of the new system. The existing (unrevised) TQRIS has been evaluated by RAND and found to differentiate program quality. The evaluation also determined effective ways to use sampling techniques for future monitoring and clarified weaknesses in the system. Solid plans for improvement of the existing system are provided. Since the previous TQRIS was found to differentiate levels of quality and the planned improvements are all positive, the new system also should differentiate levels of quality well. For example, more effective data practices such as linking data between TQRIS, licensing, and the state Department of Education data system which includes child outcomes for preschool assessment and the Kindergarten Entry Assessment will help create a unified system that allows association of quality levels with child outcomes. These revisions also will enable better use of data to improve programs by identifying programs with lower child achievement. Many sets of program standards are used in the wide variety of Early Learning and Development Programs that operate in the state. The application notes that part of the RTT-ELC project will be to create a unified set of program standards.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation In the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	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)

Currently, participation in the TQRIS is voluntary except for a small number of programs. The state proposes a plan to implement a tiered system of licensing that will go into effect Year 3 of the project. The effect of this policy will be to bring almost all Early Learning and Development Programs in the state into the TQRIS. Essentially, the TQRIS will become the licensing system, and almost all Early Learning and Development Programs (including state-funded pre-K) must be licensed. Although Head Start is exempt from licensing, over 90% of the Head Start programs are licensed and currently are rated at higher levels of the existing TQRIS. The application notes that Head Start's continued voluntary participation in licensing will continue. The very large numbers of programs and classrooms that will enter the system over a two-year period is an issue of concern. Until Year 3 approximately 600 programs will be participating. In that year, the number jumps to over 4,500 programs. In Year 4 another approximate 4,500 programs will join. No discussion is provided about how the existing TQRIS and licensing systems will be adjusted to cover this rapid conversion. Additionally, the proposal explains that IDEA Part C is delivered within the homes of the children served and, therefore, will not be covered by licensing or TQRIS. No mention is made of how the providers of the Part C services will participate in professional development related to elements of the TQRIS standards. No commitment to tiered reimbursement or other strong participation incentives are included in the reform plan. The implementation of the all-inclusive TQRIS will be by mandate, with no compensation or incentive for the additional expectations. The application discusses the possibility of implementing a tiered reimbursement system after the term of the grant and not as part of grant activities. The proposal explains implementing a tiered reimbursement system will first require the full implementation of the TQRIS, which will not be completed until the last year of the grant. Additionally, a state-wide policy change is needed because current reimbursement rates and policies are controlled at the county level. No pilot project of a tiered reimbursement system is discussed as the TQRIS and tiered licensing become fully implemented for half of all providers during Year 3 or with existing participating providers during Year 1 or Year 2. No other incentive plans are discussed, nor are plans provided to address continued access by families of Children with High Needs as quality (and possibly cost related to quality) increases. Baseline data for participation in the existing TQRIS is not clearly communicated. For example, an explanation is given that all programs receiving CCDF funds are required to participate, but those numbers are not provided. Similarly, numbers of participating licensed providers that are not associated with Head Start, state funded pre-K, and locally funded pre-K initiatives are not estimated. While it is noteworthy that targets for TQRIS participation are 100% of all programs in all categories by the end of the grant term, the ability to achieve this goal is not made clear.

	Available	Score
(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 state has an existing TORIS, and the current system makes use of valid and reliable instruments; includes extensive training for monitors that includes establishment of a high level of inter-rater reliability on the use of the instruments. However, the current system does not address all required program standards specified by RTT-ELC. For example, the frequency of monitoring within the current system is not clearly discussed, but is reported as biannual for, at least, some of the program participants. The existing TQRIS includes good strategies for providing parents with information regarding quality of rated programs, and licensing status currently is available in both English and Spanish through several different websites and through printed materials provided by some (not all) local Early Childhood Councils. Training and other additional supports proposed to help Early Educators and parents know how to access and use the data that will be available also are proposed to be developed in both English and Spanish. The application proposes excellent improvements to an already good scheme. The state plans to develop a level of access for parents to use the Early Learning Data System, so they will have timely access to data and reports that relate to their child and program. The TQRIS currently is under review, and revision is proposed that reflects aspects required by RTT-ELC that are not in the present system. However, clear details of the proposed revisions are not available and limit the ability to judge their quality and appropriateness. Specifics are not described other than to indicate the state is awaiting recommendations of the contractor developing the plan. The proposal indicates that the RFP developed for securing the contractor included elements recommended by RAND, which did a thorough external program evaluation of the existing system. The application explains that the existing valid and reliable measures of classroom environment are likely to be retained and that an additional valid and reliable measure of adult-child interaction is likely to be added. Additionally, a third valid and reliable measure is proposed that will address child assessment, program planning and evaluation, family partnerships and educator qualifications. The application explains that scoring in the mid-range of environmental quality will likely be required for entry into licensing. This policy will ensure that Children With High Needs who attend Early Education and Development Programs that do not receive public funds will still be assured of programs with some measure of quality. Appropriate monitoring frequency is mentioned as a goal, but not specified. Adequate evidence is provided to indicate the new system will improve the quality of the data collection and reporting and integrate new data into existing systems making data more widely accessible to parents and Early Childhood Educators.

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

Currently incentives are in place, but many of these incentives are not consistent across the state and all program categories. For example, some counties use quality ratings as the basis for tiered reimbursement. One county has developed an incentive package tied to quality that includes scholarships, access to assessments, and professional development. One program provider awards improvement "credits" that can be used to purchase technical assistance, materials or staff development related to improvement. One incentive available to all programs that participate in the existing voluntary TQRIS is the development of a program-specific improvement plan tied to that program's quality monitoring results. The application discusses many excellent possible incentives including infrastructure awards and quality bonus awards, but only a state-wide system of tiered reimbursements tied to quality ratings appears in the timeline. This one incentive, although very desirable, is not likely to fit the needs of all providers. For example, achieving a higher level may require purchase of capital equipment, and even with higher reimbursement, such an improvement may be difficult. An innovative plan to develop a network of provider alliances is described. These alliances would allow business services to be shared by several small providers; provide high quality business practices for many providers who do not have good business management practices; and enable the possible pooling of funds across several small providers to purchase services or expertise to improve quality. A pilot project is proposed and appears in the detailed time line. This project is proposed both as an incentive for the providers and as a support to families of Children with High Needs. According to the narrative, communities that have large numbers of Children with High Needs often are served by small providers with little business experience. The alliances will help the system retain small providers that often go out of business, thus reducing the early learning opportunities available in many communities. Increasing full-time and full year options available to working families of Children with High Needs is not addressed. The application presents a plan for 100% of Early Learning and Development Programs to be

participants in the TQRIS by the last year of the grant term, and the phase-in plan for full implementation is only two years. The plan proposes using the first two years of the grant to refine the TQRIS, develop the elements currently not addressed and embed the TQRIS into the licensing system. During Year 3 half of the programs not currently participating are projected to enter the system, and the remaining providers will enter the system in Year 4. The implementation plan for the new TQRIS and tiered licensing estimates the numbers of programs that will enter each tier of the system in each of the two years. The majority of providers are expected to enter at Tier 3 of a 5 Tier system. These estimates for a little less than half of the new programs entering the tiered system at or above the mid-point may be overly optimistic. For example, in both Years 3 and 4 over 1,100 providers are expected to enter the system at Tier 3. The proposal notes that projections for the numbers entering at each tier are based on the state's prior experience with two systems of Early Learning and Development programs that entered the existing TQRIS previously. Some differences in the new system may affect the accuracy of these projections. For example, the basis of the projections includes two systems of Early Learning and Development Programs that receive public funds and have good systems of support for professional development. Many of the providers entering the new system will be supported only by tuition or CCDF subsidize tuition, with no built in technical assistance resources, and may be in communities where technical assistance and professional development resources have been less well-developed. The application provides baseline data for the numbers of children served in the TQRIS only for the state-funded pre-K and Head Start categories. The projections for the increase in numbers of children to be served in programs that are rated in top TQRIS tiers in these program categories are ambitious and achievable based on baseline indicators. Notes indicate that data are not available regarding the numbers of children in top rated TQRIS participating programs for the IDEA Part B, Title I and CCDF categories. Neither are projections for participation of these categories by project end included. Notes indicate that "current data collection methods do not allow for reporting the specificity of data requested" and that proposal developers were "not able to identify numbers of Children with High Needs served per every program type." These statements are confusing because all of the program types listed (IDEA Part B, Title I ESEA, and CCDF) consist exclusively of Children with High Needs.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	15

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)

This application presents a very strong plan for validating the effectiveness of the TQRIS. The existing TQRIS system has undergone a multi-year, multi-million dollar external evaluation executed by the RAND Corporation and privately funded. That evaluation demonstrated the existing system does differentiate tiers of quality and that providers participating in the system improved in quality. The RAND report also identified measures that were weak and provided suggestions for improvement. For example, the parent participation questionnaire did not differentiate program quality, and steps have been taken to develop a parent engagement measure that will differentiate. State Early Childhood Leadership has experienced and is aware of the challenges of developing and implementing a high quality external evaluation. The RAND evaluation study was not able to link child outcome measures to program quality indicators because of methodological issues. For example, random sampling of programs was not possible and programs that fully participated tended to be higher quality. There was not sufficient range of quality to draw strong correlations with student outcomes. In addition, a very low percentage of children actually participated for the three years of the study. When the new TQRIS becomes mandatory for all licensed providers, many of these challenges can be addressed in a new study. The State Plan also includes improvements to the data system that will facilitate a study. The plan for improving the TQRIS is presented in detail with a time line and activity descriptions that link to the various criteria in Section B of the application. The project outline is well organized and provides a rational, achievable approach to meeting ambitious goals. This time line also indicates the responsible Participating State Agency.

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
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	30	20

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 existing Early Learning and Development Standards only address preschool ages and are not fully aligned to K-12 standards. The application describes the evolution of their P-12 standards, but does not clearly explain how the new Early Learning and Development Standards, which will address infants and toddlers, will be included in the alignment. These existing standards do address all the Essential Domains of School Readiness except for adaptive skills for children with physical disabilities. For the past year an initiative has been underway to revise these standards, and the 3rd party contractor who will perform the work is now engaged in that process. The process includes consultation with a range of stakeholders and review of the standards by national professional groups for cultural and linguistic appropriateness, for applicability for children with disabilities, and for comprehensive attention to all Essential Domains of School Readiness. The standards under development will be aligned both the Head Start Development and Early Learning Framework and the Common Core Standards. The proposed changes will result in much better standards. For example, the revisions are proposed to address infant and toddler ages and diversity in culture, language, and abilities. The application also provides some explanation for how the new standards will be incorporated into TQRIS, the assessment system and the components of the Workforce framework, and these items appear in the time line; however, very few details are provided for exactly how these alignments will be accomplished. Little description of the professional development Early Childhood Educators will receive to learn to use the standards to develop curriculum or activities is offered. An extensive communication plan has been developed that will address the needs of both parents' and Early Childhood Educators' need to learn about the new standards and how to use them. This communication plan includes electronic, print, and social media outlets. However, few details of the training to be provided to help Early Childhood Educators learn to use the standards to develop curriculum and activities are provided. The inclusion of the new Early Learning and Development Standards into the revised and required TQRIS that is tied licensing will insure use of the new standards by all program types. While the application explains the evolution of the relationship of the state's Early Learning and Development Standards, it does not clearly indicate if the standards are aligned to K-3 academic standards. The plan for addressing this criterion is presented, including time lines and overviews and responsible Participating State Agencies.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	20

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to support the effective implementation of developmentally appropriate Comprehensive Assessment Systems by--

(a) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to select assessment instruments and approaches that are appropriate for the target populations and purposes;

(b) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purposes and uses of each type of assessment included in the Comprehensive

Assessment Systems;

(c) Articulating an approach for aligning and integrating assessments and sharing assessment results, as appropriate, in order to avoid duplication of assessments and to coordinate services for Children with High Needs who are served by multiple Early Learning and Development Programs; and

(d) Training Early Childhood Educators to appropriately administer assessments and interpret and use assessment data in order to inform and improve instruction, programs, and services.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

This state application describes a very sophisticated existing early learning assessment system. For example, the system includes most elements such as screening, formative assessment, and classroom quality. Early Learning and Development Programs can choose between two high quality valid and reliable assessment systems that both address all Domains of School Readiness. The existing data system links child data to program quality data. Data are accessible by Early Childhood Educators and can be used for curriculum planning, as well as program planning. The existing formative evaluation system already links child outcome data with program quality data, as well as linking early childhood data with K-12 data. The application provides a detailed plan for scaling up this data system to accommodate the increased participation they project. The plans do not specifically address how the data will be used to avoid duplication of assessments, but the fact that the initial expansion will target programs that serve Children with High Needs provides some evidence of using data to coordinate services for these children. Additionally, the narrative notes that when the data system is completed, better access to stakeholders and easier use of data to drive instruction will be achieved. Currently the data system is mandated for some categories of Early Learning and Development Programs but is accessible to all providers who want to use it. The application presents a plan that will add 300 family child care providers and 1050 center-based programs to the system during the course of the RTT-ELC project. Weaknesses in the current system are identified and include the need to increase the numbers of communities and Children with High Needs who participate in Developmental Screening, as well as including this data in the linked system. Also more Early Learning and Development Programs need to participate in the system. The assessments need to include a measure of Adult Child interaction, and the data system needs expanded capacity to include many more Early Learning and Development Programs that serve Children with High Needs. The plan proposed addresses many of these weakness and also includes plans for more family engagement in the assessments, as well as additional training opportunities for both parents and Early Educators. While the plan includes time lines, some details, and identifies the responsible Participating State Agency, the process to train parents and Early Childhood Educators to use the assessment data to inform instruction is not clearly described. It also is not clear how duplication of assessments will be avoided when children are served in multiple settings.

