Application # CT-5005

Peer Reviewer:
Lead Monitor:
Support Monitor:
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 10:57 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**

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development | 20 | 18 |

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

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

The applicant demonstrates past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for children with high needs. Evidence is provided that the state has maintained or increased funding in Early Learning and Development Programs in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs. Evidence is also provided that the State has steadily increased the number of children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs despite economic downturns. The applicant provides an historical accounting of past and existing legislation, policies and practices related to Early Learning and Development Programs including the Governor's Executive Order to establish a State Early Childhood Office and recent state legislation which mandates the continued development of a coordinated system of early care, education and child development through increased collaboration among State agencies. This State legislation provides an important foundation for the proposed work. The applicant provides a thorough description of current status of key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system including how the State has begun to revise the Early Learning and Development Standards so that they include all five essential domains and are aligned with birth to three and K-3 learning standards. The applicant further describes the status of the Comprehensive Assessment System, specifying that State School Readiness legislation outlines 11 quality program components. The applicant describes how health promotion practices are required in State-funded programs. Family engagement practices are described as varied across programs but all emphasize the importance of working with families. The applicant describes how the State has developed a ladder of early childhood educator credentials and partners with colleges, universities and non profit agencies to provide a range of professional development. The applicant describes the status of the States' kindergarten entry assessment and explains how it is currently used. Finally the applicant provides evidence about the status of its data systems across Participating State Agencies. The accounting of the status of each of these important building blocks indicates strong past investment in high-quality accessible Early Learning and Development Programs in the State and positions the applicant well for enhanced efforts provided by RTT-ELC funds. The applicant does not explain the rational for their change in plans to move to a three tier system for the TQRIS. (Previous work in the State recommended a five tier system.)

| | 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) |
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The applicant describes an ambitious yet achievable plan by proposing to cut in half the number of the State's children who arrive at kindergarten unprepared for school. By instituting system changes that target improving the quality of publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs for children with high needs, improving the quality of care in family based child care settings and accelerating the implementation of a coordinated system of early care, education and child development services, the State appears likely to improve outcomes for children with high needs across the State and decrease the size of the readiness gap between children with high needs and their peers. The logic model and work plan with clearly outlined responsibilities and a timeline for benchmark performance details an effective reform agenda that establishes a clear and credible path towards achieving the goals. The applicant provides a clear rationale that justifies the State's choices to address the selected criteria in each focused investment area. By working to revise early learning and development standards, focusing on the health, behavioral and developmental needs of children with high needs and developing a common statewide workforce framework, the state proposes to build on previous work that has been completed by key stakeholder groups. The applicant also describes how it will improve understanding of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry by working to revise its existing kindergarten entry assessment and use this data to inform improvement in children's transition from preschool to kindergarten. Finally, the applicant explains how and why they chose to build and enhance the early learning data system so as to improve instruction, practices, services and policies. The rationale for this comprehensive approach is strengthened by the applicant's explanation of how their work in Competitive priorities 2 and 3 and the invitational priorities fit into the overall goals. It is clear that the applicant has carefully examined the past progress of the State and proposes a plan that builds both on these earlier efforts as well as their assessment of current needs. However, the plan to reduce the by half the number of children who enter kindergarten ready to be successful may be overly ambitious and not attainable.

| | 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**

<div align="center">Comments on (A)(3)</div>

The applicant describes an organizational structure for managing the grant that builds on existing interagency governance structures that appear to be effective. The applicant provides a detailed description of the roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, each Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council and other partners. Th applicant explains that the Governor's Office will intervene as warranted to facilitate timely resolution of any disputes including those associated with either policies or strategies. Given the various perspectives and agendas of participating state agencies, this may be an insufficient plan for resolving disputes. The applicant provides a detailed plan for how they will leverage resources to support local and intermediary groups invested in Early Learning and Development Programs across the state. The activities seem likely to support active participation and strong commitment to the State Plan. The applicant provides evidence that the Participating State Agencies are strongly committed to the plan. Memoranda of understanding (MOUs) are provided with signatures from the highest level of leadership in each agency and individual scopes of work are included that link directly to the State planned activities and budget. The applicant provides detailed and persuasive letters of intent and support from a broad array of stakeholders across the state as well as from intermediary organizations. The documentation provides compelling evidence that the applicant has established strong commitment to the State Plan by key stakeholders across the State.

| | 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) |
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The applicant provides detail about how existing funds will be used to support the activities of the proposed projects. A detailed table outlines each planned expenditure and shows that careful thought has been invested in leveraging resources. The applicant describes how the planning process included a professional judgement method wherein a group of experts worked through the budget process to determine reasonable and necessary costs to support planned activities. This process seems highly likely to have arrived at adequate and reasonable budgeted amounts in relations to the objectives, design and significance of various plans. The applicant provides details about how the professional judgement method was used to determine the amount of funds for each participating state agency and explains how a significant portion of the budget is set aside for local implementation activities. The applicant describes in both the budget tables and the narrative how the State will use the funds effectively and efficiently use the grant funds to achieve the proposed outcomes. The costs appear reasonable and necessary in relation to the objectives, design and significance of the proposed activities. The amount of funds budgeted to participating State agencies , intermediary and local stakeholders as well as other partners is consistent with the State plan and demonstrates a significant amount of funding is devoted to local implementation of the plan.The applicant provides detailed explanation of how the costs of the initiatives put in place through the RTT-ELC funding will be sustained by each of the Participating State Agencies. In particular, it is noted that additional state funding is already budgeted to create 1000 new enrollment slots for children of high need in the State in high-quality programs. This is part of an executive order by the Governor and indicates that the State intends to ensure that the number of children with high needs served by high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs is increased.

## B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

| | Available | Score |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System** | 10 | 6 |

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) |
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The applicant describes how the current proposed work builds on previous efforts in 2008 to develop a QRIS system that was not fully implemented at the time due to the economic down turn. The current plan establishes a three tier system rather than a five tier system that was previously recommended. This alternative three -tiered system seems likely to simplify participation and is justifiable as the State already has a rigorous licensing system which is the equivalent of tier one status in the newly proposed system. The applicant explains how national standards are widely used in Early Learning and Development Programs in the State and how these are required for the State licensing programs. The applicant provides a table that demonstrates program Standards currently used in the State already address qualifed workforce, health promotion and effective data practices elements but how these elements will be integrated into the newly-proposed TQRIS is not explained. This raises questions about whether the plan as described is sufficiently detailed to ensure a high-quality plan.

| | Available | Score |
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| (B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System | 15 | 5 |
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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) |
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The applicant provides detail about its plan to maximize participation in its TQRIS by explaining proposed policies and practices to reach the goal of having all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate. Details about proposed incentives for each program type are provided. These incentives build on previous work in the State and include strategies to build local and regional capacity to support participation. The applicant proposes to use RTT-ELC finds to establish a TQRIS technical assistance center and hire consultants that can work with Early Learning and Development Programs. In addition, the applicant provides description of how a previous effort to support programs attempting to achieve national accreditation has proven highly successful and they propose to build on this effort. Under these circumstances, the plan seems likely to achieve its targets. However, the applicant does not provide sufficient detail about specific strategies that will help more families afford high quality child care in areas with a high concentrations of children with high needs. It is not clear that adding resources to early learning and development programs to achieve higher quality program status will necessarily translate into more availability of enrollment slots for children with high needs. This is especially important as many children with high needs are described as receiving care within a family and friends network (FFN) and may not receive public funding. Strategies for addressing the needs of these children and their families are not described in detail and this raises questions about how the plan will help more families afford high quality child care particularly in areas of high concentration of children with high needs. The applicant describes a proposed reform effort to require all publicly funded Early Learning and Development programs including state preschool, early Head Start, Head Start, Part B and C programs funded under IDEA and Title I programs funded under ESEA to participate in the TQRIS. The applicant does not provide details about how this reform effort will be implemented and do not provide assurances that these programs will participate in the TQRIS.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| (B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs | 15 | 9 |

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

| Comments on (B)(3) |
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The applicant provides detail about its plan to develop and implement a system for monitoring and rating the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs using their TQRIS. The applicant describes how they will review, cross walk and analyze existing monitoring tools, protocols and processes in use in the State's publicly funded Early Learning and Development programs. This plan to use existing resources makes it likely they will build on previous work to develop a high-quality monitoring and rating system. The applicant describes development and beta testing a valid and reliable tool that may be used for monitoring programs. This appears highly likely to improve the psychometric properties of the tool and increase its effectiveness for the purposes for which it is intended. The applicant describes how it will work with the existing information technology systems through one of the participating state agencies (DPH) that operates an e-licensing system. Although building on this platform parlays the existing public recognition for "brand" it is not clear how the plan will account for the fact that this is unlikely to be user friendly for individual programs not already in the e-licensing network such as programs who serve children with disabilities. It also appears unlikely to increase the use of the information by families who are seeking information about the program quality as an electronic format may not be easily accessed by many low income families.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs** | 20 | 6 |

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

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

The applicant describes how the State will complete early care program consolidation and system improvements based on previous work across the State. These initiatives are described as likely to support continuous improvement in Early Learning and Development Programs. The applicant also describes how supports and incentives are currently provided for TQRIS participation and outlines a plan for increasing this participation. However, the applicant describes few additional policies or practices that would support the involvement of more Early Learning and Development Programs in the TQRIS. The applicant describes how providers in the Family Friend and Neighbor network are provided with financial incentives to improve the quality of services they provide to children with high need. Completion of satisfactory coursework is linked to higher pay rates. The applicant explains how such training is made available in multiple ways. However, it is not clear how FFN providers initially are recruited into the Professional Registry that triggers an increase in reimbursement for completed training. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to understand how the plan will help these service providers initially engage in continuous improvement efforts. The applicant provides detail about how families are and will continue to be provided with incentives to chose high-quality care using existing policy mechanisms. However, the applicant does not provide detail about how the needs of the State's population of children with disabilities and their families in particular will be addressed in any continuous improvement efforts and in fact they are not depicted as participating in the number or percentages of those who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tier of the TQRIS in the Table that provides targets for additional program participation in TQRIS each year of the grant. Thus, the State Plan provides little evidence of new methods to encourage Early Learning and Development Programs to participate in TQRIS or provide working families who have children with high needs with greater access to high-quality programs and is not particularly ambitious.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.** | 15 | 10 |

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

| Comments on (B)(5) |
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The applicant describes contracting with a TQRIS evaluator who can design a systems evaluation as part of a cross -state evaluation consortium. The applicant explains that the evaluation findings will be used to inform the work on TQRIS development. Such focus is likely to contribute substantially to program improvement and the applicant describes how this will be accomplished through recommendations to the TQRIS work group charged with developing the system. The applicant provides detail about how the evaluation will focus on changes in provider behaviors as well as changes in family behaviors (in chosing care providers). These are essential in understanding how the system may be working to promote change and are elements of a high quality plan to validate the effectiveness of the TQRIS. The applicant provides scant detail about the research design or measures that will be used in the evaluation study, making it difficult to determine if the plan will be sufficient to determine whether the tiers in the TQRIS accurately differentiate levels of program quality. The applicant describes that the evaluation study is unlikely to be able to gather data on the relationship between quality of care settings and outcomes for children in terms of learning and school readiness due to the short time frame that the TQRIS will be in place across the state. This acknowledgement is important but the applicant does not include a plan to conduct research that would gather data to connect use of the TQRIS with child outcome data related to progress in children's learning, development and school readiness.

## 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**

The applicant describes how the State intends to build on previous work and work in progress that aligns the Early Learning and Development Standards with K-3 academic standards. They have also selected domains for the birth to three and three to five age range based on essential domains in the Head Start framework and on recommendations from national advisory groups (i.e., National Research Council, NAEYC and NAESC/SDE). This work builds a strong foundation for their plan. Evidence that they have drafted well-crafted principles to guide the revision with a particular emphasis on incorporating the cultural, linguistic and developmental needs of all children is provided. The plan to enhance and expand on the use of the revised Early Learning and Development (ELD) Standards through the development of assessment and resource tools seems especially likely to contribute to progress in this area. The applicant describes how they will conduct a cost benefit study that examines how to best collect, share and analyze data on child progress according to ELD standards so as to ensure communities and local early childhood councils can use the assessment information linked to ELD standards for program improvement across all settings. These steps are essential to understanding how the ELD standards can be incorporated in program standards, curricula and activities, a comprehensive assessment system, the States' workforce knowledge and competency framework and professional development activities. The applicant describes how they will launch and conduct an outreach campaign to ensure that the ELD standards are understood by key stakeholders and that commitment to their use across programs can be promoted. They describe how they will translate the ELD standards into Spanish and how family resources will also be translated into Portuguese, Polish, Chinese and Creole Haitian. Such measures appear highly likely to make the ELD standards useful and well-used for the purposes intended. The applicant describes how they will use a previously developed training model in the State to deliver a four-prong approach to professional development across the State. Focusing on 30 initial model sites, they propose to provide professional development via train the trainer and coaching institutes, provide technical assistance to education/training entities about how to embed ELD standards into existing inservice and preservice professional development models. As well the applicant describes how they will promote the use of the ELD standards via TQRIS and state policy guidelines. They propose to hire a community relations expert to assist in campaign development and implementation. These supports are well-considered and likely to increase the use of the ELD standards across Early Learning and Development Programs and by key stakeholders.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.** | 30 | 20 |

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to identify and address the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs by--

(a) Establishing a progression of standards for ensuring children's health and safety; ensuring that health and behavioral screening and follow-up occur; and promoting children's physical, social, and emotional development across the levels of its Program Standards;

(b) Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators who are trained and supported on an on-going basis in meeting the health standards;

(c) Promoting healthy eating habits, improving nutrition, expanding physical activity; and

(d) Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual targets to increase the number of Children with High Needs who--

(1) Are screened using Screening Measures that align with the Medicaid Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment benefit (see section 1905(r)(5) of the Social Security Act) or the well-baby and well-child services available through the Children's Health Insurance Program (42 CFR 457.520), and that, as appropriate, are consistent with the Child Find provisions in IDEA (see sections 612(a)(3) and 635(a)(5) of IDEA);

(2) Are referred for services based on the results of those screenings, and where appropriate, received follow-up; and

(3) Participate in ongoing health care as part of a schedule of well-child care, including the number of children who are up to date in a schedule of well-child care.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

The applicant provides an overview of the current status of the State's progress in meeting the health, behavioral and developmental needs of young children. Various initiatives are described including a nationally recognized program entitled Help me Grow awarded to Connecticut Children's Medical Center by the Kellogg Foundation. Numbers are provided that indicate the State is already making good progress in these areas. Building on this earlier and current effort, a well-articulated and detailed plan is provided. Leveraging these resources and building on them will allow the State to meet ambitious yet achievable goals for increasing the numbers of children with high needs who are screened and referred for services based on the results of the screening. The applicant describes how partnerships between important state agencies in this area will support the development of a statewide, coordinated and comprehensive system for early identification and referral of children at risk for developmental

and behavioral problems. Goals include refining program standards that are aligned with the TQRIS and the workforce knowledge and competency framework, training early childhood educators in health competencies and tracking their progress in this area through a Professional Registry, increasing health consultation capacity in early care settings and facilitating information flow between health and education systems across the State. The coordinated effort along with clearly described goals will provide direction for activities that are highly likely to lead to progress. The applicant explains how a Childhood Mental Health Endorsement will be offered, providing a system of professional development that will serve to increase the numbers of early childhood educators who are trained and supported on an ongoing basis to support children's mental health. The applicant also explains how health consultants will be hired and trained to deliver services in Early Childhood Learning and Development Programs providing support for local programs. The applicant explains how the proposed Early Childhood Education cabinet will establish a Health Work Group to provide policy and strategy recommendations. Further, local early childhood councils will be encouraged to include a health component in their plans. The promotion of medical homes and completion and documentation of EPSDT screenings at medical practices through training at (50) medical practices that use medicaid reimbursements in high need communities is described. The State's plans appear comprehensive and will be informed by a pilot project that will use electronic health assessment forms building on the State's work with school age children whose health assessments can be submitted by providers electronically. These comprehensive plans make it likely that the State will achieve considerable progress in this area. The applicant does not provide detail about how the plan will coordinate with IDEA Child Find efforts nor is it clear how Part C providers will be involved in planning for the Infant Mental Health Endorsement.

## 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. | 40 | 14 |

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

(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;

(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and

(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

| Comments on (D)(1) |
|---|

The applicant describes how the State will build on its previous efforts to develop a workforce knowledge and competency framework. Information is offered in an appendix describing a competency framework that operates as part of the community college system (CCAC). The applicant describes building on this previous work to develop a common statewide workforce knowledge and competency framework. The applicant proposes to include a Professional registry which may be rather easily built into a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees that align with the expanded Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Th applicant does not provide detail about how the needs of the large numbers of FFN providers will be addressed in the revision of the State's workforce knowledge and competency framework. The applicant explains how the State is currently engaging in an Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium (ECHEC). The plan for the ECHEC includes expanding their activities to increase the numbers of articulation agreements between two and four year colleges. They also describe further development of an alternative pathway to credentialing which is currently under study and providing cross-listing of early childhood coursework at State colleges and universities. Although this work may serve to align professional development with the workforce knowledge and competency framework, it is not clear how support for this plan will be provided. The applicant also describes how ECHEC will participate in developing a tool to assess how early childhood coursework aligns with the workforce knowledge and competency framework. Details about the development of the tool or the processes through which course work and other professional development opportunities will be assessed are not provided. Thus, the plan described by the applicant lacks important elements that would serve to align the work of various key stakeholders.

