



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # DE-5006

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 11:27 AM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

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

The State has demonstrated a strong financial commitment to Early Learning and Development Programs and to Children with High Needs as evidenced by the flat budget for early childhood, even as the State faced an \$800M budget deficit. Additionally, the State provided \$22M in ongoing funds for projects that will have substantial impact especially on Children with High Needs such as: an increase in the child care subsidy; launching an increase in subsidy by TQRIS level; funding for TQRIS rating, technical assistance, and grants and awards; and, scholarships for Early Childhood Educators. Finally, the State has also shown financial support in the private sector in the implementation of the TQRIS, which was funded in 2007 with 60% private funds and 40% public funds. This demonstrates financial commitment is not just at the governmental level but also at the local stakeholder level. The number of Children with High Needs in Early Learning and Development Programs has remained relatively stable since 2007 and shows only a slight increase in the number of Children with High Needs that participate in Early Learning and Development Programs. A substantial portion of the increase is in the Parents as Teachers program rather than in center-based programs where most of the State's reform initiatives will take place. The State expresses that it is dedicated to serving this population of children yet does not demonstrate that commitment by increasing the number of children served over the four year period. Several examples of early learning and development legislation, policies, and practices are provided including: 2006 - Revision of Early Learning state plan, 2007 - Revision of Child Care Act which moved the state to a more comprehensive look at early learning, 2009 - Early Childhood Policy Audit and Fiscal Mapping which reinvigorated the Interagency Resource Management Committee (IRMC), 2010 - Early Development and Resources Work Group, and 2011 - \$22M commitment to early care and education. The timeline provided by the State actually demonstrates a longer history of support for Early Learning and these recent events are evidence of the State's consistent attention to and support of early learning and development. It is important to note that the \$22M increase came before the release of this grant application demonstrating that the State has a genuine and authentic interest in improving outcomes for Children with High Needs. The State has considerable capacity developed in all key areas of a high quality early learning and development system and has created momentum in many areas. Early Learning and Development Standards - The existing standards include all Essential Domains of School Readiness except

approaches to learning for infants and toddlers. The standards address all other Essential Domains. Work Force Development - A Workforce Knowledge and Competency (WKC) Framework is in place that addresses job functions, credentials, and professional development. Health Promotion Practices - Private and public partners have created momentum in this area and recent activities include home visit projects to support this area. The State also has strength in some key areas that are emerging yet still in development. These areas include: Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS) - There is not yet a consistent CAS across programs and the required elements of a CAS are not in place across all program types. Family Engagement Strategies - There is not a Statewide standard for family engagement although most programs have standards they follow. Impressively, the state-funded preschool program follows the Head Start Performance Standards on family engagement. Kindergarten Entry Assessment - The State has identified this as a critical area of need. A small assessment pilot has begun and plans to accelerate implementation statewide to a wider pilot by the fall of 2013 with full implementation by September 2015 are in place.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The State has a four-part reform agenda that will impact the School Readiness of all children while concentrating in a determined and clearly defined way on Children with High Needs. The State's goals are quite ambitious and exciting. Currently, only 5% of Children with High Needs are in high-quality programs as defined as being in the top three tiers of the State's TQRIS. The State's goals for improvement are as follows: 1) Increase Children with High Needs in programs that participate in TQRIS from 20% to 78%, 2) Increase programs that participate in TQRIS from 27% to 62%, and 3) Increase Children with High Needs in programs in the top tiers of the TQRIS from 5% to 58%. Based on the capacity the State has developed over the last five years and the plans and activities in the RTT-ELC application, these ambitious goals are achievable and will close the school readiness gap between Children with High Needs and their peers. The State plan consists of four parts that support accomplishing these ambitious goals and builds on capacity the State has developed. 1) The State plan builds on a foundation of addressing the health and development needs of the whole child. This foundation includes projects such as coordination of services to families to help families manage care and ensure follow-up care when needed; home visiting in targeted high needs neighborhoods; and expanding the capacity of comprehensive screening, mental health consultation, and nutrition support. The State establishes a clear rationale for having the health and development needs of the whole child as the foundation of the State's plan for improvement. This demonstrates that the State recognizes that school readiness is deeper and more inclusive than academic skills alone. 2) The second part of the State plan deals with building a professional and effective workforce. This part of the plan includes recruitment bonuses to staff in programs that serve Children with High Needs, ongoing wage enhancement to encourage staff to increase their level on the career lattice, on-site coaching, and funding for release time for professional development activities. The State demonstrates that it truly believes that Educators are the critical element in increasing program quality and thus improving outcomes for children. 3) The third part of the State plan is to strengthen the TQRIS by increasing reimbursement rates across the board with additional increases to the highest-quality programs so they can receive up to 100% of the market rate for subsidy, intensified Technical Assistance (TA) in high poverty neighborhoods, and a comprehensive communication campaign. 4) The final part of the State plan is to ensure the alignment of birth-8 programs. This is being accomplished by including stakeholders and experts in: developmental, cultural, and linguistic appropriateness in the planning and development of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment; implementing Readiness Teams in communities of greatest need; and, ensuring the Early Learning and Development Standards included the needs of children with disabilities, dual language learners and other special populations of children. The State has created a truly comprehensive plan that is built on the health and well-being of children. Children who are not in good overall health do not learn efficiently and the State has addressed this important issue. Building from the health and well-being of children, the State continues to develop a plan that is cohesive and has the potential to have a powerful impact on Children with High Needs in the State. The State provides rationale for addressing the criteria chosen. For example, the State chose (C)(3) because it supports the foundational level of the State Plan - to address the health and development needs of the whole child. The State chose to (E)(1) to support the aligned birth-8 approach to school readiness. In addition to stating why it chose particular criteria, the State also explained why it did not choose others. For example, (E)(2) is not chosen in this application because other funds have addressed this area and implementation is already in progress.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