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
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	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 application indicates that the state as a good foundation to build upon in developing a strong system for early education workforce development and has a plan to accomplish ambitious goals. The state has two existing sets of workforce competencies. One, designed for use with licensing and community college education programs, is comprehensive. The second was designed to meet the needs of teacher preparation, and although it relates to the first set, it does not align directly. The state has an existing career lattice that provides a progression of credentials and degrees, but the progression is not entirely aligned with a common Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Articulations have been developed between two and four year colleges. Licensing credentialing articulates with both CDA standards, Head Start Standards and NAEYC Associate Degree Program Standards. A strength in the existing system is the fact that licensing credentials consist of community college course work, rather than simply "clock hours" of workshops. Some weaknesses in the current system have been identified in the application, and the state proposes to address those weaknesses with RTT-ELC funds. The two sets of competencies need to be integrated into a single Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. That Framework needs to be aligned to the progression of credentials and degrees. The new Framework needs to be supported with additional professional development, integrated into the new required TQRIS and aligned to the Early Learning and Development Guidelines. Other weaknesses in the current system are not addressed in the plan. For example, the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework has not been aligned to a 4-year degree program. Although the application notes the state does not currently have a 4-year degree program in Early Childhood, no plans are provided for filling this gap. The plan provided to accomplish goals includes some detail, time lines, and assigns responsibility for tasks to the appropriate Participating State Agency.

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	14

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)

Currently in this state, workforce needs are addressed locally, and professional development initiatives outside the two and four year college systems are developed locally. Many locations provide strong professional development and some financial incentives tied to Early Childhood Educator career progression. Some program categories include significant professional development opportunities that are tied to financial compensation. However, opportunities are not consistent throughout the state or across program categories. Public reporting of data regarding professional qualifications is very limited at present. The application provides an ambitious plan that addresses wider availability of training opportunities linked to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework creative and the development of a "Learning Management System" that will provide data necessary to inform the public and policy makers. Elements of this plan include a web-based system, development of learning modules targeted to Early Educators who serve Children with High Needs, incentives targeted to those educator who pursue professional improvement, using the proposed data collection system to identify gaps in opportunity. However, although incentives are mentioned, little evidence is provided of a strong commitment to develop personal and individual incentives such as wage subsidies or tax credits. The numbers of post-secondary institutions with programs aligned to competency standards already is high, but are primarily at the 2 year level. The plan addresses the need to increase the number of 4 year institutions with program alignment. An ambitious plan is presented for increasing the numbers of Early Childhood Educators at the higher levels of professional credentials; however, how the targets will be achieved is not clear. For example, the application proposes to increase the number of educators with a bachelors degree from 116 (current) to 2,500 (by 2015), yet there currently is no 4-year degree program in Early Childhood Education in the state and no discussion is provided for developing one. The state reports that only 70 educators currently have a 2-year degree. Meeting the projections provided means over 2,400 students need to enroll this year as full-time students in order to graduate by 2015. One particular strength of the plan is that even the lower levels of credentialing are based on earning college credit that can be applied to two and four year degrees; however, the state's plan is focused on increasing the numbers of providers who have the lower levels of credentials and does not adequately describe how Early Childhood Educators will move to the higher levels of credentials. How educators will progress from the 2-year

degree level to the 4-year degree level is not clearly described. The plan is detailed, includes time lines and assigns responsibilities to appropriate Participating State Agencies.

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.	40	32
<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> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (E)(1)		
<p>Currently the state does not have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Implementation of a state wide Kindergarten Entry Assessment by 2013 has been legislatively mandated. A pilot is underway this school year (2011-2012). The measure being piloted meets the RTT-ELC expectations for a Kindergarten Entry Assessment and has other advantages, as well. The pilot is using one of the child assessment instruments currently used by the Comprehensive Assessment System for preschool. The instrument is valid and reliable; is aligned with Early Learning Standards; and covers Essential Domains of School Readiness. The advantages of using the same instrument at kindergarten entry that also is used as formative assessment across the preschool years include, providing a chronological rather than a "snapshot" picture of a child's development at kindergarten entry; building on existing capacities to implement and interpret the assessment results; providing parents with a better opportunity to understand assessment results; and enabling easier links with the State-wide Longitudinal Data System. The pilot project underway this year is being funded with both public and private foundation funds. When the assessment system is fully implemented during the 2012-2013 school year it will be funded through state and local education funds.</p>		

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	213

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	7

Competitive Preference Priority 2 is designed to increase the number of children from birth to kindergarten entry who are participating in programs that are governed by the State's licensing system and quality standards, with the goal that all licensed or State-regulated programs will participate. The State will receive points for this priority based on the extent to which the State has in place, or has a High-Quality Plan to implement no later than June 30, 2015—

(a) A licensing and inspection system that covers all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State and that regularly care for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting; provided that if the State exempts programs for reasons other than the number of children cared for, the State may exclude those entities and reviewers will score this priority only on the basis of non-excluded entities; and

(b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

The current licensing and regulation system partially meets the expectation for this criterion. Family providers who serve two or more unrelated children to be licensed; however, center-based providers who serve 5 or more unrelated children must be licensed. The state's plan for improving the TQRIS will require participation in TQRIS as part of licensing. Existing licensing rules will be strengthened, but there is no mention whether center based providers who serve fewer than 5 children will be required to receive a license. Entry level to the TQRIS will be achieved by meeting, at least, the minimum of the enhanced licensing standards. A particular strength of this state's plan is the degree to which Family Friend and Neighbor (FFN) care will be encouraged to participate in the quality initiative. The application explains the importance of addressing inclusion of this type of unregulated care because it is estimated to serve as many as 50% of families. Often Children with High Need are served by FFN care, particularly those who represent cultural or language minorities.

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	Yes
<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>		
Comments on (P)(3)		
Score of over 70 percent of points was achieved on (E)(1) which demonstrates partial current implementation and a high quality reform plan.		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	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>	
Comments on Absolute Priority	

This state's application comprehensively and coherently addresses the development of a system that will significantly improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs and will increase the readiness of those children to succeed in kindergarten and beyond. Each element of the plan builds upon significant prior investments and involves collaboration among Participating State Agencies. The elements of the plan are interwoven to create a strong system. TQRIS will reflect alignment of new Program Standards, development of a Common Workforce Development Framework and mandated participation of all licensed providers. An existing strong Comprehensive Assessment System will be strengthened and coordinated with a new Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Data linking Early Childhood Educator professional development and credentials will be collected in a way that will link to child outcomes, in addition to the system that currently links other program aspects to outcomes. Each aspect of the proposed project is developed with very detailed management plans that provide time lines and assign responsibilities. Although the plans are very ambitious, the degree of detail presented and the strong links to excellent foundations in all areas provide a high level of confidence that the ambitious plans also are achievable.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # CO-5004

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/16/2011 - 7:49 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
(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development	20	20
<p>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--</p> <p>(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;</p> <p>(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;</p> <p>(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and</p> <p>(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.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

Colorado has a commitment for high needs children to have access to high quality early childhood programs. One unique feature of Colorado is the focus on local control so while the State sets guidelines and policies, it is governed and implemented on the local level. The early childhood program in Colorado spans the ages birth through age 8. The State has received strong financial support from 15 foundations for many years. For example, QualiStar (TORIS) has received \$20 million since its inception which was well before 2007. The child care assistance program (CCCAP) now only serves about 1 in 10 eligible families because of the economic situation. They are first in the nation with the highest rate of growth for children living in poverty. 35% of these children are Hispanic and 25% ELL. Over the past five years there has been a 48% increase in state funded preschool slots and state spending has increased 52% since 2007 despite the recession. In these fiscally difficult times, funding has remained somewhat consistent with minor increases or decreases from one year to the next but mostly even funded. Enrollment in most of the programs has been fairly consistent too with small fluctuations from year to year. Legislation, policies and practices have demonstrated commitment to early education and development. Examples of these include: • In 2010 Clayton Educare School was named in the top 10 Head start programs nationwide. • In 2010 EPIC (Executives Partnering to invest in children) statewide group of business leaders was formed and advocated for the initiation of the Early childhood leadership commission. • Current governor when mayor of Denver established universal preschool program in Denver. 50% of the children are below poverty level; programs participated in Qualistar • Strong local commitment to high needs children: School Readiness Quality Improvement Program: received supports based on qualistar rating. Colorado has a framework that is comprehensive for addressing the areas of early learning, parent education, social emotional/mental health and health. The Framework outcomes focus on access, quality and equity. Local councils (30) have the responsibility for implementation and coordination of the early childhood services in the State. Early learning standards have been developed for preschool age only but are currently under revision to include B-K and include all of the designated areas for school readiness (language and literacy, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, physical and motor, social and emotional). All programs, except for Part C also include screening, formative evaluation, environment, and adult-child interactions to assess quality. Colorado expands on the areas

important for kindergarten readiness by adding the additional areas to provide an emphasis on interactions, assessment, evaluation and learning environments. Adult-child interactions are very important for all young children, including those under Part C. State licensing requirements are not required. Currently the QRIS (QUALISTAR) system does not have screening and formative assessments. State funded preschool, child care programs, state licensing and QRIS (QualiStar) do not require screenings in behavior, development or sensory. Family Engagement: most are including some type with activities identified by the particular program. Head Start includes families in the governance and other leadership activities. All have different formats for communicating with families; licensing requirements are currently soliciting stakeholder feedback on a standard that will require child care programs to provide families with regular feedback on their child's performance. Workforce credentials: the state has 13 different credentials/licenses and the early childhood credential has 6 levels. Based on the chart, it appears that a major part of the workforce is not credentialed or licensed. Kindergarten entry assessment: the assessment tool Teaching Strategies GOLD is currently being piloted with full implementation anticipated 2013. Likewise, results included in the Statewide Longitudinal data system are in process with anticipated completion in 2013. Each agency collects different types of data and most have unique site data identifiers. Plans are in place for connecting the data bases across programs in 2013. Colorado has a plan in place for developing a high quality early learning and development system. They are currently revising the Early Learning and Development standards to meet the expectations for school readiness as outlined in RTT-ELC. Plans are in place to connect all assessment systems into one state wide system. Likewise, plans are in place to enhance their family engagement strategies using existing programs (Head Start, IDEA programs). A kindergarten entry assessment system is currently being piloted with plans for state wide expansion. Colorado has some major work in creating their early learning and development system in that most of the key areas are in the process of being revised or being piloted. The timeline for full implementation is reasonable, Colorado has demonstrated a strong commitment to early learning and development so this criterion is given a high quality score.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	18

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 goals for Colorado's RTT-ELC are aligned with the State Vision: 1) 100% of the licensed Early learning and development programs will participate in TQRIS, 2) 26% of these programs will be in the top two tiers of the TQRIS, 3) over 49,000 high needs children will participate in programs rated in the top 2 tiers, 4) all of the IHE and PD providers will be aligned with Workforce competency framework, 5) 65% of the early childhood workforce will be progressing to the higher TQRIS tiers, 6) all early learning systems will be integrated with early learning and development guidelines, 7) parent engagement will increase from the current baseline of .5 on the TQRIS to 3.5 and all early childhood councils, State policy boards and commissions will have parent representation, 8) all children will participate in the Kindergarten entry assessment by 2013 with a 50% decrease in the gap between children with high needs and other children, 9) 25 communities will have screening and referral practices for children with high needs with over 1300 additional staff trained in the assessment program resulting in a 50% increase in children reaching milestones. These will be accomplished through the outcomes of access, equity and quality, systems change and positive outcomes at kindergarten entry and beyond. The objectives include: a) aligning and coordinating early learning and development programs across the state, b) implementing a common TQRIS, c) developing and using statewide Early Learning and Development guidelines, d) effectively using a Comprehensive Assessment System, e) supporting early childhood educators, and f) implementing a statewide kindergarten entry assessment system. These goals are supported by specific concrete activities listed in a table format. These are very ambitious goals and objectives, however, based on the activities accomplished to date, it is possible to complete this reform agenda within the time period. Colorado already has a QRIS system which needs to be revised; early learning and development standards are under review by stakeholders with a due date of January 2012 for completion and kindergarten entry assessment is already in process with a due date of implementation for 2013. The major activities that will need the most development and implementation are aligning programs across the State, coordinating one CAS for all of the programs, training professionals and early childhood providers, and focusing more directly on children with high needs. Colorado is addressing the focused investment areas: C1,C2, D1,D2 & E1. They anticipate that these foci will facilitate achievement of the above goals and objectives. For example, there will continue to be an emphasis on local systems but with an infrastructure to improve quality; there will be an expansion of the current work which is already in process but with RTT-ELC funds it will be accelerated; there will be a focus on children with high needs and resources will be allocated to this focus; there will be support for sustainability through systems changes and capacity building once the RTT-ELC grant is completed. The office of Early Childhood and a Governor appointed advisory board will facilitate the sustainability of the project outcomes. Consolidating the workforce credentials and licensing will be a

challenge but feasible. Ambitious aspects of this proposal include: a) alignment of the credentialing system with the licensing system and two year colleges by 2013. This will involve consolidating multiple licenses and credentials which can be a major undertaking. It is also not clear if all of the stakeholders are in agreement with this decision so, philosophical orientations might interfere with progress. b) implementing family engagement strategies which is ambitious given the current focus of the State on a parent education model. Engagement implies that families are integrated throughout all systems and programs. This will take time, especially since it is a philosophical shift and will take time for families to understand and embrace their new role. The focus areas of C1,C2,D1,D2 &E1 will enable Colorado to meet their timeline for implementing a program that prepares young children for Kindergarten that is within the expectations of the RTT-ELC grant.

