



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # DC-5007

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
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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	17
<p>The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--</p> <p>(a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;</p> <p>(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;</p> <p>(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and</p> <p>(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(1)

DC has demonstrated a strong commitment to providing quality Early Learning and Development Programs (ELDPs) since 1980 with the establishment of the Mayor's Advisory Council on Early Development. From 2000 through 2010, the district has implemented many policies and practices that demonstrate this strong commitment to creating quality Early Learning and Development Programs (ELDPs) (including establishing their QRIS in 2000) and provide a foundation on which they will improve their ELDPs. Throughout the past decade, the district has focused on improving their ELDPs and implementing reforms and practice, by reorganizing and increasing their funding sources to serve the ELDPs and specifically Children with High Needs. The district provides documentation that demonstrates the overall increase in funding for all ELDPs that correlates to an overall increase in the amount of children with High Needs that are being served. The district explains that in the past they have "experienced a challenge with the identification of children birth through five with developmental delays and disabilities" (Part C and Part B). Their Part C and Part B funding follows the child to the ELDP in which the parents choose to enroll their child. Historically, screening and tracking of these students has not been implemented. The district explains that now, a portion of the increase in Children with High Needs that are served through ELDPs, is due to a concerted effort and improvement in their child find, early detection screenings, identification, and evaluation of children in the age range of birth through 2. Also, the district uses a funding system per child that is called the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula where each student generates funds for its LEA in the same amount and same manner, no matter what ELDP they attend. However, for Children with High Needs, additional weightings are applied based on special education level (level 1-4) and limited/non-English proficiency. Additionally, Title I funds go to the LEAs that serve children living at the greatest poverty levels. Overall, the district shows an increase in 80 million dollars over the past five years in funding all areas of ELDPs, with the greatest being preschools that serve students from low-income families and Head Start and Early Start programs. Overall, the district is still in the process of developing methods to accurately identify and track (i.e. know where the students are and what services they are receiving) Children with High Needs. This results in the lack of their ability to currently provide accurate numbers and also then appropriately project how many children will be served in the future, where they will be served, and what services they will be provided. The district identifies another reason

that there has been an increase in the amount of Children with High Needs served as being due to the recession over the past four years. The district states that 31% of all their children served are in the age range of birth to five. The district's most poverty stricken wards (7 and 8) now have reached the point of almost half (48% & 40%) of those children birth to five living below the poverty level. Overall, the district has calculated that 31% of its children birth to five are from low-income families, which is higher than the national average (25%). This increase in this specific population of Children with High Needs also correlates with the above mentioned increase in funding for ELDPs. The district provides an overall picture of the current status of the key building blocks they have and do not have in place as they move forward with improving their high quality early learning and development system. They do not have a tiered quality rating improvement system (QRIS) that indicates quality markers or progression through tiers, but instead a reimbursement QRS that provides subsidy reimbursement rates to programs based on which tier they have been rated. The district currently has in place, and recently officially adopted, revised Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) that address all the essential domains of school readiness across the age groups of infants, toddlers and preschoolers. This provides a strong foundation for improving their current Comprehensive Assessment System, which they plan to expand and improve in the coming years to become more uniform and more utilized within the QRIS and in programs funded by CCDF. The assessment tools that they currently use for measures of environment quality, measures of quality adult-child interaction and formative assessments are all research and evidence-based. While the district currently implements the high quality health promotion practices of health and safety requirements, and sensory referral and follow-up and health promotion including physical activity and healthy eating habits, they have yet to utilize practices to promote healthy literacy. This will improve families' understanding of practices to utilize at home to ensure their children receive proper nutrition and physical activity. They also plan to expand their practices to include such health and developmental and behavior screenings within their child find program so as to reach children outside the school system. Except for the district's DCPCS (charter school) program, all the ELDPs employ extensive and very specific family engagement strategies to ensure the involvement of parents in their child's early childhood education. The district also utilizes an extensive amount of organizations who visit the homes of pregnant mothers through children the age of 21 (which includes children with disabilities, ELL, and low-income). DC only requires educators to be licensed if they wish to teach in the public school system. All other programs do require teacher licensure. The district plans to employ methods to encourage teachers to continue their education and receive more training as a way of improving the quality of their ELDPs. Currently, DC has implemented a pilot Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) that they will utilize as a foundation for creating a developmentally appropriate assessment in accordance with the National Research Council. The district currently utilizes the Statewide Longitudinal Education Data Warehouse (SLED) as their single repository for data regarding their students and educators. All the different data systems utilized by the various ELDPs feed their data into this one system. The district will continue to use this system as they work on improving and streamlining their data to better serve families and inform their instruction and practices. Taking into account all these current practices of the district, it is evident that they have created more than a firm foundation on which to build more and improve components of their quality early learning and development system.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	16

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)

DC constructs their goals within three "reform pillars" that address their overarching vision of constructing a plan that will result in children birth to 5 entering Kindergarten healthy and ready to learn. These three pillars are "mapping & alignment", "professional development" and "quality assurance". These three areas directly address the points of improvement that the district previously outlined in criterion A(1) as where their current areas of weakness occur. The goals are numerous and extremely ambitious, i.e. within just the "mapping and alignment" pillar, they list eight goals that progress the district through changing funding, aligning standards, providing professional development, and improving technology. The district proposes a plan that has a lot to address within four years, but due to the fact that the district recently took on a plan to implement a high quality pre-K system for 3 and 4 year olds that was supposed to take five years to implement and ended up achieving their goals in two years, this is an indicator that they have the potential to achieve their goals. The district provides a clear summary of their reform plan that outlines how they plan to develop and implement High-Quality Plans in order to achieve their goals. They provide specific details that demonstrate that they have clearly thought out and have experience with implementing long term reform plans, i.e. they delineate projected increases in numbers and percentages of educators trained, of assessments developed and utilized, of ELDPs increasing their quality rating and data collected and utilized. Because they do not currently have ways of tracking where the Children with High Needs (other than children from families with low-income) are within their ELDPs, their overall plan has a large gap in

their ability to establish a clear path toward achieving their goals. The district provides an adequate rationale for addressing the Focused Investment Areas (FIAs) of C(1), C(3), and C(4), D(1) and D(2), and E(1), as well as explaining why they chose not to address the other FIAs. These six FIAs that the district chose include the areas that the district outlines in their reform plan to address the areas of greatest need within their district, i.e. the district utilized FIA C(1) to continue their work of aligning the K-3 standards, ELD Standards and the Common Core State Standards and FIA E(1) allows the district to continue their work (based on an implemented pilot study) toward developing a developmentally appropriate Kindergarten Entry Assessment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

The district has decided that the lead agency will be the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and will manage the projects and report to the Deputy Mayor of Education - several full-time staff members will be hired to oversee the implementation of the grant and dissemination of funds to the appropriate participating agencies implementing the various projects. The district provides evidence that list eight participating agencies and entities that are in part responsible for the reform plan. The three entities are State Early Childhood Development Coordinating Council, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education and a new entity, the State Interagency Coordinating Council for Part C of IDEA. The five agencies fall within the Office of Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services - Department of Health, Department of Mental Health, Department of Human

Services, Child and Family Services Agency, and Dept. of Health Care Finance. The only agency excluded is the Department of Disability Services (even though it is provided in an overall list of departments along with the others) and provide no explanation for why. This department would be a valuable source of statistics and information regarding the current and future population of children with disabilities and developmental delays. Decision-making will continue to follow the current chain of command with the deputy mayors providing guidance to their district agencies, the executive office providing guidance to the deputy mayors and the State Early Childhood Development Coordinating Council (SECDCC) providing guidance to the mayor. The SECDCC, as the oversight and advisory group will resolve all disputes that arise among the agencies and stakeholders. The resulting governance-related roles and responsibilities provided are logical as they follow the district's chain of command and encompass the activities laid out in the reform plan. The district also includes as a part of the SECDCC advisory board, participants/representatives that represent all the programs, educators and children that will be effected by or served through the grant. This will ensure that all stakeholders have a voice in advising the team of agencies implementing the grant. The district presents detailed MOUs that include the same terms of conditions, individual descriptions of their scope and sequence of work and each MOU is signed by an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency. The district demonstrates support for their plan and collaboration with others through the inclusion of letters from several of their Early Learning Intermediary Organizations (i.e. DC Head Start Association and Washington Association of Child Care Centers) and several other stakeholders (i.e. DC Action for Children and Great Start DC). However, several Early learning Intermediary Organizations do not provide letters of support (3 out of 7) and only one charter school provides a letter of support. Given that the district proposes and projects to include all ELDPs (including all public school preschools and all public school charter schools) in their QRIS, it would be expected that there would be letters of support from these entities included in the application. The district's reform plan begins by establishing relationships across the agencies and stakeholders at a summit meeting to bring together all their baseline data on the "state of early childhood in the district". They intend to analyze the data to determine their strengths and weaknesses across the district that will in turn drive a fiscal analysis to refine their reform plan. The district's proposal to include stakeholders along the path of implementing their plan and expand on their overall provision of ELDP information to stakeholders lends credibility to the overall quality of the end results of their plan. From the evidence provided and discussed above, the district has a partially-implemented, medium-quality plan.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	8

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)

DC provides documentation that they will use a small amount of existing funds that support early learning and development activities and services to support their reform plan. They will use \$30,000 (fiscal year 2013) from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act out of the SECDCC to host the initial summit meeting to align the district's early childhood systems. They will also allocate \$80,000 (fiscal year 2012) from the CCDF funds to support some initial work on a variety of the projects. The total allocated from existing funds is \$110,000. The district provides budget tables and budget narratives regarding how they will use funding to achieve the outcomes of their reform plan. While it is well organized and detailed regarding the names of the projects and names of activities within the projects, the district provides vague descriptions of the activities along with the amount of money requested. For the personnel funds, the annual salaries are listed and these salaries are reasonable for the level of education and experience needed, as well as the cost of living in the DC area. For the Other budget category, there are many activities listed which have no explanation as to why that amount of funding is requested and why they allocate a certain amount per year. For example, there is \$15,500,000 allocated for Project 9: Streamlining Data Usage. The district has three activities within this project that all involve building databases,

creating websites, creating online tracking and managing systems. For each activity they provide a one sentence explanation and then a total amount needed: Consolidated Data Sharing System - \$10,000,000; Health Data Sharing Mechanism - \$5,000,000; and New Parent Visitation Universal Screening & Referral Process - \$500,000. This one project constitutes 30% of the entire budget that is not devoted to local implementation (personnel is another 10% which is not devoted to local implementation) and there is no information as to why they need 15 and a half million dollars to do this data work. Funding for this type of work is primarily personnel and there are not that many people needed to do this work that they would need this amount of money for. This example is indicative of several other areas within the budget that do not have any explanation as to why the amount of money is justified for the work they are explaining. This would indicate that while the district has clearly thought out who needs to do the work and the type of activities they will implement, they have not provided reasonable and necessary costs to achieve the overall goals. DC discusses their plan for sustainability as one that focuses on building the capacity of the current infrastructure such that when the grant funds end, they will have used the monies to create many new tools (i.e. guides, assessments, websites, databases) and have trained educators and personnel and further educated their current workforce. All these will continue to exist and be now embedded in the ongoing work and activities of the ELDPs. There are several people that will lose their jobs once the grant ends, but the district indicates that these are primarily those that are hired to oversee the implementation of the grant. They plan to analyze their fiscal budget overall reallocate funds toward any ongoing specific activities or duties that need to continue once the grant funding has ended. Even though the district states that building their infrastructure is their main goal, and in part this is true, they do not provide any specific information to indicate that they will be able to sustain the grant once it is completed.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

Currently DC has three-tiered Quality Rating System (QRS) and not a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS). Their QRS is strictly tied to reimbursement subsidy rates for programs based on the level at which they are rated. Therefore, they state that it is technically a Tiered Quality Reimbursement System. Of the six Program Standards that the RTT-ELC grant requires, the district's current system includes health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, early childhood educator qualifications and an assessment system. They do not include Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) or effective data practices. But beyond the RTT-ELC grant requirements, they also include community involvement, environment, curriculum, ratio and group size, administration and management, and cultural/linguistic and special needs provisions. Their QRS applies to center-based programs and family child care programs and they require that all programs receiving funds from CCDF participate in the system. The district's QRS is clear and has standards that are measurable and differentiate between levels. The district currently lacks (and acknowledges this lack) standards that meaningfully differentiate between quality levels and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved outcomes for children. These components are addressed within the district's reform plan and they have already completed two new Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) documents (for center-based and family child care programs) which provide clear outlines of the program standards within each quality rating level for each category of standards. In their new QRIS, the four levels are bronze, silver, gold (and gold plus). While there is a statement about gold plus as being a fourth tier, there is no explanation of standards or expectations regarding this tier. The new QRIS has nine categories of standards (as opposed to the RTT-ELC grant's six categories) that they state include all six Program Standard categories the grant requires. While the district indicates that they cover all the grant's standards within their nine standards, there are a few essential pieces missing from their standards. One category that the grant requires, which does not appear to be addressed by the district, is the effective data practices. They have a standard

category that is called Business and Administrative Practices which they explain and indicate it addresses the same standards at the grant's effective data strategies. Based on their explanation it is evident that the district's standard only cover data related to program policies and procedures related to how the staff run the program, but do not include data to guide instruction and program improvement and a way of sharing this information with parents. Another category that the grant requires, which does not appear within the district's standards, is the Comprehensive Assessment System. They indicate that their category of Program Evaluation and Quality Improvement covers these aspects, but instead they only cover scores that the program gets to obtain a certain level of rating – which could tie into the program evaluation piece of Comprehensive Assessment System but does not include children's learning and development outcomes to improve instruction. Within the district's set of standards labeled Curriculum and Learning Opportunities, there are some components of assessment required that if expanded could include the grant requirements for both effective data practices and Comprehensive Assessment System. The district indicates that their current QRS is aligned with their licensing regulations and that they are currently ranked third in the nation by the National Association of Child Care resource and Referral Agencies. They state that this will stay the same as they revise their QRS into a four-tiered QRIS. They also require all programs in the district to be licensed (other than a few exceptions, i.e. care provided during religious services or care by a related person). Due to their current high ranking and that many of their licensing requirements will automatically carry over to the new system, this is an indicator that they have the potential to continue to meet this grant requirement. Based on what is stated above, this is a partially-implemented, medium-quality response.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

Currently the district's three-tiered QRS mandates that all programs funded by CCDF must participate in the system and they based their subsidy reimbursement rates to the programs on whether the district is rated at a bronze, silver or gold – those at gold level get reimbursed at a higher rate than those at bronze. None of the district-funded preschools that are located at public school or public charter school sites participate in the system and currently utilize their own QRS – this constitutes 145 ELDPs. Currently all the district-funded preschools in community-based organizations (CBOs), the Early Head Start and Head Start programs and the programs receiving CCDF funds have a 100% rate of participation – this constitutes 305 ELPDs. Therefore at this point 67% of all current eligible ELDPs participate in the system. The district pays providers the difference between the families' co-payment and the 75th percentile of the current market rate for bronze-tier programs. Silver and gold receive high reimbursement rates. As the district states, this is a great incentive because the district guarantees contract payments to providers who fill subsidy slots rather than paying pro-rated rates based on child attendance. The current problem the district faces is that the difference between their reimbursement rate and the co-payment is still great, i.e. reimbursement at gold is still 44% less than the 75th percentile. The district explains that they will not need to adjust their policies and practices for helping families afford high quality care. However, they do not explain anywhere in their current structure if they have policies and practices to help more families with Children with High Needs afford high-quality care. At this point 100% of all families who are eligible for subsidized care receive services. Families are eligible for the Child Care Services Subsidy Program if their income is equal to or less than 247% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) or 80% of the current district median, whichever is lower. The families pay a monthly co-payment based on a sliding scale (based on their annual income). The district proposes a plan to change current practices for what ELDPs participate in the new QRIS and the incentives for participation because it now includes a quality improvement aspect. First, the district plans to open up involvement in the QRIS to the district-funded preschools at the public schools and public charter schools. They intend to develop a study with members from these programs and to meet regularly in order to refine their new QRIS so

that they are appropriate for all program types and design a system that includes incentives and quality program supports that are appropriate for and encourage participation from all ELDPs. The QRIS will be a voluntary system for these new preschool programs. Second, the district will develop recommendations on a menu of participation incentives that match the needs and interests of different ELDPs. Third, they plan to increase the current subsidy reimbursement rates. On the surface these strategies are innovative and appear effective. It is questionable, though, if the district will be able to find or determine what different types of incentives they can provide to the preschools from the public schools and charter schools since the ones they currently are proposing for the ELDPs (i.e. Child Care WAGES and TEACH Early Childhood Project) cannot be applied to district locations. The district provides targets for the participation of these preschools beginning in 2013 up through 2015 to be 50% of all eligible preschools at DCPS and DCPCS. They propose to increase the amount of eligible preschools at CBOs (2-3 each year) and programs funded by CCDF (8 each year) and maintain their 100% participation. The district does not include a previously mentioned "gold plus", fourth tier in their table of projected participation. It is difficult to understand if there will or will not be a four-tiered QRIS. These are ambitious goals for the participation of the preschool programs at DCPS and DCPCS and based on the fact that participation is voluntary, they already have their own QRS which would mean changing over to a new system, and the incentives do not apply to district programs, it may not be achievable. Based on statements made above, this is a partially-implemented, medium-quality response.