## E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.** | 20 | 16 |

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 provides a thorough description of the State's efforts to revise their current kindergarten entry assessment which will no longer be valid pending the revision of the State's early learning standards so that all essential learning domains are addressed. The revision of both the early learning standards and the kindergarten entry assessment will align with a more holistic approach to children's learning and development and is carefully considered with reference to previous research and guidance documents on assessment instrument development. The plan includes validation activities throughout the life cycle of the project with the appropriate use of the instrument emphasized particularly for English language learners and children with disabilities. These aspects of the plan are critical and detailed descriptions of related activities provide confidence that the applicant has thoroughly considered them. The applicant describes how the newly revised kindergarten entry assessment will be piloted repeatedly in order to ensure its reliability and validity. An expert panel with an advisory board of educators is described and multiple means of collecting data make it likely that the resulting instrument will be user-friendly and ready for use in a timely fashion with statewide implementation scheduled for October 2014 and a final report on its measurement properties complete by December 2015. The applicant describes how the data from the new assessment will be reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System and the early learning data system. The applicant also explains how State funds (along with philanthropic contributions) will be used to support ongoing implementation of the new kindergarten entry assessment after RTT-ELC funds are used for development of the new instrument.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.** | 20 | 16 |

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

(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;

(b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;

(c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the

various levels and types of data;

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

### Comments on (E)(2)

The applicant describes a detailed and carefully constructed plan that leverages the previous and current work of the State to build and enhance an Early Learning Data System. The proposed plan includes building a federated system that includes unique identification numbers to link across all State data systems, includes all of the Essential Data Elements and will serve to enable uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by participating state agencies and participating programs. The plan details how an Early Childhood Data System Technical Work group will include policy/business and IT experts from each of the key participating state agencies. A process through which each agency will alter its existing data bases and use birth certificate numbers to link to the already existing P-20 data base in the State will ensure that the work is useful for key stakeholders. The well-considered plan seems likely to ensure that the exchange of data between participating State agencies will occur and that information that is timely, relevant and accessible helps early childhood key stakeholders use the data to inform decision making. The applicant references nationally recognized standards to ensure that data system oversight requirements are met and it also describes procedures through which Federal, State and local privacy laws are enforced. The applicant describes setting up training for communities to make use of the data system and proposes to set up a help desk. This plan seems likely to assist in making data available for local decision making as well as larger systemic planning across the State. However, the relatively short timeline suggests the applicant is unaware of the complexity of the tasks and some important details are not evident. (For example, providing training to ensure data entry is not described.)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **Total Points Available for Selection Criteria** | 280 | 185 |

## 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)

The applicant describes a plan to encourage license-exempt Early Learning and Development programs in the State to participate in TQRIS. They also describe how they will conduct a market analysis that will allow the Early Childhood Education Cabinet TQRIS Work Group to better understand the barriers to participating in the TQRIS, the magnitude of the issues and potential resources needed to remedy the issues and facilitate participation. The market analysis is an essential first step in making progress towards their goals. The plan to increase participation in the TQRIS is to be implemented by June 30, 2015.

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 State addressed selection criterion E(1) and earned a score of more than 70 percent. |

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's application provides a coherent and well-considered plan that builds on previous work to increase the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for children with high needs so they enter kindergarten ready to succeed. The State demonstrates how it will empower participating state agencies to integrate and re-align resources and develop a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System that is based on its previous study of the circumstances in which Early Learning and Development Programs operate. The current proposal offers a simplified tiered system that may be easier to implement than what was previously recommended. The State proposes to work with neighboring States in a consortium effort likely to improve outcomes. In order to achieve necessary reforms the State describes strategic plans to improve in areas that specifically target children with high needs. Much of the work they propose includes building the foundation for additional work. This includes developing a well-considered and comprehensive set of early learning standards as well as program standards upon which curriculum, assessment, teacher professional development and licensing can be built. Numerous ways to engage local and community stakeholders in the process are described. The state plan also focuses on improving outcomes for children by updating its kindergarten entry assessment procedures so as to align them with birth-3 and K-3 revised standards and they propose to develop strategies to improve the early childhood education workforce. Finally, the State describes a plan for integrating data systems across agencies making data available for important decision making in both local and State settings.

Application # CT-5005

## 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 | 18 |

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

### Comments on (A)(1)

Connecticut's historical record of investment to early learning and development is determined to be high based on multiple indicators (cited below) that are described in the narrative and summarized in the accompanying evidence tables. Based on most recent census data, the size of the population of birth-to-5 children in the state is about 210,000, of which 80,000 (38%) are considered to be children with high needs. Moreover, about 90% of these children with high needs reside in communities that receive state funds (through two separate funding initiatives, the School Readiness Program and the Discovery Initiative). This is an important context for understanding the increase in the state's financial investment and in the number of children participating in early learning and development programs (ELDPs) over the last five years. First, in terms of financial investment since 2007 [(A)(1)(a)], there has been a 25% increase in overall funding for early learning and development. This increase is impressive given the decline in the state's overall economy during the same time period. An examination of the table which breaks down the funding sources [Table (A)(1)-4] reveals that the highest increases (relative to this overall 25% statewide increase) have generally occurred in funding directed specifically toward children with high needs (e.g., TANF spending on ELPDs, contributions to CCDF and IDEA Part C). This differential increase in financial investment in these programs is further evidence of the state's commitment to early learning and development for children with high needs. Finally, two additional indicators that are evidence of the state's high level of financial investment are: (a) its pledge to fund 1000 new preschool slots to complement RTT-ELC funding, and (b) a record of strong support from private and philanthropic funders in the state (i.e., $72 million from 2007 to 2011). Next, in terms of increasing the number of children with high needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs (ELPDs) [(A)(1)(b)], whereas the number of children in programs receiving CCDF funds has remained fairly stable from 2007 (13,600) through 2011 (13,800), the participation of children in state-funded School Readiness Programs (which is a proxy for high need) has increased steadily from 2007 through 2011 by 35%. It should be noted that the state cannot calculate the total number of children affected by all programs in that children with high needs may participate in multiple programs over time. Nonetheless, in terms of both financial investment and the number of children with high needs who are being served, the state has demonstrated consistent upward growth. The state did submit current data on the status of all children at

Kindergarten entry, which reveal that 22%-23% demonstrate "emerging" skills in language and literacy, and 19% demonstrate "emerging" numeracy skills. The application further indicates that children with high needs (particularly children from low-income backgrounds) score significantly lower in these skill domains compared to their peers. Thus, despite an increase in financial investment and in the number of children with high needs who participate in early learning and development programs (as documented in the required tables), the investment has not closed the kindergarten entry gap to date. The state did not submit any current data on program quality; therefore, this evidence of the state's commitment to early learning and development is missing. Third, regarding the state's early learning and development legislation and policies [(A)(1)(c)], a review of the key (indeed, "landmark") legislation and programs (including 11 legislative/policy initiatives, 5 innovative state programs, and 2 partnerships with private entities – all delineated in the narrative) reveals that Connecticut has a rich legislative tradition of supporting early learning and development. Of particular note, the General Assembly recently passed Public Act 11-181 to establish a coordinated statewide system of early child care/education – thus providing a strong governance structure within which the proposed RTT-ELC projects/activities will be supervised and implemented. Finally, both the proposal narrative and accompanying tables detail the state's current status vis-à-vis the seven building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system [(A)(1)(d)]. In describing the current status relative to each "building block," the areas for improvement/need for reform are also identified, thus laying the groundwork for articulating the rationale for the Focus Investment Areas. For example, while the state is currently utilizing early learning and development standards (separate documents/standards for infants/toddlers and for preschoolers), there is a need to make revisions within these standards to align with K-Grade 3 standards in two essential domains of school readiness, i.e., physical well-being and approaches to learning. As another example, while the state has been conducting a Kindergarten Entry Inventory since 2007, there is a need to revise the procedure to incorporate all the criteria for a common statewide kindergarten entry assessment, as operationalized in the Notice Inviting Applications (NIA). Overall, the application's response to this criterion (A)(1) was considered to be of high quality.

| | 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)

As noted above, the narrative to address criterion (A)(1) effectively "sets the stage" for articulating the rationale for Connecticut's early learning reform agenda and goals. In its response to criterion (A)(2)(a), the proposal identifies three over-arching goals (or what the application refers to as "key leverage points"), collectively aimed at increasing the percentage of children with high needs who enter kindergarten ready to succeed (and cutting in half the percentage of children who are unprepared for school). Whereas the RTT-ELC goals target children with high needs and the settings in which the majority of these children receive care (e.g., family-based settings), the concurrent Public Act (PA) 11-181 targets consolidation and coordination of the state's ELDPs. This symbiotic relationship between the two initiatives (one directed toward children with high needs and the other towards ELDPs statewide) renders the ambitious goals of the RTT-ELC proposal to be also achievable ones. The "path" between the RTT-ELC broad goals and the specific activities within each criterion area (which include enhancing and accelerating the work already legislated by PA 11-181) toward the eight measurable desired outcomes is visually depicted in a graphic logic model which provides an overall summary of the state's plan - hence, making the path visually clear and conceptually credible [as per criterion (A)(2)(b)]. In terms of the narrative to address the state's rationale for selecting particular criteria within each focused investment area (A)(2)(c), much of the actual rationale was included in (A)(1), thus allowing this section to delineate specific goals within each focused investment area criterion. For example, in (A)(1), the narrative indicated that not all of the essential domains of school readiness are covered in the state's early learning and development standards and that there is a need to align birth-to-5 standards and K-3 standards. Thus, in this section of the narrative, focused investment area (C)(1) has, understandably, been selected with specific goals to address the self-identified "gaps." This same approach has been adopted to justify and explain the other selected criteria. Specifically, the state's decision to focus on (D)(1), Develop a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, stems from the need to be responsive to PA 11-181's call for a progression of credentials and degrees aligned with a workforce framework. Similarly, the rationale for the state's focus on area (E)(1) and (E)(2) is based on a need to strengthen the current Kindergarten Entry Inventory to enable teachers to obtain an accurate "snapshot" of all children's skills and competencies at kindergarten entry to be able to address their needs. In sum, the state has provided evidence of goals related to improving program quality, child outcomes, and closing the readiness gap. Furthermore, the rationale for the selection of criteria within each focused investment area is well-articulated. Whereas the graphic logic presented in the application depicts a "path" between the goals and the ultimate objective of improving school readiness for children with high needs, there is no narrative explanation to accompany the graph. That is, the application

narrative does not provide sufficient explanation of how the goals will lead directly to improving school readiness. This omission resulted in the loss of some points. In sum, the overall quality of the response to this criterion was judged to be high, thus earning 90% of the points.

| | 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) |
|---|

In many respects, the legislative mechanism for alignment and coordination among all early learning and development efforts in Connecticut was put in place when the state's General Assembly passed PA 11-181 and, most recently, when the Governor established a State Early Childhood Office to further the implementation of the legislation. [Therefore, the state's plan is currently being implemented.] Indeed, as noted in the narrative, "the RTT-ELC opportunity occurs in the midst of a statewide early childhood movement." Specifically, the RTT-ELC proposed projects and activities will be framed within this governance structure which specifically targets statewide alignment and coordination (as depicted in an organizational chart included in an appendix of the application). Thus, the plan specified in this section is really aimed at enhancing, extending, and accelerating alignment/coordination, rather than initiating it. The plan described in the narrative includes all the key elements of a "high-quality plan" (as listed in the definition of high-quality plan in the NIA). The proposed goals and activities reflect two particularly noteworthy characteristics: (a) rather than supplant the current structure (e.g., Early Childhood Education [ECE] Cabinet, Early Childhood Office), the activities will supplement it (e.g., add three new

work groups to the existing ECE Cabinet); and, (b) acknowledging that local (not state-level) early childhood councils are the frontline coordinating mechanisms for implementation, the activities will focus on channeling the support and technical assistance created by RTT-ELC funding directly to the local level. In addition to specifying key goals and activities, the plan has all other elements of a high-quality plan, including timelines, identification of responsible parties (outlined in the Memoranda of Understanding [MOUs] of each participating state agency), plans to address the needs of programs and, importantly, to address the needs of children with high needs (again, as specified in the MOU regarding funding targeting high-needs children). In terms of the proposed governance structure for participating state agencies, the lead agency for the project is the State Department of Education (SDE), which is appropriate given the 2011 movement of the state's child day care program and Head Start collaboration office to SDE. The SDE will work with 10 additional state agencies [all listed with their roles and responsibilities in Table (A)(3)-1. Six of the participating state agencies (PSA) will have direct responsibility for proposed RTT-ELC activities; and, therefore, each has a RTT-ELC budget in addition to a MOU which reflects the roles/responsibilities as explained in the table [(A)(b)]. The narrative states there are mechanisms for (a) facilitating decision-making and resolving disputes (i.e., Commissioner of Education), and (b) involving key stakeholders (e.g., participating as members of the Cabinet). Due to the large number of PSAs (11 total) and intermediary organizations that will be involved, simply stating there are procedures for resolving disputes and for ensuring involvement among stakeholders is insufficient as evidence for this criterion [(A)(3)(a)(3)]. Finally, the application includes 150+ letters from a range of key stakeholders and organizations that provide evidence of overwhelming statewide support for the goals and activities of the RTT-ELC proposal. The only potential shortfall of the proposed plan lies in the extent to which there are explicit strategies and activities specifically targeting parents/families of children with high needs to include in the governance of the project [in response to (A)(3)(a)(4)]. Such strategies may exist, but they were not identified in the application narrative for this criterion.

| | 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 narrative depicts an extremely thoughtful, organized, and accountable planning process for developing a realistic and reasonable budget for carrying out the proposed activities. For example, work groups assigned to each of the separate, proposed RTT-ELC activities/projects were created (with membership from both experts and staff within every participating state agency [PSA]). These work groups independently constructed itemized RTT-ELC budgets which were then transported into the respective Participating State Agency (PSA) budgets. The consolidated budget (across all work groups) was then reviewed by a leadership team of individuals from the lead agency (State Department of Education [SDE]), Governor's Office, and state's Office of Policy and Management. The resulting budget is distributed across six PSAs and seven different RTT-ELC projects (as detailed in a table included in the narrative). [Note that not all of the 10 PSAs will receive RTT-ELC funds.] Regarding (A)(4)(a), the RTT-ELC proposal will use existing state funds ($306 million in 2011) and federal and private funds (over $100 million). A table in the narrative details the contributions from these funding sources (22 different entities/sources) which amount to a total of $1,733 million across four years. As explained in the narrative, close to 40% of RTT-ELL funds (over $19 million, with $5 million of that allocated for provider incentives to participate in the Tiered Quality Improvement Rating System [T-QIRS]) will be distributed to local early childhood councils, thus reflecting the state's importance ascribed to local-level implementation, as noted in (A)(3). This direct support to the local level is viewed as a strong point in that funding will likely have the greatest impact on children and families at this level. Regarding (A)(4)(b), the budget tables and narrative reflect a total operating budget for each project and for each PSA. This information reveals that requested RTT-ELC funds will account for less than 3% of the total operating budget. Of those funds, the majority (60%) will be directed toward the SDE

(lead PSA) and toward Project B (which is the development and implementation of the state's T-QRIS). This allocation of funds is appropriate given the responsibility of the lead agency in carrying out and/or overseeing the implementation of all projects, as well as the significance of Project B (T-QRIS) relative to the state's overall reform agenda. Finally, the proposal indicates that each of four key PSAs have committed to a specific level of continuing investment targeted for sustaining RTT-ELC projects beyond the end of the funding period. Note that the projected amounts to sustain RTT-ELC projects will require only modest budget increases within each agency (totaling $12 million across PSAs) relative to the total operating budgets for these agencies, thus, sustainability will likely occur [(A)(4)(c)]. Based on the evidence included in the application, the quality of the response to (A)(4) is rated as high.