	Available	Score
(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State	10	8
<p>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--</p> <p>(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--</p> <p>(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;</p> <p>(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;</p> <p>(3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and</p> <p>(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;</p> <p>(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--</p> <p>(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;</p> <p>(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</p> <p>(3) A signature from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency; and</p> <p>(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--</p> <p>(1) Detailed and persuasive letters of intent or support from Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, and, if applicable, local early learning councils; and</p> <p>(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.</p>		
Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation		
Comments on (A)(3)		

The State has been providing services using 23 different funding sources and these have been administered through 5 different state departments and multiple divisions or units all with individual policies and procedures. Colorado admits that this is a fragmented system, making it difficult to create capacity state-wide for initiatives such as kindergarten readiness. The State Commissioner of Education is appointed by the elected State Board of Education and is not a formal member of the Governor's cabinet. In 2010 changes were initiated in the State, first with the establishment of an Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) to begin coordination of State and federally supported early childhood programs. This commission is reviewing the governance system(s) for early childhood and are reporting recommendations back to the General Assembly in January 2012. In September 2011, ECLC recommended a governance structure that will better serve children with high needs and their families. A reorganized Department of Human Services now houses many of the early childhood programs and has a new Office of Early Childhood in the Department. The State should be commended for taking a bold step in consolidating services under one office. This new office will be advised by the ECLC which includes representatives from all of the key agencies. The ECLC reports to the Legislature annually on the State Plan. Governor Hickenlooper is spearheading the reform agenda in the State. The Office of Early Childhood will be responsible for implementing the State Plan. The Office of Early Childhood in the Department of Human Services will be the lead agency for the grant. This is a strength since this new office has been created to consolidate early childhood services and therefore, is a logical location for the grant administration. An organizational chart provided an explanation of the Departments and the particular activities related to each one. The governance plan is very detailed with specific timelines. The grant management team includes a director and project managers for each project (assessment, TQRIS, workforce development, kindergarten entry assessment, local council liaison, and data coordinator. The project managers may reside in other Departments but will remain part of the management team. The project team with the Director will use a decision making process where major decisions are made by the ECLC. This management team structure will provide the opportunity for all early childhood agencies and departments to be actively involved in the ELD plans, however, it could also increase the possibility of splinter services occurring with each department having different expectations. Family engagement will be integrated throughout all of the projects and a group of families will be included in the development of policies, etc. Family engagement is a major focus of RTT-ELC. It was mentioned that family members are on the ECLC as well as on local early childhood councils, it is difficult to understand how the presence of family engagement will be strategically integrated throughout the plans, especially within the governance structure. Over 100 letters of support were included in the proposal representing all levels of constituents from businesses, IHE, local programs, legislative members, organizations, advocacy groups, etc. It is an impressive list that is supportive of the proposal. Each letter specifically described their support or role in the project. The MOUs between agencies included specific details of the roles and responsibilities including the scope of work. These MOUs will be implemented within 90 of receiving the award. While there is a strong plan for coordinating early learning and development across the State, it is partially implemented at this time.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	14

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 detailed explanation of the state, federal, local and private funding sources was included. \$15 million of the funds will be used for local implementation of the State plan which is supportive of the structure for providing early childhood services in local communities. The budget is very complicated since it provides funds to other agencies and local councils to support and implement the project activities. It is going to be difficult to manage and monitor because of the multiple categories across departments and local councils. A total of \$218 million is being allocated to the project with approximately \$60 million from RTT-ELC and a little over \$158 million from state funds. The majority of the funds (almost \$20 million) will be for the TQRIS revision and implementation followed by \$13 million for the comprehensive assessment system, and \$10 million for workforce development and governance. While the funds for governance are high, each department and activity will need administrative support. The total amount is reasonable for implementing this project considering the number of children it will impact. In regards to sustainability, RTT-ELC funds will not be needed for organizational management activities after the grant project is completed. The RTT-ELC funds are needed to develop the infrastructure and provide the technical support. Funds for sustainability of the TQRIS activities will be needed after the funding ends. Colorado has plans for sustaining these activities. For example, integrating TQRIS with the licensing system will eliminate the need for funds in this area. Funds will be needed to support training and development activities and plans are to use CCDF quality funds and private foundations which have a past history of supporting these activities. Funds to continue the ongoing data system will also be needed and CCDF funds will be used. Sustainability for the CAS will be addressed through current systems and the local level coordinating councils will be asked to develop sustainability plans. There is a concern about asking local coordinating councils to develop sustainability plans when they have been receiving financial support from the State. Plans for assisting local coordinating councils in sustainability of these activities will be needed to achieve this. Plans are for the project goals to either be achieved or sustained with current department funding. It is not clear how the funds from federal, state and local sources will be used for sustainability. For example, in Table I-1, funds from other sources totaled \$158,241,620 while in I-2, the total was just over \$218 million. In Table II-1 the total for the Department of Human Services is just over \$157 million and in the budget narrative there was mention of a little over \$120 million being used from other sources. It is difficult to determine the exact amount of funds that are being used from other sources. The proposed budget is adequate for supporting this project so, this criterion is scored in the high quality response range.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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)

Colorado has had a TQRIS (QualiStar) for over 15 years. QualiStar is currently being administered by a private non-profit organization. The rating system is currently voluntary and 25% licensed child care programs and 2.5% family child care homes are rated. The current system is based on four levels and includes five areas: environment, family partnerships, training and education, adult/child ratios, accreditation. It is based on five levels from provisional (0-9 points) to 4 stars; points ranging from 10-42. So it is currently a tiered system but does not include all of the program standards required by RTT-ELC; comprehensive assessment, health promotion, data practices, and early learning and development standards. Some of the components of each are in the current system but not all are included. The system is in Spanish and there are Spanish speaking raters which is a strength given the large Latino population in the State. In 2010 Colorado completed an evaluation of their system and their plan is to use RTT-ELC funds to enhance their system and accelerate the development and implementation for completion by 2014. Their revision process was very extensive utilizing the expertise and work from other states. This is a strength because they will be examining other programs that have been extensively evaluated. The categories they are including in the revision are: curriculum and learning, workforce qualifications and professional development, environment, leadership, management and family partnership; further they are

embedding health, social emotional, cultural responsiveness and inclusion of children with disabilities in the categories. They will be developing a quantitative method for compliance to the indicators. Licensing standards have also been revised so the provisional level is now more rigorous. While Colorado is to be commended for revising the current TQRIS in a very comprehensive manner, the area that is still missing is the effective data practices for programs. They are developing a method for evaluating compliance to the indicators but there is no explanation as to if or how programs will be held accountable for data practices in their programs, especially for monitoring child progress. The current system has standards that are measurable and clearly identifies when programs can move from one star to another based on a point system. The new system will also use a similar structure but since it is in process, it is partially implemented. This is understandable given the timeline for revising the TQRIS but given the structure of the QualiStar it is expected that the new TQRIS will have a similar tiered structure. The TQRIS is currently not linked to the State licensing system but there is a plan for doing this. Colorado has a history of using QualiStar (TQRIS) on voluntary basis and has developed a strong plan for implementing it state-wide, however, it is currently partially implemented.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	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)

Up to this point participation in the QualiStar (TQRIS) was voluntary, except for programs that received CCDF funds, the School Readiness Quality Improvement program and those in the Denver Preschool Program. The original intent was that parent demand for higher quality would influence the programs in working to achieve a higher level, however, this was not the case. It is apparent from their analysis of QualiStar that the State needs to take a stronger role. The State has an ambitious and challenging goal of having all (100%) Early Learning and Development programs in the quality rating system by the end of 2015. It is also unclear if Early Learning and Development programs include Head Start as it is not clearly stated. Part C programs will not be included as they are all home based. To support the inclusion of more children with high needs, Colorado will review current funding streams to provide support to programs serving children with high needs. Since Colorado's programs are locally based and controlled this is a good action to take. The review process was not specified nor was a date for completion of this review identified. Without providing more specifics it is difficult to know how and when this will be done. Since the State has locally governed programs this may prove to be a more difficult task than anticipated so more details on how this will be done would be helpful. Currently reimbursement rates for higher quality programs is based on the local level so, it varies from one area to another. The evaluation of the QualiStar program revealed that some localities were okay with no reimbursement but a higher quality rating while others were not. Once the revised TQRIS is implemented, then the State will examine the reimbursement system. This could be a problem as reimbursement is typically tied to the rating system so programs may have less incentives to move to another level until it is clear how the reimbursement will be allocated. While strategies for encouraging program participation, there was no information about policies or practices to assist families to afford high-quality child care. While the plan to maximize program participation is good, there was no discussion about ways to assist families to afford higher quality child care and it is partially implemented.

	Available	Score
(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 QualiStar system uses ERS and Head Start programs also use CLASS which are are valid and reliable instruments. CLASS will also be used in the Denver Preschool program in 2012. Lessons learned for Head Start and Denver Preschool Program will be used in the revised TQRIS. Colorado will rely on the consultant who is revising the QualiStar for recommendations for reliable and valid assessment tools, however they do support the use of ERS and CLASS which are both valid and reliable; Program Administration Scales (PAS) is also being supported. Training of raters and certification of coaches is currently being done at the Clayton Early Learning Institute. They are expected to attain a level of 85% reliability which is within the typical range of acceptance. CLASS users are trained to observe each of the domains and reliability testing is completed through an online program. Expected levels of reliability was not included in the proposal. Monitoring of the ongoing reliability levels was not available in the grant proposal. Plans are for parents, professionals and others to have access to the TQRIS information via web link: Early Learning Data System. An extensive plan for training parents to access and use this weblink will be developed. The information will also be provided in Spanish. While this is a good plan, there are no plans to support access for families who live in poverty and do not have access to technology. The QualiStar system has a website as well as a brochure families can access to review indicators of a quality program and licensing information; this information is available in Spanish and English. QualiStar currently maintains a database of all licensed providers and specific information about the programs and information from families seeking programs. The database is a great resource for families and also programs. One concern is the information about families seeking child care that is included in the database, such as family income, and reasons for needing care. This information seems intrusive and it could be assumed that the information is kept confidential but there is no indication that this is happening. While Colorado has a strong plan that is partially implemented at this point.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	14

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)

Some local programs currently are provided assistance based on the QualiStar system. For example, the Denver Preschool Program requires providers to participate in QualiStar and depending on their rating, they receive credits for technical assistance, materials, or staff development activities. Likewise, the child care division provides coaching, mentoring, professional development, scholarships, wage increases, etc. to increase quality in their programs. The types of supports provided to the local programs for participation in TQRIS will increase their quality which is a strength of Colorado's program. Colorado has several ambitious goals that will facilitate children with high needs to be served in higher quality programs: a) 1/4 of their learning and development programs will be in the top two tiers of TQRIS by December 2015, b) almost 50,000 children with high needs will be served in these tiers by 2015, and c) shared services in high needs communities will be implemented once they have been piloted and refined. While the targets for increasing the number of programs in the top tiers of TQRIS and the numbers of children enrolled in programs in the top tiers is ambitious, Colorado has a history of providing services to young children so it is reasonable to expect these targets to be achieved as indicated. Specific support for increasing the quality for children who have high needs include: financial support for programs at the beginning of the process to assist in achieving a higher rating; quality improvement awards so programs can purchase necessary equipment, etc.; scholarships and loan forgiveness; coaching, awards to individual teachers and directors for professional development; health consultations with nurses, etc. These are all great incentives to assist programs in moving to a higher quality rating, however, there were no incentives discussed for families to access higher quality programs. One strategy for increasing the number of children with high needs is a shared services hub in local communities. Many of the local programs are very small with an enrollment of less than 50 children making it difficult to provide all of the necessary services. This is an innovative and creative idea for addressing services in rural and small local areas for which Colorado is noted. Also, plans are being proposed to develop networks in local communities so that programs can share their business plans and other resources to accommodate the many different needs of families (early learning ventures). This is also an innovative and creative approach. Specific plans and the local coordinating agency were not described so it is difficult to understand how this will be fully implemented. Supports for the project were also not discussed so, implementation process and deadlines are not clear. While the plan for promoting access to high quality early learning and development programs for children with high needs is strong, incentives for families to seek higher quality programs and this criterion is partially implemented at this point.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	12

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 QualiStar system used the RAND corporation to complete an evaluation. Interesting results such as, family child care homes increased in quality, however, family satisfaction measures indicated little to no improvement. As a result, the measures for assessing family participation included providing families with information on child development and appropriate activities. The RAND study was unable to make definitive conclusions about whether QualiStar supported children's readiness for kindergarten because there was not a spread across the tiers. The lessons learned from the RAND study are being considered in the revision of the TQRIS, especially the importance of an evaluation system that measures components of the TQRIS. The revised system will include an external evaluation of the system and how the quality ratings relate to child progress. There is not enough information included to understand how the levels will be differentiated and how it will facilitate school readiness for young children with high needs. The State has a plan for selecting an external evaluator who is an expert in program evaluation and will use information they learned from the RAND evaluation. This external evaluator will be selected through an RFP process with a specific scope of work identified. The ECLC and OEC will review and approve the RFP process and the TQRIS manager will oversee the evaluation process. It is strength that Colorado is including an external evaluator for the QualiStar system once it is revised. Having the ECLC and OEC involved in the process strengthens the objectivity of the evaluation process of QualiStar. Colorado has a good plan for evaluating the effectiveness of the TQRIS using an external evaluator. Specific information about how research-based measures will examine children's learning, development and school readiness was not discussed, therefore, it is difficult to assess this criterion, which is reflected in the score.