	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)

Currently, to ensure that programs that have submitted paperwork for participation in a certain level of the QRS, belong at that level, the district visits the site and verifies that all information submitted on the paperwork is actually in place at the site and assigns a tier. Because this system is purely based on elements present to equal a certain reimbursement rate, the district now proposes a different monitoring system for the new four-tiered QRIS. This new system will include specific monitoring tools that align with the new standards. These tools will be tested for validity and reliability and tested in a pilot study. Program monitors will be selected based on knowledge of the early learning and development and understanding of the district standards and QRIS. They will be trained and must meet an 85% inter-rater reliability. While the activities listed within this goal could potentially lead to quality monitoring tools, the timeline that is proposed for development, field testing and training the people who will utilize the tool, is unrealistic given the scope of work (i.e. between Fall 2012-Winter 2012 they will develop, field test, pilot test, prepare training modules, and training the program monitors). Currently, the district monitors an ELDP site each year to ensure that it is maintaining the same level of quality. There is no encouragement or expectation for the program to improve its rating. Under the new system, the district proposes to do a full review visit of the site every three years to monitor its QRIS status regardless of its application for a new rating level and visit every year to monitor basic health and safety aspects. Programs that slide backwards in the tiers or show a licensing infraction will be placed on a yearly review cycle until the problem is resolved. Programs develop an improvement plan with monitors where there is an expectation to increase their rating. Currently, the general public, including families, are able to call the Resource and Referral Agency (R & R) to obtain information about the ELDPs participating in the QRS – what programs are available, how the program is rated, etc. Providers can also call and obtain information about professional development offerings. The district plans to expand this information network to include a website. They also plan to enhance the Early Childhood Education Information Management System (EIMS) to include data regarding subsidy programs, capacity, enrollment, and tier quality markers for programs. Because low-income families do not always have easy access to the internet, one more strategy for improving the distribution of information to parents and public would be to use the media and mail to disseminate information via television and radio, as well as snail mail. Overall, these revisions and enhancements to the current methods of monitoring the ratings of the programs participating in the QRIS should greatly improve the district's monitoring system, specifically because now they will be focusing on aspects of quality (adherence to standards) and not just elements present in order to receive reimbursement. Based on statements made above, this is a partially-implemented, medium-quality response.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (B)(4)

Currently, the district states that they utilize many policies and practices that support improvement in their current QRS. They have three grant programs that, over the past several years have 1) provided training and support for ELL residents of DC seeking to establish a new child care facility, 2) provided training and support to ELDPs seeking national accreditation, and 3) provided financial assistance to DCPS and DCPCS pre-K programs. They have developed a career guide based on the Early Childhood Educators (ECE) credentials and aligned Workforce Core Knowledge standards. The district is also in the process of developing the Professional Development Registry which, by the end of 2011 allows ECEs to record their professional development credits and experience hours. Several changes are proposed by the district that will be implemented to support programs in improving their ratings (e.g. disincentives will be implemented for not moving up the tiers over each three year monitoring period and technical assistance will be developed with specific materials to target specific areas of weakness in the programs that are at the lowest tier). The district states that all previously mentioned strategies that are provided in B(2) for supporting families to have access to high-quality programs are in place for those that they utilize for families who have Children with High Needs. Since Part B, Part C and Title I funding follow the child to the LEA in which they attend a ELDP, they indicate that the same measures used to improve family access to programs apply also to families of Children with High Needs. This appears to be true for families who qualify under low-income status or have a child with a disability or are ELL, since they are eligible to attend the same programs as their peers and receive additional funds in order to attend those programs. There is no explanation regarding children in foster care or who are homeless. The new strategies that the district proposes to improve their current policies and practices include embedding professional development within the QRIS process to improve the workforce quality and ensuring alignment of technical assistance with program, workforce and early learning standards. This is an important component of their reform plan for improving the quality of participating programs, as it addresses a key part of improving outcomes for children – better educated and more experienced educators. In the Performance Measure table the district provides regarding their proposed numbers and percent increases for programs receiving ratings in the top tiers, the district proposes almost the same numbers as proposed in earlier criterion regarding improving involvement overall in the QRIS. This makes the table difficult to understand, since they also provide a new category not previously listed as Private Programs. No indication of the previously mentioned "gold plus" is included in the table for tier progression. In the Performance Measure table for increasing the number and percentage of Children with High Needs in top tiers, they propose to maintain the 100% for district-funded preschools at CBOs, for programs funded by CCDF (the majority of 9073 children currently in the bronze level programs) to improve from 24% to 45%, and for an increase from 0 to 100% (total of 7020 children) for preschools at DCPS and DCPCS. Since the district previously proposed 45% participation of DCPS and DCPCS preschools by 2015, it does not logically compute that 100% of Children with High Needs in these programs will be in programs in the top tiers. Also, since there is currently no baseline information specific to Children with High Needs, there is no way of determining for sure how much of an increase is possible or achievable. Based on statements made above, this is a partially-implemented, medium-quality response.

	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)

In the 2010-2011 school year the district utilized independent evaluators to implement two different evaluations on their ELDPs – one on their pre-K system and the other on their infant and toddler system. They are waiting for the results of these evaluations to help them understand how they performed. They plan to use the results to further inform the policies and practices they will put in place to achieve the goals they have set to achieve this criterion. Other than this recent evaluation, DC did not have methods by which they validate(d) the effectiveness of their QRS. Once the district has implemented the use of their new four (or three?)-tiered QRIS in late 2012, they will do a pilot study in which they use an independent evaluator (selected based on experience and education through a competitive bid process) to do a validation study on the QRIS standards to determine three things: 1) how it is constructed, 2) which elements contribute most to the final rating and which are the most variable, and 3) how do ratings correlate with an independent measure of quality through the use of research and evidence-based commercial evaluation tools. They will use these result to adjust their QRIS standards accordingly. This is an effective process by which they combine outside evaluation tools for validity with internal measures of reliability in order to determine how well the QRIS standards are dictating appropriate rating scores. In order to assess their QRIS and the extent to which changes are quality are related to child outcomes, they propose an evaluation that will be a descriptive evaluation including the following research questions: 1) what is the relationship between type and quality of providers and levels of child outcomes, controlling for socio-economic differences, 2) for which disadvantaged groups are there achievement gaps, and in which programs are these gaps lessened, and 3) what attributes of providers are related to whether their quality improves? Through the use of external measures of program quality and children's performance on standardized assessments, the district should be able to effectively answer the first two research questions. Through comparisons of scores between tier 1 scores and tier 3 scores which result in the most differences in specific scores, the district should be able to answer research question 3. The district appears to have missed one other important component of the assessing measures of progress and that is the movement of Children with High Needs and how their services correlate in quality to the rating of quality for the program.

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.	20	12
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that—</p> <p>(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;</p> <p>(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and</p> <p>(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)

Starting in 2005, DC has worked to develop and adopt new and appropriate ELDS for infants and toddlers and revised their ELDS for the pre-K system to include considerations and specifications for children with disabilities and who were English learners and from different cultural backgrounds. In 2010, they also adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Thus, now the district will engage in a revision of their ELDS in order to bring them into alignment with their new CCSS. Prior to this adoption of CCSS their ELDS were in alignment with their K-3 standards. The district aptly summarizes their goals for this criterion as aligning their standards to ensure that all the work of early childhood educators and programs work toward Kindergarten readiness for all children. They further state that "taking the time to develop on-ramps and entry points to the standards for students who need differentiated instruction ensures that all students will be on the path toward academic success". DC provides their current ELDS for infant and toddler and pre-K. These ELDS, created in collaboration with the NAEYC, Head Start, and with early childhood experts and representatives from higher institutions and ELDPs, contain all the Essential Domains of School Readiness that the grant requires, specifically they are developmentally appropriate in content and desired outcomes. As a part of their plan, they will work with the Early Childhood Education Assessment (ECEA) Consortium to assist them in adopting ELDS that lead to program quality through developmentally appropriate child and program assessments, data systems, and accountability initiatives while connecting them to early childhood curricula, instruction and professional development. They will form the "Standards Committee" that will work with the ECEA during the revision and adoption period. The committee will include representatives from all the appropriate ELDPs, parents, higher institutions and national early childhood experts – with special representation from organizations and experts who work with children with disabilities, low-income families, ELL families, and foster care. This process of collaboration with this nationally recognized early childhood consortium of experts, along with their current knowledge of the NAEYC guidelines and new core standards should result in a set of high-quality ELDS for all children birth to three that are aligned with the K-3 standards. The district plans to develop the Standards of Entry Points for Differentiated Learning manual that will provide guidance to ECEs about how to provide scaffold instruction to get Children with High Needs ready for Kindergarten. Standards will be constructed in a way that includes developmental milestones and entry points for differentiated instructions. This manual is an excellent approach to helping ECEs have concrete methods and materials for understanding the differences in development of Children with High Needs as well as how to provide instruction and measure the children's progress with measurable milestones. In order for the district's ECEs to understand and consequentially implement the new ELDS and the new entry points manual the district includes in their plan a "significant expansion of their professional development" system. They will develop training modules that are prepared for three types of delivery: paper-based, in-person and online in order to reach their educators through their most convenient method and ability to learn. The district will also hold quarterly meetings to provide guidance and support for providers in curriculum alignment and curriculum adaptation that addresses the needs of Children with High Needs. This professional development plan for the ECEs is missing an important component of follow-up on-the-job coaching by the trainer. The district plans to offer training to one representative from each ELDP to become a coach for their site through the quarterly trainings provided (attendance is voluntary). The district plans to expand their methods of educating families regarding the new ELDS through a process of using hard-copy and online materials. Providers will also discuss the new ELDS in parent-teacher conferences and social events about how the standards promote learning and development. These methods will be important for ensuring that parents understand about their child's development and learning. Based on the above-mentioned strategies for expanding their use of high quality ELDS, this is a partially-implemented, medium-quality plan.

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

To this date, the district has expended a lot of energy and monies toward educating providers and families regarding the healthy lifestyles across all ELDPs and K-12. In 2008, they adopted health standards that include the theoretical background and practical applications of healthy eating and a specific emphasis on physical activity. They require ECEs to complete continuing education (CE)/professional development training each year regarding new health research and interventions for young children. Recently, in 2010, the Department of Mental Health and Department of Health funded and implemented the Healthy Futures Programs, which serves children birth to five to promote positive social and emotional development through increasing the number of children screened for early identification of socio-emotional concerns and providing training to ECE teachers and administrators on accessing mental health resources for their students and families. These accomplishments, along with other notable initiatives currently in place, demonstrate that the district intends to ensure young children's physical and mental through comprehensive preventative and intervention methods. Although the district employs all these strategies to address the physical and mental health of young children, the district correctly recognizes the fact that these initiatives and methods are occurring in isolation of each other. They would make a greater impact for young children if they worked to 1) align their health standards with all their licensing programs, 2) provide more comprehensive professional development that includes more specific and robust teaching activities that align with the standards and curricula, and 3) create a data-sharing mechanism between different registries and agencies to allow for better communication regarding children's health. The district's detailed plan combines the strengths of what they have already implemented with much-needed methods for building a more robust and unified method to provide comprehensive wrap around services that will result in healthy outcomes for children birth through five and beyond. Due to the past lack of collaboration across systems and programs, more explanation (and planning) regarding their plan for a more unified system is needed to make this goal achievable. Based on the above-mentioned strategies for expanding their services to address the health, behavioral and developmental needs, this is a partially-implemented, high-quality plan.

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	20	16

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)

DC has outlined many of the family engagement strategies they currently utilize to educate and involve families in their children's early childhood education through their standards, QRIS, policies and practices. Within their plan to expand family engagement strategies, they propose methods for providing professional development for ECEs on best practices for engaging families, creating universal screening and referral processes for parents of newborns, developing an online system for managing and tracking services across agencies and providers, and consolidating home visitation funding streams to maximize the use of resources to reach families and their children within their home. The district submits data which demonstrate that last year, 250 trainings were offered to ECEs covering all core knowledge areas. Of these trainings, 15 (6%) focused specifically on family engagement/family support and 22 were multi-area sessions which included family engagement practices as a part of the training. The future professional development activities the district proposes involves more in-depth training on implementing the family engagement standards within the every-day practices of their programs. Again, the district proposes online, paper-based and in-person training modules, but no on-the-job coaching or training to ensure appropriate implementation of the practices. No current or projected numbers or percents are provided regarding training and support for ECEs. Of special note to the district's plan to expand and coordinate services offered directly to families is the "circle of support" model that the district has developed to address the need to unify and align supports, services and resources provided to families. Each level of support within the circle (4 levels of support that surround the center circle of the family) is a prevention program for the one that follows – the first level being the lowest cost and highest outcomes and the outermost level being the highest cost with a decrease in outcomes. This system that will unify and coordinate "family plans" will use each agency's expertise and minimize duplication of efforts and funds, while also decreasing the negative impact on families that result in multi-agency involvement. The district plan includes specific and unique supports for families with Children with High Needs in order to individualize their services and resources, i.e. coordinating supports for children who need multiple services, such as equipment for physical disabilities, speech and language services for language development and after care because the parents work or attend school. Based on the above-mentioned strategies for expanding their family engagement practices, this is a substantially-implemented, medium-quality plan.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

	Available	Score
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	20	18
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--</p> <p>(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;</p> <p>(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (D)(1)		
<p>DC currently has in place a document, called the Professional Receiving Opportunities and Support Professional Development Plan (PROS) (2009), which outlines the necessary elements for the effective professional development of DC's ECEs. Its purpose is to guide DC and ECE professionals through a plan for PD in the areas of Core Knowledge; Access and Outreach; Qualifications, Credentials and Pathways; Funding; Quality Assurance; and Governance and System Financing. It is aligned with the NAEYC conceptual framework for ECE PD and their Workforce Designs as well as aligned with the district's current ELDS and QRS. The Core Knowledge area is broken down into 11 areas that ECEs should master. They have also created a first draft of the Early Childhood & Out of School Time Career Guide to help ECEs to plan their progression toward future training/professional development, credentials, and degrees. Both of these tools were designed to help build the capacity of their ECE workforce with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of ELDPs. Due to the new revisions that are planned for the district's ELDS and QRIS, the district's first activity in this criterion is to revise the PROS and Career Guide to be brought in alignment with the new standards and new rating system. Next, they will develop a plan for implementing the Career Guide (revised draft). This incorporates re-evaluating the credentials and degrees and ensuring that they relate to levels of increasing quality for professionals. The district also describes a need to do additional work with higher education and PD provider groups to align both professional development and university credentials with each other. With the changes in the ELDS and QRIS, the PD providers and the higher education institutions will also need to revise their training and coursework in order to align with the core knowledge areas, new standards, framework and quality rating system. The district plans to establish methods for expanding their communication with ECE professionals and PD providers and higher institution professionals. They plan on building the Professional Development Registry, which also contains the Certified Trainer Registry. This is a valuable tool in helping a) ECE professionals track their credits toward degrees and "clock hours" toward licensing requirements, b) build the capacity of the district's ECE professionals, and c) PD providers and higher institutions to align their trainings and coursework with what they see ECE professionals need to progress in their education and experience. Based on the evidence provided and above statements, this is a substantially-implemented, high-quality plan.</p>		

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	16
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to improve the effectiveness and retention of Early Childhood Educators who work with Children with High Needs, with the goal of improving child outcomes by--</p> <p>(a) Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities that are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;</p> <p>(b) Implementing policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) that promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that is aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and that are designed to increase retention;</p> <p>(c) Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention; and</p>		

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

Throughout the grant application, DC has described many improvements that they plan to make regarding the professional development opportunities that they provide in order to support their ECE professionals. As they look specifically at the methods in which they support ECEs in improving their knowledge, skills and abilities, they note some gaps on which they need to focus. One change needed is making university programs more accessible to ECE professionals and creating new ECE credentials and degrees, especially those that focus on bilingual and infant/toddler ECE credentials and degrees. Currently they have in place several alternative programs for the traditional teacher preparation programs, i.e. the DC Teaching Fellows program which enrolls them in the DC Practitioner Teacher Program and a person obtains licensure while working in underserved schools and the Capital Teaching Residency where individuals gain one year of experience working alongside a mentor teacher. But they still have at least 1200 of their lead teachers who have no more than an AA degree. The district plans to conduct a needs assessment on the "ECE" pipeline in order to obtain data on what is causing the main obstructions ECE professionals encounter as they attempt to progress or why they do not attempt to progress toward higher education or certifications. They will use this data to help decide what new strategies to next employ. One alternative program they plan to implement is a Charter College that will allow bilingual ECEs to continue working full-time while earning their bilingual teacher credential. Another is community-based organization (CBO) sponsored teacher pipeline models that will fund programs to help assistant teachers progress to becoming lead teachers. The district has also realized that in an effort to increase teacher retention, they also need to increase compensation to ECE professionals with additional education and expertise. They plan to initiate a fiscal study of whether higher paid ECEs lead to high quality educators being retained as ECEs and in DC. They will use the study to develop a five-year financing plan to provide financial incentives to more qualified ECEs. The district also wants to remove the disincentive that is currently in place for providers regarding more educated teachers requiring higher salaries. They will create a program in which pay increases are provided to ECEs through the district rather than the employer, which creates an incentive for employers to encourage ECEs to progress in their education and credentials. Due to the high amount of money the district is allocating for these incentive plans, this plan has great potential for benefiting both the ECEs and the providers, while also providing relief for the providers during these difficult economic times. Regarding the sub-criterion of utilizing an effective method for publicly reporting workforce data and credentials, the district currently has built into the new Professional Development Registry a way for the public to view aggregate data regarding how the ECE workforce is responding to the education and training needed/required to appropriately serve children birth to 5. DC provides documentation that lists the 11 early childhood educator preparation programs (universities and centers) that provide approved undergraduate and graduate degrees, graduate certificates, and post-baccalaureate licensure/certifications. At this point the district only has baseline data regarding the amount of ECEs that have bachelors and post-bachelors degrees (Not AAs or CDAs). They plan to include the AA and CDA professionals in the coming years and re-establish their baseline of completers. From there they plan to increase by 5% a year the amount of people completing ECE programs. By year 2015 they plan to increase from 11 to 16 approved early childhood preparation programs. Currently, there is no data for ECEs progressing toward higher levels of education, but the district plans to collect that data in the future and increase these amounts over the years. These are all ambitious goals. The goals for increases in ECEs increasing their progression toward higher education and for increasing the overall amount of ECEs obtaining credentials and degrees appear achievable given the financial incentives the district plans to utilize to compensate more highly educated ECEs. The difficulty of achieving the goals of more teacher preparation programs is that they propose two types of alternative programs/institutions that will be put in place and within their data say they will increase overall by 5. While both of these alternative programs are based on other models already implemented and look as if they will address specific needs in their district, creating new and/or alternative programs takes a lot of human resources and time. It is questionable whether this overall goal is achievable. Based on the evidence provided and the above statements, this is a partially-implemented, high-quality plan.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	40	24

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)

Currently, the district does not have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment or practices in place which provide data regarding the knowledge and skills of children entering Kindergarten. They do not start obtaining data on students until grade 3. Currently these students are producing scores that are well below acceptable levels – 37% of students tested at the proficient level of DC's Comprehensive Assessment System. In response to this huge gap in their monitoring and assessment process, the district implemented a pilot study in 2009 with a Kindergarten Entry Assessment. This pilot did not include standardized assessment of children, objective measures of teacher behavior or classroom environment or data from parents. They used teacher surveys and teacher assessment of student performance. They plan to use the information gained from this pilot in developing their comprehensive Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) within their reform plan. The district proposes seven different strategies that they plan to implement in order to develop, test and begin implementation of the KEA. They will appoint a KEA Design Team to initiate the planning process and engage stakeholders. Part of this work involves working within their current cross-state consortium to explore assessments that measure attainment of standards for Kindergarten readiness, are aligned with the CCSS and provide data that can drive instructional improvement. By 2013 they will amend or pass necessary legislation and guidelines needed to implement the assessment on a statewide basis. Next they will develop administrative procedures and implement the training necessary for principals and teachers to administer the KEA and handle the data. They will pilot test the KEA in the Summer and Fall of 2013 and revise the protocols based on the results. They will then develop the final protocols and guidelines for reporting and use of the data. Finally, they will begin roll-out of the KEA to 50 classrooms in Fall of 2014, half of all the public and public charter school classes in Fall of 2015 and all classes in Fall of 2016. As a part of this clear and organized plan to implement a new Kindergarten Entry Assessment, there are some notable aspects that make it a high-quality plan. One, the district plans to include Children with High Needs in the pilot study so as to inform them regarding testing procedures and outcomes that are unique to these populations. Another aspect is that the district plans to engage a third-party evaluator on an annual basis to monitor and ensure that the scores from the KEA remain valid, reliable and appropriate at full-scale. The district will also report all KEA results to key stakeholders (representatives of ELDPs, parents, administrators) in order to help them make decisions regarding necessary changes needed in ELDPs regarding curricula and practices to improve their programs and close the Kindergarten readiness gap. The district does not provide documentation that the part of this plan is funded in significant part with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant. Other than stating that they will work to secure long-term funding after the grant has ended there are no sources of funding identified to sustain the implementation of the KEA past the end of the grant. Based on the evidence provided and the statements made above, this is a minimally-implemented, high-quality plan.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	195

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)

Throughout the application, the district has provided evidence and explanations regarding their existing licensing and inspection system that requires that all programs that exist, other than a few exemptions that are not related to amount of children cared for (i.e. those who are related to the child and do not charge a fee, those who provide care at religious gatherings) are required to have a license in order to operate within the DC area. The district's overall goal is that by 2015 all of currently eligible ELDPS, 80% will participate in new QRIS and 50% of all newly eligible public and public charter preschools will participate. This is not a goal in which all licensed programs are participating in the QRIS. Based on the evidence provided this is a partially-implemented, medium-quality plan.