## B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| (B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System | 10 | 6 |

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) |
|---|

Connecticut has completed substantial preliminary work to provide a foundation for creating a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (T-QRIS) – thus, the level of current implementation is considered to be "partial." This preliminary work was completed in 2008 by the state's Early Childhood Cabinet and is detailed in a draft plan [included in Appendix 4(B)(1)-1]. Building on this foundation, the narrative describes a plan with the goal of developing and implementing a final T-QRIS to be implemented starting June 2013. Four key, sequential activities are planned to achieve this goal: (a) establish T-QRIS work force; (b) have work force finalize T-QRIS design; (c) subject the T-QRIS to a pilot test ("beta test"); and (d) implement. In addition to this logical sequence of activities, the state's plan is determined to be of high quality in that (a) individuals and PSAs with responsibility for T-QRIS development/implementation are clearly specified (with their specific roles and responsibilities laid out in their respective MOUs); (b) approximately 40% of RTT-ELC funding is earmarked for this activity, which will, in fact, support all of the activities to establish the T-QRIS; and, (c) there are strategies to target and include programs that serve a large number of children with high needs (e.g., family-based child care settings). A particular strength of this (and all of the state's plans) is that "deliverables/outcomes" have been identified for each proposed activity – i.e., a measurable indicator that the activity has been accomplished. This element of each plan (which goes beyond the minimal elements of a "high-quality plan," as specified in the NIA) promotes a system of monitoring and accountability among all participating agencies and parties. The proposed T-QRIS will be a three-tiered system relative to each program's adherence to Connecticut's (a) early learning and development standards (ELDS); (b) comprehensive assessment system (CAS); (c) early childhood educator qualifications; (d) family engagement strategies (FES); (e) health promotion practices; and (f) effective data practices. The bottom tier, as the narrative indicates, is fairly stringent and is linked to the state's licensing requirements (which use three of the six standards). The top tier is linked to national accreditation, which is based on use of all six program standards. The middle tier requires programs to address competencies regarding ELDS, CAS, and FES (i.e., the three standards not included in Connecticut's licensing requirements for the bottom tier). Thus, the T-QRIS is based on a set of tiered standards that include the six competencies areas [(B)(1)(a)]. Aside from the bottom and top tiers (which are clearly and objectively linked to licensing [bottom] and accreditation [top]), however, the measurable indicators for the middle tier relative to three standards are not specified in the proposal [(B)(1)(b)]. That is, the standards do not clearly differentiate the middle tier in measurable ways, and there is no evidence provided to reflect a progression of standards between the bottom and top tiers. With respect to criterion (B)(1)(c), there is a clear link between T-QRIS and licensing in that the state's licensing requirements are fully incorporated into the bottom tier (i.e., the requirement for the bottom tier is being licensed).

| | 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)**

At this time, in that Tier 1 of the state's tiered system includes programs which are licensed by the state and Tier 3 includes programs which are nationally accredited, there is a high level of participation in the T-QRIS. Moreover, the T-QRIS includes all Head Start, School Readiness, and Child Day Care programs (i.e., publicly funded programs), which serve families/children with high needs [(B)(2)(a)]. As such, Connecticut's plan to promote participation in the T-QRIS appropriately focuses on reaching unlicensed providers (e.g., FFN) and on providing support and technical assistance to family-based child care settings (licensed). In so doing, the plan will be effective in enabling families of children with high needs to access high-quality ELDPs given that more than half of the state's high-needs children receive care through these targeted settings [(B)(2)(b)]. The plan relative to (B)(2) [which is not being fully implemented at this time, this disallowing maximum points to be awarded] has ambitious, achievable goals of 50% participation among all publicly funded ELDPs by the end of 2013 and 100% participation by the end of 2015 [as presented in Performance Measure Table (B)(2)(c)]. Given the progress to date in establishing and implementing the T-QRIS, including 100% of state-funded programs is achievable. The plan includes five specific activities to achieve these program participation goals (accompanied by all elements of a high-quality plan, including timelines, specification of responsible parties and funding sources, as well as explanation of how families/children with high needs and programs serving those families/children will be targeted). A particular strength of the activities designed to achieve the goals is the emphasis on building local and regional capacity to support programs that serve a significantly high percentage of high-needs children. These "grassroots" efforts take advantage of the extant local early childhood council infrastructure in the state by directing resources (e.g., consultants, information regarding the T-QRIS) to the local level. Furthermore, these locally-directed efforts will benefit from and be supported by significant financial resources that are realized through RTT-ELC funding (i.e., over $19 million).

| | 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**

As noted in the narrative, although the state currently monitors its ELDPs, there is variability in the monitoring process itself and schedule of monitoring visits across programs. On the other hand, the state does have a technology platform in place ("eLicense system") for posting T-QRIS results and information (B)(3)(b). Given the current status (and considering both current strengths and weaknesses), the plan relative to (B)(3) focuses primarily on the first sub-criterion [developing and using a valid and reliable monitoring tool, (B)(3)(a)]. The T-QRIS Work Group and T-QRIS Coordinator will carry primary responsibility for accomplishing all activities relative to this goal, with the bulk of the work (e.g., developing the monitoring methodology and protocols; training monitoring staff) to be accomplished within the first year of the funding period. This is a highly ambitious goal, but the application has provided evidence that the work group will have assistance from technical consultants, national experts, and the multi-state T-QRIS Learning Community. Moreover, the state has clearly outlined the sequential steps that need to be accomplished to implement the monitoring system (e.g., develop monitoring tools, training monitoring staff, etc.), reflecting careful thought on the part of the T-QRIS Work Group. Of particular note is the state's plan to engage in ongoing assessment of reliability of the trained monitors; this feature will ensure accuracy and accountability of the monitoring plan. According to the narrative, the targeted frequency of monitoring will be annual, which, in one section of the narrative, is characterized as an "increased frequency of licensing inspections" (for Tier 1); however, a depiction of the current status earlier in the narrative indicates that some programs (e.g., Head Start) presently are monitored twice a year. As such, it is not clear if annual monitoring is the minimum, with individual programs having the option of establishing more frequent monitoring. In terms of the second sub-criterion (providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs), the specificity of the proposal plan/activity is limited, with sole reliance on the current "2-1-1 Child Care" program. Although the narrative states that families do, in fact, use this program to access information, it is neither clear how many families do so, nor the extent to which the information is easily accessible to all families. It should be noted that the proposal does indicate that T-QRIS information will be translated into multiple languages, which maximizes the likelihood of reaching families of children with high needs.

| | 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**

The proposal describes a plan that incorporates two key activities, the first of which ("complete early care consolidation and system improvements identified by the PA 11-181 Planning Director") is somewhat problematic in that (a) it lies outside of the explicit purview of RTT-ELC, and (b) the direct link to promoting access to high-quality ELDPs in neither obvious nor guaranteed (i.e., the narrative states that "we anticipate...the consolidation of programs and improved coordination of funds will result in the ability to redirect resources to promote access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs."). The second activity that comprises the state's plan [related to (B)(4)(a) and (b)] is to "reconfigure and align incentives to promote participation in the T-QRIS," particularly among settings that provide services for children with high needs. The narrative describes multiple strategies to (a) provide incentives for family-centered and FFN providers to improve the quality of their services, and (b) provide incentives for families to choose accredited or licensed care providers. The state's plan to provide incentives to both providers (to improve their programs) and to families (to enroll their children in high-quality programs) will be supported by RTT-ELC funds as well as by ongoing resources from other agencies amounting to over $132 million; as such, these incentive programs are likely to succeed. Because licensing (which, as the narrative itself states, carries fairly stringent requirements) is necessary for entry into the T-QRIS, it is not clear how these early learning and development programs (which serve high-needs children) will be folded into the T-QRIS - thus, enabling parents to access high-quality care (i.e., programs in the top tiers of the T-QRIS). Because it is difficult to understand were FNN providers fit into the performance measures for (B)(4), the goals for increasing the number of programs in the top tiers as well as children with high needs who are enrolled in top tier programs are not easy to evaluate. Regardless, the targets depicted in the tables are judged to be ambitious and achievable. One point of confusion with respect to the Performance Measure for (B)(4)(c)(2) relates to the targeted number of children in ELDPs funded by IDEA, Part B and through the state's CCDF program. In fact, there are no

children within each program type who are targeted for enrollment in "top tier" programs. These children may be participating in other programs; therefore, this might reflect an effort to avoid duplication of numbers. Nonetheless, this is neither explained in a footnote to the table, nor does the application address this issue in the narrative for this criterion. There is also one point of discrepancy to note: The narrative for (B)(2) indicates that licensed (Tier 1) and nationally accredited (Tier 3) programs can populate the T-QRIS now, before the T-QRIS is in place and prior to its beta-testing. Therefore, the Performance Measure Table (B)(4)(c)(1) should reflect this, i.e., cells for Tier 1 and Tier 3 for Baseline and for 2012 should reflect the current and targeted numbers of licensed and accredited programs, respectively.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.** | 15 | 6 |

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

| Comments on (B)(5) |
|---|

Although the state's plan relative to this criterion (validate the effectiveness of the T-QRIS) includes the elements of a high-quality plan, there is limited specificity with which the activities and milestones aimed at achieving the goal are described. Although the details of a validation study will certainly rest with the T-QRIS Evaluator (to be determined), some basic components of a validation study are absent from the narrative response to address (B)(5)(a). For example, there is no activity or explanation as to how it will be determined whether the three tiers of the T-QRIS accurately reflect differential levels of program quality, based on comparison with a valid external indicator of program quality. In other words, it is important to ascertain whether Tier 3 (accredited) programs differ significantly from Tier 1 (licensed only) programs on other measurable and quantifiable quality indicators. The activities that are described relative to (B)(5)(a) represent a descriptive, feasibility study (with the aim of modifying or improving the system) more so than a validation study per se. A similar concern regarding limited specificity applies to the narrative response to address (B)(5)(b). For example, the plan does not include an examination of disaggregated data (especially for children with high needs) or consideration of critical variables (e.g., family characteristics) which research demonstrates can moderate the effects of participating in early learning and development programs. To reiterate, although some of these design questions will, ultimately, be addressed by the external evaluator, there is limited evidence in the application regarding an understanding of appropriate methods to address validation questions and key variables to explore. Therefore, the overall plan is rated as being of medium/low quality.

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

*Each State must address in its application--*
*(1) Two or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (C);*
*(2) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (D); and*
*(3) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (E).*
*The total available points for each Focused Investment Area will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address in that area, so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points.*

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

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

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

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.** | 30 | 27 |

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)

On the basis of an analysis of the current status of the state's efforts relative to (C)(1), i.e., developing and using early learning and development (ELD) standards, it is determined that Connecticut is presently implementing and has already initiated a process of revising its standards. The plan described in the narrative response to this criterion, therefore, includes goals aimed at continuing to revise the ELD standards and creating tools and resources to support implementation of the revised standards, as well as to promote understanding/ use of the revised standards and alignment with K-3 standards. The plan is determined to be of high quality in that includes all the basic elements of such a plan including seven key activities, timeline, specification of responsible parties, indication of RTT-ELC budgeted support, and explanation of how programs and children with high needs will be addressed. There are some minor areas of confusion in the narrative: First, widespread use of the ELD standards at Tier 1 is not specified. The narrative indicates that Tier 2 and Tier 3 programs will require use of ELDS. Actually, the table included in the narrative illustrating how ELD standards will be incorporated into program standards (first row in the table) only cites Tier 2 programs as being required to use ELD standards. Indeed, because Tier 3 is determined based on accreditation by a national accrediting organization (which may or may not reflect Connecticut's ELD standards), the table is the accurate information source on this point (not the narrative). Second, the entity responsible for creating the Early Learning and Development Strategies Manual is not specified in the narrative. This is considered a minor weakness in the overall plan because the manual is an important component for implementation. Third, the date by which the assessment tool (Early Learning Assessment Framework) will be completed and available for use is indicated as being Fall 2013 in one part of the narrative versus Fall 2014 in the subsection called "Implementation timeline." Please note that these areas of discrepancy do not significantly undermine the quality of the overall plan. The plan will meet criterion (C)(1)(a) in that the proposed changes will address all essential readiness domains (and include additional domains specifically for ages 3-5) and will incorporate a "Dual Language Development" sub-domain to ensure that standards are culturally and linguistically appropriate. The state proposes to align the revised ELD standards with the kindergarten standards in four skill domains [to address criterion (C)(1)(b)]. Although the alignment will not be explicitly with K-3 standards, the narrative states that kindergarten standards are, in fact, vertically aligned with elementary grade standards. The state provides a table indicating how ELD standards will be incorporated into program standards, curriculum, comprehensive assessment systems, workforce knowledge and competency framework, and professional development [(C)(1)(c)]. The evidence provided in this table is categorized as strong because for each component (e.g., Program Standards), both the state's current status (e.g., School Reading programs are currently required to use curricula and assessment tools aligned with standards) and the state's planned approach (e.g., all state-funded programs will be required to use the revised ELD standards) are clearly delineated. Finally, with respect to (C)(1)(d), the application includes strong evidence that the state will channel support to promote understanding of the revised ELDs to programs at the local level, i.e., using local early childhood councils to deliver the training for providers. The localization of training efforts is supported by research as being an effective approach.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| (C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness. | 30 | 27 |

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to identify and address the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs by--

(a) Establishing a progression of standards for ensuring children's health and safety; ensuring that health and behavioral screening and follow-up occur; and promoting children's physical, social, and emotional development across the levels of its Program Standards;

(b) Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators who are trained and supported on an on-going basis in meeting the health standards;

(c) Promoting healthy eating habits, improving nutrition, expanding physical activity; and

(d) Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual targets to increase the number of Children with High Needs who--

(1) Are screened using Screening Measures that align with the Medicaid Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment benefit (see section 1905(r)(5) of the Social Security Act) or the well-baby and well-child services available through the Children's Health Insurance Program (42 CFR 457.520), and that, as appropriate, are consistent with the Child Find provisions in IDEA (see sections 612(a)(3) and 635(a)(5) of IDEA);

(2) Are referred for services based on the results of those screenings, and where appropriate, received follow-up; and

(3) Participate in ongoing health care as part of a schedule of well-child care, including the number of children who are up to date in a schedule of well-child care.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

| Comments on (C)(3) |
|---|

Similar to criterion (C)(1), the state is currently (a) investing $443 million annually, (b) reaching close to 75% of children who are eligible for Medicaid Early Period Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment benefits, and (c) implementing a full continuum of child health services (as specified in the state's Framework for Child Health Services, which is included in the proposal as an appended document). Thus, the plan for Connecticut's RTT-ELC is aimed at leveraging the existing resources to reach 90% of the state's high-risk children and strengthening or expanding the state's current initiatives through (a) making revisions in both program and ELD standards to incorporate a focus on physical, social, and emotional health [embedded in the plan for (C)(1)], (b) training early childhood educators, and (c) providing coordination and leadership through the establishment of an Early Childhood Health Coordinator position and a Health Work Group on the state's Early Childhood Cabinet. The proposed plan includes a total of 11 key activities (albeit some of these activities overlap with the activities related to criteria within other focused investment areas). Consistent with the guidelines for a high-quality plan, the proposal includes implementation timelines, specification of the parties responsible, as well as measurable outcomes for each activity. The evidence in the application is particularly strong in terms of increasing the number of early childhood educators who are trained and supported in meeting health standards (C)(3)(b). Specifically, 200 health consultants are currently in place, and there are multiple endorsements from mental health professionals. The one exception to the overall high quality of the plan is that there is no evidence regarding coordination of health-promotion training with Part C providers. Related to criterion (C)(3)(a) are activities designed to integrate the health-related standards into the T-QRIS. The focus is on developing standards for Tier 2 (because, as noted previously, Tier 1 is based on a program being licensed and Tier 3 is based on a program being accredited). There is no clear evidence in the narrative that the health-related standards will, in fact, be integrated in to the T-QRIS Tier 1 and Tier 3 requirements. In other words, there is limited evidence to document a progression of health-promotion knowledge and skills across tiers. Finally, the Performance Measure table for (C)(3)(d) reflects ambitious yet achievable goals to increase the number of children with high-needs who are screened [(C)(3)(d)(1): goal is 90%], who are referred for services [(C)(3)(d)(2): goal is 10%), and who participate in ongoing health care [( C)(3)(d)(3): goal is 75%]. In sum, the application describes a plan that is currently being implemented and that is rated to be of high quality.

## D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.** | 40 | 30 |

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) |
|---|

According to the narrative's depiction of Connecticut's "current status," the state has a competency framework map [included in Appendix 4 (D)(1)-1]. The framework, among other things, contains "guidelines for ECE trainers of teachers and a monitoring system for quality." A review of the appendix, however, revealed a framework grid in which early care provider types/credentials (e.g., CDA, Pre-K through Grade 3 certification, etc.) are plotted against core areas of knowledge. No other guidelines/resources related to this grid are included. Therefore, although the "pieces" for developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework are in place, the current implementation status is partial. Of particular note, the appended framework (which shows multiple "empty cells," indicating no competencies for that early childhood professional group) includes a footnote articulating an appropriate "next-step" goal, which is to work toward filling in the gaps on the framework grid. The goal and activities described in the narrative, however, are not entirely targeted at these already-identified gaps in workforce knowledge and competencies. As such, the proposed plan does not appear to take full advantage of work the state has already initiated toward creating a common statewide workforce knowledge and competency framework. As one example, there is no explicit plan for working toward including competencies for home visitors or FFN providers. In its plan, the state is proposing to address four key goals through 14 activities (some of which, as noted above, have been, at least, partially completed, such as the "environmental scan"). Embedded within the proposed activities are some noteworthy strengths: (a) the framework will include "strands of focus" that cut across all competency sets and caregiver roles that highlight knowledge/competencies for working with children with high needs; (b) the state will work to create an alternative path (in lieu of state teacher certification) to allow all caregivers across diverse early learning and development settings (e.g., FNN) to obtain the knowledge and competencies, especially for diverse populations and age groups that fall outside the current state teacher certifications; and (c) the current professional registry will be enhanced to incorporate not only listings of certifications/degrees/endorsements, but also competencies within the framework. The bulk of the work related to (D)(1) will be the responsibility of a Framework Collaborative Group (to be determined) and the state's Early Childhood Higher Education (established in 2004). Consistent with the state's plans for the other criteria, a detailed work plan (including measurable outcomes for each activity and timelines) is included. Whereas the evidence provided in the application (as summarized above) is generally considered to be strong, there is one exception relative to (D)(1)(c): Specifically, there is low evidence that the Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium (through which input from postsecondary institutions will be channeled) will enable sufficient representation from individuals at those institutions. Limited input from universities, for example, could significantly undermine efforts to engage professional training programs in applying the framework and in having their courses and curricula evaluated relative to the framework.