The State has an existing interagency organizational structure and duties of the bodies will be expanded to include RTT-ELC goals and projects when needed. At the top of the structure is the Interagency Resource Management Committee (IRMC). IRMC is responsible for approval of policy and funding. Membership includes the Secretaries of Education, Department of Health and Social Services (HHS), and Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families (DSCYF) as well as the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and the Controller General. The Early Childhood Interagency Planning Committee (IPC) is responsible for strategic planning and for implementation of the State Plan. This committee includes managers from the DOE, HHS, and DSCYF as well as stakeholders. Finally, the State Early Childhood Council (ECC) is made up of public and private stakeholders and provides oversight to the EC Interagency Planning Committee and meets with them quarterly. The ECC also serves in an advisory capacity to the IRMC and advises them quarterly. The organizational structure includes clearly defined roles for bodies as well as a well defined plan for resolving disputes. The dispute resolution plan for policy, program and regulatory changes begins with the Early Childhood Interagency Planning Committee and the State Early Childhood Council considering the issue and making a recommendation to the Interagency Resource Management Committee who then makes a final decision. This is an excellent system for ensuring various community voices are heard on issues since a wide range of stakeholders are included in the IPC and the ECC. It is clear that the interagency committees are already in place and have been functioning for several years to assist the State in reaching the Early Childhood priorities. There is