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
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	30	22
<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: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (C)(1)		
<p>Since early 2000 the State has had two documents outlining standards for preschool preparation in K-12 programs in Reading and Mathematics. Then in 2007 Colorado adopted Rhode Island's standards for all of prekindergarten. Currently the Standards are being revised and will be available for stakeholders comments in early 2012. The revised standards are more comprehensive in focus and are for supporting children's development and learning. For example, they are recommended to be used as a continuum of learning, provide information about child development and learning during the preschool years, guide selection of assessment tools, etc. The standards imply that programs and schools should be accommodating young children at their level and facilitating their growth which is exactly what early childhood educators should be doing. Under the guiding principles, all of the standards are based on cultural and linguistic diversity and all of the major domains are addressed. In addition, separate sections are included for mathematics and literacy to facilitate children's readiness for kindergarten. Likewise, the standards span from birth through age 8 which automatically incorporates the early school years. Plans are for the standards to be aligned with workforce framework, IHEs and other professional development and TQRIS. Specific plans for incorporating these was not discussed in the proposal, just that they will be incorporated after the Standards have been finalized. It would be important to have specific plans in place with targeted deadlines to insure that the alignment will occur. Colorado plans to share the ELD standards with early educators, however, there was no discussion of training methodologies or how this will be completed so that the Standards are fully understood. While the State has the ELD Standards currently under revision, they are partially implemented as they have not been used State-wide.</p>		

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	22
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to support the effective implementation of developmentally appropriate Comprehensive Assessment Systems by--</p> <p>(a) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to select assessment instruments and approaches that are appropriate for the target populations and purposes;</p> <p>(b) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purposes and uses of each type of assessment included in the Comprehensive Assessment Systems;</p> <p>(c) Articulating an approach for aligning and integrating assessments and sharing assessment results, as</p>		

appropriate, in order to avoid duplication of assessments and to coordinate services for Children with High Needs who are served by multiple Early Learning and Development Programs; and

(d) Training Early Childhood Educators to appropriately administer assessments and interpret and use assessment data in order to inform and improve instruction, programs, and services.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

Results Matter is the assessment system used in Colorado. It is currently serving 45 thousand children, one thousand programs and four thousand teachers and child care providers. So, it is being used across the State in many of the programs. The two assessment instruments being used include: Teaching Strategies GOLD and HighScope child observation record (COR) which are reliable and valid. They assess the key kindergarten readiness areas which are aligned with the revised State Early Learning and Development standards. Results Matters is a comprehensive assessment system because it addresses all of the expected domains for kindergarten readiness, uses valid and reliable instruments, and includes an observation protocol. Child assessment results are reported 3-4 times a year which is a great process for assessing child growth, especially those who have high needs as interventions could be initiated if the child is not progressing as would be expected for their age. Plans are to develop a developmental checklist so families will be able to participate in the assessment process. Results Matters reports assessment results across programs using an online format so that services across agencies are available to all programs providing services to the child. Teachers and professionals are trained to use both of the instruments through a variety of online training modalities and face to face trainings. It is difficult for all teachers to reach criterion or reliability on assessment instruments and the reliability was not reported or discussed so it is difficult to know if all of the assessments are consistent in administration and scoring. The variability could result in inaccurate reporting of child scores. A strength of this assessment system is that the GOLD measures have been adjusted to accommodate children with disabilities. It is unclear if the instruments are available in Spanish. It would be important for the instruments to be in Spanish to accommodate the growing immigrant and ELL populations in the State. Results Matters is not used statewide and the plan is for it to be fully implemented across four phases with phase one beginning in 2012 and phase four 2015.

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
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	20	12
<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)

Colorado has had three systems in the State and in 2010 the P-3 professional development task force of the Governor's P-20 coordinating council published plans for the Early Learning and Development workforce. This plan was developed with input from over 100 stakeholders across the state. The ECLC endorsed this plan and an RFP for the development of Phase 1 (workforce knowledge and competency framework) is currently under review. The RTT-ELC will facilitate the development of this plan. The community college system has a two tiered system for credentialing professionals with 13 different credentials and four year institutions are currently using standards developed in 1991. These systems are not currently coordinated or aligned and there is a plan to do an alignment among all of the systems so there is one system state-wide. The plan will be implemented in two phases: Phase one is included in D-1 and Phase 2 in D-2. Phase 1 will be to complete a workforce knowledge and competency framework. It will be aligned with the current competency frameworks for early childhood educators, TQRIS, P-12 Educator effectiveness standards and Colorado's Early Learning and Development guidelines. In addition, all institutions and Professional Development providers will align their work with the revised Framework by 2015. Phase one also includes a plan for tiers to be identified and aligned with TQRIS. Colorado has requested funds to support the validation of the measurement instruments for the competency framework. While there is mention of developing a tiered system there is no description of what this might look like or the steps being used to

implement it as the current system has 13 credentials and there does not appear to be a progression among them. There is mention that the community colleges and four year institutions have articulation agreements but no mention as to their involvement in the aligning of the new competency framework with their institutions. The plan does not include an emphasis on receiving degrees such as bachelors or masters. While there is a plan for developing a workforce knowledge and competency framework and progression of credentials, the role of Institutions of Higher Education, particularly four year colleges in the progression of credentials was not discussed. This criterion is partially implemented.

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	14

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)

Until now support of the early childhood workforce has been at the local level which has caused a problem with understanding statewide needs and the demographics of the workforce. Currently a number of initiatives support training of early educators. For example, TEACH (college scholarships to early childhood educators); expanding quality in infant toddler care (course specifically for this workforce). The State is to be commended for initiating these initiatives that provide quality educators for working with young children. Data on the quality of the workforce has not been available, however plans are in place for this to change. In 2012 all early childhood educators who have a degree or endorsement will have their information available on the online data system. Head Start already has a reporting system. Plans are to develop a Learning Management System which will integrate all of the systems and will also track professional development opportunities by 2015. Plans are for 65% of the workforce to be tracked in the system and for 15% to be in the top 2 credential tiers. A strength of this workforce plan is to provide training to the educators working with the children who have the highest need. They will be targeted as the first recipients. Charts are included that list the different activities to be implemented and the target dates. This information is critical in developing such a comprehensive plan with so many different components so that it can be feasibly implemented. By 2015 49 higher education institutions (this is 100% of the IHEs) and Professional Development providers will be aligned with the workforce competencies and 65% of the workforce will be in the TQRIS. This is a very ambitious goal but given the supports and plans it is doable within this time frame. The number of trained professionals estimated at each of the tiers seems low considering the great need in the State and the plan for training that has been identified. For example, only 19% of the workforce will be at level one; 21% at level 2; 11% each at levels 3 & 4. The overall goal is for 65% to be in the TQRIS which is reasonable but the small percentage at the first two levels is low when level one equates to 6 semester hours. This criterion is partially implemented in that the State currently has some standards but they are not consistent across all professional development programs. In addition, there is mention of a tiered system of credentials and degrees but it is not described.

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.	40	32

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 State is currently piloting the assessment Teaching Strategies GOLD as a possible kindergarten entry assessment for all state programs beginning in 2013. So, the State has a commitment to kindergarten entry assessment and is piloting the process which is a good practice before full implementation so the various glitches can be worked out on a smaller scale. The State Board of Education endorsed the recommendations of the School Readiness and Early Childhood Assessment committee that all children, including those from special populations should be able to participate fully. The assessment tool GOLD is linked with the TQRIS, ELDS and the State early childhood assessment Results Matter. The GOLD is a reliable and valid measure that is appropriate for children with disabilities and ELL. Teachers and administrators will be trained in this assessment system and parents will have access to the information to support their child. Three phases are used for the full implementation. Phase 1 is current, Phase 2 will expand the pilot to 500 classrooms in 2012-2013 and then full implementation in 2013. Phase 1 was privately funded with Phase two funded by RTT-ELC and phase 3 partially funded by RTT-ELC. The RTT-ELC funds will provide for a quicker scale up to full implementation. Based on this, RTT-ELC will be providing a significant amount of financial support for this initiative. The three phase plan is reasonable given that the teachers and administrators need to be trained. Using a phase-in process will allow for more time for training and consistency of program implementation. Colorado has a strong plan for developing a Kindergarten entry assessment over several phases, however, it is currently in phase 1 so it is partially implemented.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	218

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	8

Competitive Preference Priority 2 is designed to increase the number of children from birth to kindergarten entry who are participating in programs that are governed by the State's licensing system and quality standards, with the goal that all licensed or State-regulated programs will participate. The State will receive points for this priority based on the extent to which the State has in place, or has a High-Quality Plan to implement no later than June 30, 2015--

- (a) A licensing and inspection system that covers all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State and that regularly care for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting; provided that if the State exempts programs for reasons other than the number of children cared for, the State may exclude those entities and reviewers will score this priority only on the basis of non-excluded entities; and
- (b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

All licensed child care and family care homes are required to be licensed and as such will be entered in the TQRIS system automatically at level 1. Later in the grant process an incentive program will be available for other non licensed programs to participate in the TQRIS. A tiered quality rating system for all licensed programs is in the plan. The plan is still partially implemented.

Priorities

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

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)

Colorado has already piloted a kindergarten entry assessment with full implementation planned for 2013. This competitive priority is met. Colorado has developed a high quality program that is currently partially implemented, and is scored above 70% in E1.

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 State has a well developed plan to increase school readiness for young children. A kindergarten entry assessment has been piloted with full implementation by 2013; early learning and development standards are being revised; workforce competencies are being aligned across all professional development entities and a TQRIS is being revised. Colorado mentions that there is an increase in the number of ELL and immigrant children in their state, however, strategies related to increasing school readiness for these children is limited in scope. While Colorado mentions that they are addressing the needs of children with high needs, the strategies and activities discussed and described are not specifically targeting this population. The State provided extensive data supporting the need to address high needs populations such as, disabilities, ELL, migrants, however the discussions in each of the areas did not mention how the specific needs of these children will be addressed. For example, early educators will need strategies for including young children with autism, multiple disabilities, and other special needs within their classroom in order to meet the needs of these children. There is no mention as to how this might be accomplished. Likewise, strategies for preparing early educators for young children who are ELL, homeless, etc. was also not included. While the case could be made that Colorado's plan is increasing the quality of programs so these children will have the opportunity to be successful in kindergarten, there are specific strategies that will enhance this further (for example, interpreters for ELL). Overall, Colorado has a great plan that could enhance the success of young children entering Kindergarten.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # CO-5004

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 6:56 AM

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. Includes detailed description and sub-points (a) through (d).

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

(a)The applicant lists 12 state funding sources that support programs for children with High Needs, and the amounts contributed to each for the 2007-2011 years. Between 2007 and 2009, the investment pattern for each funding stream showed an increase. However, in 2010, five of the funding streams had a decrease in funding, while another three had an increase. The net loss of funding in 2010 was approximately \$10 million dollars. Given that the total 2009 state investment is over \$169 million, it would appear that that Colorado has demonstrated ongoing commitment to early learning programs. (Note: The data available for 2011 are insufficient to contribute to these conclusions). (b)The applicant presents information on the numbers of children enrolled from 2007-2011 in eight programs designed to serve Children with High Needs. Six of those programs show a consistent increase between 2007 and 2010, while one program (HIPPOY) shows an increase/decrease pattern. Title I programs showed a large decrease in 2009 (due to a switch in funding streams for the Denver Public Schools pre-k program) and a large increase in 2010 (due to ARRA funds). As a whole, these data demonstrate an increase in High Needs Children served. (Note: the data available for 2011 are insufficient to contribute to these conclusions). (c) Colorado already has in place a framework for delivering RTT initiatives, and it also has existing legislation, policies and practices that also will support this implementation. For example, one piece of legislation has created a statewide kindergarten assessment to be implemented by 2013. A new Office of Early Childhood also was created through legislation, with the creation of local early childhood councils in all areas of the state being embedded in the law. The state also has policies in place that will guide the work. It has adopted an Early Childhood Framework that is serving as its guide for developing comprehensive services for children birth through age eight. It was developed in 2008 with wide stakeholder participation, and has a set of guiding principles. That framework is comprehensive, because its four key areas are early learning, parent support/education, mental health, and health. The Framework has three types of clearly-defined outcomes as well as strategies for action for each of its four key areas. It contains all the elements that are recommended for a comprehensive planning document. A recent survey of 350 state and local stakeholders showed that 75% use the Framework for planning, which demonstrates that the concept and the document are actually of use to the early childhood/human service community. The Action Plan contains a set of strategies, indicators and measures that are guiding the work.

for High Needs Children in 2010-2012. Like the Framework, the Plan was developed with input from over 100 partners, and appears to be endorsed by the various state agencies and community groups that are part of the RTT proposal implementation. There is a strong history of practices that encourage local involvement and ownership of efforts to improve services to High Needs Children. These include the operation of the local Early Childhood Councils and the aggregation of 15 foundations as the Colorado Early Care and Education Network, so as to better target their combined resources. The latter has resulted in initiatives that are key to Colorado's implementation of RTT, including the Qualistar R and R/TORIS program, the Clayton Educare School, and a statewide advocacy initiative. Colorado already has in place a forum for leaders in the business community to advocate for quality services for High Needs Children. Called Executives Partnering to Invest in Children, this group demonstrated its value by supporting the creation of an Early Childhood Leadership Commission.