## E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.** | 20 | 15 |

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) |
|---|

Connecticut has been implementing a Kindergarten Entry Inventory (KEI) for all children starting kindergarten in public schools since 2007. The State Department of Education (SDE) is the lead agency responsible for overseeing the KEI implementation, and there is an electronic statewide data collection system in place for reporting results. Thus, three critical foundations - an extant tool, oversight agency, and online data entry system - are currently in place as the starting point for the state's plan relative to criterion (E)(1). In other words, Connecticut's plan is designed to strengthen its current KEI. Three goals and 10 related key activities are proposed for this criterion. At the heart of Connecticut's plan is creating a revision of the KEI, with the revised inventory being called the Kindergarten Early Learning and Development Inventory (KELDI). A review of the current KEI [included as Appendix (E)(1)-1] indicates that it incorporates a 3-level rating (1 = emerging skills; 2 = inconsistent demonstration of skills; 3 = consistent demonstration of skills) of children's performance in six skills domains (language, literacy, numeracy, physical/motor, creative/aesthetic, and personal/social). Teachers are directed to use "all available and pertinent information" when assigning a rating for each skill domain to a child. Although the narrative indicates that all but one essential domain of school readiness are included in the KEI, an analysis of the instrument provided in the appendix revealed more than one omission. For example, also missing are (a) approaches toward learning, (b) adaptive skills (as part of physical well-being and motor development), and (c) early scientific development. Moreover, whereas global teacher ratings provide valuable information regarding children's overall development within each skill domain, teacher perceptions may be subject to sources of bias, unreliability, and lack of validity. The state has failed to articulate specifically how it will not only expand the content of its current inventory [to align with the revised early learning and development standards, (E)(1)(a)], but also strengthen the quality of the data derived from the inventory via use of a more clearly operationalized common teacher observation procedure with objective, observable, required (not optional) behavioral/performance indicators to consider within each domain. A notable strength of the state's current implementation of the KEI and its plan for creating the KELDI revision is that there will be an explicit focus on and evaluation of implementation with high-needs children. The narrative response to address criterion (E)(1)(b) [instrument is valid, reliable, and appropriate for target population] presents a comprehensive approach to studying validity and reliability in concert with the joint AERA, APA, NCME Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing. Some of the validity types that are proposed to study with the revised inventory (e.g., ascertaining internal structure through differential item functioning analysis), however, are not entirely relevant for a 6-item global rating measure. Finally, according to the narrative, the state's plan will achieve (E)(1)(c) [KELDI will be administered to all children beginning fall 2014], (d) [KELDI data will be entered into the statewide longitudinal data system], and (e) [KELDI development and validation will be funded with significant resources through SDE, the lead agency]. Minor note about the plan: There are some discrepancies between the implementation timelines reported in the narrative and the dates included in the tabled work plan. For example, the pilot student #2 for the KELDI (in kindergarten classrooms) is targeted for 11/1/13 in the table versus October, 2014 in the narrative.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.** | 20 | 16 |

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

(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;

(b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;

(c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data;

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

### Comments on (E)(2)

Connecticut currently has in place multiple early childhood data systems (e.g., each state agency has its own data management system and reporting protocol) which, according to an analysis conducted in 2008, are neither coordinated nor managed in a consistent fashion. [Note that, due to this lack of coordination, the current implementation level is partial.] On one hand, local early childhood councils in Connecticut carry significant weight in managing and delivering high-quality services; however, at the same time, it is difficult for local councils to access and coordinate data from various state agencies specific to their communities. Thus, although there is implementation of early learning data systems within programs, there are significant areas for improvement and reform. The state's plan to address the problems includes three specific goals and 11 key activities. The following features of the state's plan are particularly strong and will address the sub-criteria in (E)(2): (a) all children – including children with high needs – will have a "unique identifier" thus allowing coordination of services for these children across multiple agencies; (b) each participating state agency will able to maintain their existing databases, while also controlling the distribution of data to an "edge server" which will be linked to a statewide central server; and (c) RTT-ELC funds will support the creation of an Early Childhood Data Systems Technical Workgroup (EC-DSTW) to oversee the design and implementation of the reformed data system. The state has also been clear in the narrative about staying in compliance with federal, state, and privacy laws in both maintaining and

accessing data. Other elements of a high-quality plan are also present (e.g., timelines, responsible parties, and measurable outcomes for each proposed activity). There is one potential limitation with the state's plan: Although the application does explain that a new group (EC-DSTW) will be created to carry out the work associated with (E)(2), modification of the data system within the targeted three-month time period may not be realistic. In sum, this is an overall high-quality plan that is being partially implemented to date.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **Total Points Available for Selection Criteria** | 280 | 220 |

## 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 | 0 |

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 application did not receive any points for this competitive priority. The state is currently implementing an inspection system; however, it is not universal across all types of early learning and development programs. Currently, there are 458 known license-exempt programs in the state, which, according to the application, provide services to predominantly children with high needs. The state has developed a plan to conduct a "market analysis" of these programs to ascertain barriers to participating in the TQRIS and to identify resources that may be necessary to facilitate participation in the system (which is a positive initiative). The long-range goal is that, based on the information and recommendations stemming from this analysis, 100 license-exempt programs (less than 25%) will participate by 2015. As such, the state will not have in place a system that covers all programs [as specified in (P)(2)(a)]. Criterion (P)(2)(b) will also not be met: Whereas Tier 1 in the TQRIS requires licensing, it is not the case that all programs that are licensed must participate in the T-QRIS.

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 state received 75% of the maximum points for (E)(1); therefore, this competitive preference priority has been met by addressing criterion(b).

Absolute Priority

| | Met?<br>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** |
|---|

Based on the application data, Connecticut's RTT-ELC proposal meets the absolute priority for this competition. Building on PA 11-181, the state will continue to work toward a coordinated system of early learning and development that, based on the evidence provided in the narrative and tables, will enable the state to increase the number of children with high needs who enter school ready to learn. The state has commitments from 11 PSAs and numerous intermediary organizations that resources will be leveraged to support the RTT-ELC activities to meet the absolute priority of promoting school readiness among children with high needs statewide.

Application # CT-5005

Peer Reviewer:
Lead Monitor:
Support Monitor:
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 8:53 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

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development | 20 | 19 |

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

| Comments on (A)(1) |
|---|

The application provided a thorough discussion of the state's past commitment to early learning and development. The evidence presented made a convincing case that the state has a long history of supporting programs for young children. The state estimates 80.000 children with high needs. The state has data to examine the status of incoming kindergarten children through its entry assessment (a strength). The data show that a relatively small percentage of children are demonstrating appropriate skills levels which is somewhat surprising given the amount of state activity in this area (and suggests limited effectiveness of the current state system in improving school readiness). The state's past investment is significant at $306 million and has continued to grow. The application reports the state's intention to add 1000 new preschool spaces which will increase the number of children participating in programs. The public-private partnership which has resulted in the leveraging of private funding is especially impressive. The legislative history, going back to 1997 and culminating with a bill to establish a coordinated system, was very clearly presented and provides more evidence of the state's commitment. The analysis of the state's current status on the building block areas was thoughtful indicating some activity in each of the areas per the review criteria. The data in the tables provides additional support for the state's commitment showing the increase in funding and children served. The data presented in Table (A)(1)(5)shows very minor increases in the number of children being served in these programs overall, for example, Early Head Start/Head Start has gone from 6900 to 7100 children across the 5 years. The exception is state-funded preschool which has seen a large proportionate increase. This would suggest that the funding increases are going to infrastructure rather than increasing the number of children served. It is important to build the state infrastructure but it is also important to serve more children. There were a few other minor issues with the section. The number of children in Part C and 619 did not match the number of children with delays and disabilities. More importantly, 619 was not listed as one of the "core early learning programs" in the narrative. It was not clear why the types of assessment are "not applicable" to the Title I programs. Overall, this section presents a high quality demonstration of the state's past commitment.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.** | 20 | 19 |

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 and the accompanying logic model present a clear picture of the state's vision and how they see their vision for the grant achieving its ultimate outcomes. The goals are indeed ambitious, and given the amount that the state has already accomplished, it is reasonable to conclude the state will be able to make significant progress toward many of these goals. In addition, the goals and actions of the recently enacted state legislation are compatible with the overall goals of the RTT-EC vision of a coordinated system. The goals and the associated outcomes as presented in the logic model are connected to each other and, as a set, they build on the state's progress to date and the goals in the legislation which is a strength. This section presents easy to follow summaries of the goals in each of the areas along with a discussion of how the planned activities will build off of past activities. The activities are appropriate to the goals. The graphic and the summaries make a strong case that the state has developed an effective reform agenda. The only shortcoming is that the state has no TQRIS currently so its goal of having 100% of programs participating by 2015 is ambitious but not likely to be achievable which suggests the state has not planned through the TQRIS implementation thoroughly (i.e, the state's plan may not demonstrate an understanding of what will be required to achieve this goal). The application presented a clear discussion of why the selected areas were important to the state and how they would contribute to achieving its overall vision.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State** | 10 | 5 |

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 application describes a moderately well conceptualized plan for the participation of key agencies and stakeholders. The participating agencies are identified and evidence of their commitment is provided. Several other relevant non-required state agencies also are participating. An Early Childhood Office was recently created to coordinate efforts across state agencies. The placement of the RTT-ELC work within the new structure also was described. The lead agency (Department of Education) was identified. The lead agency's responsibilities were described as implementing projects in conjunction with other agencies; slightly more detail was needed especially with regard to day-to-day decision making and dispute resolution. The Scope of Work for the Department of Education does not convey that the Department of Education is overseeing implementation but rather contributing to numerous activities. This raises the question of exactly which entity is responsible for ensuring activities are completed. The responsibilities of the lead agency in Table A3-1 do not match the responsibilities in the signed scope of work in the appendix. The table indicates the Department of Education will provide overall leadership, staff the Office of Early Childhood Office, and manage the RTT project teams. These activities are not in the Department's signed scope of work which raises major concerns about the management of the grant. The relationship between the lead agency and the newly created Early Childhood Office was unclear. The role of the Education Cabinet and the work group was described as was the need to create new work groups for new work to be carried out under the grant (a strength). The governance structure is complex which is appropriate to the nature of the activities and responsibilities of the various entities were described. More information about the project teams would have been helpful, for example, will each team have a member from each agency or only the most relevant agencies to the nature of the project. Who is responsible for overseeing each of the project teams (e.i., presumably a team member) was not identified although it is clear that the Project Coordinator oversees all of the teams. The local councils appear to be a innovative and important piece of the governance structure but the nature of their responsibilities was not clear. (Several other sections refer to the councils and none of these sections provide additional information to clarify their roles in implementing the grant.) There are numerous opportunities for stakeholder involvement at both the state and local levels. A strength was the number and contents of letters in the appendix which indicate strong stakeholder support with the exception of the child care community which was not very well represented. The work in this area was judged to be substantially implemented with a plan of medium quality.

| | 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 budget was very clearly presented and the detail for each of the participating agencies provided important information with regard to proposed spending on specific activities. Costs appeared reasonable and adequate to support the planned activities. One area requiring more explanation was the $14 million budgeted for the local councils. There was no description of what the councils were expected to do with this money. The councils are referred to intermittently throughout the proposal but a description of their function and how they operate is not presented. The narrative indicates that they develop annual plans but more information was needed on the council's work scopes and their activities was needed. The state presented very large amounts of non-grant funding being used to support work in early childhood systems building which is consistent with the contention the state has the capacity to sustain this effort after the grant ends. However, the application would have been stronger had it addressed the issue of sustainability directly. Some activities are obviously time limited such as the development of the kindergarten assessment or the development of the data system and so sustainability is not an issue for these activities. Other activities such as the operation of the TQRIS including support for programs to move to higher tiers and supporting use of the ELDS are ongoing which raises questions about how these activities will be supported once the grant ends. Given the state's track record in supporting early childhood and its success in leveraging private funding, it is not hard to believe that the state will sustain key efforts. A discussion of sustainability and how ongoing activities would be supported would have strengthened the budget discussion. The amount of funding for developing the preschool assessment was far less than the amount of funding for the kindergarten assessment. Both should be held to the same high standards and, therefore, comparable investments should be made to demonstrate technical adequacy. More funding should have been budgeted to develop the preschool assessment. The budget was judged to be of medium high quality.

## B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

|  | Available | Score |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System** | 10 | 3 |

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 currently does not have a TQRIS in place but does have some key foundational elements upon which to build a TQRIS, such as an extensive set of blueprint recommendations developed in 2008 for a TQRIS, programs that are nationally accredited, and a support project for assisting programs seeking national accreditation. The state's current status was judged to be minimal implementation largely because one of the most critical building blocks, the 2008 recommendations, is not being used at all in their new system. Since the state is not making use of this work, it is difficult to count it as part of their current implementation. The reason for never adopting the 2008 recommendations at the time is explained and sensible (lack of resources). The application does not address why after such a substantial and impressive planning investment that resulted in a 5-tier system, the state is now abandoning those recommendations and starting over with an unrelated 3-tiered system especially because the RTT funds could now provide the resources that the state did not have before. Several

concerns about the proposed plan include: (1) tier 1 is licensing (which does link the TQRIS to licensing) but this is status quo and represents not even a minor step forward in quality. The state maintains it has high standards for licensing but presents no evidence to this effect. Tier 1 as licensing would have been less problematic in a system with more tiers. (2) Evidence is not presented in the application to demonstrate the extent to which the planned 3 tiers are based on a set of tiered program standards that include the required elements in the criteria and that there is (or in the case of Tier 2, will be) a set of tiers in these areas). Table B-1-1 indicates that licensing requirements do not address 3 of the 6 elements (ELDS, comprehensive assessment, and family engagement). Given that tier 2 is not yet developed, the application needed to provide evidence of the specifications that would drive the development. The data in Table B-1-1 shows that the various accreditation schemes address each of the elements but this is not evidence that they address them in a high quality way.(3) The application states that national accreditation constitutes tier 3 but does not specify which types of national accreditation are acceptable. The narrative is confusing on this because it lists Head Start approval as an example of national accreditation but then states that all Head Start programs are required to have NAEYC accreditation. Table B-1-1 also lists a separate set of Program Standards for School Readiness programs but indicates these programs must meet standards for NAEYC accreditation as well. It was difficult to ascertain exactly how many different sets of accreditation standards the state will be recognizing as Tier 3. Requiring national accreditation is admirable but given the state appears to be planning to recognize multiple standards (which is problematic for trying to build an integrated system), the application needed to make clear what would be accepted as Tier 3 and then provide evidence that each of these do indeed address the required elements at a comparable level of high quality. (4) Given that tier 2 is yet to be developed, the plan and process for developing this tier need to be well specified to provide evidence (assurances) that the resulting tier will indeed address the required elements. The plan allows only 5 months for finalizing the entire system (which is defining tier 2) which seems rather ambitious given no work has been undertaken. More time will be needed for stakeholder participation. The developmental pathway for the FFN providers is referred to repeatedly in this section and in other sections but never described. The discussion of the TQRIS is silent on the needs of children with delays and disabilities so it is impossible to evaluate the TQRIS addressed their needs. The state did not build in a process for review to ensure appropriateness for various sub=groups of children with high needs. The roles for the responsible parties were clearly described. In general, the plan in this section was vague and needed more detail as to how the state plans (or plans to develop a plan) to build on existing components to move the state to a fully developed TQRIS. The plan was medium quality.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System** | 15 | 4 |

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)

Even though the state does not have a TQRIS, it does have some mechanisms in place to support licensing, accreditation and overall program improvement which provide good starting points from which it can move forward. A number of good strategies for promoting participation in the TQRIS are proposed including a technical assistance center, "embracing" of the model currently in use to support accreditation, developing consultants, building the capacity of local and regional networks, reconfiguring incentives, and providing resources to local councils. These are potentially solid strategies but there is not enough information provided about any of these to communicate a sense that they are part of a coordinated, coherent plan to move to a statewide system, rather than a listing of good projects. More information was needed on how these efforts will be coordinated and together resulted in a very high level of increased participation. Information was needed as to an estimated level of resources required to meet the estimated level of need, especially for the technical assistance center since it plays a key role in promoting and supporting participation. There is no expectation that the state have precise information but presumably something was used for the budget estimates. The state is planning to move from no programs in the TQRIS to 4500 programs by 2015 so the capacity of the promotion support mechanisms is a

critical issue. Table (B)(2)-1 is described as existing mechanisms to support improvement efforts but it would have been helpful to discuss how these mechanisms will be adapted to support participation in the new TQRIS. Not enough information was provided to evaluate the quality of what is proposed. There is conflicting information in the application on which programs will and will not be required to participate and which are currently considered in Tier 3 and which are not. The narrative in this section maintains that Tier 3 includes a number of programs but none of these programs are reported in table (B)(2)(c). The narrative also maintains the reform effort will require a long list of programs to participate but the discussion under competitive priority 2 only discusses the role of incentives and does not mention required participation. A confusing point was resolving the notion of requiring programs to participate in the TQRIS with the fact that the lowest tier is licensed. Some number of these programs are already required to be licensed which presumably will become synonymous with TQRIS participation. The application does not address Part C at all and does not address Part B 619 in a meaningful way. There were no targets set for these programs in the table with the explanation that services are provided in the child's home or in child care settings and funds are not used for program operation. It is highly unlikely that all children receiving Part B services are served in child care (and if they are, this raises serious issues of why some children with disabilities are not in state-funded preschool). Eliminating these programs from the table implies measures of quality are not relevant to these programs. The targets for program participation were certainly ambitious but there was no justification provided for why the state thinks they are achievable within the timeframe. This speaks to the need to justify that the resources being proposed to promote participation are appropriate to the scope of the task and to the needs of those to whom they are directed (i.e., have a high probability of achieving the intended result). The Governor's commitment to add 1000 spaces will help more families find affordable care. The level of implementation was considered as partial and the quality of the plan was medium.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs** | 15 | 4 |

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 discussion in the application did not convey a sense that the state is aware of how much effort is required to design and implement a reliable and valid system for rating and monitoring. A number of appropriate activities are listed but nearly all of the work is being done by the TQRIS coordinator who has numerous other responsibilities related to the TQRIS. There is no expectation that the application would describe the process in detail or the tools but it would have strengthened the application if the narrative provided evidence of having researched the issue at least minimally. The Mathematica report is cited as evidence but there is nothing in the discussion that indicates that it was used in guiding the development of the activities in the section. Similarly, the information about the planned monitoring schedule or the plan for how decisions would be made about the monitoring schedule would have been helpful. More on the follow up after monitoring (or how the plan to follow up after monitoring will be developed) also would have been helpful, for example, whether programs will be required to use the TA center if problems are identified. The state already has a mechanism for communicating with families about child care programs (the 2-1-1 Child Care) and the state plans to build on as it moves forward. This is a strength but multiple mechanisms of communication would increase likelihood of reaching more families. The effectiveness of the current system was not discussed. Given that the state has not yet developed a system for monitoring the TQRIS this area was considered minimally implemented and the quality of the plan was medium.