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	No
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
Comments on (P)(3)		
<p>The district currently does not have a KEA. While the district provides a high-quality plan for creating and implementing a new KEA in E(1), they have clearly only begun the process of developing, implementing and using the data from such an assessment and in E(1) received 60% of the total maximum points for a minimally implemented, high-quality plan.</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
Comments on Absolute Priority	

The district ensures that as they implement their new QRIS, which now emphasizes the aspect of improvement of quality progressing up the tiers, they will work to have Children with High Needs served in programs that are in the top tiers. Throughout the application, the district has specifically noted ways in which they will address the unique needs of Children with High Needs within their ELDPs through their tiered QRIS. For example, they plan to focus on building an alternative teacher preparation program for bilingual ECEs to obtain teacher credentials. They will be expanding their early learning standards to include "entry points and on ramps" that provide teachers with specific developmental milestones to monitor and address the progress of students with High Needs. They plan to provide training to all ECEs regarding curriculum adaptation for Children with High Needs based on the results of the KEA and this training will include follow-up consultation in the classroom. They also plan to include a representative sample of Children with High Needs in their pilot study of the KEA in order to better inform them regarding these children's performance and outcomes.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # DC-5007

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
 Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
 Support Monitor: [Redacted]
 Application Status: Reviewed
 Date/Time: 11/16/2011 - 6:16 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	17
<p>The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--</p> <p>(a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;</p> <p>(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;</p> <p>(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and</p> <p>(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)
<p>The District of Columbia has demonstrated a strong focus in the past on serving children with high needs. The financial investment is very strong. This section of the response indicates that DC has 10,247 low income children and is expending \$250,129,425 on early childhood programs (not all of which goes to low income children). The majority of the spending is for state funded preschool for 3- and 4-year old children. Further, the number of children served in most early childhood programs has increased steadily since 2007. The one exception is programs receiving Child Care Development Funds (CCDF). That program, which serves the largest number of low-income children ages zero to 5, has shown a decline since 2009 (the earliest year for which comparable data are presented). Despite this decrease, it is clear that almost all high needs children are being served. DC presents many strengths in the current early learning and development legislation and policies. Key among these is the Pre-K Enhancement Act that aims to serve all 3- and 4- year olds by 2014. Additionally, DC's early adoption of a quality rating system (QRS; started in 2000) and movement of IDEA Part C to the State Education Agency, show forward-thinking on DC's part. DC has several of the needed building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system in place, including Early Learning and Development Standards that cover ages birth to 5 and all Essential Domains of School Readiness. There are a host of health promotion and family engagement programs underway, but they need better coordination. An assessment system and data system exist, but do not meet the definitions put forth in the application. DC does not yet have a working Kindergarten Entry Assessment. In sum, DC is making a large investment and is serving high numbers of young children; however some key elements are missing and improved coordination is needed. This response is on the low end of high quality.</p>

	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)

In the recent past, the District of Columbia's early childhood focus has been on increasing children's access to programs, especially 3- and 4- year olds. The application is clear that through RTT-ELC, they will now shift their focus to program quality, using three reform pillars: 1) Mapping and Alignment, 2) Professional Development, 3) Quality Assurance. This is an excellent change, because only quality programs are likely to benefit children in terms of school readiness. The plan presented is coherent and lays out specific target dates and participation numbers. Those goals are both ambitious and achievable. The rationale for writing to the selected criteria is logical, as is their rationale for electing not to write to certain criteria. They have identified areas where some foundational work is complete, but revision or improved coordination is necessary in order for overall program quality to truly improve. The only weakness in this section is a lack of focus on infants and toddlers. Given the strong past emphasis on 3- and 4- year olds, a specific emphasis on younger children would have made for a more comprehensive response. In sum, this state's rationale for its agenda includes a frank assessment of their current weaknesses and a logical path to improvement. It is a high-quality response.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

obtaining--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

The governance structure proposed is thoughtful and logical given the current structure for early childhood services within DC. The plan to create a new office within the Office of the State Superintendent of Education to oversee the work of RTT-ELC, with four FTE positions, is a strength of this proposal because it acknowledges that RTT-ELC will require a high level of effort and coordination. The plan outlined in the section labeled Roles and Responsibilities is also logical, but is unclear how the five individuals described in this section relate to the four proposed in the section above. DC has used the model MOU provided in the application. All MOUs appear to be present and properly executed. Each contains an individualized scope of work for the agency. This proposal contains several letters of support from Early Learning Intermediaries and other stakeholders that demonstrate the community's support for this application. However, given the large number of children currently served within the public and public charter schools it would have been encouraging to see more letters from those stakeholders. Additionally, the strategies and activities proposed to align and coordinate early learning are generally thoughtful, especially Strategy B regarding a comprehensive fiscal agenda and Strategy C regarding communication with the public. There is no rationale provided for the Medicaid study (Strategy A) and it does not appear to be directly related to early childhood alignment and coordination. In sum, the proposal for alignment and coordinating services is currently partially implemented and the response is of high quality.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	8

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)

A4a: The amounts of funds to be reallocated from other sources are small. However, it is commendable that the proposal makes a point of using the new money to supplement not supplant services and that some activities using existing funds have been identified. A4b: In looking at the 'Budget by Project' information, the budgeted amounts are not always in line with both the importance of the task and their current state of development. The most concerning issue is the \$15 million for 'Streamlining Data Usage'. The project is the largest single project in the budget, but received fairly little attention in the proposal. It is clear that the individual projects under this heading are valuable, but their cost seems excessive given the other goals. Additionally, only \$1.9 million has been allocated for the development of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA). The KEA is a major part of the

proposal and is barely in its formative stages, so more funding will likely be needed. There is a plan to convene a finance committee to identify funds to sustain the KEA; however, the amount allocated in the current budget (relative to other projects) does not appear to be sufficient to develop the needed tool. Additionally, the overall number of children to be served remains unclear. This section of the response indicates that 20,000 high needs children will be served annually, but the tables in Section A1 indicate that there are, at most, only 14,000 high needs children (depending on duplication between tables A1-1 and A1-2) in the District. 4bc: The proposal is focused on using these RTT-ELC funds for activities that only need to be done once and serve as building blocks for an improved early childhood system (e.g., revamping the Workforce Competencies; instituting a new TQRIS). Given the short-term nature of the funding, this is a logical start, but it is concerning that so few details are provided about how the infrastructure will be maintained and updated in the future. For instance, the assertion that using current funds to increase the knowledge and skills of the current workforce will translate into improved instruction by future teachers through coaching of colleagues and sharing of best practices seems like wishful thinking without specific supports and funding. In sum, the proposed budget is of medium quality.

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)

The District of Columbia was an "early adopter" of the quality rating system (QRS) concept as evidenced by the current Going for the Gold system that links quality to reimbursement schedule and was adopted in 2000. However, the response clearly indicates that the program has not been fully implemented as planned and that the program improvement aspect is virtually non-existent. DC has made significant progress in creating a new tiered quality rating improvement system (TQRIS), aimed at meeting the definition in the application. To that end, they have developed a new set of TQRIS program standards that clearly differentiate various levels of quality and are in line with national standards. However, the new program standards within the new TQRIS do not fully meet the requirements of the application. Most importantly the various forms of assessment do not constitute a Comprehensive Assessment System as defined in the application, with little mention of screening, formative assessments or measures of adult-child interaction. Additionally, evidence of effective data practices is absent. Further, the draft TQRIS has clear standards, but measuring them will be a challenge, especially given that they are very numerous and no existing tool covers them. In sum, the District of Columbia's TQRIS is partially implemented, in the form of the current QRS system. The plan is of medium-high quality. It has many strengths, including a solid draft that has been vetted and revised based on the feedback of many groups and a detailed set of activities for finalizing and piloting the new system. However, they do not fully meet the application's definition and the extent to which the standards are 'measurable' is in question.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	15	8

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)

B2a: Sixty percent of eligible programs participate in the current QRS, which is an impressive participation rate. However, school-based programs are not currently eligible for participation, DC's plan to allow school-based program to participate -- and ensure that there are not policy or structural barriers within the new TQRIS preventing their participation -- is an important first step in encouraging their participation. Currently, there are sizable financial incentives in place to encourage participation among programs that receive subsidies, and it appears that those will remain intact under the new TQRIS. However, reimbursement rates do not apply to school-based preschools, and the response does not propose any other incentives to encourage their participation. The lack of specific incentives for school-based programs is a weakness of this response. The proposal includes a study group to ensure that all types of early learning programs can participate in the new TQRIS and that there are proper incentives in place for them to do so. However, the programs specifically mentioned (TEACH, WAGES) are unlikely to apply to public school teachers because they are already credentialed. The proposal implies that public schools will be encouraged to participate in order to receive the professional development, but it not clear that public school preschools would find such opportunities sufficiently attractive to encourage them to join the TQRIS. B2b: The current subsidy structure for families is very generous, both in terms of who is eligible and how much of their annual income they are expected to contribute. However, there does not appear to be a financial incentive for families to select programs with a higher QRS rating or any additional incentives or policies in place in areas with high concentrations of children with high needs, and no plan is proposed for addressing these issues. This is a weakness in the current plan. B2c: The targets presented are ambitious. The TQRIS will not be available for school-based programs until 2013, so the proposal is to reach 50% participation from that group only three years after introduction is quick. However, without a strong incentive structure in place, it does not seem to be attainable. In sum, DC currently has a partially implemented TQRIS program, with high participation in some sectors and no participation in other sectors. The plan for promoting participating in the new proposed TQRIS is on the of medium quality because it addresses the policy barriers to participation, but not the incentives.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs	15	4
<p>The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--</p> <p>(a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency; and</p> <p>(b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (e.g., displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

B3a: The monitoring system proposed under the new TQRIS will involve the development of a new observational tool. It will be difficult to validate the new tool and to ensure that it is being used reliably. Standards like "classroom rules and expectations are age/developmentally appropriate, clear, and consistently enforced" require a lot inference on the part of the rater, therefore observers will require a high level of training and monitoring. The draft presented in appendix B3.1 is in the very early stages of development, with no actual scoring information presented. Additionally, no information is provided on how scores on individual indicators will become ratings (bronze, silver and gold). Given the intense work still needed to develop a quality monitoring tool of this type, the timeline is not reasonable. The timeline is inconsistent across different parts of the response, but appears to leave less than one year to create the draft version of the tool for pilot testing (slated to begin in winter-spring of 2012 according to section B1) and then only a few months to finalize the tool (full roll out starts in fall 2012, according to the timeline presented in section B1). This type of instrument takes several years to develop properly. Additionally, when tools like this are new, reaching acceptable levels of inter-rater reliability takes many months. Further, annual refresher training and norming is not sufficient for this type of high-inference, high-stakes observational tool. Instead inter-rater reliability should be tested in at least 10% of all observations. B3b: Hiring a marketing firm to develop a public awareness campaign around the TQRIS is a strong idea that will likely result in increased understanding and use of the ratings. The described Resource and Referral system and web-based systems should also increase public understanding. In sum, the plan for rating and monitoring programs within the TQRIS is partially implemented under the current QRS. The response regarding using a valid and reliable tool for program monitoring is of low quality because DC is unlikely to be able to create a valid tool and reliably train observers within the time frame of this grant. The outreach campaign to families is of higher quality, resulting in a response score on the low end of medium-quality.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	4
<p>The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--</p> <p>(a) Developing and implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve (e.g., through training, technical assistance, financial rewards or incentives, higher subsidy reimbursement rates, compensation);</p> <p>(b) Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs (e.g., providing full-day, full-year programs; transportation; meals; family support services); and</p> <p>(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing--</p> <p>(1) The number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and</p> <p>(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.</p>		
Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation		

Comments on (B)(4)

B4a: DC has a tiered reimbursement structure in place to encourage programs to attain higher levels on the scale. This is an important component of a plan to improve quality, but is not sufficient. In general, the activities proposed under B4a -- checklists, quick reference guides, open houses and workshops provided by higher quality programs, program improvement plans submitted only every three years -- are of fairly low intensity and are therefore unlikely to make large changes in program quality. No mention is made of more high intensity strategies, focused on the specific needs of individual programs, such as one-on-one coaching or mentoring. B4b: The response claims that DC already has a fully implemented plan for supporting working families with children with high needs to access high quality programs (B4b), so no additional plan is presented. However, the current system only addresses access to care and early education in general; it does not help working families access high-quality care, as required by the application. The sliding-scale is based entirely on family income; quality (or rating) is not a component. Likewise, it is commendable that DC is able to serve all 3- and 4-year olds in state-funded pre-k, but there is no current way to assess the quality of those programs and no incentives in place to help families enroll their children in the highest quality programs. Further, the public school system does not include infants/toddlers and no mention is made of addressing the needs of the special populations identified at the start of the proposal (children with disabilities, English language learners, homeless children, and children in foster care). Although the response indicates that programs of different hours and different services are available, no specific supports are named to help families who need them access those programs aside from a listing. B4c: Currently 27% of participating programs are at the highest tier on the QRS. In 2015, the target is for 45% of participating programs to be at the highest level. Additionally, table B4c2 indicates that all children in state-funded programs will be in programs that are in the top tiers of quality by 2015. These are ambitious goals, especially given that many of the programs are currently ineligible for QRS participation and therefore of unknown quality. It is unlikely that these goals will be attained because of the low intensity strategies proposed. In sum, DC currently has a partially implemented set of policies for improving quality, the most powerful of which is the tiered reimbursement structure for programs depending on QRS rating. The quality of response is at the low end of medium because there is no proposal to increase working families access to high quality programs and the plans

for continuous improvement are of low intensity.

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)
<p>B5a: The plan for validating the TRQIS is strong. It includes several critical components including use of an independent measure of quality and an analysis of what elements contribute most to final ratings. The timeline, however, is of concern. Section B1 indicates that the pilot test (which includes this implementation study) will take place in the winter-spring of 2012, and full implementation of the new standards for current QRS participants will begin in October 2012, allowing only a couple of months for analysis and revision. The newly created tool will likely require revision after this validation study is complete, and proposed timeline will not allow for that. B5b: The plan to evaluate the TQRIS once it has been implemented for several years makes sense and should provide valuable information to the state. In general, the plan is somewhat vague and therefore difficult to assess. A critical component that is not addressed is the need to assess children at multiple time points to decrease the likelihood that outcomes are not attributable to preexisting differences among children. The general research questions and timeline, however, appear appropriate. In sum, the plan for validating the effectiveness of the TQRIS is of medium/high quality.</p>

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.	20	12
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--</p> <p>(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;</p> <p>(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program</p>		

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)

Currently, DC has early learning and development standards that cover each age group and all essential domains of school readiness, as required in the application. However, they are not in line with the District's recent adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and make no special reference to issues of culture, language, or children with special needs. Furthermore, although all publicly funded programs are required to use the current standards, there does not seem to be a mechanism in place for training teachers or ensuring the standards are in use. The District presents an excellent plan to engage with the Early Childhood Education Assessment (ECEA) Consortium to rewrite the early learning standards to better align them with the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework and the CCSS. The ECEA appears to have goals that are well aligned with the purpose of this portion of the application and offers excellent supports in the form of a multi-state consortium. A DC Standards Committee, with representation for all types of early childhood programs, will be formed to work with ECEA. However, one weakness of the described plan is that no mention is made of the infant/toddlers standards. There is no discussion of their current alignment with other sets of standards and it is unclear if they will be rewritten as well. Special consideration is placed on revising the standards to inform instruction for English Language Learners and children with special needs by creating a Standards Entry Points for Differential Learning manual. Again, this appears to be a strong plan that is likely to result and much more useful document. Some mention is made of children in foster care as part of this plan, but the other high needs group identified in section A — namely homeless children — are not specifically addressed. As with section B, the professional development activities proposed do not seem strong enough to be likely to engender much change. Specific amounts of time are not mentioned, but the trainings for all instructional staff appear to be one-shot workshops, a professional development strategy that research has indicated is relatively unproductive. The proposed coaching model is stronger in that the coaches will meet quarterly for one year and be provided with some compensation, but this type of model will likely require more than one year to fully implement and require some form of monitoring and follow-up with the early learning programs that is more regular than the every-three-year QRIS monitoring. In sum, the Early Learning and Development Standards are currently partially implemented and the response is on the upper end of medium quality. The plan to revise the standards is of high quality, while the plan to promote understanding of and commitment to the standards is of lower quality.

	Available	Score
(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.	20	10

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)

C3a: The health and safety standards in the licensing regulations are comprehensive and form a solid basis for all licensed early learning and development programs. But, there is no progression of standards and the licensing standards do not appear to cover behavioral screening, as required in the application. The draft of the new Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) has only one standard for health and nutrition, again with no mentions of screenings or follow-up. The proposed workgroup makes sense given the various programs and standards in place. However, it is unclear that they will have authority to influence standards or practices and it is unclear that a progression of standards will exist at the end, as required in the application. C3b: As with professional development proposed elsewhere in DC's response, the intensity of the professional development proposed here may be too low to have an effect on practices in programs and classrooms. C3c: DC has a number of separate programs in place to promote healthy lifestyles, including Project LAUNCH and the local Wellness Policy. However, these efforts are not coordinated and no specific additional activities (aside from standards and educator training) are proposed. C3d: The goal of unifying and streamlining health data bases, as a means of identifying gaps, is worthwhile. It appears that the District has a number of isolated programs in place and this type of data coordination would likely lead to a decrease in duplication and an increase in coverage. Table C3d is very difficult to follow. The number of children screened at baseline (23,934) is 10,000 more children than the total number of children with high needs in the entire District presented in Section A (which is 14,000 at most, depending on duplication between tables A1-1 and A1-2). Further, this table indicates there is no means of tracking the percentage of children who are referred for services that receive follow-up, but no specific plan has been put forth to address this missing component. In sum, the District has a partially implemented plan for C3, primarily in the form of recently updated and strong licensing standards. The response is of medium quality because it addresses some gaps, but lacks reach and depth.

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	20	10

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)

C4a: The quality rating system (QRS) that is currently in place does include family partnership, with a progression of standards. However, no attention is paid to cultural or linguistic appropriateness and no mention is made of enhancing the capacity of families to support their children's education and development, as required in the application. The draft of the new quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) also includes a progression of standards for family engagement. The draft has little specific guidance around cultural or linguistic diversity, but does indicate, at the silver level, that interactions should be "respectful of each family's diversity and cultural and ethnic background." Likewise, a silver-level indicator mentions information about home activities to support learning and development. C4b: As with other professional development sections in this proposal, the plan for professional development around family engagement and support centers on "online, paper-based and face to face" training modules. There is no discussion of length, intensity, or follow-up. These types of one-shot training sessions are generally not sufficient to change practice. The other two activities – coaching and Centers for Excellence – are stronger. However, with minimal required training for the coaches and follow up through the QRIS monitoring (every 3 years) only, the intensity is again likely to be too low to engender change. Additionally, the application requires the state to provide data regarding proportion of early childhood educators who currently receive training on family engagement and support and a plan to derive such data. No data or plans were presented. C4c: The plans for creating a universal screening and referral process for all parents of newborns are strong in that they are based in current research and build on existing programs. However, the response lacks detail and does not indicate how many families are currently served and how many they would expect to serve under this model. The new integrated and coordinated service delivery system sounds exciting and innovative, potentially empowering families and streamlining services. However, it is unclear the extent to which this is truly a change in service delivery or primarily a change in internet interface. The activity title focuses on an on-line system. The description of the activity focuses mostly on coordination of services, with some mention of data coordination. In sum, the plan for engaging and supporting families is partially implemented with a progression of family engagement strategies in the current QRS and some professional development currently offered on this topic. The response is in the middle quality range, the primary weakness being the professional development plan and the primary strengths being the universal screening and coordinated service delivery systems.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

	Available	Score
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	20	16

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

D1a: The response indicates District of Columbia Professionals Receiving Opportunities and Support (DC PROS) provides detailed information on the knowledge and competencies early childhood educators should master. The response includes a plan to update and align the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework with other documents being created as part of RTT-ELC. The plan includes the correct people, timeline, and goals, so is likely to be successful. D1b: The Career Guide provides specific training, degree, and credit options to attain different levels of qualification. The planned professional development registry to track credits and clock hours is a strength. The idea of linking levels on the career guide to teacher performance on the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) is intriguing; however, it is unlikely to happen within the proposed timeline due to the unlikelihood that the TQRIS will be fully functioning by spring of 2014. D1c: The ideas of a Trainer Approval program and Certified Trainer Registry are steps in the right direction for improving professional development quality although it is difficult to tell from the response how quality will be assured. The idea of a Higher Education Consortium within RTT-ELC is a good one. That group should be well situated to improve articulation agreements and validate PD opportunities. In sum, DC has a substantially implemented Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The response is of high quality, with strengths in revising the Framework, creating a training and trainer registry, and creating a higher education consortium.