no need to create additional interagency governance bodies at this level and the State can build on their track record of success. Having these structures in place will allow the State to focus on other early learning priorities without having to build or rebuild infrastructure. A signed MOU is included along with scope-of-work for each participating agency. Additionally, there are many letters of support. Support letters are included from legislators including Senators, Members of Congress, State Legislators, the State Board of Education, and the State Secretary of Education. Support letters are also included from state universities and community colleges, the state Association for the Education of Young Children, state Head Start Association, and the state Early Childhood Council as well as other stakeholders including the Home Visit Advisory Board, Workforce Investment Board and private providers. An exciting letter of support was submitted by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Child Development and Early Education. In this letter, North Carolina commits to partnering with Delaware to develop a measure of program quality that will be valid, reliable, research-based, and will assess multiple dimensions of quality. These support letters include details of the collaboration that will occur within in State and indicate the support the grant projects have across a variety of stakeholders. The existence of an operational interagency governance structure, clear scope-of-work statements, and support letters from a variety of stakeholders is clear evidence of the support this application has in the State. The interagency infrastructure the State has established is a good foundation for implementing the State Plan.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The State has a plan in place to use funds in a cross-agency, collaborative fashion. For example, the Department of Education coordinates with the Department of Health and Social Services to manage CCDF funds, which is an efficient way to maximize capacity and reduce duplication of services. The State has maximized federal grants to provide services aligned to this application. These grants include the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visitor grant as well as a mental health grant. The State has also maximized funding from other RTT grants by including Early Childhood in the development of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System. This allows the State to focus RTT-ELC efforts in other areas. Finally, the State has allocated an additional \$22M of ongoing State funding for early childhood projects. The State will use CCDF quality set-asides to support rating of programs in TQRIS and to provide professional development of educators. The State has developed clear budget tables and detailed narratives that support the goals of the application and provide sufficient details to show that costs are reasonable in relation to the scope of the projects. The narratives demonstrate that the State has done a thorough analysis of each project and the costs associated, which will ensure successful implementation of the State's plan. These budget tables also reflect the additional \$22M of State funding and provide evidence of the State's support of the increase in funding for tiered reimbursement and for professional development of educators. The budget narrative associated with the Kindergarten Entry Assessment contains sufficient information to demonstrate all aspects of the project have been considered when developing the budget. The narrative and budget tables demonstrated a thorough knowledge of this type of statewide implementation. Having this level of detail and planning in the budget is a solid foundation for the project. There is a clear plan to sustain the growth and improvements implemented through the RTT-ELC grant. The State has identified an ongoing cost of \$9.1M to sustain TQRIS reimbursement, TQRIS administration, and educator compensation. Most of this will be addressed through the State's \$22M budget increase. The State provides two additional points of sustainability. First, the capacity developed through the professional development provided to leaders as well as the systems developed to support health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs will continue with no ongoing costs. Building capacity of personnel is an effective way to ensure sustainability. Second, the support garnered from stakeholders as evidenced by the letters of support demonstrate that Early Learning and Development will continue to have

substantial support within the State.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	8
<p>The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and adopted, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and adopt, a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System that--</p> <p>(a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Early Learning and Development Standards; (2) A Comprehensive Assessment System; (3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications; (4) Family engagement strategies; (5) Health promotion practices; and (6) Effective data practices; <p>(b) Is clear and has standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children; and</p> <p>(c) Is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs.</p>		
<p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (B)(1)		
<p>The State has an effective TQRIS partially implemented as described below and has demonstrated commitment to keeping the system current. In 2007 the State established a TQRIS with a combination of private (60%) and public (40%) of funds for programs that participate in licensing. In 2010, the TQRIS was evaluated and redesigned with input by providers as well as state and national experts. It is clear that the State has a commitment to keeping the TQRIS current and effective in determining levels of program quality. The TQRIS already includes all six required elements. 1) The TQRIS requires implementation of the State's Early Learning and Development Standards. The Early Learning and Development Standards currently in place do not address all needed elements for infants and toddlers since approaches to learning is not included for these age groups. The revised standards will address these elements, but they are not yet in use. 2) The State has elements of the Comprehensive Assessment System in place although it has no statewide assessment system. Furthermore, elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System are in place in some program types, but not in others. The State has an assessment plan that will be implemented to ensure all elements are in place across program types. Improving this system will have a significant impact on child outcomes. 3) Early Childhood Educator Qualifications are tied to the career lattice and to career competencies to motivate the workforce. 4) Family Engagement is addressed extensively and pays special attention to children with special needs and dual language learners and their families. 5) Health Promotion Practices include implementation of curriculum that includes healthy eating and physical activity for programs that are licensed. The state-funded preschool program follows Head Start Performance Standards so health promotion is addressed in depth for these agencies. Following Head Start Performance Standards in this area is an excellent way to make sure children's health education needs and family health education needs are met in a high-quality way. 6) Data practices include the use of assessments to inform goals and lesson plans as well as to evaluate the child and family outcomes to determine areas of need. While the ELDS require programs to use assessments it is not clear how much training Educators receive in this area. Without sufficient training, the educators may not be administering assessment correctly nor can they use the data collected in an effective manner. The standards statements are clear as is the evidence required to demonstrate achievement of each level. The Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) is used to evaluate environmental quality but other examples of quality are used as well including evaluations, work samples, certifications, and surveys. This provides a multi-dimensional picture of quality which will provide a more accurate picture than using one measure provides. The TQRIS is based on standards from a number of national organizations including the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation standards, Head Start Performance Standards, and Department of Defense Effectiveness Rating and Improvement System. The TQRIS plan includes a significant amount of oversight and support provided by Technical Assistants. Each program receives an initial visit and evaluation after which the Technical Assistant assists the program in developing a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The program continues to receive visits twice each month to support quality improvements. The continued technical assistance to programs is a true investment in quality improvement. The TQRIS is directly linked to the State licensing system in that licensed programs can participate in the TQRIS and that minimum standards of licensing correspond to level 1 of the TQRIS.</p>		
	Available	Score