(d) Colorado's status in the key areas is as follows: 1. Early Learning and Development Standards: Colorado does have Standards for children ages three and four, called the Building Blocks for Preschool. While Standards are available for many developmental areas, there are no Standards that describe expected development in general knowledge and in problem solving and other cognitive processes. Nor are there Standards that provide guidance as to skills and accomplishments for Second Language Learners, or for children with disabilities. In addition, there are no Standards for children birth to age three. (2) Comprehensive Assessment System: Colorado does have a formative assessment system in place for children birth to age five. Called Results Matters, it currently is used to assess the progress of 45,000 children in 1,000 sites, including 99% of the state's Head Start programs. The two assessment options are Creative Curriculum Gold and the High/Scope available to caregivers, with special emphasis on meaningful reporting to parents and developing a portfolio of skill and knowledge accomplishments that can be shared with each child's next teacher. While not employed throughout the entire state ECE community, Results Matters appears to be widely employed and supported in major segments of the early childhood delivery system (e.g., Colorado Preschool Program; Special Education; Title I). (3) Health Practices: Colorado has used its Medicaid and CHIP plans as vehicles to improve health services for High Needs Children, through encouraging the establishment of a medical home and providing mental health services. Local Early Childhood Councils have been encouraged to integrate health services at a local level and a statewide initiative focuses on community awareness. While these efforts are important, it does not appear that the steady building of statewide and local capacity that has occurred with expanding high quality early childhood services has been present in the health area. (4) Family Engagement Strategies: In this area, the state's activities are more recent, hence less developed than its early childhood efforts. A new initiative is designed to develop family leadership skills, and a second stresses embedding the five family protective factors into all programs. A third is focusing on a one-point-contact for families for all services. These efforts are important but are too new to evaluate their contributions. (5) Development of Early Childhood Educators: Colorado does have Core Knowledge and Standards that define professional early childhood competencies for those programs not in the Department of Education, while the latter has another set of standards. While efforts are underway to develop one Common Core, this has not yet happened. The state also has a voluntary set of credentials aligned with licensing and community college offerings. There are 13 different options, which may be confusing to a professional in the field. In addition, there are numerous institutions offering numerous professional preparation options, but there appears to be minimal cooperation or organization across that system, and there does not appear to be an undergraduate degree in ECE or child development available in the state. Further, there is no recognition of on-line learning opportunities, which for rural professionals and full-time employed adult learners, may be the most viable option. Overall, the profession development program appears fragmented and incomplete. (6) Kindergarten Entry Assessment: While 2008 legislation mandated statewide kindergarten entry assessment by 2013, that is not yet present in Colorado. Creative Curriculum Gold has been selected as the assessment tool for this project, and a plan for statewide implementation is in place with tasks and deadlines. (7) Effective Data Practices: For children served in publicly funded programs - and by their own admission- Colorado currently has a decentralized data collection system that is maintained by several state agencies. This is not a practice that allows for effective data analysis and use in planning. The state does have a plan and vision for ensuring data-sharing and feedback loops.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	18

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) Colorado has identified eight goals for improving program quality that focus around using TQRIS participation as a strategy for improving services, getting High Needs Children into top-tier programs, and increasing the number of educators with credentials. The focus on TQRIS and credentialing as improvement strategies is sensible, given the foundations already in place in the state. However, the applicants do not clearly explain why certain numerical targets were chosen. For example, the 2015 goal for participation in the top two tiers for TQRIS is that 26% of all licensed ECE programs will obtain that rating. However, no justification is offered for why that percentage is reasonable and attainable, in light of current and historical information. Similarly, the state proposes to serve 49,049 children in the top two tiers of TQRIS, but does not explain why that is an attainable number. In a footnote found in Table B(4)(c)(2), it would appear that this number is 46% of High Needs Children who currently are served by licensed programs. The state also has selected three goals for improving outcomes for High Needs Children. Two are correlational, which is to say they build on the research finding that high quality programs are more likely to lead to greater child outcomes. Only one goal is directly related to improvements in child outcomes, and it does not appear as if the state will be able to collect enough information to assess whether it has met its improvement goal. The one goal that does directly assess child outcomes focuses on increased knowledge and skills in only three targeted outcome areas (i.e., social-emotional; acquisition and use of knowledge and skills; use of appropriate behavior). Why only those three areas were targeted for improvement was not explained. It is of concern that other developmental domains are not addressed because the state will not be able to effectively assess all domains of school readiness. The applicant also does not clearly explain why a 50% improvement between 2013 and 2015 is reasonable and appropriate. Without having access to baseline information, it is difficult to determine if this is an attainable goal, but an increase of 50% in developmental milestones in only two years for High Needs Children appears ambitious. The goal for closing the gap between High Needs Children and their peers implies there will be a 50% increase in the number of the former group who are kindergarten ready. No justification is provided for selecting this increase and no historical data are presented to help determine if this is a realistic goal. In addition, the applicant sets readiness goals for 2020 that have to do with an increased number of High Needs Children who are proficient on third grade reading measures (from 72% to 85%) and the footnoted explanation of how that percentage increase was determined is confusing and does not add to the substance of the proposal. (b) The applicant's State Plan is comprised of six project areas that are clearly identified. Given its foundation, these project areas (i.e., coordination; enriching TQRIS; expanding early learning guidelines; expanding its comprehensive assessment system; supporting EC educators; and initiating a statewide kindergarten assessment) flow logically from that base. Key milestones, with dates for each, are noted. The milestones make sense as do the timetables, so that a clear and credible path could be in place for implementing these project area (c) In describing its rationale for choosing Focused Investment Areas C1, C2, D1, D2 and E1, Colorado reflected on its progress thus far in implementing its Framework. The Lt. Governor and other staff also conducted a statewide listening tour to gather input from stakeholders, which is commendable. It appears that the state has opted to focus on areas for which much work has been done (i.e., its revised Standards; comprehensive assessment system; a competency framework for the workforce; improved workforce skills; and kindergarten assessment). The applicant also justifies its choices by picking those which are most urgent, will have the greatest impact, are feasible and can be sustained. In summary, these choices appear wise and are well-defended by the applicant

	Available	Score
(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State	10	9
<p>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--</p> <p>(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--</p> <p>(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;</p> <p>(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;</p> <p>(3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and</p> <p>(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;</p> <p>(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--</p> <p>(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;</p> <p>(2) "Scope-of-work" descriptions that require each Participating State Agency to implement all applicable</p>		

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)(4)

(a)(1)The applicant would build upon its current structure by using the newly-created Early Childhood Leadership Commission to oversee the RTT work, including their recent decision to reorganize the Department of Human Services to create an Office of Early Childhood. Several programs from the Department of Health and the Lt. Governor's office will be shifted into this new Office, but others (e.g., Colorado Preschool Program, IDEA; Maternal/Child Health; Medicaid; Nutrition) will stay at the current homes. A concern with this strategy is that all young children's programs will not be managed from one office, which could negatively impact the applicant's ability to coordinate service delivery and to develop seamless policies. However, what is positive is that there is a new office focusing only on young children (and by extension, High Needs Children), and that the often-challenging sorting out of what programs go and stay within state agencies already has occurred. Thus the work on actual projects should be able to commence soon after a potential grant award. (a)(2) The responsibilities of the various state agencies are clearly defined in Table (A)(3)(1), and which agency will have the lead in which project area is stated. The roles and responsibilities of other entities (i.e., Early Childhood Leadership Commission; Part C Interagency Coordinating Council; State Board of Education) also are clearly defined (a)(3)The applicant does not directly address the methods and processes that will be used to make different types of decisions, including dispute resolution. (a)(4)The applicant does not directly address its strategies for involving a variety of stakeholders in its planning and implementation. However, the listening tour for stakeholders was noted, and the composition and responsibilities of the Early Childhood Leadership Commission was described. Both demonstrate opportunities for input. The applicant also places emphasis on enriching the local Early Childhood Councils where local input can be obtained. (b)(1)Letters of support from the leader in each of the participating state agencies are present, and are strongly worded to indicate support for the project (b)(2)A chart clearly describes the specific responsibilities of each of the state agency partners. Included are those areas where the agency will have primary responsibility (e.g., the Department of Education will have primary responsibility for expanding the comprehensive assessment system) as well as areas where the agency will have supporting responsibility (e.g. the Department of Education will support the new Early Learning and Development Guidelines). These descriptions are thorough and appropriate. (3)A signature was present from an authorized representative of all participating agencies: The Departments of Human Services, Education, Public Health and Environment, and Higher Education, and the Governor's Office of Information Technology. (c)(1)The applicant does present letters of support from intermediary organizations that list very specific services that the organization will provide as part of the RTT implementation. Those services differ across the organizations. Letters from Early Learning Councils are attached as well. (c)(2)The applicant presented letters of support from local early childhood and other human service leaders as well as from state and national leaders, including former Governors. Also included were many letters from foundations, Head Start programs, post secondary leaders, and other related projects (e.g, children's museum, children's hospital). Family and community organization support was demonstrated through letters from the Intermediary Organizations. There were over 100 support letters from programs and persons across Colorado and as a whole, they were impressive and persuasive as to the number of stakeholders involved and the depth of their commitment. In summary, the applicant had a substantially implemented plan and its proposal was of high quality

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	14

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)The applicant does present detailed information about the specific state and federal funding streams that will be used to support RTT, including annual dollar amounts to be invested. All of the funding streams mentioned in (a) above will be contributing. Of particular note was the large amount of the CCDBG quality set-asides that would be invested, the contribution of both Parts B and C of IDEA, and the substantial amount (i.e., over \$14 million annually) from foundations. This is demonstrated proof of these agencies' commitment to the project. (b)(1)The budget is presented in several different formats, but the allocations are delineated across the six project areas. The activities to be accomplished in each project area are described and the budget allocations are delineated. The budget appears to be adequate to support the State Plan (b)(2)The costs appear to be reasonable and necessary to both implement the Plan and to serve the maximum number of children and families (b)(3)The applicant does provide budgets for the activities in which each state agency will engage. It also lists those activities that appear to be the purview of Intermediary Organizations as part of its contractual line. Those organizations are not specified in the proposal, and a portion of the budget will be devoted to their work. The applicant does not identify how the state agencies will monitor this work. The applicant states that 18% of the budget is designated as local funding. Providing such a substantial amount of the budget to locally implemented activities is significant, given the ambitious array of activities proposed across the six project areas and the amount of work necessary at the state level to carry out these projects. (c)The applicant presents tables for each of its six project areas and further divides each table by the proposed activities with each project area. The applicant then determines if the activity must be sustained beyond RTT and if so, what funding sources are available. The information is thorough and the sustain vs. non-sustained judgements are sensible. The proposed funding sources for sustainability are unpredictable and generally not under the control of the state (e.g., other Federal funding sources; foundations; the business community), but Colorado does have a track record of securing support from these sources and targeting it wisely.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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)

Colorado already has in place some of the building blocks for a QORIS of high quality. It provides a plan for enriching these blocks and for adding others. (a)(1) Colorado currently has Standards only for children ages three and four. Those Standards do not include general knowledge and cognitive strategies, nor do they provide guidance on second language learners or children with disabilities. There are no Standards for children birth to age three. In early 2012, the applicant will receive (from a contractor) a draft set of Standards covering all developmental areas and appropriate for children ages Birth through age three. It plans to disseminate, train on and support the use of those Standards widely throughout the state. (a)(2) Colorado has a comprehensive assessment system for preschool children, called Results Matters, that is widely used throughout the state, with the support of the Early Childhood Councils. Programs have a choice of either the Creative Curriculum Gold or the High Scope COR. TA and support is provided to teaching staff as they use the results to individualize, improve their teaching practice and share results with parents. The applicant is proposing to continue this effort and to focus on using just the CC Gold assessment tool, as the result of a pilot study. No rationale for removing the COR as an option was presented. (a)(3) Colorado currently has 13 types of credentials available to early childhood educators. The Department of Education provides this voluntary system of credentials the requirements for which are aligned with licensing and community college offerings. There also are numerous post secondary institutions that offer an array of training and degree-granting opportunities. The state has two sets of workforce competency documents available to it, one for persons in education/public school settings and another for persons in non-school early childhood settings. The applicant reports that, pursuant to a recommendation of a Governor's Task Force, work now is underway to combine the two documents into one Knowledge and Competency Framework, and that work would be accelerated using RTT funds. Then the progressive credentials would be changed to align with the Framework, and would also be linked to the requirements for the QORIS levels. The Framework would be rolled out through the local Early Childhood Councils, with the support of the community college faculty, who are active Council members. (a)(4) Colorado recently re-established a Family Leadership Coalition to develop and nurture families who self-identify as leaders. There also is a new initiative to help programs embed the five family protective factors into their services, and another program is focusing on single points of contact for a variety of family services. In addition, there are a variety of parent participation requirements established by funding sources that are fully implemented by programs (e.g., IDEA; Title I). The applicant noted that continuing to support these new initiatives would be a part of RTT, and that exploring a universal application for service also would begin, as part of a recently legislated initiative. While these strategies are important, this area does not appear to be a focus of this proposal (a)(5) Colorado has an initiative that stressed finding appropriate medical homes for children enrolled in the Medicaid or CHIP programs. Mental health services also can be paid for through these funding sources as well. A private foundation is funding a project to help local Early Childhood Councils to coordinate local health screening resources, and another long-standing program provides current information on maintaining healthy environments for children. These are typical health efforts that tap existing resources. The applicant proposes to work with the Department of Health to field-test a community-based comprehensive developmental screening system for the 25 communities identified as having the highest need. This will benefit High Needs Children and is commendable. (a)(6) Currently, information about Colorado's children who receive public funding is collected and maintained by separate state agencies. Internally, those agencies have made efforts to improve their systems. However, obtaining collective information about a child and family currently is not possible. The applicant proposes to expand the recently-adopted Colorado Data Strategy, created by the new governor to ensure accurate and comprehensive information for decision-making. The RTT initiative would allow this work to move faster, including a unique person identifier for each child, so that information from the comprehensive assessment, the kindergarten readiness and other data bases can be aggregated for each child as part of an Early Learning Data System. This effort also would allow for electronic QORIS applications. These options are a strength of this proposal. (b) The current QORIS system, called Qualistar, is a 0-4 point system, and uses five research-based quality components which are differentiated by level. The current system does not address developmental screening measures or health promotion practices. It does not have all the data elements (e.g., child identifier) that RTT has encouraged. This QORIS system operates independently of licensing and each group has its own data base with no interface. The applicant proposes to design an enriched system that would begin with a crosswalk among NAEYC, Head Start and other available program standards. Additional indicators would be developed for curriculum and learning, workforce qualifications, management and family partnerships. Cultural responsiveness, health, social-emotional development and inclusion of special needs children would be embedded in all categories. A more precise methodology for determining adherence to each indicator would be created, as would a technical manual. Tiered reimbursement would be explored. These are important changes that would expand the current program and allow for a more comprehensive view of program operations. (c) The Qualistar system is not currently linked to licensing. Each group maintains its own data base and there are no strategies for data interface. The applicant does propose to alter that reality by revising center and family child care regulations to be at Level 1 of QORIS, which will occur by this month. This will make it possible for licensed facilities to immediately participate in QORIS, and will greatly expand opportunities for many centers that serve High Needs Children to improve the quality of their services through a series of program and professional development support. In summary, this was a partially implemented plan of high quality