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

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

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

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

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

The plans for Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills and abilities are currently partially implemented. The alternative programs described appear strong, but no numbers are given to indicate how many teachers of children 0-5 participate and their descriptions imply that they primarily address the needs of school-based teachers. The Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (TEACH) program seems to be one of the few programs that is currently serving larger numbers of early childhood educators outside the school system. The response presented is on the high end of medium quality. Strengths include the Professional Development Registry, with public access to aggregated data; the specific plans to address the unique needs of for Community Based Organizations; and the planned needs assessment. The plan for professional development for English Language Learning (ELL) adults is innovative, but appears to address a very small population of teachers and is therefore unlikely to affect the quality of the overall system. Whereas the plan to conduct an economic/fiscal study of compensation might be worthwhile, it seems unlikely such a study would identify enough duplication in the current system that streamlining would provide for meaningful incentives.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	40	23

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 plan for a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) is only minimally implemented at this time, but the response is of high quality. There was a pilot study in 2009, but it did not collect any direct assessment of children and teachers were not trained on proper use of rubrics, making it of very limited utility. The aspects of the plan that are strong include: a well-articulated set of purposes for the assessment that specifically guard against some possible misuses of the data; a strong plan for training teachers on implementation; a realistic roll-out timeline with the pilot starting in 2014 and the full implementation not starting until 2016; and random fidelity checks by an outside evaluator. The financing plan is one of the weaker elements. The response is correct in identifying a wide array of costs associated with this ambitious plan, but details are lacking about where the funds might be available.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	165

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	5
<p>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--</p> <p>(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</p> <p>(b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Comments on (P)(2)</p> <p>The plan for including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the TQRIS is partially implemented and of medium quality. The District already fully meets the requirements of CPP2(a) whereby all programs that are not otherwise State regulated and care for two or more unrelated children must participate in licensing. CPP2(b) is not implemented and the proposal is of medium quality. Table B2c indicates that only 50% of school-based programs are expected to participate three years after implementation. As noted earlier, that is an ambitious goal given that they can not participate at all right now, but does not meet CPP2(b)'s goal of all licensed or state-regulated programs participating.</p>		

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	No
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Comments on (P)(3)</p> <p>DC does not currently have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment, meaning that E1 is minimally implemented and thereby does not meet CPP3a or CPP3b.</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting</p>	

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 District of Columbia's response meets the absolute priority by presenting a comprehensive and coherent set of plans to promote school readiness for children with high needs. Currently, DC has a number of initiatives in place, but readily admits that the various initiatives lack coordination and that program quality has not been a priority in the past. The response addresses many of the current shortcomings. Past successes include a school based prekindergarten program serving a high percentage of 3- and 4- year with high needs, strong licensing standards, and well developed career guide that is ready for implementation. Strengths of the plan include the well-conceived kindergarten entry assessment that has not yet begun implementation, solid plans for validating the TQRIS (although the timeline is problematic), and the plans to rework the early learning and development standards to better address the needs of English language learners and children with special needs.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # DC-5007

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/16/2011 - 4:40 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	18
<p>The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--</p> <p>(a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;</p> <p>(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;</p> <p>(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and</p> <p>(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

Washington D.C.'s commitment to ensuring that children "enter Kindergarten healthy and ready to learn" is demonstrated through a combination of the proposal's (a) narrative, which includes citations of relevant and compelling research to justify targeted areas of intervention (e.g., research documenting the link between poverty and negative social-emotional outcomes; research identifying challenges faced by young English Language Learners [ELLS]; etc.), and (b) tables summarizing historical data regarding financial investment and number of children with high needs who participate in early learning and development programs (ELDPs) as well as the current status of DC's programs and policies related to early learning and development (ELD) and status in key areas related to ELD. In terms of financial investment [(A)(1)(a)], the data presented indicate that funding for ELDPs has more than doubled over a five-year period from 2007 (\$170 million) to 2011 (\$250 million). Similarly, participation among children with high needs in all types of ELDPs has evidenced moderate (20% to 50% increase) to significant (more than 50% increase) growth [(A)(1)(b)]. Of particular note is that the number of children with high needs in state-funded Pre-K programs through DC Public Charter Schools (DCPCS) has more than doubled between 2007 and 2010 (2011 data are not yet available). These two sources of historical data convey a high level of past commitment on the part of the District. Regarding existing ELD legislation and policies [(A)(1)(c)], a total of 11 initiatives are described, including innovative practices which have been funded through other competitive grants (e.g., DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative). Collectively, this number and quality of policies provide further evidence of the District's high level of commitment to ELD. Finally, the current status of the District's progress and development in four key areas of ELD is documented in both tables and narrative as being high [(A)(1)(d)]. Specifically, all essential domains of school readiness are addressed in the District's early learning and development standards across all age groups; at least 3 of 4 elements of high-quality health promotion practices are required in seven programs/systems; family engagement strategies are required in seven programs/systems, and all ELD workforce credentials are aligned with the District's workforce knowledge and competency framework. In the other key areas in which the current status does not meet the requirements of RTT-ELC (e.g., Kindergarten Entry Assessment [KEA]), the narrative clearly explains why the status is below requirement and articulates an overall objective to address it which, importantly, is responsive to current research

(e.g., "DC's plans include the introduction of a developmentally-appropriate KEA in accordance with the National Resource Council's report on early childhood assessment."). Based on this analysis of the evidence presented and the supporting narrative, the proposal demonstrates the District's high past commitment to early learning and development.

	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 District's overall reform agenda is evaluated as being of high quality for the following reasons: First, the goals represent logical "next steps" toward strengthening early learning and development (with the ultimate goal of ensuring that all children "enter kindergarten healthy and prepared to learn"). Specifically, as detailed in Section (A)(1) of the proposal, the District already achieved its goal of increasing the number of Pre-K slots by 2,000 (i.e., full universal free Pre-K for all children) far ahead of schedule (i.e., within 2 years, instead of the anticipated 5 years). As such, the proposed shift in emphasis from increasing availability (quantity) to, now, focusing on quality enhancement makes good sense. It also reflects the District's commitment to moving beyond doing what it has already been successful in accomplishing. Second, the goals subsumed within each of the three overarching reform areas (termed "reform pillars" in the narrative) are ambitious in terms of the sheer number (i.e., 8-10 goals per area) and the targeted amount of movement or growth from baseline (current status) to the end of the funding period [(A)(2)(a)]. The goals are clearly operationalized with an objective, measurable outcome, e.g., a targeted quantity (percentage or number) by a specific date. For example, given the amount of development and piloting that will be required for the Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA), the goal of 50% implementation of the KEA in all public/charter school Kindergarten classrooms by 2015 is both ambitious (moving from 0% to 50%) and achievable (moving from 0% to 100% would not be feasible). Third, the proposal includes in Appendix A2.2 a detailed summary plan and timeline [(A)(2)(b)] whereby each goal is broken down into small-scale activities (linked to the goal) to be completed by a targeted agency or entity. Not only does this "task analysis" explain in detail how a range of activities will be achieved to address the reform agenda, but at any point in time it is possible to assess progress toward meeting the goals of the agenda. One limitation with the District's plan lies in the differentially higher focus placed on activities directed toward children ages 3-5 versus activities directed toward infants and toddlers. The narrative identifies a "new emphasis on programs for infants and toddlers," however, many activities within the overall plan (in particular, activities listed in Appendix A2.2) reflect a 3- to 5-year-old focus – e.g., Activity 2, revise standards to align with Head Start Child Outcomes Framework; Activity 4, develop standards entry points for a differentiated learning manual for pre-kindergarten children). Lastly, the proposal articulates a clear rationale for the District's choice of selected criteria in each Focused Investment Area and, importantly, explains why the excluded criteria were not targeted [(A)(2)(c)]. The strength of each rationale rests on the strategy embedded in the narrative's approach for justifying the focus. Specifically, for criterion (C)(1), the current status is that the District adopted early learning and development standards (ELDS) aligned with K-3 standards in 2008 and, subsequently, adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010; next, the narrative articulates the need based on this current status (e.g., again, for criterion (C)(1), there is a need to fully align ELDS with CCSS); and, finally, the narrative explains the District's general plan vis-à-vis the identified need. This logical three-step sequence of explaining the rationale contributes to a high-quality rating of the proposal's response to (A)(2)(c), in particular. Overall, the response to (A)(2) was rated as being of high quality, and, therefore, earned 90% of the total points.

	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 District's plan for participation and commitment among participating state agencies and other stakeholders is reflected the narrative and three appendices: (a) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for each of the six participating state agencies listed in Table (A)(3)-1: Each MOU was carefully reviewed and is consistent in including standard elements (terms/conditions, scope of targeted work, authorized approval). Similar to the high level of specificity in articulating goals and activities throughout the proposal, each MOU clearly lays out the participating agency's specific scope of work (including responsibilities of the agency, responsibilities of OSSE [lead agency], and responsibilities shared jointly by both). As the lead agency, OSSE will be carry primary responsibility for decision-making and conflict resolution. (b) Letters of Support from four of seven intermediary organizations listed in Table (A)(3)-2: The narrative indicates that the absence of a letter is not an indicator of lack of support. Without a brief explanation indicating why letters were not provided, however, the level and quality of support from these agencies cannot be directly determined. As an example, there is no letter of support from the Home Visiting Council (HVC). The HVC is a logical agency through which family engagement activities will be implemented; thus, lack of evidence of support from the council is a critical omission. (c) Letters of support from five stakeholders, which, according to the narrative, represent a broad foundation of support in the DC early learning and development community: There are three instances of inconsistent or limited information: (a) the narrative indicates that the RTT-ELC administrative team (housed within the OSSE, the lead agency) will include five professionals; however, roles and responsibilities for six individuals are delineated; (b) the narrative also indicates that the five other participating state agencies (DOH; DMH; DHS; CFSA; and DHCF) will each have staff assigned to support implementation of the proposed RTT-ELC projects/activities; however, the FTE varies across agencies from .3 FTE to 2 FTE without sufficient explanation or apparent differences in levels of roles and responsibilities; and (c) the narrative states that families of children with special needs, English Language Learners, and foster parents will be involved in proposed activities without indicating through which participating and/or intermediary agencies their involvement will occur. Despite high-quality MOUs and strong letters of support, these latter issues take away from the overall quality of the response to this criterion.

Available

Score

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)

Although the proposal demonstrates how existing ARRA and CCDF funds will be used to accomplish and implement four of the 10 proposed activities (State Advisory Council Summit; Standards Aligned; Enhance Standards Pilot; and, Professional Development Registry), the level of contribution from extant funding sources (\$110,000 across two years) is minimal (relative to the history of funding for ELD over the last five years). In terms of criterion (A)(4)(b), the budget figures are explained in detail relative to two organizational structures; first, by participating agency and proposed project/activity; and, second, by budget category (e.g., personnel, fringe benefits; travel, etc.) within agency and activity. Moreover, each activity (for which funding is requested) is subsumed under a specific goal and is designated as the responsibility of a particular agency (and reflected in the agency MOUs). As such, the budget clearly details the distribution of funds across participating agencies [(A)(4)(b)(3)]. Whereas the budget is well-described, there is insufficient explanation of the need (i.e., rationale) for all budget lines. The lack of justification means that two criteria are not met because there is no information to evaluate them – i.e., (A)(4)(b)(1), adequacy of budget to support activities, and (A)(4)(b)(2), costs are reasonable and necessary in relation to the objectives. For example, a look at the distribution of funds across the 10 proposed projects reveals that close to one-third of requested funding will be directed toward Project 9 (Streamlining Data Usage). In fact, this project will receive the greatest support through RTT-ELC funds. In contrast, Project 8 (Standards Revision and Alignment) will receive less than 1% of RTT-ELC funding. There is no explanation provided to justify the extreme differences in funding. The "Standards Revision and Alignment" project is, at face, a critical task for meeting the absolute priority of promoting school readiness which would likely warrant a high investment of time and resources. The proposed plan for sustainability after the grant period lacks clarity and specificity. In effect, the plan is to "embed" or institutionalize the activities of the RTT-ELC within extant agencies and organizations. Indeed, this is the ultimate goal of every funded initiative. A specific plan to ensure that such institutionalization of activities occurs, however, is missing. Importantly, there is no long-term financial plan (extending beyond the funding period) for maintaining or expanding the number and percentage of children with high needs being served by ELDPs in the District (again, beyond the achievement of goals targeted for the funding period).

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 District currently implements a Quality Rating System (QRS), called "Going for the Gold" (GFG). GFG is a reimbursement system which has been in effect since 2000. The current QRS has three levels/tiers (hence, it is considered a "tiered" system), with each level based on whether the program is accredited by a national accrediting body (e.g., "bronze" level indicates the program is not accredited, "silver" that the program is in the process of being accredited, and "gold" that the program is fully accredited). [Note: The appended QRS refers to a fourth tier, called "Gold Plus," which is not referenced in the narrative description of the rating system.] In addition to relying on external accrediting bodies for determining a program's rating or level, the current QRS is also flawed in that there is no mechanism for using the system to improve the quality of programming for children and families. In other words, the system is compliance-oriented and not oriented toward improvement vis-à-vis measurable standards. The narrative describes a plan for remedying these flaws – specifically to transform the current QRS into a Quality Improvement Rating System (QRIS), whereby a program's rating is no longer based solely on being accredited, but, importantly, by the extent to which the program implements "research-based practices" relative to each of the six required components (Early Learning and Development; Comprehensive Assessment; Educator Qualifications; Family Engagement; Health Promotion; and, Effective Data Practices). Table B1.2 provides evidence that the six required standards will be included in the new QRIS. In other words, although there is not a one-to-one match between the six required standards and the nine categories of standards within the new QRIS, Table B1.2 demonstrates the alignment between the two (thus, indicating that criterion (B)(1)(a) is met). [Note: Again, a look at the appended QRS reveals that the crosswalk presented in Table B1.2 may not accurately match the District's components with the required components, particularly with respect to "Comprehensive Assessment System." For example, Component 9 (Program Evaluation and quality Improvement) is mapped on to "Comprehensive Assessment System," and it does not include child-level measures.] The overall plan for transforming the QRS into a QRIS (which is already underway) includes some, but not all, essential elements of a high-quality plan. Specifically, two key goals (referred to as "strategies" in the narrative) and two key activities to achieve the goals are described. The timeline for accomplishing the activities, however, is not realistic (and, indeed, reflects some inconsistencies or possible errors). For example, Activity 1 (aligning draft standards with nationally recognized accreditation standards) is targeted for completion by Spring, 2012, with Activity 2 (piloting newly enhanced program standards) to occur Winter, 2012 – Spring, 2012. If piloting (with a subset of QRS participating programs) does not begin until Winter, 2012, then the target date to "begin full roll-out" (Fall, 2012) is not possible in that it overlaps with the pilot period. The plan includes no information about financial resources to support implementation, which is particularly problematic in that the key personnel responsible for each activity is an expert in early childhood education (Activity 1) and contractor to oversee the pilot process (Activity 2). Finally, the plan states that "attention will be given to ensure that the standards ... meet the needs of" children with high needs; however, there is no explanation about how this will be accomplished. Lastly, because all programs that participate in the QRIS must meet licensing standards, there is an automatic and implicit link to the current and proposed newly enhanced QRIS, thus addressing (B)(1)(c).

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

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

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

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

(b) Implementing effective policies and practices designed to help more families afford high-quality child care and maintain the supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs

(e.g., maintaining or increasing subsidy reimbursement rates, taking actions to ensure affordable co-payments, providing incentives to high-quality providers to participate in the subsidy program); and

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

According to the narrative, 60 percent of all programs that are currently eligible to participate in the existing QRS (i.e., all programs that receive child care subsidy payments) are participating (hence, the current implementation level is partial). This figure does not seem to jive with the baseline data presented in the Performance Measure for (B)(2)(c), which indicates 100% current participation. As such, the narrative reflects a goal of increasing participation from the current 60% to 100% among all ELDPs currently eligible for QRS, whereas the performance measure suggests that the goal is to maintain current participation levels. This is significant because if, in fact, maintaining (versus increasing) is the goal for ELDPs currently eligible for QRS, then the targeted goal of increasing participation among public and public charter schools with pre-K classrooms (that are not currently eligible because they do not receive child care subsidy payments) from 0% to 50% may not be considered as "ambitious" as if the District needed to increase participation in both program types. Regardless of this discrepancy, the District's plan to "fold in" programs that operate in public and public charter schools (in particular) will have a significant impact in that these program types have witnessed the most dramatic increase in participation over the last five years [based on data presented for (A)(1)]. The narrative does not provide specific evidence that school-based programs (located in public schools and in public charter schools) will have sufficient incentive to participate in the system. The District has articulated nearly all elements of a high-quality plan for (B)(2)(b) – implementing practices to help more families afford high-quality care. In that the QRIS incorporates three quality tiers, it is considered to be a tiered system (i.e., T-QRIS). Two issues are not adequately addressed in the plan: (a) there is no explanation of the reimbursement rates for programs that fall into the "Gold Plus" Tier, as identified in the QRIS; and (b) despite an impressive "track record" of families who are eligible for subsidized care receiving services, there is no explicit plan for maintaining the supply of high-quality child care in areas of high concentrations of children with high needs.

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

Inasmuch as the District has neither fully developed nor implemented its revised QRIS system, the tools for rating and monitoring ELPDs relative to the QRIS are also in the planning and development stages. Thus, the focus of the review for this criterion is on the District's plan for developing and implementing a rating and monitoring tool. Appendix B3.1 includes a draft of a monitoring system that reflects the work to date. This draft identifies three monitoring methods to evaluate programs relative to the QRIS standards – including document review, observation, and evidence sources provided by the ELPD. Other than delineating which monitoring method will be used to evaluate each standard, however, no specific tools are identified (e.g., systematic observation procedure). This represents a significant gap in the District's overall plan. In other words, although field-testing program-monitoring tools and preparing high-quality program monitors (with 85% inter-rater reliability) are important activities relative to criterion (B)(3)(a), neither can be accomplished without, first, having a well-conceived plan for developing the monitoring tools. In terms of criterion (B)(3)(b), again, there is no plan currently being implemented. The proposed plan includes only one activity (develop a public service campaign) to be implemented by an outside marketing firm, with a Spring 2015 target date. This plan lacks sufficient detail, particularly in terms of how un-specified marketing strategies will enable families (including families of children with high needs) to directly access and appropriately utilize information about program quality. In sum, based on the above concerns, the current implementation level is partial and the quality of the proposed plan is medium.