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

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 discussion in this section needed to provide more details to be considered a high quality plan. A description with some level of detail on what is currently in place and the anticipated changes, again, with some moderate level of detail, was needed to be able to evaluate the strength of the proposed plan. For example, reporting that families will receive greater financial incentives for enrolling with an accredited, licensed or credentialed provider is a good start but the application would have been stronger with a description of the current levels of incentives, any evidence, even anecdotal, that the current levels are inadequate, a description of the process that will be use to set new higher levels, and a description of how data will be tracked to see if the incentives are working as planned. The application asserts that the TQRIS includes a process for reviewing and adjusting incentives but does not describe it, even minimally. Furthermore, there is no TQRIS in place so it is unclear whether this is referring to a mechanism in the current system or something in the plans for the proposed TQRIS. The supports to be provided to families to access high quality programs were addressed in one sentence and described as the public ratings. The ratings are a form of support but there are many other supports that state plan could include. The ratings also do not address the full range of family needs such as the need for transportation or meals. Overall, the narrative contains many assertions that were not supported with evidence. The omission of targets for Part C and Part B preschool in the table is troubling. The targets are extremely ambitious but, given that the state has not provided an analysis of the what will be required to achieve their targets, the state has not provided evidence that they are achievable. This section was considered partially implemented based on the current incentives and the quality of the plan was medium low.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.** | 15 | 2 |

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 narrative revealed a low level of understanding of the purpose of a validation study. Addressing the criteria requires a study design that examines whether programs in different tiers are truly of different quality and the relationship between the tiers and child progress. Some of the components listed as part of the evaluation design are related to the issue of verifying differential quality but none address it directly. The applicant plans to use an external evaluator which is a strength. It is not sufficient to say the evaluator will design the plan. The applicant needed to demonstrate that the state has sufficient understanding of the activity to be able to contract for an appropriate study. Some of the issues proposed for the evaluation are important for examining the operation of the TQRIS system but they are not issues of validity. For example, the tiers could truly reflect differences in quality (i.e., the tiers are valid) but programs could opt not to participate. In this case, the response would be to review the incentives and supports, not adjust the tiers. Answering this kind of important secondary question could be an additional benefit of an evaluation as long as the validity questions are addressed. The validation study needs to examine whether there are real differences across the tiers, which cannot be done by just looking at tier 2 as is proposed. The three tiers cannot be validated by only looking at tier 2 since the purpose is to see if the level of quality in the tiers is different and progressive across the tiers. The criteria of relating the children's progress to the quality rating was not addressed appropriately. The vague description presented suggested the study would look at kindergarten and third grade status whereas the criteria clearly specify looking at the relationship to children's progress (for example, do children in tier 3 programs show more growth during their time in program than comparable children in tier 1 programs?). The quality of the plan was low.

## 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 state has ELDS in place that address the birth to five age spectrum and address nearly all of the necessary domains. The state has undertaken work to revise the ELDS to align with the K-12 standards and other national standards. The state has completed substantial work related to the alignment. The state is proposing using a consultant to complete a validation study of the appropriateness of the standards for key populations. All of these are strengths and reflections of high quality. One table is presented as evidence that the state will incorporate the standards into the Program Standards, the curricula, etc. The table provides weak evidence and needed explanation. The planned activity under curricula in the table does not appear to relate to the ELDS. The ECERS, ITERS and CLASS are mentioned under comprehensive assessment but these tools have not been addressed in other sections of the proposal nor does naming them address how they relate to the ELDS. The role of the Child Progress Study as a connection between Professional Development and ELDS was not clear. The state has developed an assessment based on the current ELDs. The revision process is well described. Based on this, the state has substantial implementation in this area. The state's commitment to have teachers conduct assessments based on the ELDs is a strength, however, both the process description and the timeline indicate that the state is not aware of the requirements for developing a valid and reliable assessment tool. The state is incorrect in maintaining that demonstrating validity is not necessary for an assessment used for instructional planning (See National Research Council's report on early childhood assessment). The listing of the features of the tool is a strength and the features are appropriate. The concept of a strategies manual is a good idea but it would have been helpful to discuss the relationship between curricula in place in these programs, the ELDs, and the strategies manual. The intended use of the data as it relates to the development of a data system is described. The outreach campaign is a good support for the ELDs although it was not clear exactly which audiences were to be targeted. The state addressed training and professional development with a variety of approaches although more details on the capacity of the system to address the need would have been helpful to understand the likely effectiveness of these strategies. The role of the local councils was not described. The plan makes good use of outside expertise and studies to inform next steps. The state has substantial implementation in this area and the quality of the plan is on the low end of high.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(C)(3)** Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness. | 30 | 14 |

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to identify and address the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs by--

(a) Establishing a progression of standards for ensuring children's health and safety; ensuring that health and behavioral screening and follow-up occur; and promoting children's physical, social, and emotional development across the levels of its Program Standards;

(b) Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators who are trained and supported on an on-going basis in meeting the health standards;

(c) Promoting healthy eating habits, improving nutrition, expanding physical activity; and

(d) Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual targets to increase the number of Children with High Needs who--

(1) Are screened using Screening Measures that align with the Medicaid Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment benefit (see section 1905(r)(5) of the Social Security Act) or the well-baby and well-child services available through the Children's Health Insurance Program (42 CFR 457.520), and that, as appropriate, are consistent with the Child Find provisions in IDEA (see sections 612(a)(3) and 635(a)(5) of IDEA);

(2) Are referred for services based on the results of those screenings, and where appropriate, received follow-up; and

(3) Participate in ongoing health care as part of a schedule of well-child care, including the number of children who are up to date in a schedule of well-child care.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

| Comments on (C)(3) |
|---|

The state has already undertaken a number of activities with regard to identifying and addressing children's needs in these areas. The increase in the number of children who have received behavioral screenings through EPSDT is impressive. Having a framework for articulating a full continuum of child health services is also evidence of state concern and commitment in this area. The state has established relevant goals for this section. The activities described to achieve the goals are appropriate and possibly effective but as a set they do not convey a sense of a cohesive effort that will indeed be successful in moving the state forward. The concept of a progression of standards is not adequately addressed. There is minimal information in the TQRIS section as to the contents of any standards so it is not sufficient to simply reference their 3-tier system. The application makes clear that Tier 2 is yet to be developed but does not convey a sense that the state understands what is meant by a progression of standards for health, behavioral, and developmental needs. A comparison of the requirements of tier 1 contrasted with tier 3 and a possible middle ground for tier 2 would have been helpful. More detail was needed. Similarly, the application asserts that early educators will be trained but does not indicate in what, by whom, to what end and what kind of evidence will be provided to assess the impact of training on practice. The Health Consultants are referred to repeatedly but it was not clear who they are and what they do. Similarly, the Mental Health Endorsement is a strength but it is not clear who the endorsement is meant for (i.e., which providers would be expected to move to the endorsement). The establishment of the Statewide Early Childhood Health Coordinator is evidence of state commitment and appears to be a good idea but more information about this person's roles and responsibilities and the linkage between the creation of this position and the increase in the numbers in the performance measure would have been helpful. The local councils also were references in several places but their roles were not adequately described. In general, this section presented many strong pieces without conveying a sense of how all these pieces will actually result in improved health outcomes. A discussion of coordination with Part C and Part B preschool would have strengthened this section. The numbers in the performance tables are ambitious but there is no evidence presented to substantiate the likelihood of the state being able to achieve them. A more concrete and targeted expansion of the logic model would have been helpful. The plan suggests that the provision of training will result in improved outcomes for children without recognizing the need for activities directed toward ensuring changes in practice as a prerequisite for good outcomes. The state was considered to have partial implementation and a plan of medium quality.

## D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(D)(1)** Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials. | 40 | 10 |

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) |
| --- |

Insufficient information was provided to ascertain where the state is in moving toward a framework and a progression of competencies. The matrix in the appendix indicates there are a number of competency sets currently in place but no information was provided as to which sets apply to which programs or for which program a competency (and credential) is mandatory and for which it is voluntary. The application conveys a commitment to develop a framework but very little information is presented as to the state's vision for that framework. More information would have been helpful about how many sets of competencies the states sees as necessary or a description of the process for determining how many competencies will be necessary. If the state has a vision, for example, of bringing all educators who work with young children in a group setting under a single set of competencies, this was not communicated – nor was an alternative vision. Similarly, a description of why there is a need for progressions or what the progressions might look like, how the decisions would be made or the principles that will be applied in the decision making would have provided some evidence that the state had a plan and the capacity to carry out the plan to move toward a framework and competencies. The framework collaborative has representation from multiple sectors which is good although, surprisingly, higher education does not appear to be involved. Given the limited progress the state has made to date in creating a unified framework and the critical role of the framework in guiding future work in this area, finalizing the framework in 6 months seems very optimistic. Also, the process does not call for expert review or comment from other stakeholders which will be critical. More information was needed about the Registry as well, such as what are its current purposes and how will those purposes be expanded or changed under the grant. The application indicates that the registry will be expanded but the linkage between the registry and a highly qualified workforce was not communicated. The existence of the higher education consortium and ongoing work related to moving from the 2 year to 4 year institutions is a strength but more information was needed about how the consortium would be moving to establish the progression. Overall, there were tidbits of promising work mentioned in the application but the narrative did not describe how a set of activities will be woven together to develop a framework and competencies to provide uniformly qualified staff in all EC sectors. The state was considered to have partial implementation and a 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.** | 20 | 17 |

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) |
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The state is already implementing a kindergarten entry assessment and has been for several years. The current assessment addresses 4 of the 5 domains of school readiness. The current assessment aligns with the ELDS and a good procedure is proposed to ensure the revised assessment will align as well. The state reports that the results will be part of the State Longitudinal Data System. Several major studies have been conducted and some of the results were described. The description of the plan to revise the assessment is extremely well presented with all major areas related to assessment development addressed. The activities are clearly presented and the responsibilities are clearly delineated. The application demonstrates the state's capacity to learn from what it has undertaken in the past and move to the next level. The discussion of validity and the proposed plan to pilot and revise was especially impressive. Only a few areas were not addressed. Resources will be devoted to assisting teachers in using the assessment results but no mention was made of training teachers to administer the new assessment. A observation-based assessment that is sufficiently detailed to provide information for instructional purposes will most certainly require professional development around administration. The application correctly indicates that ensuring that teachers are applying the scoring criteria correctly will be critical but this is not addressed in the proposed studies nor is there any discussion of how reliability will be ensured when the assessment is implemented. Finally, the issue of sub-group validation was not addressed. Since the state plans to compute sub-group analyses which is appropriate for understanding the performance of various groups of children with high needs, it will be critical to examine that the results for children who are dual language learners or children with disabilities are valid for their intended uses. The assessment is substantially implemented and the plan to revise it is of high quality.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.** | 20 | 8 |

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

(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;

(b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;

(c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data;

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

| Comments on (E)(2) |
|---|

The state has multiple data systems across agencies that are not linked, do not have a common data structure, and do not use a common identifier. The state conducted an analyses of its data systems in 2008 and reached some important conclusions about the status of its multiple data systems. This work provides a stepping stone for moving toward a more integrated system. The state also is working on its longitudinal student data system through two grants. It is difficult to evaluate how close (or far) the state is from having a unified data system because the analysis presented is at a very general level. Some information on which programs are where with regard to the essential data elements at a more detailed level than the table A-1-13 would have been helpful. It also is not clear exactly which early learning programs will be participating. The failure to mention child care and Head Start was a significant weakness. The application notes that the state has made significant progress since the 2008 report but does not describe what that is. Given the information presented, a reasonable assessment is that the state is partially implementing a unified data system. A more detailed analysis of where the state is (e.g., which programs have which data elements) would have provided a stronger base for the discussion of specifically where the state needs to go and how it plans to get there. The Data System Technical Work Group provides a feasible governance structure creating a mechanism for cross-agency work. It was not clear what constitutes the five stage in the five-stage design process. Overall, this section contains an adequate overview but a far too general description of the state's plan. The discussion related to the unique identifiers did not convey a sense that the state is aware of some of the challenges that might be encountered in this activity and therefore, the plan makes no provision for how to address these challenges. There was no discussion of why the state considers the birth certificate number a good common id, how programs will know it, or how the state will address children born outside the state. These are relatively minor points but a discussion would have illustrated that the state has considered implementation issues. Only 3 months is scheduled for modifying the data bases to include the required identifiers, which suggests the state does not understand the complexity of the undertaking or that there will not be very many different data bases to modify. Particularly troubling is that the final step only has LEAs

enacting changes which suggests that children in non-LEA based programs will not be in the data base. The discussion would have been stronger if it had included a succinct listing of all the purposes of the new data systems or some of the questions that will be addressed with it. Some purposes are scattered throughout the text. The issue of data entry is barely mentioned. It is difficult to believe that all the providers currently have the human or hardware capacity for this kind of effort (but it is difficult to evaluate because the text does not make clear which programs are to be included). The plan does not build in steps in the timeline for professional development around data collection and entry, which could be an issue since many programs will be collecting data they have not collected before and entering it into a revised data system they have never used. There is also no mention of training around data use. The role of the Data Collaborative was unclear; more was needed to explain how they make data available (or why the data won't be available directly to the user anyway). The application asserted that the data system would include data on program quality but did not say where the data would come from. In general, more linkages between this section and what was discussed in the other sections would have made a more convincing case that the state had a high quality plan to build a data system that would truly support the other activities. The state was considered to have partial implementation and a plan of medium quality.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| Total Points Available for Selection Criteria | 280 | 145 |

## 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 | 0 |

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 application does not address whether licensing is required for programs serving two or more children which is part of the criteria. Programs in public schools are listed as license-exempt but presumably they are operated by the public schools meaning they are "state-regulated" so they should be included in the TQRIS. It was difficult to understand why programs that are receiving public funds from one of the Participating Agencies would need to be encouraged to participate since their agencies are agreeing to be part of the grant. Given that not all state-regulated programs will participate, the application does not meet the second criteria. The incentives would be better used to encourage private programs that opt not to participate (although programs that are required to be licensed will be in Tier 1 on the basis of their license alone which is why that tier is rather weak.) It was difficult to follow the discussion about supporting license exempt programs to participate in the TQRIS since the first tier is being licensed. It read like the goal was not to get them licensed which leaves unanswered the question of what is the participation goal for these programs.

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.

The application presented a high quality plan for how the state will revise its current KEA which has many of the required steps to make it an even better assessment.

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 presented a plan which addresses all of the requirements. The state application discusses how it will integrate and align resources to address a number of components of a statewide system. Some of the components of a high quality system were not addressed as well as others, but the state application did contain a plan that addressed how the state will build a system to increase the quality of programs for children with high needs. The state's application was very strong in the ares of ELDS and the Kindergarten Entry Assessment and less strong in the areas of the TQRIS, the workforce competencies, and the data system.