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	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) Currently, participation in Colorado's TQRIS is voluntary, so only 24% of licensed centers are involved in the program. However, the state is implementing a tiered licensing system, so that all programs listed in B (a) (1-5) will be required to participate in TQRIS. In addition, the licensing requirements will be changed so that they will be the same as the Tier 1 requirements of TQRIS. The new licensing standards will be of higher quality than are the current standards, which leads to an immediate increase in quality of services. Because Head Start programs do not appear to require Colorado licenses, there could be a concern that this community would not be part of this initiative. However, because 99% of HS/EHS programs voluntarily are licensed, it appears that they will participate in this initiative. The RTT proposal provides for T/TA to help programs understand this strengthening of the licensing standards and their link to TQRIS. It is important to note that school district programs are required to be licensed in this state, so they will be included in this new initiative. The applicant's goal is that 100% of all licensed programs will be actively involved in and have a rating from the TQRIS by 2015. Given that licensed programs will automatically be part of this system, this goal is realistic. (b) The applicant states that because all licensed programs will be at least at Tier 1 by 2015, High Needs Children will thus have access to programs of at least minimal quality, with an emphasis on a program's growing forward up the rating scale. The support systems available to programs through local early childhood coalitions, which will include training and technical assistance, are based on Qualistar's current work and seem appropriate. The applicant did not provide a plan to ensure that this high quality care would be affordable for families of High Needs children. (c) As noted above, the applicant expects that 100% of all licensed programs will be participating in TQRIS by 2015. Given that programs will not have a choice, and will have to participate in order to keep their licenses, this is an ambitious but attainable target. In summary, the applicant had a partially implemented plan, and their response was of high quality.

	Available	Score
(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)

(a) The current Qualistar program used the Environmental Rating Scale in all settings. This valid and reliable tool is a reasonable choice. Raters are trained through a program at the state's Educare Center and the inter-rater reliability across the state is about 85%, which is acceptable. However, the applicant did not describe how often centers are observed. Head Start programs use the CLASS tool, which is a valid and reliable instrument to measure three dimensions of teacher-child interaction. The applicant proposes to revisit the tools used to assess classroom quality as part of the enriched TQRIS system. A consultant will be hired to make recommendations about this as well as the frequency of visits and inter-rater reliability determination. The current plan is to retain the ECERS but to implement CLASS as well. The Program Administration Scale also may be included. One option under consideration is the use of CLASS and PAS at levels 3 and 4, with its being introduced at levels 1 and 2. Colorado is wise to adopt a two-tiered strategy for measurement of classroom quality, since programs at the lower tiers will have motivators for continuing their improvement. The applicant does not state the length of time for which a TQRIS rating is valid, nor does it discuss the process for renewal or upgrading. This is an important component of the continuous improvement process. (b) Currently, the applicant does provide information on

selecting child care through the Qualistar Web site and through some local early learning coalitions. The information is in both Spanish and English. The state also maintains a data base on all licensed providers and share ratings information on its Web site and through local R and R agencies. These strategies have proven to be effective in various studies of resource and referral work. As part of its RTT initiative, Colorado proposes to build a link through the Early Learning Data System so that parents and other community members can continue to have timely information about all centers. Included would be dashboard reports so that specific information can be viewed quickly. This site would be designed so that families with High Needs Children could view the information in their home languages, and bi-lingual Webinars would be available to support such effective use. These are important next-generational strategies to build on capacities available to some. However, persons in rural communities and English-as-a-Second Language families may need hard copy documents and information in their languages. The applicant does not include strategies to meet these needs in its plan. The state provided a partially implemented plan of high quality.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	14

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)

(a)The applicant reports that participation in Qualistar itself serves as a catalyst for program improvement, since the program gets a performance profile that suggests steps that can be taken to move to the next tier. No data are presented to support this position, however. Some counties use a tiered reimbursement system for child care payments, and foundations have supported Qualistar initiatives in other areas. These efforts, however, are fragmented and inconsistent across local areas. The applicant states that incentive programs in other states will be explored as to their effectiveness in promoting continuous improvement. This is a positive next step in Colorado's work. A recent effort has been the creation of Early Learning Ventures, a foundation-supported program that creates Alliances where a number of small programs have some of their administrative functions handled centrally, so program leadership can focus on improving services to children. This strategy could be effective in promoting services of higher quality in a state where many providers are isolated and in rural communities with fewer resources. Because the applicant proposes to ensure that more centers who serve High Needs Children are in tiers 3 and 4 of its TQRIS, so that close to 50,000 of those children will be in those centers by 2015, it will consider a variety of incentive strategies, including a series of awards focusing on quality, education, retention, infrastructure and quality, along with health and operations consulting. These supports have been used with some success in other states, so their inclusion by Colorado is valuable. (b)Colorado uses its Qualistar Web site to provide information to parents, and notes in its application notes that it relies on the work of those programs who have requirements for parent engagement as its primary vehicle. These programs include the Early Childhood Councils and the Resource and Referral Centers, both of whom have local infrastructures, to support families with High Needs Children (c)Colorado has identified that 20% of its programs will be in the top two tiers of TQRIS by 2015, and they will be serving 49,049 High Needs Children by that date. The applicant does not clearly explain how it arrived at those targets, so it is difficult to determine if they are attainable and realistic. A weakness of this proposal is that the applicant did not use data about the amount of time its current Qualistar programs need to move from one tier to the next, and the applicant did not note that it also had considered the impact of a large influx of new Qualistar applicants into the system. Colorado provided a partially implemented, high quality response

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	11

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)(6)

(a) and (b) An extensive study of the state's TQRIS system by the RAND corporation was published in 2008, and concluded that program quality did improve. However, the study did not provide information about the effectiveness of TQRIS in improving school readiness, due to methodological challenges. Therefore the applicant proposes to do another effectiveness study by 2015, the goal of which is to link improvements in quality to improvements in school readiness. However, the applicant does not identify the previous barriers, nor is a research design proposed that will test out the relationship of quality to outcomes. The applicant proposes to link RTT funds with private funds which will provide ample support for a major research entity to engage in a thorough, multi-year study.

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
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	30	23
<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)		

(a) The new version of Colorado's Standards are to be completed early in 2012. The applicant states that they will cover the spectrum from birth through age 8 and will cover the developmental domains from the HS Child Outcomes Framework and the current state Department of Education's Building Blocks in Reading and Math. They will be culturally and linguistically appropriate and will include children with disabilities and English language learners. These Guidelines (or Standards) will then be reviewed by national experts for content issues. Because the Guidelines are not yet available, it is not possible to determine if they are appropriate across dimensions. However, the strategies in place for making those determinations appear to be appropriate. (b) The applicant states that the revised Guidelines will be congruent with the Department of Education's Building Blocks in Reading and Math. There are no descriptions beyond that statement, so it is not possible to determine what strategies will be used to ensure alignment with the state's K-3 standards, especially in literacy. (c) The applicant presents a plan to do reality testing of the initial Guidelines by working with programs across multiple service delivery options and locations, using five different service delivery models. This is an appropriate design for a field test, and should yield important information for Standards revision and supporting T/TA. Based on feedback, the Guidelines will be revised further, and information from that field test will be used to further shape planned professional development activities across the state. Mention also is made of embedding the Guidelines into the Workforce Knowledge and Competency system, into TQRIS, and into the comprehensive assessment system. However, the applicant does not provide details of how each of those integrations will take place. (d) As noted above, Colorado does have a plan for promoting its Guidelines that includes a Phase I field test, followed by adjustments, and then a Phase II rollout across the state. A multi-media approach will be followed, so that Facebook, Twitter, blogs and e-mail will be employed. The applicant does not describe the content of any training that might be offered about both the Guidelines themselves or how to use them. Nor do they offer possibilities for tailoring the training itself and their materials to various audiences (e.g., different reading levels, parents vs. providers). The heart of this criterion is using appropriate Standards as a strategy to improve practice, and the applicant presents little substantive information to describe how that will be done. The state has submitted partially implemented, high quality response.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	18

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to support the effective implementation of developmentally appropriate Comprehensive Assessment Systems by—

(a) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to select assessment instruments and approaches that are appropriate for the target populations and purposes;

(b) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purposes and uses of each type of assessment included in the Comprehensive Assessment Systems;

(c) Articulating an approach for aligning and integrating assessments and sharing assessment results, as appropriate, in order to avoid duplication of assessments and to coordinate services for Children with High Needs who are served by multiple Early Learning and Development Programs; and

(d) Training Early Childhood Educators to appropriately administer assessments and interpret and use assessment data in order to inform and improve instruction, programs, and services.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

(a) Colorado currently has a screening system that relies on its Department of Health to build awareness of appropriate instruments across a variety of professionals (e.g., doctors; mental health providers; teachers) so that tools selected for specific developmental areas are appropriate. The Assuring Child Health Project, which is designed to coordinate services for High Needs Children will be expanded thru the RTT project. It appears as if there will not be one screening tool, or even a small battery of tools, but rather an emphasis on helping local professionals make appropriate selections. The applicant does not present a plan for accomplishing this, although a small timeline is offered. This strategy supports Colorado's history of local decision-making, but it opens up the possibility that inappropriate tools will be selected. Further, Colorado loses the capacity to compare screening results across the state when there are numerous tools being employed. Colorado also will build on its current statewide system of formative assessment, Results Matter, using only the Creative Curriculum Gold assessment tool. This tool is used across different populations, but is not an equal interval tool, so it will be difficult for the applicant to speak in terms of quantifiable growth in knowledge and skills across populations. The applicant does not describe how it worked with early learning and development programs to select this assessment tool, and why the current alternate choice of the High/Scope COR was removed. The applicant does not state how it will work with those programs that currently use the COR, and its companion curriculum. (b) The applicant does not describe a plan for how it will support users' understanding of either the screening tools or the Creative Curriculum Gold assessment tool. There is mention of the current system of support, where trainers demonstrate the features of the on-line system, connect new users with seasoned users of the tool, and allow initial trials of the tool. While these options all are appropriate, it is not clear that they will be employed in the RTT project. Given that reliability of assessment is a key concern, especially when aggregated information is being used to determine the degree to which certain populations are ready for school, it is of concern that the proposal does not describe a thorough plan to train assessors. (c) The applicant does not articulate an approach for assessment integration and sharing of results for High Needs Children, nor is coordination of services for this population discussed. Mention is made of using a community-based approach with coordinated data-sharing, but no details are provided. These omissions are important, because lack of a plan to integrate assessments and services on each child increases the probability of service fragmentation. A first step targeting Early Head Start and Head Start and School

Readiness Improvement Programs who do not already use Results Matter is mentioned. This makes sense, since these programs target High Needs Children. The next phase of implementation will target family child care and other center-based programs for implementation. However, the applicant does not provide details about the content of those implementations. Having a well-developed plan is important to ensure success, since a large percentage of the state's High Needs Children are and will be served through these three funding streams. (d) As noted above, the training and support plan currently in place revolves around training in the assessment tool, mentoring by a veteran, and trial opportunities. Other information about training in administration and data interpretation for the RTT project is not provided. Colorado has submitted a partially implemented, medium quality response