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

20

12

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

The District has a plan for addressing two selection criteria – (B)(4)(a) and (B)(4)(c). First, to help ELDPs to continuously improve and move into higher levels/tiers [(B)(4)(a)], the District proposes to provide support/technical assistance directed specifically toward improving two top areas of deficiency (“top two priorities for support”). Two priority areas will be targeted annually. Based on the narrative, it appears that common priority areas will be determined annually for all programs (based on QRIS Study Group) rather than individualized priority areas on a program-by-program basis – which could minimize the benefit of the technical assistance. In addition, the narrative indicates that the assistance will be delivered to programs at the bronze level, which will not allow programs at the other tiers to benefit. [It should be noted that the narrative does make reference to professional development (PD) hours required by educators in programs at all tiers/levels; however, these are PD requirements for educators and not technical assistance support for programs.] The second activity (i.e., award high-quality programs with the opportunity to serve as a Center for Excellence) is a good incentive for achieving excellence (only 5 programs); however, it does not represent a realistic incentive for the lowest level programs. The third activity relative to this criterion (i.e., collect program improvement plans every three years as part of the program review) is a good strategy to ensure ongoing improvement; however, one of the concerns articulated in the narrative about the current QRS is that “the onus for quality improvement rests squarely on the shoulders of the participating programs.” There is no evidence that the proposed activity, whereby programs must develop a plan to address their own deficiencies, circumvents the original concern. The District did not develop a plan to provide supports for families of children with high needs to access high-quality programs because, according to the narrative, this “criterion is fully developed.” The existing supports (as described in the narrative) include giving access to free Pre-K to all families, providing financial support, and having programs in place to strengthen parenting skills. Two key aspects of this criterion, however, are not addressed: (a) how parents will have access to programs at the highest tiers (i.e., “Gold”), and (b) the extent to which parents of children with high needs will be provided access to appropriate programs. Finally, the performance measures provided for the third criterion of establishing goals for increasing the number of programs in the top tiers of the QRIS and, in turn, increasing the number of children with high needs in those top-tier programs are not aligned. For example, the overall goal, as stated in the narrative, is for “at least five new ELDPs per year” to be rated at the Gold level (top tier); this is not reflected in the numbers presented in the performance measure table in which the number of top-tier programs is targeted to increase from 74 to 212 across a five-year period. The targeted percentages of children enrolled in top-tier programs are not consistent with either the narrative or table. According to the table for this performance measure, for example, 100% of children with high needs in state-funded preschool classrooms in community-based organizations and in Early Head Start/Head Start (about 4500 children total) are currently in top-tier programs. In that only 74 programs total are currently at the Gold level, this does not seem reasonable.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

The District's plan to address this criterion was evaluated relative to the key elements of a high-quality plan. The plan states a goal (understand strengths/weaknesses of the QRIS) and explains two key activities to be undertaken (i.e., two validation studies to be conducted by external evaluators), as well as a targeted completion date. Beyond these basic elements of a plan, however, some specific implementation features are not well-conceptualized. Understandably, many design features will be determined by the external evaluator; however, the District's plan did not specify a rationale for selecting validation measures (either classroom quality measures or child outcome measures) or how characteristics of different types of ELDPs or children with high needs will be addressed (both minimum elements of a high-quality plan). Although a cross-sectional descriptive study is appropriate, given the differentially high percentage of programs currently at the Bronze level (close to 60%), a longitudinal comparative study across years as these low-tier programs move to higher levels (in terms of outcomes on demographically similar child populations across years) would provide a direct test of the association between QRIS levels and outcomes.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	20	16

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 District currently has Early Learning and Development Standards (adopted in 2008); however, because they are not aligned with the Common Core State Standards, the current implementation level for (C)(1) is partial. Evidence provided on these ELDS indicates that they (a) are appropriate for both infants/toddlers and preschools (i.e., separate standards for each age group); and, (b) address all the essential domains of school readiness and incorporate additional knowledge domains (e.g., creative arts, social sciences) [(C)(1)(a)]. Although developmentally appropriate, certain standards "at face" do not appear to be appropriate for all children from culturally/linguistically backgrounds and/or with disabilities. For example, second language learning in young children often manifests itself in social withdrawal and limited peer-to-peer interaction, which is not reflected in the standards. Recently (2010), the District moved to adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) which, as the narrative indicates, has created the need to enter into work to align the ELDS with the CCSS (instead of the District's previous K-3 standards). The proposal describes a plan that includes all elements of a "high-quality" plan

to complete this critical alignment work [(C)(1)(b)]. Of particular note, specific content included in the CCSS (e.g., phonemic awareness and technology use) has already been identified as missing from the ELDS and, therefore, is targeted for revision/addition. Another particularly strong point of the District's agenda relates to the plan to incorporate benchmarks within each readiness domain, thus allowing teachers to identify children who are below benchmarks relative to key progress indicators and, in turn, to provide scaffolded, differentiated instruction to promote adequate progress. This "response-to-intervention" approach has a strong empirical foundation for effectiveness with school-age populations and, based on preliminary work with preschool-age populations, is likely to promote children's acquisition of essential school readiness competencies for kindergarten entry. A final strength of the proposed revisions is the establishment of "entry points" for students with disabilities into the standards. As noted in the narrative, all ELDPs in the District are required to be familiar with the ELDS. Activities have been planned to provide training to educators on the revised, newly-aligned ELDS through multiple teaching/learning mechanisms and to disseminate knowledge to parents [(C)(1)(d)]. The use of classroom coaches and a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach for training educators are two research-supported elements of the planned activities. The additional elements of a high-quality plan (e.g., timeline including milestones; designation of individuals/parties responsible for implementation of activities) are also present in this strategy to meet this criterion, resulting in the highest possible points being awarded (within a partial level of implementation).

	Available	Score
(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.	20	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 District has in place more than a dozen different policies, standards, and initiatives to address health, behavioral and development needs of all children – particularly children with high needs – to improve school readiness. Much of the narrative is focused on describing these current policies and programs. Thus, the District's plan relative to this criterion (C)(3) is, appropriately, to focus on "purposeful alignment" among the "mixed bag" of tools and resources which currently exist. Although several different initiatives are being implemented, the "purposeful alignment" among them is not. As such, the level of implementation is viewed to be partial. The plan to achieve the alignment goal was reviewed and determined to include the majority of components of a high-quality plan. In terms of notable strengths, the plan will build on current policies and leverage current resources. For example, ELDPs will be held accountable for achieving common standards of promoting children's physical, behavior, and social-emotional health while also being afforded the flexibility to meet the standards in different ways that best fit the individual program. Research supports this approach as facilitating "buy-in" on the part of educators. Similarly, the plan includes specific activities to develop training modules which can be taken via alternative approaches self-selected by educators (online, paper, via on-site training). The culmination of these proposed activities are linked to ambitious goals to be accomplished by 2015, including 89%+ children who are screened [(C)(3)(d)(1)], referred for services on the basis of the screenings [(C)(3)(d)(2)], and participating in ongoing "well-child" health care [(C)(3)(d)(3)]. There were a couple omissions. First, the proposal did not include data to document the number of early childhood educators who have been in the past and who will be targeted in the future to be trained in meeting health standards (C)(3)(b). Second, evidence that the program standards (which are linked to licensing and regulation) incorporate a progression of standards relative to health promotion knowledge and practices is not included (C)(3)(a). Overall, the response was evaluated to be of high quality, within a partial level of implementation.

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)

In the current and planned revision of the District's ELDP program standards, there is a progression of standards related to engagement of families of children in the programs that reflect increasing levels of two-way communication, family involvement activities at home and school, family training opportunities, and outreach to family members. As such, the proposal provides sufficient evidence of having established the progression delineated in (C)(4)(a). The focus of the District's plan, therefore, in ensuring that the family engagement standards which are already codified and included in the QRIS and ELDS are, in fact, implemented across all program types. To this end, the District has proposed four specific activities (with timelines, milestones, and responsible parties delineated) to provide the necessary professional development (PD) related to family engagement standards and practices (C)(4)(b). The content and approach of proposed PD activities are consistent with what is supported in the research as being effective, specifically: (a) working collaboratively with universities to develop training content and methods; (b) including parents themselves in the development of training content; (c) requiring that one representative from each licensed ELDP participate in training and then return to his/her respective program to function as a "coach" (thus, embracing a "teacher-teaching-teachers" model); and (d) creating within-District model demonstration sites (Centers for Excellence) for other programs to witness first-hand successful family engagement practices. Although actual numbers of early childhood educators who will be trained and supported are not provided, given the high quality of the plan, there will likely be an increase in the number of trained early childhood professionals. Finally, the plan includes proposed activities to leverage and consolidate family engagement funding streams (currently amounting to over \$6 million) [(C)(4)(c)]. In that the majority of this funding is directed toward programs that provide services to families of children with high needs, the plan to streamline funding and consolidate services should continue to address their needs, which is a requirement for a high-quality plan.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

	Available	Score
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	20	18

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)

Six different activities have been planned to address the criterion of developing a workforce knowledge and competency framework and progression of credentials [(D)(1)]. The District is currently fully implementing a workforce knowledge and competency framework called "DC PROS." The DC PROS document was included as an appendix and reviewed; it was found to address all elements outlined in the definition of this framework, with one exception (which, appropriately, is the target of a proposed activity). Specifically, the framework is evidence-based (aligned with blueprint documents prepared by national organizations) and includes knowledge of all domains delineated in the definition (as shown by the explication of core knowledge areas in the framework itself and in the summary Table D1.2 included in the narrative). According to the definition in the Notice Inviting Applications (NIA), the framework must incorporate knowledge and application of the state's early learning and development standards. In that revision of the standards is one of the goals to be achieved through the RTT-ELC proposal, it makes sense that the current DC PROS cannot include this element until the revision of standards has been accomplished. Hence, the first proposed activity (revise core knowledge areas of DC PROS to align with the revised ELDS and QRIS standards) is a necessary and critical starting point for work relative to this criterion. In terms of (D)(1)(b), the DC PROS is accompanied by a "Career Guide" that lays out the progression of credentials and degrees aligned with DC PROS. This guide will also require revision to ensure alignment with the revised ELDS and QRIS – and, in fact, an activity is planned to accomplish just that. An Early Intervention credential is targeted that will contribute to creating a workforce specifically equipped to address the needs of children with high needs. Finally, the plan includes activities to communicate with all entities that provide professional development (not just universities and higher education institutions) such that training is aligned with the revised framework. A particularly strong feature of the activities related to the third component is that the party responsible for oversight and implementation (OSSE) must approve all training opportunities and courses as being aligned with and, thus, contributing to credentialing (D)(1)(c).

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	15
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to improve the effectiveness and retention of Early Childhood Educators who work with Children with High Needs, with the goal of improving child outcomes by--</p> <p>(a) Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities that are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;</p> <p>(b) Implementing policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) that promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that is aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and that are designed to increase retention;</p> <p>(c) Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention, and</p> <p>(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--</p> <p>(1) Increasing the number of postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and the number of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(2) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)
<p>The District's overall plan for addressing (D)(2) is evidence-based (i.e., the narrative cites published research to support some of the more innovative features of activities), comprehensive (i.e., a total of seven different, but well-integrated activities are planned), and intentionally responsive to the needs of a linguistically and socioeconomically diverse early childhood workforce (i.e., there is a concerted effort to develop and make available to early childhood educators alternative, non-traditional venues for participating in professional development). Moreover, the narrative justifies the focus of the planned activities based on extant data (e.g., the results of a 2008 study documenting the limited number of teachers who do not hold bachelor's degrees underscores the need for Activity 7 [conduct needs assessment]). The plan is considered to be of medium-to-high quality (which is being implemented), based on inclusion of key elements as detailed in the definition of a high-quality plan. The key activity for (D)(2)(b), specifically to implement policies/incentives that promote professional improvement and career advancement, is to implement a pay-incentive program to encourage ECEs to progress in their credentials. The milestone associated with this activity, however, is only to develop a draft of such a pay-incentive program (by Summer, 2012), without explicit milestones related to implementation. The goals reflected in the performance measures for increasing the number of ECEs (a) receiving credentials or training necessary for credentialing, and (b) progressing to higher levels of credentialing are modest (increase by 5%, 10%, and 20% across three years following baseline), but achievable. It should be noted, however, that without current baseline data, it is difficult to gauge the reasonableness of the targeted goals for moving programs into higher credentialing levels.</p>

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children’s learning and development at kindergarten entry.	40	24

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 District currently has no data-gathering mechanism to understand the status of children’s learning and development at Kindergarten entry. Indeed, as noted in the narrative, the earliest point at which district-wide student competency data are collected is Grade 3 (at which point, close to 40% of students are below academic proficiency levels). Thus, the District has a compelling justification for targeting (E)(1). At the same time, however, the current level of implementation is none or minimal. The proposal articulates a sequential, comprehensive plan that includes a targeted, ambitious goal of full implementation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) in all public/charter school Kindergarten classrooms by 2016-2017 [key goal]. Nine key activities are described to allow the District to achieve the goal. Much of the extent to which the proposed plan will achieve (E)(1)(a) [alignment with ELDS and covering all essential domains of school readiness] and (E)(1)(b) [being valid, reliable, and appropriate for diverse populations of children, including children with high needs] relies heavily on the work of an RTT-ELC KEA Design Team. The work of the team is described in general terms, but, given the magnitude of work, more short-term milestones to monitor the progress of the team’s work are needed. The proposed representation on the KEA Design Team will include representation from parents and individuals with expertise relative to students with disabilities and other students with high needs, thus achieving one of the critical elements of a high-quality plan. As allowed in the NIA, the District has proposed a realistic implementation phase-in approach (i.e., 50% pilot implementation, then 50% actual implementation, then 100% implementation). The District has proposed planned activities that go well beyond the criteria specified in the NIA. For example, one key activity associated with implementation is a plan for developing and providing training related to administration of the KEA (including establishing inter-rater reliability). Another activity is the development of a continuous improvement protocol for revising the KEA tool and administration whereby random reliability checks will occur annually to monitor fidelity of implementation. The SECDCC will carry primary responsibility for developing the financing plan for each phase of KEA development and implementation, which is appropriate. A particular strength of this and other activities targeting (E)(1)(e) is the “ambitious, but achievable” goal of KEA being fully funded with other non-RTT sources beyond the grant funding period. In sum, the proposal has presented a high-quality plan that is being minimally implemented; therefore, 60% of the total points (24 out of 40) were awarded.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	197

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	7
<p>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--</p> <p>(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</p> <p>(b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate.</p>		
Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation		
Comments on (P)(2)		
<p>The District currently has in place a licensing and inspection system that applies to all programs that provide care for two or more unrelated children in a provider setting (unless programs are exempt). Moreover, the proposed T-QRIS system will be modified to involve all early learning and development programs, including programs that operate in public and public charter schools (which, previously, were excluded from participation because they do not receive subsidies). At this time, about 60% of all licensed or state-regulated programs participate. The District proposes to include 80% of currently eligible programs by 2015 and 50% of public/charter school programs by 2015, thus falling short of including all state-regulated programs.</p>		

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	No
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
Comments on (P)(3)		
<p>The state did not meet this priority through either (a) or (b). First, the state is not already implementing a Kindergarten Early Assessment for criterion (a). Second, the state did not earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for criterion (b), i.e., 24 out of 40 points were awarded. Therefore, this competitive priority is not met.</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas</p>	

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 District's application is constructed around three reform pillars, which collectively, are aimed at promoting school readiness for children with high needs. The proposal delineates key goals and a sequence of key activities across all targeted criteria (with responsible parties and appropriate funding) that are aimed at improving the early childhood education workforce and, in turn, child outcomes. Overall, the District's proposal has met this absolute priority.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # DC-5007

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/16/2011 - 10:57 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

A1a The proposal indicates that Funding for Early Learning and Development Programs (ELDP) comes from child care subsidy funds, Head Start, and local dollars disbursed to schools as part of the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula. Table A1-4 identifies the funding allocations over the last 5 years, amounting to over \$250 million in FY 2011 for early learning programs. In every area, with the exception of Total State contributions to Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) and up and down in Head Start, the District's financial investment has been increasing. A1b The Data from DC indicates that since 2000, the number of children in DC under age 5 has increased by 11%, with 31.2% of the District's children ages birth to five are from low-income families. Table A 1-5 shows that the number of children in the 7 types of early learning programs. State-funded preschool - CBOs, State-funded preschool - District of Columbia Public (DCPS), State-funded preschool - District of Columbia Public CS, Early Head Start and Head Start, Programs and services funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619, Programs funded under Title I of ESEA, and Programs receiving CCDF funds for which data is available, has been increasing. There is little information on the populations of children identified in A1-2. A1c Table A.1.1 clearly identifies the policy/process and description of DC's commitment to ELD reflected in its legislation, policies and practices. Eight components are identified which includes QRIS "Going for the Gold" quality; Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Amendment Act of 2008 (Pre-K Act) D.C. Official Code §271.01 et seq pre-K enhancement, Reform of IDEA Part CDC Early Intervention Program (children with developmental delays and disabilities, birth through 2 (2008); Reform of IDEA Part B 619- DCPS Early Stages Diagnostic Center (serves children with disabilities ages 3-5) (2009); Child Care Regulations /Licensure Standards 29 D.C. Mun. Regs. § 300 et seq; DCPS Head Start School-Wide Model (2010); DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative (DCPNI) (Recipient of 2010); Strong Start; Early Stages; Project Launch; and TEACH DC. A1d Table A1-6 indicates that DC standards address all of the essential domains for school readiness for infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Table A1-7 identifies the assessment systems in each of the types of systems. Some of the systems do not have screening measures or formative assessments. Due to the strong charter school law within DC, which guarantees the autonomy of public charter schools to choose their own curriculum and teaching methods, the District has not to date implemented a statewide comprehensive assessment system as prescriptive as one defined through RTT. DC has decided to

focus efforts on the QRIS to ensure that ELDPs are using assessments as part of their quality improvement processes, and will collaborate and communicate with DCPCS to encourage their involvement.' Table A1-8 identifies the elements of health promotion practices. The application indicates that through various funding components there will be increased developmental screenings, as well as mental health consultants and the use of evidence based interventions. Table A1-9 identifies the family engagement strategies in place within the types of program systems. The table identifies that there is a wide variety of approaches used, and in some cases this area has not been addressed. Table A1-10 identifies the current credentials and Table A1-11 identifies the institutions and professional development providers. The application has stated that DC 'has developed a draft Career Guide and PD Registry'. Table A1-12 identifies the status of KEA. The application indicates that DC status to date 'does not meet the requirements of RTT-ELC, lays important groundwork for the development of a KEA in the District.' Table A1-13 identifies the SLED data systems. The Application has indicated 'has determined that it is more appropriate and effective to continue with the existing work of SLED rather than implement additional initiatives that would likely result in a duplication of services.' Additionally, the applicant indicates that 'Throughout the proposal, activities are suggested that seek to merge and streamline data in order to better service children and their families.' The District of Columbia has Early Learning and Development Standards in all of the age groups and the Essential Domains of School Readiness. The District of Columbia has indicated from the information presented in this section that they have been making steady progress in their commitment to quality early learning and development. There are a number of issues that have not been addressed with regards to the system building blocks. The lack of information on the specified groups of children with high needs is a concern since this is what the grant focuses on.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	16

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 application indicates that the goal is 'To ensure that all District children enter Kindergarten healthy and prepared to learn.' A) The application has identified fitting goals to achieve their overall goal and identify 3 reform pillars. They are Mapping & Alignment, Professional Development and Quality Assurance. Appendix A2.2, Implementation Table presents information on all activities. B) The Mapping and alignment component has identified, '1. Analysis of the systems and agencies, 2. Fiscal analysis and consolidation of funding streams, 3. Aligning standards for Standards for DC's QRIS, the early learning & development standards, health and wellness standards, family engagement standards & workforce knowledge and competency standards must be aligned in order for all moving parts to work in concert to support the vision and 4. Technology will be utilized to enhance the ability of various agencies to work together to provide support to children and their families, ensuring that those who need resources the most receive them in a timely and efficient fashion. Through centralized intake and unified case management, a health data sharing mechanism, universal screening and referral for home visitation, DC will better serve children with high needs.' Professional Development - This pillar will make use of existing components, such as Centers of Excellence and Family Provider Peer Network to include professional development as well as new additions from this grant. Quality Assurance - The proposal indicates that aligning systems and increasing professional development will lead to improvement. The QRIS will be expanded allowing for cross settings/sectors analysis. The applicant plans on implementing KEA which they indicate will enable them to focus on quality of all programming, rather than the historical approach of increasing capacity. There is lack of information on how the District of Columbia will address the unique needs of the populations of Children with High Needs that they have identified in the proposal. There is a lack of information on addressing the unique needs for infants/toddlers. C) The Application has identified the focused investment areas in each of the 3 areas, with clear rationales. The criteria allow the District to raise the three reform pillars of mapping and alignment, professional development and quality assurance in order to lift up the overarching vision of DC's children arriving at Kindergarten healthy and ready to learn. The Proposal has also indicated its rationale in not responding to E2, 'Office of the State Department of Education (OSSE) is already working diligently on development of the Statewide Longitudinal Education Data (SLED) warehouse, which will house data from the KEA. Work on the SLED is being funded through other sources presently, and the District intends to apply for the next round of longitudinal data system funding to develop these efforts further.' The applicant has articulated an early learning and development agenda, which they indicate would result in positive changes in school readiness for many Children.