Application # CT-5005

Peer Reviewer:
Lead Monitor:
Support Monitor:
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 11:51 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

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development** | 20 | 18 |

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

| Comments on (A)(1) |
|---|

(a) The applicant provides evidence of a considerable financial commitment to early childhood through a variety of state dollars. Overall, total funds to serve early learning have steadily increased since 2007. Increases in funding to programs that serve children with high needs has also been demonstrated with growth in supplemental funding to Head Start as well as Part C of IDEA. Additionally, state contributions of almost $306 million represent a significant amount of money directed to early childhood relative to the population. The state also demonstrates support from private organizations, as well as philanthropy, indicating that private sources have provided an additional $72 million in early childhood investments for the reporting period. (b) Overall, the applicant demonstrates clear gains in the total number of children with high needs participating in early learning and development programs. Although some early learning programs such as Family Resource Centers have steadily decreased in participation, the state shows significant increases in state funded preschool programs and moderate increases in participation in Head Start/Early Head Start programs, both of which more directly serve children with high needs. (c) The state demonstrates a long-standing commitment to early childhood with a history of policies and legislation supportive of early childhood. Most notably, recent legislation was enacted in 2011 to "establish a coordinated system of early care and education and child development." Along with this recent legislation, the state has enacted a variety of policies that work in concert to create a high quality continuum of care and education. For example, the state has tied funding to various quality level requirements such as enhanced teacher qualifications. (d) The applicant provides significant evidence of implementation of most of the necessary building blocks of a high quality system. Although the plan proposed by the state indicates the intent to revise or enhance many of the system components, much of the initial analysis and program development has been completed. The state has a current set of Early Learning and Development standards for the full continuum of children birth to five and a clear system for training and dissemination. Additionally, the state provides an early childhood educator registry and a variety of educator credentials are available to demonstrate teacher qualifications. Furthermore, the state has in place, and has used a Kindergarten Entry Assessment for several years. The state is well underway in developing a federated data network. Although the state has yet to design a tiered quality rating system that would provide a platform for stronger health promotion and family engagement

practices, these areas are partially addressed in the state's program standards and accreditation expectations. The status of the state's components demonstrate that the foundations are clearly in place for most of the building blocks needed.

| | 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) The state's overarching goal of reducing the number of children entering school by half is highly ambitious, but meeting the goal might prove difficult based on the current status of the state's systems. However, the state makes a strong case for addressing the areas it chooses and provides several achievable intermediate goals for each selection criteria. Additionally, the state effectively targets family, friend and neighbor care identifying gap areas of quality among providers. Based on funding and the number of children served through family, friend and neighbor care, the state's choice to address that area of the system makes good, rational sense. Together, the state's plan works to form an effective reform agenda aimed at streamlining and fully integrating systems and agencies that work together to serve children and families with increased levels of quality across the system. (b) The summary of the state's plan effectively articulates a comprehensive and targeted approach to early childhood reform. The applicant clearly outlines the current status of the state and addresses how each goal will mark progress toward the state's overall vision. Specific activities are identified for each goal, and the identified activities fully connect with each of the outcomes. (c) The state provides a well thought out and valid rationale for each of the chosen selection criteria C, D, and E. The state's plan outlines how each of the criterion builds on, and enhances the current status of the state system while also demonstrating how each of the selections work in coordination with one another. The state describes how further developing specific components such as the Early Learning and Development Standards works to enhance the effectiveness of other strategies being forwarded such as the TQRIS and workforce development. The state's rationale for addressing both focus areas related to measuring data effectively supports their drive for improving data-driven decision making across the state. The various connections made between the criteria demonstrate the state's clear and careful planning of its proposed plans of action.

| | 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) |
|---|

(a) The state provides a clear description of its proposed governance and organizational structure that sufficiently demonstrates interagency coordination and collaboration. The proposed plan clearly builds on current systems of governance by working under the auspices of the Early Childhood Cabinet. Additionally, the applicant appropriately identifies current and future workgroups to be established as part of this funding opportunity, such as a TQRIS and Health & Behavioral Needs committees. The applicant adequately addresses most governance roles, responsibilities, and decision making authorities, including a dispute resolution process, though at times it is unclear if decisions are made by groups, individuals or the oversight of the cabinet. A variety of stakeholders are afforded reasonable opportunities for involvement by serving on local early learning councils within their communities. (b) Memoranda of Understanding fully articulate each agency's commitment to the work and demonstrates a high level of commitment and collaboration. MOUs provided include both the state agencies required as well as additional, invited agencies the applicant determined would enhance a coordinated state system such as The CT Board of Regents. Scopes of work provide clear descriptions of each agency's responsibilities by including those who are assigned as to implement work and serve on inter-agency boards and workgroups. Scopes of work further identify agencies that bear responsibility for specific criterion implementation such as the development of a TQRIS financial incentive program (DSS). Demonstrating a strong financial commitment, the MOUs include agreement by the PSAs to repurpose and deploy agency resources to ensure successful development and implementation of the state's plan. (c) The state supplies a variety of Letters of Intent demonstrating a strong community of support by early learning organizations and the public. Letters are provided from an array of organizations including businesses and parent groups. Child development programs provided letters stating a strong commitment to not only participate in the state's plan, but to voluntary join the TQRIS system and encourage other providers as well. The large number and variety of authors of the letters of intent provide significant evidence of the state's breadth of support for early learning.

| | 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.

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Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

| Comments on (A)(4) |
|---|

(a) The state's plan provides substantial evidence of the use of existing funds to support the achievement of the plan's outcomes. Currently, the state provides almost $306 million in existing funds to support early learning and development. The state further indicates that it will incorporate an additional 100 million in federal and private investments into the budget. The state clearly outlines how each Participating State Agency (PSA) is committed to the plan by noting the various investments by program and agency and connecting those funds to specific project criteria. Significant resources supportive of the state's plan in particular, include $288 million targeted to implementing and expanding the state department of education's school readiness program and $431 million targeted to support affordable child care to families through the Care4Kids program at the Department of Social Services (DSS). (b) The state provides strong evidence that its budget is adequate and reasonable to support the plan's activities. The state describes a clear and thoughtful process for calculating costs that included consultation with participating agencies, councils and the private sector. Additionally, the budgets clearly demonstrate significant costs allocated to local implementation citing that 48% of the total budget will address regional and local organization implementation activities. (c) The state plan clearly outlines a strong investment in early learning and development both prior to this funding and throughout the grant period. The applicant also demonstrates effective decision making regarding use of funds by directing dollars to the necessary infrastructure development on which the state can continue an early childhood agenda. The significant state resources of more than $300 million being used to augment the state's plan demonstrates the applicant's willingness to effectively leverage resources, but also that the state has widespread support of using funds to drive early childhood actions. Financial commitment and public support together demonstrate a strong likelihood that the state will be able to sustain activities beyond the funding period.

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## 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) |
|---|

(a) The state currently demonstrates partial implementation of a tiered quality rating system, but intends to develop one with the support of this funding opportunity. Prior work conducted in 2008, provides the applicant with a strong foundation on which to build its rating system. Although programs are not currently rated, a set of quality standards are required to be met by programs funded through the state, including the School Readiness programs. Established program standards address the state's Early Learning Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, Workforce and each of the other components that make up an effective TQRIS. The state's plan clearly indicates that its TQRIS will be based on program standards currently in use and that when building its tiers, each of the components will be taken into consideration. However, each of the standards appear to be addressed only in the top tier of the system. Licensing compliance is described as Tier I and according to the data table provided only addresses workforce, health promotion, and data practices. (b) The state articulates an intent to ensure its standards meaningfully differentiate program quality. However, with a three tier system in which Tier I is licensing and Tier III is accreditation the plan lacks adequate specifics regarding the role the middle Tier II will play in identifying quality early learning and development. Although Tier III standards appear to require national accreditation, and therefore clearly align with indicators nationally recognized as producing positive outcomes, the applicant provides few details outlining what standards will be used for Tier II. The applicant describes recommendations for standards from the workgroup convened in 2008, but the detailed plan described in the narrative veers too far from those recommendations by moving to a three tier system to consider those standards as examples. Without sufficient information regarding what standards will be identified in Tier II beyond the general categories, it is difficult to identify whether the Tier II standards are measurable or whether they will adequately align with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved outcomes. (c) The applicant provides sufficient evidence that the TQRS will be tied to licensing in its planned implementation. The applicant describes its TQRS as having compliance with licensing constitute the first tier in its system. Additionally, the state's plan identifies activities for including license-exempt programs across the state as well as promoting licensure of family, friend and neighbor providers to enter them into the improvement system.

| | 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)

The state partially implements a system that maximizes program participation and helps families afford high-quality child care. (a) The state does not currently require participation in a quality rating system, but describes adequate plans to include all publicly funded early learning and development programs in the TQRIS. The applicant indicates that the state's proposed reform efforts will require all programs, including Head Start/Early Head Start, Title I ESEA, and Programs serving Part B and C of IDEA, to participate. The applicant outlines a phased in process so that by the end of the grant period at least 4500 providers will be included in the TQRIS. However, these reforms are proposed, not guaranteed as a rating system is not yet in place. It is unclear whether the state has the support necessary to implement this policy. (b) The applicant outlines a clear and effective set of strategies to assist families in affording high quality child care. The state demonstrates an understanding of families' needs by connecting child care subsidies with family, friend and neighbor care but also recognizes the challenges of the quality among family care providers. The state's plan to first tie subsidy to quality rating increases the likelihood that families will be able to access higher quality programs. Additionally, the state proposes to support FFN providers to move toward licensure and thereby enter the quality improvement and rating system. As a comprehensive set of strategies, the state effectively uses a variety of methods to increase availability and accessibility of quality programs. (c) The state demonstrates a strong commitment to full implementation of a TQRIS by setting highly ambitious goals for participation. The state indicates that it intends to include over 4500 providers participating by 2015. Smaller benchmarks are described for prior years to make the goal more realistically attainable. While 4500 providers by 2015 and 1000 in the first year seems overly ambitious, the

system under consideration (Tier I licensing; Tier III accreditation) may increase the likelihood that the goal will be achieved. Using three tiers, two of which are already in place, allows for practices and systems currently established and implemented to continue. Therefore, the state would be monitoring only for the Tier II programs which may make the goal more easily achieved.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs** | 15 | 9 |

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

| Comments on (B)(3) |
|---|

The applicant currently has a rating and monitoring system that is partially implemented (a) The applicant provides adequate assurances that its plan includes the use of valid and reliable monitoring tools though these systems are not currently implemented. In the plan, the TQRIS coordinator is identified as the individual responsible for developing recommendations for a multi-state workgroup to review. Included in the recommendations will be tools, the scheduling and assigning of monitors, and protocols for posting results. These types of recommendations appropriately relate to the various decisions necessary regarding monitoring and rating programs using valid and reliable tools and procedures. The applicant describes a moderately rigorous process for ensuring reliability indicating that it will use a system of ongoing supervision of monitors beyond initial training. The plan also states that licensing specialists will be trained and participate in site visits as well as the TQRIS monitors (consultants, non-licensing specialists). But how programs will be rated and by whom specifically (licensing, consultants, or the accreditation assistance specialists) is uncertain. The described plan indicates that these decisions will be made at a later time. (b) The state indicates that it will build on its 211 system which currently works to provide up to date child care information. Using a system well established and well known increases the likelihood that families will utilize the information provided. The 211 system provides an adequate platform on which to build a quality data and information sharing system.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs** | 20 | 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 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 state provides sufficient evidence of policies and practices currently employed to support programs' continuous improvement indicating a partial implementation of the criterion. Programs in the state currently have access to Connecticut's Accreditation Facilitation Project, a nationally acclaimed model. In addition, the plan includes the establishment of a Technical Assistance Center to support programs and maximize resources. The state couples access to training and technical assistance with financial incentives such as "Quality Grants" and "merit awards" to further promote continuous improvement among TQRIS participants. Providing professional development and funding together increases the likelihood for participation as well as ongoing quality improvement. (b) The state plan adequately addresses supports to families. However, the policies described appear to be in the discussion phase and not yet an agreed upon policy of the state or the various oversight agencies. The state plan indicates that supports for consideration include providing greater financial incentives for parents who choose higher quality care settings for their child. These financial supports appear to be the main mechanism for increasing the number of children in higher tier settings. Additionally, the plan outlines intent to increase the number of state funded enrollment opportunities, thereby increasing supports to families indirectly. Finally, the state has a well-established system of subsidy that allows families a great amount of choice in making care decisions. Family, friend and neighbor care is included in the reimbursement rates. With the planned reform, FFN providers will be encouraged to enter the TQRS system by becoming licensed providers. It is unclear if families will be required to choose licensed FFN providers and maintain reimbursement or not. (c) The targets for programs and the number of children who are served in the top tiers of the state's system seem unambitious. The state has identified both tiers II and III as "high quality." While the number of programs moving to accreditation is expectantly low, The number of programs expected to be in the middle tier is less than 5% of the total participating programs in the final year identified. With the numerous supports for quality improvement described, and the bottom tier starting with licensing, it seems that more aggressive targets are warranted. Based on the targets presented, the vast majority of TQRIS participants remain at the minimal standards level of licensing throughout the implementation period. Therefore, the plan lacks ambition in making significant progress in the number of children served by high quality programs.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

| Comments on (B)(5) |
|---|

(a) The state's plan to design and implement evaluations lacks a clear outline of the methods to be used for validating the state's TQRIS. The applicant adequately addresses appropriate research questions and describes an intent to assess how outcomes are affected at both the provider and system levels. Although the initial research questions appropriately align with the scope of this funding, the state does not provide sufficient information regarding the research based measures it intends to use to determine results. The state plan instead indicates that the "selected evaluator" will assist in determining research design. No further details are provided. (b) The state provides little information as to how quality ratings will be determined. Measures of progress are unknown. Therefore, the state plan does not adequately address how quality relates to progress made or children's development. The research design beyond the effective initial questions has not yet been determined.

## 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 | 30 |

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)** |
|---|

(a-b) The applicant proposes a strong plan for ensuring that the state's learning standards are appropriate across both domains and ages. The state has well established and fully implemented standards for both children 3-5 as well as birth-three that cover the essential domains of learning. The state describes its intent to further refine these standards to create a single document that fully aligns with the newly adopted common core standards and the recently revised Head Start outcomes framework. The state is well underway with the task of creating an effective set of standards. The key activities outlined clearly lead to achievement of a document that will include developmental, cultural and linguistic appropriateness. To date the state indicates that it has drafted principles, selected domains, and conducted alignment and gap analyses. (c) The state provides significant evidence of a comprehensive plan to embed standards throughout the early childhood system. State funded programs are currently required to utilize curricula and assessment that are aligned with standards, and the state indicates it will further utilization of the standards by incorporating this requirement into Tier II of its TQRIS. Additionally, the state outlines a strong plan to develop a new workforce competency framework that will also include understanding standards and their use. (d) The state provides sufficient evidence of various supports to promote understanding and commitment to standards utilization across programs. The state indicates that professional development activities will be a shared responsibility across agencies with the state department of education coordinating. Additionally, the state plans to include existing state/regional organizations to deliver training and coaching. The state's plan for a technical assistance center provides additional opportunities to ensure effective training and dissemination of information.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.** | 30 | 22 |

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to identify and address the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs by--

(a) Establishing a progression of standards for ensuring children's health and safety; ensuring that health and behavioral screening and follow-up occur; and promoting children's physical, social, and emotional development across the levels of its Program Standards;

(b) Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators who are trained and supported on an on-going basis in meeting the health standards;

(c) Promoting healthy eating habits, improving nutrition, expanding physical activity; and

(d) Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual targets to increase the number of Children with High Needs who--

(1) Are screened using Screening Measures that align with the Medicaid Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment benefit (see section 1905(r)(5) of the Social Security Act) or the well-baby and well-child services available through the Children's Health Insurance Program (42 CFR 457.520), and that, as appropriate, are consistent with the Child Find provisions in IDEA (see sections 612(a)(3) and 635(a)(5) of IDEA);

(2) Are referred for services based on the results of those screenings, and where appropriate, received follow-up; and

(3) Participate in ongoing health care as part of a schedule of well-child care, including the number of children who are up to date in a schedule of well-child care.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

(a) The state plan effectively demonstrates that it will establish a progression of standards regarding children's health and safety. Currently, the state licensing requirements include general health and safety issues. These existing standards will make up the bottom tier in the TQRIS. Additionally, Accreditation standards, which make up the top tier of the system, also include a variety of health, safety, and development (including behavioral) indicators. The state's plan is to determine which health and safety indicators would appropriately identify a provider in tier II of the TQRIS. In addition to incorporating health and safety into the program standards, the state outlines its intent to include health-related issues in the revised Early Learning Standards. The state provides strong evidence that it clearly understands the connection between children's health and learning. (b) Over 200 health consultants currently provide supports to early learning programs throughout the state. Having an established cadre of well-trained health consultants provides the state with a strong foundation on which it can successfully expand. The plan includes intent to increase the consultants' capacity to disseminate knowledge and information by adding consultant coordinators and enhancing the consultants' training curricula. The state provides an effective plan for incorporating the consultants with the work of the TQRS technical assistance center and indicates an intent to then train 1000 early childhood educators on the standards and quality indicators. (c) The state provides adequate evidence that it will promote healthy eating and improved nutrition. The plan outlines intent to train the health consultants on issues of nutrition so as to better support early learning programs and families. The plan provides no further details for incorporating nutrition or physical activity into the TQRS or program standards. However, the role of the health coordinator proposed includes participation on the workgroup developing the Tier II program standards. The integration of health and learning programs described increases the likelihood that standards related to nutrition and healthy habits will be included in development. (d) The applicant provides a sufficient plan for leveraging resources to meet ambitious and achievable targets. The plan outlines activities that will be supported by over 71 million dollars in additional resources. The state plans to establish a workgroup within its current early childhood cabinet focused on health related issues. As a subgroup of the early childhood cabinet, the state identifies the importance of health related topics to the early childhood system as a whole. The state supports local councils with development of Early Childhood plans that identify the supports and strategies used locally to ensure young children's health and learning. The plan demonstrates an intent to assist local councils in including health and screening related topics into their plans. Health components will include issues around screening and the provision of medical homes. Previous work in this area, such as increased reimbursement rates for screening, has made a significant difference in the number of children participating in well care, increasing from 2% to 46% since 2007. Continuing to enhance the successful models of training and care coordination will further the likelihood that the state's targets will be met.