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
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	20	12
<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>(a) Colorado currently has two sets of competency standards. One is the Common Core which informs licensing and serves as a focus for community college coursework. The second is the Department of Education's Core Knowledge, which is for persons working in traditional settings. The applicant already has made a commitment to producing one Framework that draws on both documents and is competency-based (as opposed to coursework-based). The RTT project will allow for acceleration of that development. An RFP has been issued for this work, so there is some confidence that it will proceed. This task will be formidable since the Common Core document is extensive and somewhat cumbersome to use, although thorough. The Core Knowledge document was not provided. However, having one Framework will be an essential element of the development of a knowledgeable and competent workforce. It is this element that appears to be the focus of the RTT work for this Priority Area. (b) The Department of Education does have a voluntary system of tiered credentials that recognizes specific skills (e.g., infant/toddler care) and is aligned with licensing. The applicant does not talk about whether this system would need to be revised to comport with the newly-developed Framework, which would seem to be a logical exercise. This is important because a seamless professional development system requires that coursework and training content be aligned with developing those knowledge and competencies that the state feels are important for continued improvement of teaching skills. The applicant does not mention that revisiting the usefulness and need for 13 different credentials is part of its plan. This review is important because having so many options for staff may be confusing, and may hinder staff making wise choices about their professional development future. (c) The applicant states that the local community colleges already are engaged in providing coursework that fits into the Common Core, and that faculty are involved in their local Early Childhood Councils to ensure coursework is available as part of the training responsibilities of those Councils. The emphasis in this proposal is on linking the new Core into the local councils/community college system. This is important, since these colleges are the starting point for many of Colorado's early childhood staff. However, the state does not propose to develop similar linkages with four-year institutions or with on-line post secondary degree offerers. Such linkages can open up options for early childhood professionals as they consider degrees and coursework beyond the associate's level. The state has provided a partially implemented, medium quality response.</p>	

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	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)

(a) The applicant states that professional development has been driven by local initiatives. Therefore it has been uneven across the state. There have been targeted efforts to develop 100 Infant/Toddler professionals across the state, and to develop an informal coaching consortium. The applicant proposes to use the RTT opportunity to engage in statewide training on the new Standards/Guidelines and to allow staff to track their own professional development through a web-based learning system, and to target access to training. This strategy will spread out opportunities more evenly throughout Colorado. The applicant also talks about making sure that training is available in formats that support diverse adult learners, and the need to fill current gaps in the training system. However, the proposal does not describe what those might be. (b) The applicant states that incentives are in place to accelerate professional development, and that policies support those incentives. This is important because some early childhood educators will be responsive to such motivations. These incentives are described as coming from the TEACH program, but the applicant does not specify which of the TEACH options are employed in Colorado. (c) The applicant describes the creation of a Learning Management System that will make reporting on workforce professional development possible. A goal of 2015 is set for reporting on workforce development. This is an important activity, because maintaining a responsive professional development system requires statewide information about what activities are successful, and which do not lead to improved performance, credentials and degrees. The proposal lacked specificity about the data that would be collected, nor was their discussion about how local experts with important information (e.g., local early childhood councils) would be tapped as part of the development process. (d)(1) In its High Quality Plan for Workforce Development, the applicant does set target of 2013 for updating current inter-institutional agreements, and it does propose that by 2015, 49 institutions will have coursework aligned with the new Framework. The applicant does not provide information about how these targets were chosen, nor what strategies or activities it will use to ensure that they are met, so it is not possible to determine if this is a realistic target, and if having 49 institutions with coursework alignment will meaningfully impact the availability of systematic ECE training of high quality across the state. (d)(2) The applicant presents a table of targets for each year, focusing on the number and percentage of educators who will attain each available credential. While the targets appear reasonable. The applicant itself admits, in a footnote, that projecting these targets with its current data is challenging. Colorado has offered a partially implemented, medium quality response.

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.	40	28

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)

(a) The applicant reports that, as part of a pilot project, Creative Curriculum Gold is being piloted as kindergarten entry assessment in 16 classrooms this fall. Given the characteristics required by state leaders for any kindergarten assessment (e.g., culturally and linguistically sensitive; correlated with the Results Matter formative assessment), Colorado's sense is that this tool would meet those criteria. The applicant feels that this tool also will be aligned with its new Standards/Guidelines and will cover all essential domains. All of these assumptions appear to be accurate. (b) Creative Curriculum has provided the applicant with the results of studies that purport to demonstrate its tools' sensitivity to diverse populations. It is not clear if these studies were done by independent researchers or by persons hired by Creative Curriculum. The former research would be more credible because it would have been conducted by persons with no connection to the curriculum developer. (c) The applicant's timetable calls for statewide implementation by 2013, due to a state law requiring this date. A timetable and activities are presented that lead to this date, but there are no descriptions of those activities, who will coordinate them, and how various community groups will be involved in the development of the final system. Preparing an entire state for implementation in less than two years is a challenging and complex tasks. Without the aforementioned timetable and supports, Colorado may not meet its self-imposed deadline. (d) The applicant states that the results of the kindergarten readiness assessments will be linked to State Longitudinal Data System, and funds are requested to ensure that this happens, with much of the work being delegated to the Governor's Office of Technology. A timetable of activities is presented by this Office as part of its budget, but the descriptions of those activities are broad. A more specific timeline and activities timetable would have been useful to ensure timely implementation of this project. (e) The applicant, in its budget material, indicates that the ongoing implementation of this activity will be supported by state and Federal funds other than the RTT grant. Given that this activity has been mandated by the legislature, this claim would appear to be reasonable. Colorado provided a partially implemented, high quality response.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	205

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	8

Competitive Preference Priority 2 is designed to increase the number of children from birth to kindergarten entry who are participating in programs that are governed by the State's licensing system and quality standards, with the goal that all licensed or State-regulated programs will participate. The State will receive points for this priority based on the extent to which the State has in place, or has a High-Quality Plan to implement no later than June 30, 2015--

- (a) A licensing and inspection system that covers all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State and that regularly care for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting; provided that if the State exempts programs for reasons other than the number of children cared for, the State may exclude those entities and reviewers will score this priority only on the basis of non-excluded entities; and
- (b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

(a)Colorado's licensing standards already cover all family child care centers with two or more unrelated children, and centers with five or more unrelated children. (b)The state's licensing requirements are in the process of being changed to link their requirements to the TQRIS system, so that the basic licensing requirements will be the same as the Tier 1 of TQRIS. This means that 1,214 centers, 3,171 family child care homes, 845 preschool programs and 821 school-age programs will be able to immediately participate in TQRIS. This should be in effect long before 2015, given that the revised licensing standards are about to be published, and this is a strength of this proposal. The applicant also proposes to make TQRIS available to non-licensed providers with emphasis on Family, Friend and Neighbor (FNN) care. While the applicant makes a compelling case for working with these caregivers, it does not provide specifics as to how that would occur (e.g., how these caregivers would be recruited; what incentives would be available for their participation; what T/TA would be available to prepare FNN staff for TQRIS). The state provides a partially implemented, high quality proposal

Priorities

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

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 have a kindergarten entry assessment that is used across the state and that meets all the elements required. It does have a plan to do so, as described in (E)(1) above, where it received a rating of 70% or better.

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 presented a plan that wisely builds upon its current early childhood efforts, and is designed to increase access to services of high quality for High Needs Children. Key strategies for ensuring that this goal is met is the expansion and improvement of the state's TQRIS, improving the knowledge and skills of early educators through a variety of credentialing choices, and individualizing children's experiences through systematic screening and assessment. Each cooperating state agency has a well-defined role, supported by the proposed budget. Local communities and other stakeholders will be involved through local Early Childhood Councils, and through the oversight of the newly-created statewide council. The plans for expanding and enriching the current TQRIS are well-described, as are the initiatives to ensure ongoing child screening and assessment. The strategies for developing the workforce, and for implementing and using data from a statewide kindergarten assessment are less developed. Community input into and support for this proposal is well-documented from all stakeholders and all part of the state. State agency partners appear to be committed to the RTT project, and the roles for each are appropriate and well-defined. The budet is thorough and reasonable.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # CO-5004

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 11:26 AM

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, 19. Includes detailed text about Colorado's early learning programs and a 'Comments on (A)(1)' section.

Essential Data Elements are not currently in any one system or database but items are across multiple systems.

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

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)

Colorado provided a clear path for its reform agenda by building on the current success of its pilots that demonstrated improved outcomes for children on third grade tests in the K-12 system. Specific goals for improving program quality, improving outcomes for Children with High Needs, and closing the readiness gap between Children with High Needs and their peers are stated with ambitious but achievable goals. The state plan lays out the vision in the logic model which demonstrates the cohesive High Quality Plan in its six project areas for a clear path to success. This six areas provide coordinating and integrating goals for building on successes while addressing Focused Investment Areas for improved child outcomes. The selection of specific investment areas to enhance the existing system is appropriate within the context of the local tradition and past successes. Table A-D and A-E provides a visual summarizing the key transitions of the movement to the current system with direction on its future path

	Available	Score
(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State	10	9

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)

Colorado detailed in its High Quality Plan the governance and organization structure to facilitate coordination and implementation. In September 2011, an approved governance structure was implemented that included structural changes within the state agencies to redefine roles and integrate most funding streams. Colorado did demonstrate governance structures, roles and responsibilities of each agency, and a process for dispute resolution. The redefined structure will facilitate decision making and interagency coordination thereby enhancing efficiency and effectiveness for its operation. An annual reporting mandate on the impact on child outcomes is part of this new Office of Early Childhood. This state requirement demonstrates the commitment to data use to inform the public as well as to monitor progress of the child outcomes. The Office of Early Childhood will have data to use in program improvement as a result of the outcome data. The Participating State Agencies and broad group of stakeholders demonstrated commitment to the plan with its letters identifying leverage of existing resources. While Denver schools and two (2) teacher unions provided letters of support, there was nothing from large school districts that would be administering the Kindergarten Entry Assessment, educators working with children with disabilities, or the largest higher education institutions providing the largest number of credentialed staff. The applicant provided the MOUs with each Participating Agency along with the scope of work for each agency so as to leverage and coordinate the statewide work necessary for an early childhood system. Because of the high local involvement, representation of key stakeholders are involved in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	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)

Colorado provided detailed information on use of current funding by program area for implementation of the plan. Tables A-H through M provide an overview of each investment area with a designation if the funds are provided for startup or future sustainability. This does demonstrate a thoughtful and planned approach to efficient use of funding to demonstrate reasonableness of costs in relation to the program design and objectives. Colorado continues its strong financial commitment as well as aligning its public private partnerships to this end. The Budget is appropriate to the outlined areas so that the State may sustain this work after federal funding ends. The program areas selected lend to sustainability because the state enhanced its existing programs instead of building a different system to meet a grant program. Colorado did provide information on funding devoted to local implementation of the state plan to leverage existing work. However, CO did not identify how or if some of the funding and programs will phase out so that the services could be reallocated into the state plan. For example, \$1,470,000 at the local Head Start office is listed as an aggregate investment in non-direct services for professional development and quality improvements but it is not known if that amount is contributed to the statewide professional development to implement the High Quality Plan or if that amount continues to be provided for what each program decides is quality improvement. Medicaid resources is listed at 75,000 annually for supporting community based screening and this seems very low considering this is one of the main priorities of the program.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	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"> (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; <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>		
<p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (B)(1)		
<p>Colorado has a fully implemented volunteer common statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) administered by Qualistar Colorado but is currently not linked to the State licensing system. The current TQRIS does not address Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment System, Health Promotion, or Effective data practices. An independent study and evaluation by RAND identified areas for improvement while indicating that the rating system was valid in differentiating levels of quality. Zellman and Perlman (2008) identified Colorado as one of the five pioneer states in implementing a child care rating and improvement system which demonstrates the States early commitment to improved programs for children. The State will accelerate development and implementation of the enhanced and expanded TQRIS which will be embedded in licensing and links with other state data systems. Currently, licensing is not linked to the Early Learning and Development System although there are plans to do so. This expansion will include developmental screening measures, health promotion practices, and additional data elements defined as necessary in the grant process. Colorado planned TQRIS will address all of the required program standards identified. The High Quality Plan provides an integrated approach to implement the enhanced TQRIS while also addressing Competitive Priority 2.</p>		
	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	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)

Colorado has a High Quality Plan to maximize participation in the State's Tiered Quality and Rating Improvement System (TQRIS) by moving from the current voluntary to mandated participation requirement for all licensed programs. Currently the plan is partially implemented. Colorado intends to have 100% of licensed Early Learning and Development Programs included in TQRIS by December 2014 so there will be an increased impact on Children with High Needs in quality programs. Since Colorado is requiring all licensed programs to participate in the rating system, the plan is ambitious and achievable. CO does not require state licensing for Head Start and Part C, IDEA which will not fall under the TQRIS system leaving a gap in the plan. As part of meeting this goal, CO will redesign the financing from the current funding streams to offer higher levels of funding for High Quality Programs. The state redesign is reasonable based on its lessons learned from the current system. The current system was built on the assumption that parent demand would drive increased voluntary participation in the quality rating system. That was not true so the next generation of TQRIS will be a rated license system. CO's child care system is administered at the county level and currently several counties provide a tiered reimbursement for child care, including up to 100% for providers at the top tier. Other counties have very low reimbursement rates with no tiered incentives for quality. As a result, CO will assess the current system to study what supports and policy changes are necessary to implement the tiered system statewide after the implementation of the new TQRIS. Therefore, CO does not have incentives in the plan for provider participation or reimbursement for parents. Rules require all programs servicing more than two unrelated children in family child care homes and five unrelated children in centers to be licensed. Colorado's more assertive role in the new system seems appropriate since they had experience in a system under Qualistar to continuously improve the Early Learning and Development System.