	Available	Score
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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)

3Aa1 The organizational structure makes use of existing governmental structures. Additional staff are identified for this grant but there is a discrepancy in FTE's between Table A3-1 and the narrative. FTE's designated from other agencies specifically for this grant. The ORG chart in the appendix depicts the DC structure but does not include placement of the RTT-ELC structure within it. 3Aa2 Table A3-1 identifies governance related roles and responsibilities. State Inter-agency Coordinating Council for Part C of IDEA is planned for start up in January 2012. 3Aa3 The State Early Childhood Development Coordinating Council (SECDDCC), as the oversight and advisory group to this project will be responsible for resolving any disputes that arise among participating state agencies and/or other stakeholders. Decision making dispute resolution is identified but not the process. 3Aa4 The application identifies the involvement of stakeholders but there is no indication of recruitment or actions (when and how is missing) of groups such as parents, advocacy groups etc. 3Ab1 and 3Ab2 and 3Ab3 MOU's and scope of work included for most agencies with signature. MOU does not indicate leveraging of funds. There is incomplete information in some aspects of the organization chart and the MOU's included in the application, for example there is no MOU from Department of Disability Services. 3Ac1 Nine letters of support are included, but the home visiting council did not provide a letter. 3Ac2 Table a3-2 Identifies intermediary organizations. Seven are listed, but only four have provided letters of support. The letters are not robust, letters from the group identified as family and community organizations are few. Scoring used partially implemented framework, taking into consideration the items/information not submitted.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	9

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)

A4a The application has identified two funding sources, ARRA funds, fiscal year 2012 and CCDF, fiscal year 2013 for a total of \$110, 000 over the 4 year life of this project. No other funding sources were identified. A4b1 and A4b2 The amount of money allocated for Project management appears to be high particularly when comparing to the other budgeted components. For example, mapping and alignment which the applicant has indicated is a key structure does not appear to be sufficiently funded. In many of them, zero funding is identified for some time periods, for example standards revision and alignment, only two years for a system which requires evaluation of current information and then implementation and reevaluation. A4b3 A number of DC public agencies are identified as participating with funding identified. There is no indication that participation and support of parents/advocates/community members are funded. A4c The application indicates that the grant will provide infrastructure that has the systems in place to support the new ELD culture with the policies and procedures. The intent of the District is to embed the activities of the project into the foundation of ELD-serving agencies and organizations so that the impact will continue beyond the award period. The plans include utilizing the Children's Budget to ensure utilizing all Federal, State and local support and leveraging financial resources in the most fiscally responsible manner. This plan does not appear to be in alignment with the earlier indicates of identifying only 2 funding streams. In addition earlier in the application it was indicated that 'the current DC Children's Budget is not sufficient, nor is it intended to inform a comprehensive and coordinated early learning and development system, the District will engage in a strategic analysis of the current financial landscape of birth to five services, programs, and infrastructure across Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), DC Public Charter School (DCPCS), Department of Human Services(DHS), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Mental Health,(DMH) and Department of Health Care Finance (DCFS) and will develop a comprehensive Early Learning and Development System Budget that clearly reports all investments in one location.' The applicant appears to be in the process of identifying funding and budget issues, which is a concern. The information that DC plans for cost savings through inter-agency collaboration is questionable. Particularly since there is little information on developing stronger inter-agency collaboration, a one conference in 2013 will use one time ARRA funding for this. The sustainability information presented is weak.

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)

B1a Each of the 5 subcategories have been identified in the proposal and the Quality Rating System (QRS), the current tiered rating system is active. The QRIS is DC's tiered quality rating and improvement system that is in the development phase. The draft standards are based on Head Start Program Performance Standards, the Office of Child Care Draft Benchmarks for Quality Improvement and the District's vision for program quality. The draft standards are only aligned with the NAEYC accreditation standards, Appendix B1.4. The QRIS has included all of grant program standard categories. QRIS is developed for both Centers and Home based programs. The proposal indicates that Standards are not used with complete fidelity. This is an area in which emphasis needs to be placed. B1a2, 3, Table B1 identifies the current program standards status. The comprehensive assessment system is indicated. However when looking at Table A1-7 there is a paucity of assessments identified in the different learning programs. There is little in the proposal identifying developmental screening, some is found in Gold plus standards, however Gold Plus appears inconsistently throughout the proposal. Capacity building is identified, but the assessment component will require a great amount of work. There are very few comments on the elements of assessment system with the exception of environmental rating. Early Educator qualifications, like much of the standards is a work in progress. B1a4 Family Engagement is mentioned throughout the proposal, but it is not clear what this means nor are strategies or approaches identified. There are no specific mentions of family engagement with the identified special population, ie children in foster placement and children who are homeless. B1a5 Health promotion practices, there appears to be a paucity of approaches. B1a6 The effective data practices category 9 in the proposal applies only to environmental ratings. B1b Work has been done on developing measurable quality levels and they reflect next steps. Two strategies have been developed for this grant. 1) Develop/refine research-based QRIS standards. 2) Pilot test draft revised QRIS standards. The crosswalk work is clearly in process. The B1c The QRIS is linked to DC licensing system. Scoring used partially implemented framework, taking into consideration the items/information with insufficient information.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

B2a 60 percent of all programs that are currently eligible to participate in the existing QRS are participating. This appears to be due to the requirement that all programs receiving child care subsidy payments participate and their quality level dictates the reimbursement rate they receive. A Goal by 2015, 50% of public and public charter schools with Pre-K classrooms in the District will participate in the QRIST B2c identifies the programs within each of the identified categories. It indicates that #3 is not applicable to DC funding and #4 Title I of the ESEA information is found in other categories. B2b The proposal has indicated what current actions and systems they have in place, information on payment criteria. There is no current waiting list. The High Quality plan proposed includes the following strategies, C. Refine QRIS to allow involvement from all types of ELDPs, regardless of funding stream. This strategy includes convening a District wide QRIS study group that will meet monthly with representatives from a variety of organizations. There is no indication of specifically identifying parents/advocates or representatives from homeless, foster care, disabilities/developmental delays or English learners, those special populations identified in Table A1-2. There is no indication how the participants will be compensated for their time. The unique needs are not clearly considered and addressed nor are strategies proposed. The issue of high quality care is not clearly linked to promoting participation by all of the programs, given the issue of voluntary participation. B2c Table B2c identifies the types of early learning programs and the target numbers for each of the applicable subsets. It is not clear why the target numbers of State funded preschools in both public and charter are aiming for only a 50% involvement by the end of the grant. It is not clear how are they planning on engaging the other programs in DC who are not yet involved, for example the school based programs and charter schools. Scoring used partially implemented medium quality framework, taking into consideration the items/information with insufficient information.

	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)

B3a The applicant has indicated that the QRS is in practice now and that monitoring is done in an efficient way. The proposal indicates that 3 strategies will be used to address this section, 'E: Develop program monitoring tools and mechanisms for inter-rater, F: Develop a schedule for monitoring and ongoing technical assistance'. There is currently no valid or reliable tool to monitor programs. The timeline developed for developing, establishing reliability and training high quality program monitors is not sufficient for the quality work that is desired. For example, developing and testing the tool has a 9 month time frame, with a pilot test at the end, this is insufficient to make adjustments. The proposal calls for monitoring on a three year cycle, which for initial implementation does not allow for learning curve support. The data presented on the current programs and rating show that in both center and family day care bronze, the lowest rating is the greatest percentage. It is not clear how the new rating scale will adequately address the need to support programs to achieve the highest level - Gold. B3b The strategy for parents is G: Improve distribution of information to parents and public. The marketing plan budget is not sufficient. It is not clear why the public service campaign is scheduled for 2015 the last year of the grant. The proposal indicates that the 'OSSE has an Early Childhood Education Information Management System (EIMS) that currently captures licensing data, provider demographic info, & reports from various rating monitors. The next phase is to add the data elements for subsidy program, capacity, enrollment, and tier quality marker.' No information on usage was provided. Scoring used partially implemented framework, taking into consideration the items/information with insufficient information.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)
<p>B4a The proposal identifies that there is support for Licensing Technical Assistance and Professional Development for Persons with Limited-English Proficiency Grant, but numbers and need are not identified. The proposal targets 1 of the groups of high need identified in Table A1-2. There is no indication of specific supports for the other high need groups. The development of the PD registry is a supportive tool. Family day care homes are often run by one person. It is not clear how the policies and practices will specifically support them. B4b The proposal indicates that parents are supported by no wait lists, ELDPs that support nontraditional hours as well as part-day, full-day and before- and after-care programs, but there is no indication about the numbers of nontraditional care. This section had a paucity of information on family support information and specifically for families who are homeless or with children with special needs. B4c1 and Strategy H: Implement supportive quality improvement processes within Going for the Gold, 'Activity 10 implement targeted technical assistance', identifies the area of personal care as a common deficiency. The technical assistance identified for support relies primarily on materials and not on relationship building or ongoing supportive monitoring. The information presented in Tables B4c1 and B4c2 identifies numbers of programs and numbers and percentages of children. Identifying target numbers is difficult as there is no baseline information for some of the programs, for example, state funded schools and early head start. B4c2 Table B4c2 identifies 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. The percentages identified as goals in the state funded preschool programs begin with year 3 and go from 20% to 40% to 100%. How percentages can be identified without a baseline is a concern. These percentages are very ambitious in the short time frame and question how achievable. Scoring used partially implemented framework, taking into consideration the items/information with insufficient information.</p>

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)
<p>B5a The proposal indicates that there will be a 'a rigorous third-party evaluation, understand the strengths & weaknesses of the QRIS by 2015'. Strategy J addresses a, as it says, 'Examine the extent to which tiers in the QRIS accurately reflect differential levels of program quality.' Evaluator will be selected in 2012, evaluation will be from winter 2012 - winter 2013. It does not appear that there will be any evaluation from 2013-2014. This is not a robust approach to validating an effectiveness system, the timeline is inefficient. B5b The proposal identifies 'Strategy K: Assess the extent to which tiers are related to children's learning, development and school readiness'. An external outcome evaluation is planned for Summer 2014 - Winter 2015. The proposal indicates that a second descriptive study is planned. While the evaluation frameworks are presented, the research designs and measures of progress are not indicated. Instruments identified for child outcomes are the Peabody Picture</p>

Vocabulary Test and Expressive Vocabulary Test and on teacher-rated social behavior measures. No other measures are identified. This does not fit with the essential domains of school readiness in the grant application. No mention of the unique needs of the identified populations of Children with High Needs is made, which is required for a robust assessment. Scoring used partially implemented framework, taking into consideration the items with insufficient information.

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.	20	14
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--</p> <p>(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;</p> <p>(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and</p> <p>(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)
<p>C1a The proposal indicates that the work to date on ELDS addresses all domains of development and learning and crosswalks have been done with NAEYC, Head Start and other content experts. Included are that standards are developmentally, linguistically and culturally appropriate. The Standards Committee will continue to work with the ECEA to build out the ELDS to include to work on standards specifically addressing ELLS and children with special needs. Children in the foster care system have been explicitly identified, but how is not clear. However, children who are homeless have not been identified. The application references that these standards also are developmentally, linguistically and culturally appropriate, but not how this will be approached. C1b 'Strategy A. Draft, adopt and implement ELDS standards that align with Common Core State Standards and Head Start Child Outcomes Framework.' Creative Curriculum, is identified for us as this early learning curriculum was selected due to its alignment with the DC ELDS as well as the CCSS in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math for Kindergarten. pg 126 C1c The proposal identifies ELDS are aligned with Program standards, curricula and activities and professional development activities. 'Activity 6: Train providers in the effective implementation and use of new standards and support materials' indicates how work will be done to map the 'new standards against program standards and the state Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework' and professional development activities. C1d Strategy C. Promote understanding and implementation of revised standards and Standards Entry Points addresses this component. The approach incorporates the Universal Design for Learning multi-prong approach. Plans include varied trainings, consortium meetings, utilizing a coaching model. The goal is to create an early education workforce knowledgeable about the outcomes which their students are expected to reach and able to design instruction that meets the developmental needs of all students so that they can be working toward meeting those outcomes and fostering Kindergarten-readiness. Scoring used partially implemented framework, taking into consideration the items/information with insufficient information.</p>

	Available	Score
(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.	20	13

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)

C3a The proposal identifies aligning all health standards by 2013, and identifies that Health and safety standards are in the DC QRIS for early learning and development programs (Category 6: Nutrition and Wellness). Local Wellness Policy for DCPS, currently under revision. C3b by 2015 train 85% of staff on health standards and best practices. DC licensing standards require that a minimum of 18 hours of Continuing Education/Professional Development training are completed for all instructional staff each year for the bronze level, the Gold requires 30 hours. 98 of the 252 trainings specifically addressed core knowledge areas related to health and wellness, DC has a Project Launch grant to improve the systems that serve young children and address their physical, emotional, social, cognitive and behavioral growth. Information with regards to the work done to inform children's development does not appear in this grant proposal. C3c State Board of Education (SBOE) adopted comprehensive physical fitness standards for children from Pre-K through 12th grade. District has also enacted comprehensive health education standards for PreK-12 children in 2008. C3d1 The proposal identifies the goal of increasing the percent of children screened before Kindergarten by 2015. The District has increased the number of children served under IDEA Part C by 30%. Much of this increase is due to the establishment of inter-agency partnerships between DHCF, CFSA, Medicaid Managed Care Organizations (MCO), and Early Head Start through memorandums of agreement (MOAs). This component has an associated database for tracking. There is another database used by other organizations for tracking Ages and Stages Questionnaire. Use of IDEA Part B requirements has increased. In 2009 75% of evaluations were completed in the appropriate time frame. The Healthy Futures Program has increased the number of children screened for social emotional concerns. Other initiatives have been identified in the proposal. The children receiving services through IDEA and other funding streams have been identified, but children who are homeless and in foster care have not been explicitly identified. While there appears to have been work done from other agencies and funding streams to support screening and child well being services, the data presented in this proposal does not reflect the programming. This is a concern with regards to DC's use of services. C3d2 Table C3D identifies the number of children screened, the fragmentation of systems that lack the ability to communicate and track follow-up. The Goal 'Create a data sharing mechanism between agencies' is identified. The Department of Health will take the lead on this activity, in partnership with CFSA and DHCF. C3d3 Development of the data sharing mechanism along with trainings will enable the District to obtain needed information to accurately gauge what is needed to promote the health and wellness of all District children. With a history of a wealth of projects and grants, and the paucity of letters of support, it is questionable why their data lacking in some of this information. Scoring used partially implemented framework, taking into consideration the items/information with insufficient information.

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	20	14

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)

C4a The applicant has identified that family engagement is an important component to providing quality care to young children. The District already has legislation and a number of programs and grants providing a range of interventions including home visiting and a fatherhood initiative. Table C4.1 shows that standards are in place, but that continuous quality improvement will continue to occur. Strategy H, 'Expand and coordinate services offered directly to families,' addresses this component. There was no explicit indication regarding culturally and linguistically appropriate standards in the proposal. There has not been clear indication of the linguistic needs of young children and their families in the DC. Neither has there been any specific identification of the unique needs of families involved in the foster care systems and who are homeless. C4b The proposal indicates that 'family engagement is already infused in the QRIS program standards and the ELDS, but more concentrated work must be done to ensure that providers are implementing the standards across all types of programs in the District.' Three activities have been identified to address the goal of 'Provide professional development for ELDPs on best practices for family engagement.' The key activities are to map and crosswalk all of the existing standards and program needs, then to develop paper and pencil, face to face and online trainings. The third activity is to 'Train one coach from each licensed provider in family engagement strategies.' It is not clear how ongoing support will be provided to maintain continuous quality assurance and fidelity. A final strategy, 'Expand the Centers for Excellence and Family Provider Peer Network,' is planned. These model sites will be for family engagement-related professional development. A variety of strategies are identified. However this approach works, if the providers will be compensated for their use of the Centers and Network, how this fits in with the creating a Great workforce. C4c The proposal includes Activity 16 'Develop an online system for managing and tracking services across agencies and providers.' Named the Circle of Support, it places families in the center of an integrated 4 levels of support. It proposes a 'systematic redesign of how District agencies interact with and serve families.' How will the services proposed for families align with the intent of this grant? 'To support the data and information sharing necessary to creating coordinated eligibility and service delivery systems, the District passed the Data-Sharing and Information Coordination Amendment Act of 2010.' Activity 16 in the proposal identified to align programs and projects is 'Consolidate home visitation funding streams and maximize federal revenue opportunities to better maximize dollars spent on home visiting.' Scoring used partially implemented framework, taking into consideration the items/information with insufficient information.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

	Available	Score
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	20	16
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--</p> <p>(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;</p> <p>(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p>		
<p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (D)(1)		

D1a The District has developed a framework and Strategy A. Design an updated, clear, publicly available Framework of Early Childhood Workforce Knowledge and Competency for working with children from ages 0-5' with the grant. The existing framework DC Pro has 11 core knowledge areas. Intended work includes addressing alignment 'with the revision of the ELDS and QRIS, DC PROS and its accompanying Career Guide must also be brought into alignment with the needs of current centers, professionals, families and community-based interest groups.' There is 1 activity in the strategy, 'Revise the core knowledge areas of DC PROS to align with revised ELDS and QRIS standards.' The proposal indicates that it will collaborate with CEC-DEC which addresses the area of children with special needs. No other collaborative work is identified for the other categories in the special populations in Table A1-2. There is no indication regarding the needs of the Children with High Needs in this section, except for children with disabilities. D1b This component relates to 'Strategy B: Implementation Plan for Career Guide.' There are three activities in the strategy. They are '2: Conduct a needs assessment of updates to existing policies, legislation and regulations that impact ECE progression of credentials; 3: Finalize and implement an updated Career Guide and 4: Ensure degrees and credentials are related to levels of increasing quality for ECE professionals.' These are aligned with this subsection. D1c 'Strategy C. Expand outreach to higher education institutions and PD providers to ensure alignment of programs with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework' directly relates to this section. The activities are 'Develop a communication strategy to expand outreach efforts specifically to early childhood education professional development providers' and 'Expand articulation efforts with higher education institutions to align PD opportunities with the Framework and validate programs that are in alignment with the Framework.' Not all of the colleges are partnering with this challenge, and there is no indication for stakeholders meetings to further develop this approach. Activities, Timeline and Responsible Parties for each of the three components are appropriate. Scoring used partially implemented framework.