## 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.** | 40 | 32 |

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**

(a) The applicant's current workforce system is partially implemented across the state. The state's plan effectively demonstrates a clear set of strategies and a high level of motivation to successfully develop a common and statewide competency framework for the early childhood workforce. Recent legislation requiring all state funded programs to employ teachers with at least an associate's degree provides considerable influence in connecting the various workforce development systems. Additionally, the state's Charts-A-Course program provides an effective starting point on which to build a full competency framework. The plan proposes a common set of competencies to cut across all early childhood roles and settings for which work has begun with a mapping of roles and desired skill sets. Next steps outlined include forming a Framework Collaborative to oversee the drafting of the state's framework as well as plans for its implementation. Planned members of the collaborative include both experts from the post-secondary institutions as well as other early learning experts and educators. (b) The state plan provides sufficient evidence of developing a progression of credentials aligned with the competency framework. The plan includes first identifying currently available credentials and degrees, identifying gaps and determining barriers. The plan then describes an intent to build on the current Charts a Course program which provides pathways to entry level personnel, as well as link to the state's career ladder. Again, the state's mandate to have degreed professionals in publicly funded programs provides compelling motivation to form a career ladder with a progressive set of skills and credentials. (c) The state's community colleges are well underway in ensuring a successful pathway toward early childhood degree programs. All 12 colleges are cited as being in process of receiving NAEYC accreditation of the college's associate degree programs. Once established, the state indicates that smoother transitions and stronger articulation agreements will be seen between 2 and 4 year college programs. Additionally, the state is currently piloting a credentialing program. The state's higher education system appears to be well invested in providing quality professional development opportunities. Members of the proposed framework collaborative will include post secondary representatives furthering the institutions' engagement in the system and its development. The state has a clear vision and an adequate plan for engaging the community and producing an effective and aligned competency framework.

## E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.** | 20 | 19 |

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 state provides adequate evidence of a kindergarten entry assessment aligned with standards and which measures school readiness. The current assessment implemented in the state is administered to all students statewide and is aligned with the current early learning standards. The state proposes to revise the current assessment to ensure alignment as it revises the early learning standards. In the proposed revision, the state also indicates an intent to address all of the essential domains of readiness. With the state department of education as the lead, the plan outlines an effective set of strategies to ensure a fully aligned assessment is in place by the required time. (b) The applicant offers an effective plan to ensure the newly developed kindergarten assessment accurately measures students' performance. The state's use of a formative analysis process allows for ongoing, informed changes to occur during development so as to ensure the most reliable and valid instrument is developed. Furthermore, the state describes collection of both qualitative and quantitative data during pilot testing ensuring that analysis includes a fully informed process. The design of the validation process

includes varying populations to ensure appropriateness of the assessment across groups of children with needs. Overall, the state presents a well thought out and sound plan for ensuring reliability and validity. (c) The state provides sufficient evidence that the kindergarten assessment will be administered within the required timeline. The state has a current assessment instrument in place as well as outlines a timeline that the revised assessment will be implemented statewide from 7/14-11/14. (d) The current assessment instrument is included in the state's education data system and can track data at both the aggregate and student levels. However, the state reports that the current system has minimal functionality. The proposed plan includes strategies to enhance the system's functionality to broaden the widespread use of the data collected. The state further indicates that the new assessment, just as the current assessment, will continue to be a part of the state longitudinal data system and be reported on the public website. The state's data system seems well established with minimal need for large scale development changes. (e) The state presents significant evidence of the use of other resources to fund kindergarten assessment strategies. The state indicates that much of the work will be supported through philanthropic organizations. In addition to the funds requested from this opportunity, the state identifies over $760,000 from outside resources.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.** | 20 | 16 |

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

(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;

(b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;

(c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data;

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

| Comments on (E)(2) |
|---|

(a) The state adequately outlines its plan to ensure the data system will include all of the essential data elements. The state currently has several data elements in place and systematically collects data such as unique student identifiers. partially implementing an early learning data system However, the current system often duplicates data due to differences in identifiers used across programs. The state plan includes sufficient strategies to ensure collection of each of the essential pieces of data. (b-c) The state's plan effectively builds on the current work being conducted with the National Center for Education Statistics. The center has submitted recommendations for a federated data network rather than a centralized data warehouse allowing agencies to control distribution of data while also allowing for a process for each agency to access data by query. The plan includes strategies to adopt data standards so that information collected is uniform in nature. Use of a data network automates and streamlines processes. Additionally, the state's plan incorporates the development of a single identifier to further improve uniformity. The recommendations and planned implementation described adequately address data collection and data exchanges. (d) The state provides sufficient information to demonstrate that data from the SLDS will be generated in timely manner and be relevant and accessible. The state describes its system as accessible in "real-time" so that programs may utilize data for continuous improvement. Additionally, data will be available to local early childhood councils which will in turn assist councils in making informed and effective policy and program decisions. (e) The state provides adequate assurances that data oversight requirements will be satisfactorily met. The state indicates that the data workgroup will work to create policies regarding data quality and privacy, The policies include development of internal controls to ensure compliance is met. The development of the system will also include each of the PSAs with expertise and knowledge regarding the various HIPAA and FERPA guidelines to ensure all issues of data security are carefully addressed during development.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **Total Points Available for Selection Criteria** | 280 | 223 |

**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 | 0 |
| --- | --- | --- |

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 state plan insufficiently addresses the competitive preference for priority 2. Admirably, the state plan emphasizes efforts to change state policies regarding license exempt programs so that they may enter the quality rating system. However, the state fails to address either of the indicators for this priority. While the state indicates that the Tier I of the rating system requires licensure, the plan does not make clear that the reverse is true. It is not clear that all licensed programs are required to participate in rating, only those that are publicly funded. The state also discusses that it will encourage 100 Family Friend and Neighbor care providers to pursue licensure. However, the state fails to provide information regarding the minimum requirements for licensure. Therefore it is unknown whether programs caring for more than 2 unrelated children must be licensed. This priority was not met.

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)**

(b) The state received 19/20 points on (E)(1) thereby meeting the 70% point requirement to meet this priority.

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 successfully meets the absolute priority of promoting school readiness for children with high needs. The state has many well-established components of a strong and interconnected early childhood system such as early learning standards and a strong assessment framework for assessing young children. The plan outlines strategies and goals that augment and enhance the current foundation of early learning systems and promotes a focus on data-driven decision-making. Addressing revisions of the early learning standards and developing clearly defined workforce competencies will support the state's move toward promoting early learning and development outcomes for young children. Additionally, the many financial supports to programs that provide services to target populations of children with high needs will specifically address outcomes to reduce the achievement gap. Overall the state's plan effectively addresses its goals of ensuring school preparedness.

Application # CT-5005

Peer Reviewer:
Lead Monitor:
Support Monitor:
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time        11/17/2011 - 8:57 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 | 19 |

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

### Comments on (A)(1)

The state of Connecticut demonstrates strong commitment to early learning and development. The state's investments in early learning and development programs totaled $306 million in 2011 representing a 25% increase in funding for early learning and development from 2007 to 2011 despite the economic downturn (Source Table (A)((1)-4.). The state has provided that both private and philanthropic support complements state investments. For example, the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative was created in 2011 in partnership with the State to provide funding and support for the implementation of Public Act 11-181. A total of $72 million in early childhood efforts from 2007-2011 will reinforce the proposed RTT-ELC local community infrastructure investments by strengthening existing private sector networks to increase private investments in early childhood. The Commission for the Advancement of 21st Century Skills, referred to as the A P-20 Council, created in 2009 will support collaborative efforts among early childhood, K-12, and higher education in workforce training, effective education and career pathways that will maximize the number of people in the state with a postsecondary degree or other credentials. The state provided evidence of already having key building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system. For instance, it included Early Learning Development standard revisions to fully align birth to grade 3 standards, addressing current approaches to Learning and Physical Well-Being. Connecticut developed a solid assessment system for specific early learning programs (Source Table (A)(1)-7). The state has a solid baseline of high-quality health promotion practices currently required in State funded programs (Source Table (A)(1)-8). The state's proposed plan fully supports Early Learning and Development Programs and K-12 (Source Table (A)(1)-9). The state proposes to bring together state-funded early learning and development program, and Family Resource Centers (FRCs) to promote a comprehensive, integrated, community-based system of family support and child development services. The model is based on -Schools of the 21st Century developed by Dr. Edward Zigler of Yale University. The state proposes to develop a ladder of early childhood educator credentials and partner with colleges, universities and non-profit agencies to provide a range of professional development and training opportunities for educators (Source Table (A)(1)-10). The state's Kindergarten Early Assessments, initiated in 2007, meet most of the criteria for a common statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment (Source (A)(1)-12). The state proposes to include ' all RTT-ELC Participating State Agencies

(PSAS) to work on effective data practices with an early childhood focus track, and compile and maintain information about children and families. A cross-agency Data policy Work Group of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet will facilitate progress toward the adoption of a unique identifier for children, programs, and staff. The Policy Work Group received funding for two State Longitudinal Data System Grants to evaluate the options for a data system interoperability architecture, including the existing interoperability framework. The state's plan provides a commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs serving Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's-Financial investment, from January 2007. In addition, the state provided the existing early learning and development legislation, policies, and practices in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system. The state demonstrates that they're interested in key early learning reform in the following areas: Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators and Kindergarten Entry Assessments The state details past historical information includes the enactment and decades of investments in early childhood programs and originating with one of the nations' first Head Start Programs (14 years of State-funded School Readiness Programs for Priority high-need children) established the Early Childhood Education Cabinet 2005, pursuant to Public Act 05-245.

| | 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 state provides reasonable and ambitious overall goals in its plan to achieve a dramatic increase in the percentage of children with high needs who enter Kindergarten ready to succeed, and to cut in half the percentage of children unprepared for school. The state's proposed plan will successfully implement eight RTT-ELC projects that will establish the infrastructure and necessary pre-conditions to positively affect Connecticut's 80,000 children with high-needs, including children from special populations ages birth to 5 - by consolidating, improving and expanding the quality of publicly funded early learning and development programs to close the readiness gaps by: 1. Instituting system changes targeting children with high needs 2. Improving quality in family based child care and family, friends and neighbor settings by serving over half of children with high needs and very young children, and 3. Accelerating implementation of a coordinated system of early care, education and child development that improves quality, assessment and identifies the key elements from Public law Act-11-181. The state's achievable goals include a dramatic increase in the percentage of children with high needs who enter Kindergarten ready to succeed and to cut in half the percentage of children unprepared for school. The successful implementation of eight RTT-ELC projects will establish the infrastructure and necessary conditions to positively affect the state's 80,000 high-need children during the grant period. Connecticut's Key leverage points: Institute system changes targeting children with high needs, including children from special populations, birth to five by consolidating, improving, and expanding the quality of publicly funded early learning and development programs to close the readiness gap. The state provides an adequate plan, allowing the state to deepen our bench of early childhood leaders across all setting (communities, philanthropy, State Agencies). The state's signing of an executive order established the State Early Childhood Office (ECO), and serves as the initial implementation mechanism for RTT-ELC projects that requiring high level cross-agency partnerships and collaborative efforts. Connecticut provides assurances that its application will align with the state's broader early care, education and child development reform agenda and that its proposed projects accelerate implementation of these reform efforts.

| | 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 state provides reasonable and ambitious overall goals in its plan to achieve a dramatic increase in the percentage of high-needs children who enter Kindergarten ready to succeed, and to cut in half the percentage of children unprepared for school. The state's narrative provides a sound and realistic plan to align and coordinate the various Early Learning and Development programs, including concrete goals to: 1) Coordinate statewide implementation of the State Plan by activating the State Early Childhood Office (ECO) and enhancing the Early Childhood Cabinet; 2) Increase the capacity of local early childhood Education Councils to implement the State Plan; and 3) Carry out activities that will enhance the Early Childhood Education Cabinet to support implementation of the RTT-ELC State Plan. The state legislative efforts include the enactment of Public Act 11-181 which sets the frame for implementation of RTT-ELC projects and provides the foundation for broader transformative implementation. . The state outlines that the State Department of Education will serve as the Lead Agency and fiscal agent for Connecticut's RTT-ELC State Plan and will hold responsibility for implementing RTT-ELC Projects in partnership with Participating State Agencies (Source Appendix 2). The state demonstrates organizational capacity it its identification of the Commitment by Core Funders- a broader philanthropic movement resulting in 38 charitable institutions investing $72 million over the most recent five years to address early childhood matters. A total of $16,459,851 in RTT-ELC grant funds will support Project A (Overall Budget Narrative, Budget Part I, Project A).

| | 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 proposed budget seems adequate and reasonable to support the activities described in the plan. The state's proposal includes leveraging other sources beyond the RTT-ELC grant such as partnering with private organizations. This leveraging of other sources promotes sustainability to ensure Children with High Needs are served after the grant expires. A total of $16,459.851 in RTT-ELC grand funds will support Project A (Overall Budget Narrative, Budget Part I, Project A). The plan identifies other potential funding sources that may be received such as the $14 million in RTT-ELC funding directed to local Early Childhood Councils is expected to leverage another $50 million+ in public-private partnerships at the local level.

## 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) |
| --- |

The State of Connecticut includes a strong proposal to join the 26 other states currently operating a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (T-QRIS). The state provides a High Quality Plan that will connect and ensure that over 4,500 programs will participate in T-QRIS by 2015. The state details extensive efforts to include past historic experience in completing work on a T-QRIS, with more than 25 representatives from a Guiding Committee, including state and private agencies and child care providers. Connecticut has in the past failed to implement a previous comparable project. The previous plan was to recommend a 5-Tier system, with licensed programs at Tier 1 and nationally accredited programs at Tier 5. However, the state could not fully implement it primarily due to financial challenges. The state's goals are to now meet all of the standards within each prior level prior to advancing to the next level, for example: •Tier 1, require licensing compliance for child day care services; •Tier 2, require compliance with standards above and beyond licensing; and •Tier 3, require a national accreditation The T-QRIS will create a developmental pathway into the system through program and practitioner outreach and specifically target Friend, Families and Neighbors (FFNS) and family based childcare programs. The full-time T-QRIS Coordinator to oversee implementation and facilitate the development of a multi-state T-QRIS Learning Community to facilitate sharing of policies and best practices regarding implementation and sustainability. The time frame outlined is as follows: T-QRIS, developed, beta tested, and implemented starting June 2013 and addition of at least 1,000 high quality spaces for high-need children by 2011.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System** | 15 | 15 |

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 state of Connecticut has robust participation in its Tier I early childhood licensing system. Tier III includes all Head Start, School Readiness and Child Day Care programs and are partially funded by CCDF (Source Table (B)(1)-1). State funds provide strong incentives as they provide funding through the Care4Kids program to serve low-income working families which may also use Friends, Family and Neighbors to provide early child care and many of which serve the children with high needs population. The state's goals for the High Quality Plan seems realistic and will promote participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. The state: 1. Anticipates over 4,500 programs will participate in the T-QRIS by 2015. Table (B)(2)(c) shows that Connecticut intends to engage a range of providers in the tiered T-QRIS by mid 2014 with at least 1,000 providers in the system; and in 2014 at least 2,250; and by the end of 2015 at least 4,500 providers. Identified services to be provided by the Center will be a full menu of program supports and technical assistance to: programs serving children with high needs and programs serving children with disabilities, children whose families do not speak English, children at risk of being abused or neglected, and children who are homeless, as well as low-income children. 2. Plans to establish a T-QRIS Technical Assistance Center to support parent information and engagement process through the development of a marketing campaign. 3. Plans to provide T-QRIS consultants to assist programs participating in the T-QRIS. 4. Plans to build an infrastructure to create capacity of local and regional networks so that the created infrastructure will support family based child care programs (licensed) and FFN providers (unlicensed) and will specifically engage family-based child care programs and FFN providers because they serve high-need children. Further, the TQRIS will create a developmental pathway to reach out and engage other FFN providers, particularly those who serve high-need children and are motivated to enter Tier 1 licensing. Table (B)(2)-1 presents the existing mechanisms to support participation in quality improvement efforts by support type and description. It includes information on existing incentives and Quality grants, one time or Quality bonuses or merit awards. It also includes financing options such as low- or no-interest loans to improve playgrounds or facilities and scholarships for professional development with emphasis on programs participating in the T-QRIS and state tax credits.