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

Colorado has developed and implemented a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs administered by Qualistar Colorado. Through its current program, CO had identified specific areas to address as part of its Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) which will be accelerated with the assistance of this grant. As a result, CO has a partially implemented plan. The current process includes a requirement for training of raters with an IRR of 85%. The High Quality Plan expands the monitoring process through additional tools, rater trainings, and expanded and integrated data systems. Colorado has experience in implementing and monitoring rating system previously and has applied its experience to the new program. However, it is not clear on the frequency of the monitoring currently or in the new plan. The state did not designate the rating period. As such it is not clear how parents will be able to evaluate the program. For example, if the frequency was once every five years, how reliable is a rating if parents are considering the program in year 4. Colorado maintains an appropriate inter-rater reliability with its current rating tool used to train raters and monitor programs so this experience is essential as it expands to the new system. An RFP for the design of the next generation TQRIS is planned to provide recommendations for valid tools and processes for monitoring. At the same time, the interagency design group supports the continued use of the Environmental Rating Scales (ERS), Classroom Assessment Scoring System(CLASS), and Program Administration Scales(PALS)which is currently used in many programs. The Denver Preschool Program is implementing CLASS alongside the current Qualistar rating system for the 2012 year so that lessons learned can be applied to the revised TQRIS. This is an appropriate avenue to provide pilot data and training information to assist with the large scale effort. The current Qualistar website does include program quality information in both English and Spanish. Parent and public access to TQRIS data will be available via website, councils, and printed materials in English and Spanish. A multi-media campaign, including social media, is planned to assist families in accessing services. Colorado's plan is appropriate to share information with parents.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	10

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)

CO had implemented components and extended its system through a High-Quality Plan to improve the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in TQRIS. Colorado demonstrated that it has a system in place to incorporate results of the current monitoring to improve practices at the state, local, and private levels. The state has used data from its current programs to develop this plan. The Early Learning Ventures (ELV) supports a shared services model to manage back office and administrative operations so the smaller providers can focus on quality of care instead of meeting administrative burdens. Currently 9 alliances are in operation with goals to launch 30 by 2015 which may support 300 providers serving 68,000 children. Colorado demonstrated that it can establish policies and practices to support the Early Learning and Development Programs, especially as it receives information from a local program that has implemented a successful practice. The state has a system to integrate it into the statewide system. CO recognizes the need to provide incentives to continue to sustain quality by moving to the top two tiers and to bring unrated programs into the rating system. Incentives are under consideration for one time awards to the providers and staff through scholarship, professional development, retention awards and consultation access. Incentives for staff include loan forgiveness, scholarships, retention awards and access to coaching and health consultation while administrative incentives are one time quality and infrastructure awards. Because the incentives are still under consideration, there is no review of the feasibility for continuous improvement of the system. No supports for working families are under consideration. The incentives listed address the teaching staff or the administrative personnel but not parents. CO indicated it may consider methods for longer term incentives such as tax credits tied to TQRIS. The tax credit does appear to be an appropriate incentive for both the provider and family, if considered and implemented. The targets identified for increasing programs in the top tier and the number of Children with High Needs in the top tiers seem appropriate for this beginning program.

	Available	Score
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(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

15

14

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)

Colorado has demonstrated its commitment to independent evaluations of the relationship between ratings generated and learning outcomes for children to use the results as part of its continuous improvement. Qualistar commissioned a 3 million, multi-year study by the Rand Corporation with funding from the private sector to evaluate the rating system which was a major step in measuring child care effectiveness and its impact on future outcomes for children. Unfortunately, there was no definitive conclusion on the rating system for school readiness for the state to use this data to tie to program improvement. With the current plan, CO has expanded its strong base in evaluating program effectiveness to include additional measures in the ratings on child outcomes. Private sector funding will be used in the RFP process to select an independent evaluator to evaluate the revised TQRIS. The state demonstrated that its High Quality Plan includes appropriate research designs and measures of child progress to determine rating changes, program quality, and 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
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	30	20

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)

Colorado's High-Quality Plan to support the effective implementation of developmentally appropriate Early Learning and Development Guidelines is to extend the existing McREL contract to pilot, refine, and implement the Guidelines as well as to develop and execute a communications plan with multi-media. Colorado currently has fully aligned P-12 standards and identified the need to expand the scope to include infants and toddlers. An RFP was awarded to Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). McREL's deliverables are to manage the development of the Colorado Early Learning and Development guidelines to meet the definition in the NIA as well as extending to the birth to 8 continuum. The aligned guidelines will be completed in January 2012 with two phases of implementation activities: demonstration and deployment. Demonstration phase consists of a test of five delivery methods with professional development to follow where the impact will be evaluated. During deployment, the final Guidelines will be distributed through multiple formats and forums. This two phase implementation is an appropriate approach for a statewide professional development program. Colorado did demonstrate that the current standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and with the RFP award provided the NIA to ensure that the deliverable met the standards as outlined by the Department. A demonstration phase on the use of the guidelines is appropriate to gain sufficient information to move the system forward. However, the support system described to promote understanding of the standards is not sufficient for statewide implementation. The guidelines will be embedded into workforce competencies and integrated into higher education partners into courses, TQRIS and Comprehensive Assessment Systems. Colorado's plan is appropriate for integration of the guidelines in the statewide systems of TQRIS, Comprehensive Assessment, and Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The state did not identify the process to embed the competencies into the other systems, but the state stated that would be the case. Therefore, without sufficient evidence to evaluate this statement, the reviewer could not provide evaluative information on this component.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	18

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to support the effective implementation of developmentally appropriate Comprehensive Assessment Systems by--

- (a) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to select assessment instruments and approaches that are appropriate for the target populations and purposes;
- (b) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purposes and uses of each type of assessment included in the Comprehensive Assessment Systems;
- (c) Articulating an approach for aligning and integrating assessments and sharing assessment results, as appropriate, in order to avoid duplication of assessments and to coordinate services for Children with High Needs who are served by multiple Early Learning and Development Programs; and
- (d) Training Early Childhood Educators to appropriately administer assessments and interpret and use assessment data in order to inform and improve instruction, programs, and services.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

The Comprehensive Assessment System addresses most of the components in a multisystem approach using the local and state systems as a partially implemented plan. Currently, 99% of Head Start and Early Head Start voluntarily participate in the state's early learning assessment system which is implemented in over 1000 sites, 4,000 providers and 45,000 children. Teaching Strategies Gold and HighScope Child Observation Record are the two approved assessments addressing the key domains of school readiness within Results Matter but the state will move to one assessment for use in Results Matter. Results Matter is Colorado's statewide system of formative assessment for children birth to five. Results Matter is recognized as national model featured at the Early Childhood 2010 conference which provides child outcomes by providing child monitoring tools and supports. Colorado has demonstrated the use of formative assessments within Early Learning and Development Programs to raise the quality of services to Children with High Needs and link child outcome data with existing program quality measures. Colorado has developed this area in two tracks: developmental screening and Results Matter as part of the integration and services to Children with High Needs. The developmental screening will target high needs communities to strengthen screening measures with Children with High Needs and this is an appropriate approach. An interactive tool provides a crosswalk between the assessment items, Preschool Academic Standards and Head Start Program Standards so staff can meet necessary program requirements without duplicating assessments among the programs. Through this interactive tool, Colorado demonstrated that it is attempting to align and integrate assessments to avoid duplication. However, the coordination of services for Children with High Needs who are served by multiple Early Learning and Development Programs was not sufficiently addressed to results in a coordinated program. Colorado did not identify the process for training early childhood and family care providers other than documents in the activity description that training, books and materials will be provided. A more detailed plan on training staff to administer, interpret and use data is necessary.

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
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	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> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p> <p>Comments on (D)(1)</p> <p>The applicant has a partially implemented plan. The first priority of the State High Quality Plan is to develop a comprehensive, research-based Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and to align that Framework with existing progression of credential and degrees in the field. Currently CO has two state development systems and a voluntary credentialing system with plans to evolve into a cohesive system through the Framework as the galvanizing agent. This approach addressed the need to bridge the systems with multiple providers but does not provide the necessary detail to evaluate the feasibility for implementation. The dual system has two sets of competency standards for the early learning workforce, one of which is aligned with the Colorado Core Knowledge and Standards. Alignment will be addressed by development and adoption of the comprehensive Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework with selection process through the RFP funded by the ECLC. The Community College System received a \$1M award to redesign developmental education for early childhood professionals to accelerate students' movement through the courses. Community colleges programs have alignment with the Core Knowledge and Standards and produce professionals that teach almost 70% of the CO children enrolled in licensed settings. CO has demonstrated that it is building on its success to implement this Framework. The professional development programs, mentoring, coaching, hiring decisions will apply the Framework as part of their operations. Colorado demonstrated its alignment with the Framework by applying it to all professional development programs in the state. Colorado did not state how it would monitor this activity to ensure its implementation. Funding will be provided to support professional development with coursework targeting Children with High Needs, which is appropriate to ensure support to Children with High Needs. Colorado will roll out Competency Framework activities at the Early Childhood Councils since local community college faculty and professional development providers are members of the council and will assist with the statewide implementation. While the Competency Framework is mandatory for all professional development opportunities, it is not stated if it is mandatory for all postsecondary institutions and how this would lead to degrees within the state.</p>		

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	12
<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> <p>(c) Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention; and</p> <p>(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--</p>		

(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)

Colorado identifies its 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. Currently, the plan is partially implemented. The coordinated community college system has been the cornerstone of early childhood preparation driven by and responsive to the local Early Childhood Councils. This has mainly been a voluntary response effort. The State will provide a system of incentives and supports to implement statewide while integrating a technology based tracking system. The private public partnership tradition in CO has provided incentives and policies in specific geographic areas which the state can build on that success. For example, one of the Early Childhood Councils awards mini-grants and school districts pay early childhood professionals on a classified pay scale that rewards the earning of pre-approved college credits. The state did demonstrate that its incentives used at the local level were effective in increasing the supply of early childhood providers. Colorado is expanding its coaching network to provide support to the staff working with Children with High Needs which is an appropriate avenue to offer additional support. The plan identifies goals focusing on implementation of a web based Learning Management System (LMS). The LMS will track progress of early childhood educators, policies and incentives to accelerate professional development with targeted incentives for educators serving Children with High Needs, public reporting for all stakeholders on quality of educators and their development, advancement, and retention. Colorado demonstrated that there is a plan to continue the staff incentives such as T.E.A.C.H to promote professional improvement and career advancement. Colorado acknowledged the percentages are very low in the performance measure tables for the progression of credentials aligned to the Framework. As a result, the state is using funds to create the Learning Management System for better documentation and tracking to understand the workforce and develop targets. While this is a strategy to develop a baseline on the current workforce, there were no specific strategies identified to improve the progression for degrees or the number of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials from post secondary institutions.

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.	40	32

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)

With partial implementation, the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The Kindergarten Entry Assessment will inform instruction and services in the early elementary grades, especially for Children with High Needs in alignment with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness. The CAP4K education reform adopted requires statewide implementation of a Kindergarten Entry Assessment by 2013. In 2010 the State Board approved recommendations that the Entry Assessment should be built on the foundation of the Results Matter assessment system. Universal design for access will be built into the system to ensure addressing of Children with High Needs. Colorado demonstrated that it is addressing Children with High Needs in building the system to ensure their participation. The system will provide ongoing information from multiple sources on the developmental domains of school readiness. Currently the selected assessment measure is being piloted as a kindergarten assessment by 16 classrooms across the state. Private sector partners are underwriting the costs for the pilot which will be expanded to begin in the 2013-14 school year. Colorado demonstrates a thoughtful approach to determining the assessment by conducting a pilot to determine the feasibility. The Kindergarten Entry Assessment is linked to the TQRIS as well as the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) to study the extent that changes in program quality ratings reflect progress in school readiness. The state appropriately indicated that the linking of the TQRIS rating to child outcomes in its data system. The state did not provide a specific reference to grade 3 assessment as part of closing the achievement gap due to quality Early Learning and Development Programs. Local funding will be provided for initial support and for sustaining it after federal funding ends. Since Colorado does have a state law on Kindergarten Entry Assessment, it may not have determined it necessary to address the requirement that the assessment cannot be used to deny entry to children.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	213

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	6

Competitive Preference Priority 2 is designed to increase the number of children from birth to kindergarten entry who are participating in programs that are governed by the State's licensing system and quality standards, with the goal that all licensed or State-regulated programs will participate. The State will receive points for this priority based on the extent to which the State has in place, or has a High-Quality Plan to implement no later than June 30, 2015--

(a) A licensing and inspection system that covers all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State and that regularly care for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting; provided that if the State exempts programs for reasons other than the number of children cared for, the State may exclude those entities and reviewers will score this priority only on the basis of non-excluded entities; and

(b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

Colorado has a partially implemented plan. The state will implement the TQRIS in all currently licensed programs that participate and will encourage participation by targeted non-licensed providers, including Family Friend and Neighbor (FFN) providers who care for Children with High Needs. CO does have a plan to include non-licensed providers in the TQRIS through studying, designing, and implementing an incentive program to drive voluntary participation in the TQRIS by non-licensed providers.

Priorities

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

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 (F)(3)

The State addressed the selection criteria in E(1). Currently the plan is partially implemented with a high quality plan for implementation. Currently, the selected Kindergarten Entry Assessment measure is being piloted by 16 classrooms across the state. Private sector partners are underwriting the costs for the pilot which will be expanded to begin in the 2013-14 school year. Colorado provides an appropriate phase in of the program by piloting and field testing prior to state implementation. Lessons learned can be implemented within the larger context.

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	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>	
<p>Comments on Absolute Priority</p> <p>Colorado's application comprehensively and coherently addressed how the State will build upon the existing system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so they enter kindergarten ready to succeed. The state is building onto a state infrastructure that has committed fiscal resources from 2007 forward. The private-public partnership has invested heavily in the success of the Early Learning and Development Programs which is a strength of the system by integrating resources, The local initiative has allowed CO to build a system based on successes at the local level which significantly improved the statewide implementation.</p>	