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	16

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

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

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

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

D2a The proposal has identified 2 strategies to address this component. 'D. Examine the pipeline for ECE in DC' and 'E. Build multiple pathways for new and current ECE professionals to enter and advance through the Statewide progression of credentials.' Table D2.1 identifies the accomplishments and plan for addressing the criteria. The District has 11 early educator programs. All meet the state standards. Table D2.3 identifies the programs and components, they include traditional career approaches, (ie BA, MA) as well as CDA and AA programs, and alternative teacher preparation programs. D2b Strategy 'F. Create incentives to increase retention of, and attract new, high quality ECE professionals' addresses incentives. The proposal identifies the existing scholarships available, the total numbers of scholarships provided and the breakdown of how the scholarships supported education. The proposal indicates that they are exploring opportunities to increase the available funds. D2c 'G. Develop a strategy for publicly reporting workforce data and credentials' The tracking will be done in the Professional Development Registry will be expanded in a publicly accessible database. Participation in the registry is voluntary; with enhanced QRIS it will be required. D2d1 The proposal indicates that the strategies used for setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with the standards will be done through 'D. Examine the pipeline for ECE in DC'; Strategy E. Build multiple pathways for new and current ECE professionals to enter and advance through the Statewide progression of credentials and 'F. Create incentives to increase retention of, and attract new, high quality ECE professionals.' Of specific not related directly to needs of English Language learners is 'Activity 8 Establish an alternative pathway for bilingual early childhood educators to earn their credentials through bilingual teacher preparation programs.' Table D2d1 shows increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators receiving credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The specific needs of the some of the populations of Children with High Needs are identified, while others are not. D2a2 Strategy F and the accompanying 3 activities

directly address this component. They call for addressing a number of actions, including 'initiate an economic/fiscal study of the compensation rates of the current ECE workforce and how the implementation of new compensation incentives will impact the District'. Addressing the issue of 'encourage educators to attain degrees inadvertently create a disincentive for providers, as more educated teachers require higher salaries.' This is an important policy and implementation issue, the proposal identifies studying the Child Care Wage\$ Project and other models. The plan includes 'DC implementing a pay-incentive program to encourage ECEs to progress in their credentials. This will be done as a RTT-ELC grant supported program that will be transferred to DC support with the next Market Rate study in 2015.' Table D2d2 shows the 'Increasing number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework' that is a part of the District plan. Scoring used partially implemented framework, taking into consideration the items/information with insufficient information.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	40	25
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p>		
Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation		

Comments on (E)(1)

E1a 2009 the District piloted a KEA study which provided information for next steps. However it is a pilot and KEA has not been implemented. Table E1.1 shows the DC plan and the alignment with Section E1. Two of the 7 strategies developed respond to A. They are 'Strategy A. Appoint an RTT-ELC KEA Design Team that will engage stakeholders, identify resources, and engage in a planning process to design/select, test, and implement a KEA,' and 'Strategy C. By 2013, amend or pass necessary legislation, regulations and guidelines needed to implement the assessment on a statewide basis.' The design team, composed of a wide range of early learning stakeholders will be responsible to reviewing, developing and implementing the KEA. The accompanying step is passing regulations and guidelines to implement the assessment. Due to DC status, they are under 'Home Rule Act of 1973' and 'laws must either be affirmatively approved by Congress or sit before Congress for a required period of passive review before taking legal effect, this process is complex and time intensive.' Thus the timeline is 2012-2013. E1b Strategies A, E and G identify the plans and actions to address this subsection. A indicates that information on special populations will be a priority. E. indicates that 'KEA instruments must be tested for validity and reliability of scores using a representative sample of Kindergarteners in the District to ensure that the assessment measures reflect the five Essential Domains of School Readiness and capture the right data to address the purposes of the KEA.' G. indicates that the implementation will enable analyses on different subpopulations of children. The specific subpopulations are not indicated and the children how are homeless and in foster care have not been clearly commented on throughout this proposal. E1c Three strategies are presented to address this component. They are 'A. Design team, D. Administrative structure development and E. Pilot test the KEA instruments. These strategies allow for piloting and alignment in preparation for a staged implementation beginning with '50 classrooms in Fall of 2014, half of all public and public charter Kindergarten classrooms in Fall of 2015, and District-wide by Fall 2016.' E1d 'Strategy F. Develop guidelines on reporting and use of data.' is specifically addresses this component. 'Modifications will be 'made to SLED to incorporate and use the KEA data. The legal requirements have been addressed in Strategy C. E1e Strategy B 'Develop a detailed financing plan for each of the phases of KEA development and implementation, as well as for the long-term sustainability of the

KEA,' focuses on this need. The proposal identifies that 'the District is committed to a funding structure that ensures long-term sustainability' with the knowledge that KEA will incur significant costs. They have developed an activity to address this within the OSSE. Preliminary funding plan fall 2012, with long term financing plan by fall 2013. The proposal identifies 'In year 1 of the grant, 20% of funds will be generated from research grants, local dollars and sources outside RTT-ELC; during remaining grant years, 50% of funds will come from other sources; and the KEA will be fully funded with other sources beyond the grant years.' The proposal supports this project through the grant years, but there is insufficient information provided to understand how it will be sustained after the grant period. Scoring used partially implemented framework, taking into consideration the items/information with insufficient information.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	188

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

P2a The proposal indicates that this is met and implemented fully. 'By regulation, DC licensing and inspection applies to all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State (i.e., Pre-K programs in the public schools and public charter schools). The only exceptions to this regulation are outlined in DCMR § 301 EXEMPTIONS FROM LICENSURE. P2b Two strategies have been identified for this priority: Strategy A: Refine QRIS to allow involvement from all types of ELDPs, regardless of funding stream; with an activity to 'Activity 1: Convene a District-wide QRIS Study Group' and Strategy B: Design a system of incentives and quality program supports that are appropriate for and attractive to ELDPs across all sectors', an activity 'Revise QRIS to ensure appropriateness for all program types.' and 'Design and implement incentives to encourage QRIS participation from ELDPs.' The work in this priority uses elements of the plan found in B2. The plan suggested in based on maximum inclusion of all types of ELDP's and is addressing the need for all voices to be heard. The Full District roll out is identified in the timeline for Spring 2013. It is not clear if all programs will be participating.

Priorities

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

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

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

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

Comments on (P)(3)

b. The District has not yet implemented a KEA. They have piloted a KEA study and have presented plans in E1 to implement a district wide KEA.

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
Comments on Absolute Priority	
<p>The District of Columbia identified their Plan for addressing how they will build upon the early learning system that is in place, how they set goals in keeping with elements of the grant including a district wide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. They have addressed criteria in 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. The emphasis on Children with High Needs was not well identified and the KEA has not been implemented.</p>	



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # DC-5007

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 7:42 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	15

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

(A) (1) The applicant presents historical evidence of commitment, both programmatically and financially, in the development and availability of high quality Early Learning and Development Programs. The District has partially implemented the key components of a high quality early learning and development system but does not indicate or identify plans for building a comprehensive data system, coordinating data or implementing data practices. (A)(1)(a) The applicant provides in Table (A)(1)-4 historical data demonstrating strong financial investment and increased funding for state-funded Pre K and Pre K Charter Schools. The applicant also presents evidence indicating no significant decreases in state funding or state contributions to CCDF, TANF or Social Services Block Grant. (A)(1)(b) In 2008, the DC Council unanimously passed the Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Amendment Act committing an additional \$8.9 million for the implementation of Universal Pre-K for all 3- and 4-year old children. An additional 2000 children who did not have access to services were enrolled by 2011. In Table(A)(1)-5 the District provides historical data on the number and percentage of children with high needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs (ELDP). The data provided demonstrate an increase in the number of children served by the various ELDP programs since 2007. (A)(1)(c) In Table A1.1 listing twelve significant pieces of legislation, policies, and practices since 2000 as evidence of the District's commitment and investment in Early Learning and Development Programs. (A)(1)(d) In the application, the District describes the current status on each of the following components of an Early Learning and Development System: - In 2008, DC developed and implemented a set of Early Learning and Development Standards for children ages birth to preschool. The ELDS are currently used by all DC Pre K, Charter Pre K, and Subsidized providers. - By definition, the District admits that currently it does not have a comprehensive assessment system and multiple evaluation systems are utilized by Early Learning and Development Programs. For example, due to their autonomy, Charter Pre K programs utilize their own self identified tools and the district will not pursue the use of a comprehensive tool by Charter Pre K programs but will "encourage" their involvement in the new TQRIS. - The District indicates that it currently supports health promotion activities through a variety of programs including the Early Stages Early Intervention program (Part C IDEA) and implementation of the Project LAUNCH grant but it is not clear how these programs are linked to health promotion. In Table (A)(1)-8 the applicant provides the current list of early childhood

programs who a addressing health promotion practices as defined by the criteria. The table reveals that most of the state funded Pre K programs, Charter Pre K, and subsidized programs do not address Health Literacy and that current state licensing requirements do not address developmental, behavioral, or sensory screening, referral, and follow-up. - The applicant identifies a number of home visiting programs within the district and outlines specific strategies and required elements for family engagement across state funded Pre K and Center Based Programs, but there are no family engagement strategies required for Charter Pre K programs. - The District states it is in the process of developing a Career Guide and Professional Development Registry as a means for encouraging early care and education providers to continue their professional development. - Over the past year the District has piloted a Kindergarten Entry Assessment, but acknowledges that the piloted assessment does not meet the definition or requirements as outlined in the RTT-ELC application. The applicant indicates there are plans to revise and implement the Kindergarten Entry Assessment. - The District currently maintains a Statewide Longitudinal Education Data Warehouse. In Table (A)(1)-13 the applicant list the various data collected within the various system of early childhood services and identifies how each program does or does not address essential data elements. There are no plans for developing, creating, or aligning all data sources into a unified data system for the purposes of tracking children's development and continuous quality improvement identified in the plan. The applicant has provided a medium/high quality response.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

(A)(2) The applicant outlines a reform agenda described as the "Three Reform Pillars". The three pillars include; Mapping and Alignment, Professional Development, and Quality Assurance. The District stresses that much of the reform agenda will address improving the quality of existing Early Learning and Development programs and for those programs serving infants and toddlers. (A)(2)(a) The applicant has outlined a framework for improving key elements and components of the current system, aligning early childhood standards, increasing the workforce skills and abilities of Early Childhood Educators, and measuring children's readiness for school at Kindergarten entry. The applicant fails to address how it proposes to build a comprehensive assessment system of services that can track children's progress over the first five years of life and ensure that children are reaching developmental milestones. (A)(2)(b) Based on the gaps identified in the current system, the applicant has outlined an implementation plan based on the "Three Reform Pillars". The District has chosen to focus on the following, aligning the recently developed Early Learning and Development Standards for children age birth to five with the recently adopted Common Core Standards for K-12, addressing the health, and behavioral health needs of children, engaging and supporting families, increasing Early Childhood Educators knowledge and abilities through the development of the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and identifying and implementing a Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The applicant has provided a detailed description of the timeline and activities within each of the three pillars. (A)(2)(c) The applicant has decided not to respond to (C)(2) building a comprehensive assessment system or (E)(2) building and enhancing an early learning data system. The District districts rationale and belief is that by first increasing early care and education providers understanding of the new Early Learning Standards and the newly developed Kindergarten Entry Assessment, will create future interest by the providers in utilizing other assessment instruments. The District does not provide an alternative means for tracking the growth and development of children up to Kindergarten entry. This is problematic given that the District has indicated that it will emphasize efforts towards infants and toddlers but does not identify a means for tracking growth and development or the services that are provided to this population of children. The applicant also indicates that the District is already working on a Statewide Longitudinal Education Data Warehouse to incorporate end data such as the Kindergarten Entry Assessment, but does not identify a plan for how the District will synthesize and cross reference the various data collected by multiple early childhood programs for the purposes of identifying future needs, improvements, and assist in making funding decisions during the grant period and ultimately improving the outcomes for young children. In addition, the District states that it will apply for funding in the next round of longitudinal funding, but does not identify a time frame for when this would occur. The applicant has submitted a medium/high quality response.

	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)

(A)(3) The applicant provides strong documentation demonstrating the commitment and partnerships among participating state agencies and stakeholders. (A)(3)(a) - The District presents a clear organizational structure for management of the grant. The applicant indicates that it will build upon the existing State Early Child Development Coordinating Council (SECDCC) as an advisory body to the Deputy Mayors for Education and Health and Human Services. - The Governing body will be the Office of the State Superintendent for Education who is housed in the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education. - In Table (A)(3)-1, the District provides a clear outline of governance responsibilities and identifies the State Early Childhood Development Coordinating Council (SECDCC) as the body responsible for resolving all disputes. The SECDCC is composed of members from all cabinet officials (who maintain agency decision making authority) as well as public sector members including center based organizations, service providers, and advocacy organizations. - The applicant identifies throughout the state plan opportunities for involvement and input from various stakeholders. For example, the proposed Kindergarten Entry Assessment Design Team will include agency representatives, child care providers, early care and education teachers, and parents. (A)(3)(b) In the appendix, the applicant has provided documentation and evidence indicating that all MOUs have been signed by each participating agency. All MOUs outline all terms and conditions, the specific and differentiated scope of work for each participating agency, and signed by the authorized representative. (A)(3)(c) The applicant provides documentation and lists all Early Learning Intermediary Organizations. Three of the seven identified Intermediary Organizations and associations provided letters of support. One of the organizations listed that did not provide letters of support included the Home Visiting Council. This is questionable since the applicant indicates throughout the plan, especially around family engagement, the strategies for involvement and working with home visitation programs. Letters from Intermediary and other organizations present evidence of their commitment and involvement in the development of the plan. The

applicant has provided documentation and evidence indicating that the applicant has established a substantially or fully implemented plan with a high quality response.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	5

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

(A)(4) The District has identified \$110,000 of existing funds that will be contributed towards activities described in the grant. One activity proposed is a State Advisory Council Summit which will focus the state of Early Childhood. The District has budgeted \$30,000 for the summit. The applicant does not indicate whether these funds were budgeted in the state advisory council grant. An additional \$80,000 will be derived from Child Care Development Funds (CCDF). The funds are identified and dedicated to various sections throughout the plan but do not appear to be sufficient for implementing the activities for which they are identified. For example, the applicant indicates that a committee will address the realignment of the Early Learning and Development Standards and build out sections of the standards to address English Language Learners including the creation of a manual for early childhood providers. The manual will be used to increase early childhood providers understanding for children with disabilities, but the applicant has only budgeted \$5000 for this effort. In addition, the applicant will create an RTT-ELC program team consisting of 14 staff members and a percentage of FTE time for each staff liaison from each of the five participating agencies. The RTT-ELC team and staff will be funded solely through RTT-ELC grant funds. The applicant does not present strong evidence for budgeting and sustaining this infrastructure past the grant period. The District only indicates that it will analyze its existing Children's Budget and map out strategies for future sustaining of the RTT-ELC efforts. The applicant has submitted a medium/low quality response.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	5

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)

(B)(1) The District has developed and has historically maintained a Quality Rating System (QRS) since 2001. The QRS is required for all providers who receive CCDF and has been used mostly as a tiered reimbursement system. In the past year the District has been in the process of developing a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) and has plans to announce the draft standards in November 2011. The District proposes that it will define quality by the implementation of the new QRIS and provide resources and supports for Early Learning and Development programs who meet the highest tiers, but indicates it will hold programs accountable if they do not improve over time. The applicant does not appear to clarify the difference between a Quality Rating System (QRS) utilized for the purposes of compliance and funding versus a Quality Rating and Improvement System that includes all elements required by the notice of grant application. This is further evidenced in the crosswalk provided by the applicant in Table (B)(1)-1 outlining the elements identified as required components as defined by the grant application and the new TQRIS Standards proposed by the applicant. For example: The proposed TQRIS provides a checklist of elements that should be implemented at each tier level but the elements listed do not address how a comprehensive assessment system or a system of effective data practices will be incorporated or implemented in the proposed QRIS. Utilizing a comprehensive assessment system and implementing data practices in order to track children's growth development and progress are critical elements for improving a Quality Rating System and improving the outcomes for Children with High Needs. The applicant admits that it will need to transform the current QRS from a financial reimbursement system to a quality driven QRIS. The applicant provides evidence of a partially implemented TQRIS system but does not provide a complete response that fulfills the criteria outlined in the notice of grant proposal. (B)(1)(a) The applicant indicates that the revised QRIS is currently in development and will be piloted in spring 2012. In addition, the applicant indicates that national standards including Head Start, Office of Child Care Benchmarks for Quality Improvement and NAEYC accreditation standards were used in the development and alignment of the new QRIS. Again, the categories provided and outlined in the new appear to be compliance standards for programs and not a Quality Rating and Improvement System as defined by the grant application. (B)(1)(b) The applicant proposes to hire an early childhood expert to study the new draft of the QRIS standards and conduct a cross walk with nationally recognized standards by spring 2012. The applicant does not indicate how it proposes to validate the QRIS ensuring that the standards are measurable and meaningfully differentiate program quality levels. (B)(1)(c) The District states that the current and proposed Quality Rating and Improvement System are linked to state licensing system for Early Learning and Development programs. Currently only CCDF programs participate. In addition, the applicant provides in Table (B)(1)-1 a listing of all current program standards used in the District and by which program (i.e. Head Start, etc). The table reveals that licensing standards do not address a comprehensive assessment system nor does the proposed QRIS sufficiently address effective data practices. For example, the cross reference in the area of effective data practices reveals that licensing standards only address record keeping and does not meet the definition of effective data practices as defined by this grant announcement. The applicant has provided documentation and evidence indicating that the applicant has submitted a partially implemented plan with a medium quality response.