| | 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 proposes to establish a robust monitoring and rating process that promotes use of T-QRIS information by families, especially those with high-need children. The planned activities the state has identified include developing assessment and monitoring protocols as well as a T-QRIS assessment and monitoring database. The state's plan describes procedures to address program needs by monitoring site visits and working closely with the Center's technical assistance services. The state will use the T-QRIS workgroup plans to review, crosswalk and analyze existing quality improvement monitoring tools as well as protocols and processes across publicly funded early learning and development programs. The T-QRIS Coordinator will provide collaborative efforts and collect policies and "best practice" information from members of the multi-state T-QRIS Learning Community. This process will ensure the development of the recommendations reviewed by the assigned monitors. The Coordinator will work with the software specialists from the Department of Social Services to build a database for recording of the T-QRIS beta test assessment and monitoring information; train monitoring and inspection staff; post and publicize T-QRIS results, and adjust and improve monitoring protocols. The state will provide quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs and make program quality rating data, information, and licensing history publicly available so that families currently using the Department of Social Services 2-1-1 Child Care Program can get critical up to date child care information. By using this approach, 2-1-1- Child Care will serve as the nexus for public information sharing about T-QRIS result. The ratings will also be translated into multiple languages. The state provided assurance that for the various populations served, especially the monolingual parents that the threshold languages will be addressed.

| | 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) |
|---|

Connecticut presents a strong approach to promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs. Current data provided illustrates a total 4,500 programs that will participate in the T-QRIS by 2015 with an increase of at least 1,000 high quality spaces in the total system, and 155 programs advancing to a higher Tier (Source: Table (B)(4)(C)(1) and (B)(4)(C):(2). The proposal reveals the current status on programs and participants and will include : 1) CCDF Program Care4Kids-13,807 participants 2) State funded School Readiness- 8,913 participants 3) Early Head Start and Head Start- 7,119 participants 4) Programs funded under Tile I of ESEA 5) Child Day Care Centers 3,606 The state clearly identifies that a goal will be to complete early care program consolidation and system improvements identified by the planning Director combined with maximizing efficiencies in the system and that the state's Public Act-1181 requires the creation of an early childhood care and education system. The creation of the system will recommend action regarding how federal, state, and local resources can be combined to maximize efficiencies in the system. The state anticipates that the establishment of a permanent governance structure, the consolidation of programs, and improved coordination of funds will result in the ability to redirect resources to promote access to high-quality Early Learning and Development programs. The State provides that the T-QRIS resources include types of information available to families about price, quality and openings, outreach campaigns supported at the statewide and local levels, equity in provider access to supports; and the extent to which tiered incentives support full costs. The state has provided in the proposal that they have not progressed in the areas of children's learning, development and school readiness, nor increased the quality of early childhood education across all learning programs and made known the indicators of quality to families.

| | 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 state presents a high quality plan to conduct a comprehensive evaluation by validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) for improving childhood learning and development, particularly for Children with High Needs. The state maintains the validation effort will prove critical with respect to the establishment of the Tier 2, the efficacy of the development pathway for Family Friends Neighbors (FFN) programs into the T-QRIS, and the impact of incentives and program supports with respect to upward mobility within the T-QRIS.The state provides details that an evaluator will conduct evaluations provide updates and annual reports until the completion of the system evaluation and use recommendations to update the T-QRIS. For example, the evaluator will work on the finalizing the following design components: formative evaluation of the T-QRIS implementation, examining changes in provider behavior and examining changes in parent behavior. However, the state does not identify an Evaluator and provides that the selected evaluator will assist in finalizing an evaluation design. The T-QRIS multi-state learning community will provide input into the evaluation and validation design process, embed formative evaluation activities into the beta test and collection in other relevant baseline measures, including evaluating and reviewing for possible modifications. Information drawn from the validation study will inform elements of the system including, changes in staff quality, gaps experienced by children with high needs versus their peers and staff interaction with children and families, among others.

## 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

*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 state's plan provides strong evidence to demonstrate the Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers and preschoolers, and cover all Essential Domains of School readiness. The evidence demonstrates that the ELDS are of high quality and appropriate for all children. The State has hired an expert consultant to complete the alignment and gap analyses work in pursuit of revised standards to ensure a rigorous process and produce a report documenting the vertical alignment. The state's process will involve a comprehensive validation study including use of ELD Standards with children and disabilities and dual language learners. The ELDS are utilized by public schools offering early learning and development programs, the community of early care and education providers, including state-funded pre-K and child care, Head Start, infant-toddler family based childcare programs and center-based providers. The State's provides that current progress in revising the state's birth to 5 ELDS standards will occur through the Early Childhood Education Cabinet (PSA), and will align to new K-3 standards. In addition the standards will incorporate essential domains of school readiness, address high-need populations to include children with delays, disabilities and dual language learners. They will also reflect a continuum of skills from birth to age 5 (Source: Appendix (C)(1)-1 through (C)(1)-4 for current standards documents). The state's plan to utilize a rigorous process in developing ELDS are referenced in two documents, entitled Connecticut's Guidelines for the Development of Infant and Toddler Early Learning and Connecticut's Preschool Curriculum Framework. These will be utilized by public schools offering early learning and development programs and the community of early care and education providers, including state-funded pre-K and child care, Head Start, Infant-Toddler family based childcare programs and center-based providers. The states revised Standards will focus on incorporating the cultural, linguistic and developmental needs of all children, including children with disabilities and dual English learners, including those specified in the Head Start Framework, such as language and literacy (see Appendix 4(C)(1)-5 for Guiding Principles and Appendix 4(C)(1)-6 for revised domains). The states ELDS Guiding Principles (Source Appendix 4(C)(1)-5) stress developmentally appropriate practices, culturally diversity, and research based practices to support dual language development and children with delays and developmental disabilities.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.** | 30 | 24 |

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to identify and address the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs by--

(a) Establishing a progression of standards for ensuring children's health and safety; ensuring that health and behavioral screening and follow-up occur; and promoting children's physical, social, and emotional development across the levels of its Program Standards;

(b) Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators who are trained and supported on an on-going basis in meeting the health standards;

(c) Promoting healthy eating habits, improving nutrition, expanding physical activity; and

(d) Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual targets to increase the number of Children with High Needs who--

(1) Are screened using Screening Measures that align with the Medicaid Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment benefit (see section 1905(r)(5) of the Social Security Act) or the well-baby and well-child services available through the Children's Health Insurance Program (42 CFR 457.520), and that, as appropriate, are consistent with the Child Find provisions in IDEA (see sections 612(a)(3) and 635(a)(5) of IDEA);

(2) Are referred for services based on the results of those screenings, and where appropriate, received follow-up; and

(3) Participate in ongoing health care as part of a schedule of well-child care, including the number of children who are up to date in a schedule of well-child care.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

| Comments on (C)(3) |
|---|

The state has proposed an adequate plan to establish a progression of standards to: ensure children's health and safety; ensuring health and behavioral screening and follow-up occur; and promote children's physical, social and emotional development across the levels of its program standards. The state of Connecticut demonstrates that their high quality plan identifies and addresses Health, Behavior and Development Needs and Goals. The state provides a good analysis of the plan to incorporate the health and early learning development program standards via the T-QRIS system and the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework will incorporate the new standards. Plans include: • Invest $443 million annually in public funds to support healthy child development. A total of 103,800 children birth to 5 are eligible for Medicaid Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) benefits (Table C(3)(D). • Developing a framework for Child Health Services: full continuum of child health services (see Appendix 4(A)(3)(-4,), placing health services within a broader range system with sectors that serve children and families. • Leverage existing resources to reach 90% of children with high needs (screening and well-child visits), see Figure: :(C)3(1), Logic Model illustrating situational analysis, goals, activities and deliverables and outcomes illustrating actual high need children enrolled in state health programs, 45,9917 in WIC, 9,165 Part C and 37,000+high need children publicly funded EC programs, • Increase the number of early childhood educators who are trained and supported on an ongoing basis in meeting health standards and train at least 1,000 Early Childhood Educators. • Promote healthy eating habits, nutrition, and expand physical activity, in 2,000 early care settings. In addition, the state will implement a Childhood Health Endorsement which will assure persons that provide infant mental health services in culturally sensitive and relationship-focused manners according to well-recognized standards. To this end, an Early Childhood Health Coordinator position will be established to promote integration of education and health programs and health resources. The position will create direct access between public health and education to address a wide range of activities by increasing the effectiveness of policies, programs and practices to promote physical activity, nutrition, and prevention of tobacco use among students in grades K-12. The state plans to replicate this model by establishing a Statewide Early Childhood Health Coordinator (Appendix 4(C)(3)-2 for letter of intent). The state details plans to promote "medical homes" and the completion and documentation of EPSDT screenings through training at medical practices. The state health department leads a Medical Home Initiative to increase the number of pediatric practices that serve Special Health Care needs Efforts to conduct an Early Childhood Health Assessment Record Form Pilot Project including supporting a network of staff that will provide health advocacy and support to families and will facilitate connections between early care programs and health providers (i.e., medical homes). Effective collaboration with responsible parties include Participating State Agencies who will play a critical role, Department of Public Health, Education, Social Services, Developmental Services, and Children and Families (Refer to MOU). Other stakeholders will contribute across multiple levels, e.g., Early Childhood Cabinet Health Work Group and local early childhood councils for implementation. Financial resources of $5,297,708 RTT-ELC grant funds will support goals and activities included in Section 3 (C)(3), leveraging $237,390.00 from other sources. The state provides extensive support and evidence cited: Framework for Child Health Services, technical compendium offers in-depth descriptions of each component of the system, indicators, and research findings associated with best practice.

### 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.** | 40 | 32 |

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**

The state provides an comprehensive agenda to progressively achieve a High Quality plan aimed at workforce development, including sector collaboration focused on building the knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals working in early learning and development programs. The state plans to develop a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials. The state's goal will be that students who graduate from an AA or BA level program after 2013 from an approved institution offered by the Early Childhood Higher Education (ECHEC) Consortium _this is an incomplete sentence-what's missing? The state will develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, which will create clear career pathways for EC professionals. The focus of the work will be to link knowledge and competencies to educational accomplishments and to state mandated requirements for Early Childhood (EC) teachers. The state will engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The state plans to pilot credentialed programs and the timeline for all proposed work in this section will be completed and implemented by 2015 and identifies how the High Quality Plan will meet the criteria. This framework will broaden existing what word is missing here? and open new learning opportunities for EC professionals. Additionally, it will: 1) Create a common statewide workforce knowledge and competency framework, Section (C)(1) to ensure that workforce competencies address the developmental, functional and academic context of high-need populations, including children with special needs. 2) Expand the existing Professional Registry to align with other EC workforce databases. Expand the data fields to include the framework competencies and credentials and enable new data portals to simplify and increase Registry membership. 3) Advance the Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium (ECHEC) and work to integrate EC credentials and degrees among Connecticut higher education institutions. Smooth and accelerate the educational trajectory of EC teachers and improve the quality of academic programs, particularly focused on infants and toddlers. The ECHEC will create an assessment tool and process, in consultation with partners such as the RESC's, State Education Resource Center and CCAC and local coaches and consultants who deliver in-service professional learning experiences. Figure (D)(1).1:"Logic Model for Narrative Section, Develop a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a Progression of Credentials" notes that the current CT Charts-a-Course (CCAC) Professional Registry and SDE Certification EC Educators' databases are neither compatible nor interoperable and that the CCA has the beginnings of a competency framework. The state demonstrates a progressive plan to create a common statewide workforce knowledge and competency framework.

## E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.** | 20 | 16 |

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**

The state has begun solid implementation of its annual Kindergarten Entry inventory (KEI) for all children entering public school kindergarten, as directed by the state legislature. The State Department of Education serves as the single lead agency responsible for the implementation and results are currently reported for every public school entering kindergarten, in every school district, through an electronic statewide data collection system (source: 4 (E)(1)-1 for details). The current KEI developed based upon the Connecticut Preschool Curriculum Framework and the Skills and Behaviors are defined by the three to five specific indicators in each of six domains: Language, Literacy, Numeracy, Physical/Motor, Creative/Aesthetic and Personal/Social. The new KELDI will be developed using a similar process and the KELDI Research Team worked closely with the Early Learning Development Standards Workgroup as they revise the state's early learning standards. However, the state will revise indicators and domains to reflect new Early Learning and Development (ELD) Standards (See Section (C) (1) to ensure the revised KELDI is valid, reliable and appropriate to target populations. The state plans to use KELDI data to inform instruction and engage families by developing complimentary resources and deliver professional development to help kindergarten teachers use data to address student's development needs and provide the appropriate services in the early elementary schools years, in conjunction with the development of ELD Standards supporting documents, for example: ELD Strategies Manual Section (C)(1). KELDI data will be used to inform instruction and engage families, develop resources to help Kindergarten teachers inform instruction, use inventory data to promote school readiness for high-need children and help agencies to use data to improve the early childhood data system. The KEI is currently part of the SDE's state longitudinal data system (SLDS) and state and district level KEI results are available on SDE'S public on-line data dissemination Website, CEDaR. KEI data will continue to be part of the state's longitudinal data system (See Section (E)(2). Connecticut's system meets privacy standards consistent with the requirements of Federal, State and local privacy laws. Funding source the State Department of Education will devote a significant portion of its funds for "Philanthrophy Match" (line 14 of Project A in Budget Narrative) to support development and validation of the KELDI of the KELDI, ensuring adequate funds for the project. As with the current KEI, the state will cover the costs of ongoing implementation of the KELDI. RTT-ELC funds will be utilized primarily for the development of the revised instrument, substantial in-kind resources, for example: staff time and administrative costs. The state provides assurances that the KEI meets most of the criteria for a common public school kindergarten Entry Assessments as illustrated (source: Table (A)(1)-12 for details).

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.** | 20 | 16 |

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

(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements.

(b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;

(c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data;

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

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

The state identifies a concrete plan to establish a federated data network solution for data linkage across agencies and provides that the state already has in place a Health Information Network. The federated system draws from health related data systems and this network will serve as a prototype for the early childhood data system. All stakeholders will have access to quality, early childhood data to aid in data-driven decision making. The state also has in place the Connecticut Education Data and Research (CEDaR) portal, which will serve as a model for stakeholder access to quality, early childhood data. The state will establish a Connecticut Early Childhood Data Systems Technical Workgroup (DSTW) to oversee design and implementation of data system reform and establish unique identifiers for children, participating programs and staff to be used by all participating state agencies. Each agency will modify its existing early childhood databases to include the required identifiers. The state Department of Education will require school districts and publicly funded early childhood programs enter a child's birth certificate number at first point of enrollment. The state identifies current work in progress, for example the State Department of Education is working with the P-20n Council with the National Center for Education Statistics to further develop the State's Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). The Center has recommended specifically the establishment of a federated data network rather than a centralized data warehouse (refer to Appendix 4(E)(2)-1 for more details). The DSTW will work to format data and oversee security of data and work with a consultant to develop a federated data network. In addition, the state will allow all PSA's to control the distribution of their data by pushing selected data onto a separate server for "key users" to query data across agencies. The Connecticut Data Collaborative will make interactive data available to local early childhood councils and the general public using open space software through an open source web-based platform with enhanced data analysis and data visualization features. The roll out of the federated data will include standard reports accessibility and a network public portal after the early childhood federated data network is operable. It will

include standards reports accessible to local early childhood councils and the general public modeled on the SDE Connecticut Education Data and Research (CEDaR) system which produces reports both for local school districts (with secure access) and for the general public. In addition, the federated data network design will include standardized forms and templates, resulting from a year of planning by the DSTW, generate information that is timely, relevant, accessible, and easy for programs and early childhood educators to use for continuous improvement and decision making. The system meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with the requirements of Federal, State and local privacy laws. The state has clearly demonstrated plans to implement and succeed in the planning and implementation phases as detailed to achieve a High-Quality Plan to enhance the State's existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System with all the required Essential Data Elements and meets the criteria as specified above.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **Total Points Available for Selection Criteria** | 280 | 228 |

## 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 | 0 |

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) The applicant proposes an adequate plan to encourage license exempt providers to participate in the T-QRIS to increase the number of high quality early learning and development programs. b) Similarly, the applicant proposes an adequate plan to increase licensed providers who participate in the T-QRIS, for example, the state will make available technical assistance and capacity building resources through a T-QRIS TA center.

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 earned a score of 80% of the maximum points available for criterion 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

Overall the state demonstrates a comprehensive approach to building a system that increases the quality of early learning and development program so that children enter kindergarten ready to succeed. It provides reasonable and ambitious goals in its plan to achieve a dramatic increase in the percentage of children with high needs who enter Kindergarten ready to succeed, and to cut in half the percentage children unprepared for school. It provides a long history of commitment to and investment in early learning and development programs. The state's private and philanthropic support complements state investments and demonstrates sustainability. The state also included in its plan a strong approach toward revising its early learning and development standards to fully align birth to grade 3, and provides strong evidence that the standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group. Its robust plan to revive its T-QRIS will ensure higher quality programs for all children, especially those with high needs. The state lays out a robust agenda to develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework to create clear career pathways for early childhood professionals. Finally, the applicant laid out its current efforts of implementing its Kindergarten Entry Inventory for all children entering kindergarten and identifies a concrete plan to establish a data network solution to early childhood data collection. It is clear that the state has met the absolute priority of promoting school readiness for children with high needs.