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

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)

(B)(2) The applicant proposes to modify the current QRS to allow involvement of ELDPs that do not receive child care subsidy payment. Currently public Pre K and Charter Pre K programs are not eligible to participate in the existing QRS. The QRS is designed as a cost reimbursement system. The applicant states that 100% of families eligible for subsidized care receive services and there has been no waiting list for services or need for slots since 2010. (B)(2)(a) The applicant proposes to convene a District-wide QRIS Study Group who will make recommendations and revisions to the QRS to accommodate different program standards and reduce barriers for programs who have not historically participated in the QRS. The applicant indicates that the QRIS Study Group will make recommendations and develop a menu of incentives in order to increase participation including access to resources, technical assistance, and professional development. (B)(2)(b) The applicant does not provide sufficient information or a detailed plan to address policies and practices that should be altered to ensure full participation by all early learning and development programs in the new QRIS. For example, the applicant does not identify how it plans to incentivize public Pre K programs to participate in QRIS program. Professional development and supports provided to early learning and development programs (such as TEACH) who participate in QRIS would not provide a sufficient incentive for public Pre K programs given that the district already requires all teachers to meet the highest level tier. In addition, the applicant does not address or identify plans for incentivizing private providers to become qualified CCDF providers when all eligible children are currently being served and no additional slots are needed. (B)(2)(c) The applicant does not provide sufficient logistical and detailed information to determine if the timeline for increasing the percentage of Learning and Development Programs participating in the proposed QRIS is achievable. The applicant has submitted a plan that is partially implemented and a low quality response.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs	15	2

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)(4)

(B)(3) The District proposes to conduct multiple activities in the revision of the proposed Quality Rating and Improvement System program standards and the development of a high quality monitoring tool. The applicant does not indicate how the tool will be validated. (B)(3)(a) The applicant indicates that specific monitoring tools will be aligned with QRIS standards which are currently under development. The timeline for the revision and piloting of the newly drafted QRIS does not align with the timeline for the development of the QRIS monitoring tools. For example, the applicant indicates that revising and piloting the new QRIS will occur in Winter - Fall 2012 with full roll out to current QRS participants Fall 2012. The amount budgeted is \$100,000. The applicant also plans to identify a Study Group who will make programmatic revisions to QRIS to accommodate the different program standards and other quality measures the QRIS does not address or consider. The timeline for this Study Group, implementation and completion of activities and scheduled full roll-out of QRIS to District, is Winter 2012 – Fall 2013. The amount budgeted does not appear sufficient for all activities (\$15,000). The timeline for development of the monitoring tools Fall 2012 – Summer 2012, piloting in Summer 2012 and implementation in Fall 2012 is not parallel to the timeline for proposed changes and revisions. The amount budgeted for this activity does not appear sufficient (\$25,000). (B)(3)(b) The applicant proposes to hire a marketing firm to design information and outreach materials to families about the QRIS. The timeline for implementation of a public service campaign and informing parents is 2015. The amount budgeted for this activity does not appear to be sufficient (\$50,000). The applicant has submitted documentation and evidence indicating a partially implemented plan with a low quality response.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	5

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)

(B)(4) The applicant currently provides several training programs to increase the quality of early care and education providers participating in the QRS including; the Licensing Technical Assistance and Professional Development for persons with Limited-English Proficiency Grant, the Accreditation Facilitation program, the Pre-Kindergarten Technical Assistance Grant and is in the process of drafting a career guide or career lattice system for early care and education professionals. The District proposes to implement targeted technical assistance, establish Centers for Excellence, and the Family Provider Peer Network, and develop program improvement plans for programs that participate in the QRIS. (B)(4)(a) The current QRS system implemented by the District is, by design, a tiered cost reimbursement system with financial incentives for acquiring higher tier levels by providers. The current QRS system provides technical support for assisting programs for achieving higher tier levels and/or accreditation levels as listed above. (B)(4)(b) The District indicates that it fully meets the criteria for providing support to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high quality Early Learning and Development Programs meet those needs but does not provide additional evidence that demonstrates that families' needs are being met. For example, the applicant indicates that it will target increasing quality services for infants and toddlers and currently provides the Infant and Toddler Expansion Grant but does not provide evidence of or data on the number of infants and toddlers and their families who are enrolled and in what type of programs. (B)(4)(c) Table (B)(4)(c)(1) list the current number of programs participating in the Quality Rating System but focuses on CCDF and Preschool programs. In Table (B)(4)(c)(2), the District provides information on the number of Children with High Needs served by programs in the state. The data provided is on Pre K programs for five year olds with the exception of the Early Head Start program. The age ranges for children in the CCDF program are not identified. The applicant does not have data on the number of children with disabilities served or within what programs or environments they are being served. The applicant does not capture the number of infants and toddlers and their families who are enrolled in the CCDF program though this is a target population. The applicant has provided documentation and evidence indicating a partially implemented plan and medium quality response.

	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)

(B)(5) The District proposes to utilize an outside evaluator to examine quality practices at the classroom level and review student outcomes as a means for validating the Quality Rating and Improvement System. The applicant also plans to use an independent evaluator to assess the new QRIS on an annual basis using nationally normed, valid, and reliable evaluation tools on a sampling of providers. (B)(5)(a) As indicated above, the District proposes to hire an outside evaluator to conduct a validation study of the newly enhanced QRIS. The timeline described for conducting the evaluation will be parallel to the proposed pilot of the QRIS during the Winter 2012 -Fall 2012. In addition, the applicant indicates that during the same time period it will be validating the appropriateness of the QRIS for all program types and train program monitors on the QRIS monitoring process. The timeline does not appear feasible given that the applicant will validate the QRIS and present the results to the QRIS study group by Winter 2013. It appears according to the timeline that the Study Group will be making recommendations and revision during the same time it proposes to train the monitors. (B)(5)(b) The applicant plans to conduct an external outcome evaluation in 2015 to determine the extent to which the QRIS tiers correlate with child outcomes. The District indicates that it will collect child outcome data utilizing standardized assessment tools such as the Peabody Picture Vocabulary but does not identify any additional tools for measuring other areas of development or an instrument for children ages birth to three. The applicant has provided a medium/low quality response.

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.	20	18
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--</p> <p>(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;</p> <p>(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and</p> <p>(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)
<p>(C)(1) Since 2005, the District has maintained Early Learning and Development Standards for children age four and five. The applicant indicates that the standards were expanded in 2008 to include infants and toddlers. In 2010, the ELDS were aligned with the state K-3 standards until the District's adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), resulting in the applicant's current work in realigning the ELDS to the CCSS and the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. (C)(1)(a) The applicant states that the current ELDS were developed with the assistance of national experts, community organizations, research institutes and examining other states existing standards and in collaboration with NAEYC, Head Start, and several institutions of higher education. The applicant provides a copy of the ELDS in appendix C1.1. (C)(1)(b) The District has outlined a feasible plan to build out the early learning standards in order to align with the Common Core State Standards. The applicant recognizes the need to address critical elements in need of improvement such as more emphasis on phonetic awareness, expanding the ELDS to include an introduction to technology, and refining the Pre K standards to include more specific developmentally appropriate progressions. The applicant proposes to work with the Early Childhood Education Assessment Consortium and other states as part of the process. In addition, the</p>

District will specifically address developmental milestones and entry points for differentiated instruction to address the needs of English Language Learners and children with disabilities. The applicant plans to develop a "Entry Points for Differentiated Learning Manual" to assist early care and education providers in serving these populations. (C)(1)(c) The District describes the current government infrastructure which will allow for quick adoption and implementation of the of the revised Early Learning Standards. The applicant does not provide evidence or information indicating that the Early Learning Standards will be incorporated into all aspects of the District's Early Learning and Development System. (C)(1)(d) The applicant provides a description of its plan to roll-out the ELDS including; a website for teachers, parents and other key stakeholders, in person and online training modules and implementation of a coach training model for teacher support. The District will monitor participation of providers through the professional development registry. Families will be provided hard copies of the ELDS with an introduction through a flyer. The applicant plans on making the materials available online and in multiple languages. The applicant has provided documentation and evidence of a partially implemented plan and a high quality response.

	Available	Score
(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.	20	12
<p>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--</p> <p>(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;</p> <p>(b) Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators who are trained and supported on an on-going basis in meeting the health standards;</p> <p>(c) Promoting healthy eating habits, improving nutrition, expanding physical activity; and</p> <p>(d) Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual targets to increase the number of Children with High Needs who--</p> <p>(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);</p> <p>(2) Are referred for services based on the results of those screenings, and where appropriate, received follow-up; and</p> <p>(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.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(3)
<p>(C)(3) The applicant indicates that it amended and updated Municipal Regulations in 2007 for all home and center based child development facilities on health and safety. It is not clear by the applicant's reference which regulations it is referring to. The applicant also indicates that it is in the process of updating its Local Wellness Policy for Pre K programs to ensure that children receive appropriate nutrition but a letter of support was not provided by the Wellness Council. The District outlines a plan for aligning and updating all health standards, guidelines, and regulations for Early Childhood programs, provide training on the updated standards and a timeline for increasing the number of children screened before Kindergarten. In addition, the District has enacted comprehensive health education standards for Pre K -12 children in 2008. The applicant indicates that it maintains a variety of sources for storing and tracking data related to health but acknowledges that there is no consistent and available data on children's health and proposes plans to develop a data system. (C)(3)(a) The applicant describes a plan to work with Early Stages, the District's Early Intervention program, to train child care providers on how to conduct development screenings. The applicant states and provides an adequate timeline for updating and aligning all health standards, guidelines, and regulations. (C)(3)(b) The applicant indicates that it will partner with American Academy of Pediatrics to redesign comprehensive health standards and training with an emphasis on targeting infants and toddlers but provides no description in activities or timeline in which this will occur. The applicant has set a goal of having 85% of all licensed providers trained by 2015 but does not provide baseline data or information. In addition, the District does not describe how the training will be maintained on an ongoing basis. (C)(3)(c) The plan described in the application will address aligning standards by 2012 and launching training but does not provide sufficient information or detail in the content for the training regarding the short time frame. (C)(3)(d)(1) The applicant indicates that the District has established a 120-day time frame in which initial evaluations of children with high needs must be conducted. The Law under Part B of IDEA requires 90 days. (C)(3)(d)(2) and (3) The applicant proposes to hire a consultant to develop a Health sharing mechanism between the Spring of 2012 and Winter 2014. The District states that the data base will assist in assuring that referrals are made and services are identified. The applicant does not indicate how the information will be used to ensure that children are getting referred and the services are in place or how existing resources will be utilized and how the system will be maintained once the grant period is over. The applicant admits that tracking Medicaid referrals is fragmented but does not indicate how Medicaid data will be utilized in the development of the Health data system. The applicant has budgeted \$500,000 for this activity. In addition, the District has provided a Table that provides baseline data on the number of children which have been referred to and receiving health services and the targets</p>

for future enrollment but does not identify the source or funding for these services. The applicant has submitted documentation and evidence of a partially implemented plan and provided a medium quality response.

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	20	12

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)

(C)(4) The applicant historically demonstrates efforts to address family engagement through the codification of early learning and K-12 programs, including family engagement measures in the proposed QRIS. In addition to legislation, the District has home visitation programs, a Fatherhood program, and provides Family Book Club grants for families in high need areas of the District. (C)(4)(a) The District will identify a Standards Committee to align family engagement standards. The applicant's statement that a Standards Committee will be developed is in contradiction with section(B)(1)(b)where the applicant indicates that alignment of standards will be conducted by an early childhood expert. (C)(4)(b) There were 250 trainings offered to early childhood providers with 15 focused on family engagement, family support, and respect for diversity and culture in the past year. The applicant plans use the Standards Committee to align family engagement standards and then will partner with Universities to develop online, paper-based, and face-to-face trainings including a coaching training model to ensure training across all early childhood programs. The applicant outlines a specific training plan that will ensure that one coach from each licensed providers will be trained. The District plans to create a Model site for family engagement through a newly established Family Provider Peer Network. (C)(4)(c) The applicant proposes to expand and coordinate services provided directly to families including a universal screening and referral process for newborns, developing an online system for managing and tracking services provided to families across agencies and providers. The applicant does not align this with the Health Services Data efforts referenced in (C)(3). The applicant has provided documentation and evidence indicating a partially implemented plan with a high quality response.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

	Available	Score
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	20	18

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)

(D) (1) The District indicates that it has an established professional development and career system. The applicant implemented the Professionals Receiving Opportunities and Support Professional Development Plan in 2009 (DC PROS), which was aligned with the National Association for the Education of Young Children's conceptual Framework and has drafted a Career Guide Document for early childhood providers across all early childhood programs. The DC PROS system also outlines a plan for access and outreach to early childhood providers, but also addresses funding supports, Quality Assurance, and Governance and Financing. (D)(1)(a) The applicant proposes plans and an adequate timeline for aligning and updating the Framework of Early Childhood Workforce and Knowledge Competency with the newly updated and revised QRIS referenced in (C)(1) and a plan for disseminating training on the framework to all early childhood providers. (D)(1)(b) The District has a newly developed Career Guide that provides direction for early childhood providers who want to increase their credentials. The Guide is very detailed in identifying specialty areas (such as Infants and Toddlers). The applicant proposes to conduct a needs assessment to review the current policies and regulations pertaining to credentials and make recommendations on how to improve. The applicant indicates that it will conduct an analysis to examine the relationship between teacher performance and levels on the Career Guide with degrees and credentials but does not provide information on how it will conduct the analysis or what critical factors will be used. (D)(1)(c) The applicant indicates that the Higher Education Consortium will be responsible for developing an articulation plan and a process for validating professional development training programs within the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Activities will include strengthening already existing articulation agreements and identification of new agreements for transfer of credits. The applicant does not provide enough detailed information on how this will be implemented. The timeline for achievement, Fall 2012, does not appear feasible for completing the work. The applicant has provided documentation and evidence indicating a substantially/fully implemented plan with a high quality response.

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	18

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

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

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

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

(D)(2) The applicant provides evidence of a well established professional development system with plans for increasing and improving the current system with key elements and structure. The current system (11 early educator preparation programs) includes established provider core knowledge and skills, a career lattice and the implementation of a professional development registry but also the proposed development of a trainer registry, financial incentive program, increased collaborations with Higher Institutions and the development of career counselors, coaches and mentors. In addition, professional development and training is available to all licensed, Pre K, and Head Start providers within the district. (D)(2)(a) The applicant proposes to build multiple pathways for new and current early childhood providers to advance along a profession of credentials. The District recognizing that in addition to the supports that are currently in place or proposed within the there is a need to target a specific of providers who are English Language Learners. The applicant recognizes the needs in the community for training for early childhood providers who are English Language Learners will assist them in improving the skills and obtaining degrees. (D)(2)(b) The applicant will propose plans to create retention of and attract new high quality providers. The District currently utilizes CCDF funds to pay for scholarships for early care and education providers to participate in the DC TEACH programs. In 2010 the District established the Pre K Acceleration and Clarification Emergency Act which provides scholarships. (D)(2)(c) The District proposes to develop a strategy for publicly reporting aggregated workforce data using the Professional Development Registry. The applicant does not clarify how this aggregated data will be of interest or of benefit for public knowledge or used for decision making. (D)(2)(d) The District does not have baseline data on the current number of early education providers who are progressing to higher levels of credentials. In Table (D)(2)(d)(1) the applicant provides baseline and targeted data on the number of Early Childhood Educators receiving credentials from post secondary institutions and professional development programs but this number does not appear to capture the total number of providers

across all early childhood programs. The applicant has provided documentation and evidence of a substantially/fully implemented plan with a high quality response.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	40	24

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)

(E)(1) In 2009, the District implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment pilot study. The study developed a framework for a comprehensive Kindergarten Entry Assessment. It is not clear from the description provided if the applicant intends to implement the KEA assessment at the start of kindergarten or utilizing the assessment in kindergarten to determine if children will be ready for first grade. (E)(1)(a) The District proposes to appoint an RTT-ELC Kindergarten Entry Assessment Design Team who will consider building upon the KEA pilot and identify a means for incorporating additional demographic information such as family income, parent education level and maternal mental health. The applicant does not explain how or why these various elements of demographics would be considered. The applicant is not clear whether it is considering the purchase of one assessment tool or will identify a battery of tools that would be implemented. In addition, the applicant does not clarify the range of additional information that will be collected, for what purposes, and considered as part of the assessment process. (E)(1)(b) The District indicates that it will use the Council to develop a detailed finance plan for each phase of development of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment and consider all federal and state funds for implementation and long-term sustainability, but provides no additional evidence. (E)(1)(c) The applicant proposes a timeline to phase in the implementation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The District will begin with making the required changes through legislation and/or regulations in order to implement the assessment statewide. The plan has five key steps; appoint a Design Team to provide oversight of the design and implementation of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment instrument(s) and protocol, amend appropriate legislation, develop administrative procedures and training, pilot test the Kindergarten Entry Assessment, and implement the assessment statewide. (E)(1)(d) The applicant did not respond to (E)(2), building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies. The applicant does not present a plan for collecting data on the Kindergarten Entry Assessment but states that a plan will be developed that will address protocols for collecting and how the data will be aligned with the State Longitudinal Data System to determine if children are ready for school. (E)(1)(e) The District proposes to develop a finance plan for securing long-term funding for the implementation of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment, but does not provide any additional detailed information or plan for how to accomplish this goal. The applicant has provided documentation and evidence of a minimally implemented plan with a high quality response.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	164

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	1
<p>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--</p> <p>(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</p> <p>(b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (P)(2)		
<p>The applicant does not provide information describing how early learning and development programs are licensed. It indicates that all publicly funded early learning and development programs are licensed but does not address center based or family homes which may not be publicly funded but licensed. The licensing regulations in the appendix indicate that ratios for center based programs is 1:3, which is the only evidence provided in the number of children that can be minimally cared for by a provider and require a license. In addition, home based programs as described in the regulations indicate that Expanded Child Development Homes shall comply with the same licensing ratios. Additional clarification or revisions would be required to meet this priority. The applicant proposes in Section (B) a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all state Pre K and Charter Pre K schools can participate but indicates participation will be voluntary for these state regulated programs. The applicant has submitted a partially implemented plan with a low-quality response.</p>		

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	No
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
Comments on (P)(3)		
<p>The applicant has been in the process of piloting a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA). Building upon its current efforts the applicant proposes a plan to develop or identify a Kindergarten Entry Assessment tool or tools as addressed in (E)(1). It was not clear by the applicants response how or when the tool will be utilized or how the District will provide sustained funding for the continued use of the KEA past the grant funding period. The applicant received a score of 24 points out of a possible 40 or 60%.</p>		

Absolute Priority

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

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 District presents a detailed history describing its efforts in providing services to children with high needs. One major structure has been the Quality Rating System, but the District admits that it has historically utilized the QRS as a cost reimbursement system and not as a system for improving the quality of programs. The applicant indicates that it is in the process of enhancing and validating the newly revised TQRIS but critical improvements to transform the system into a true mechanism for rating quality of early childhood programs are not addressed. For example, the applicant has chosen not to address a comprehensive assessment system to assure that early childhood providers, programs, and agencies can track child progress during the first five years of life but it appears the applicant has put most of the onus of determining the effectiveness of the QRIS on the results of the proposed Kindergarten Entry Assessment or measuring end results. In addition, the timeline for activities the applicant has proposed to validate, train monitors, and implement the Kindergarten Entry Assessment does not appear feasible nor in a coordinated sequence. The District identifies plans to implement a Kindergarten Entry Assessment but does not provide sufficient information or describes plans to incorporate the data into the Statewide Early Childhood Longitudinal Data system in order for the District to determine if the reform changes are resulting in improved outcomes for children. The District states in (A)(1) that it proposes to specifically target efforts for improving the outcomes for infants and toddlers but this was not evident in the activities or plans described throughout the plan. The applicant did not adequately address services to children with disabilities nor did the applicant describe or indicate in what Early Learning and Development programs these children are being served. In various sections, (Section A the RTT-ELC Office, Section B the development and implementation of a QRIS, and Section E, Developing a Kindergarten Entry Assessment) the applicant does not adequately address how it plans to fund and sustain the implementation of these critical components of an Early Learning and Development System beyond the grant period. Many of the infrastructures and activities outlined within the plan are solely dependent on grant funding and will not be sustainable.