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

The State has done a thorough analysis of participation of each program type and has established a plan to entice or mandate each program type into participation in the TQRIS. The plan shows an understanding of the qualities that make each type of program unique as well as a dedicated effort to overcome barriers so each program can and will participate in the TQRIS. 1) State-funded preschool programs - These programs receive state funding and will be mandated to participate in the TQRIS beginning in 2012. These programs are required to follow Head Start Performance Standards for eligibility and quality and will enter on level four. The goal is 100% participation in 2012 which is ambitious yet achievable since funding will be conditional upon participation in the TQRIS. Since these programs enter at level four it does not appear that this will increase the quality of services to children in the program. Instead, it appears that these programs will continue to operate as before with little to no improvements based on TQRIS participation. 2) Head Start/Early Head Start - The State has taken several steps to ensure participation by Head Start Programs. First, the state recognized that programs had received federal guidance to participate in the State TQRIS if possible. The State followed that by ensuring that the TQRIS standards are aligned with the Head Start Performance Standards, which eliminates a potential barrier and also allows Head Start programs to enter the TQRIS at a level four. The State goal is 100% participation by 2014 which is achievable based on the careful steps already taken by the State and based on support by the Head Start Association, the largest Head Start program in the State, and the State Head Start Collaboration Office. 3) IDEA Part B and Title 1 programs - These programs have not participated in the TQRIS in the past because they are not licensed and therefore were not eligible. The licensure stipulation has been removed with the redesign of the TQRIS and these programs will participate on a voluntary basis. These programs will be held to the same evaluation standard and will also receive the same technical assistance as other programs which should help draw these programs into participation. The State goal for participation of IDEA Part B and Title 1 programs is to increase from 0% participation to 50% and 54% respectively which is ambitious yet achievable given the plan to provide technical assistance to these already high-quality programs. The State indicates that these programs are typically of high quality. Again, it does not seem that the State has a plan for helping these programs establish systems to evaluate strength and weaknesses and therefore participation will be "on paper" only. 4) Child Care Centers with and without CCDF funding - Only 26% of these programs currently participate in the TQRIS. More programs will be drawn into participation through increased Purchase of Care (POC) reimbursements, tiered reimbursements, and increased technical assistance. The State expects such a high response by providers that they have developed a plan to prioritize participation in year one of the grant to give priority to programs in high need neighborhoods as well as to programs serving the highest percentage of Children with High Needs. The State expects to increase participation by Child Care Centers from 9% to 50% by 2015. This goal is ambitious, but the State has established a plan that includes intense technical assistance, which makes this plan achievable. 5) Licensed Family Child Care (LFCC) - The State requires all Family Child Care to be licensed regardless of the number of children served. Because of the small number of children each LFCC may serve the State has developed a cluster plan of technical support which is tailored to programs of this size. The cluster approach will provide a cohort of participants who can understand the needs and challenges of this population as well as provide needed support. The State's plan is very ambitious considering the small size and all-inclusive approach to LFCC and . The State's goal is to increase from 4% to 45% of LFCC providers participating in TQRIS and 55% of children in Family Child Care to be enrolled in programs participating in TQRIS. 6) IDEA Part C - This funding follows the child so the State will ensure 100% of children are served in a natural, inclusive setting by providing technical assistance to programs on inclusion of children with special needs. Additionally, the leadership of the State Part C is on the TQRIS management team and ensures the appropriateness and inclusiveness of standards. Finally, data on these children will be included in the DHHS database and shared with the DOE longitudinal data system. The State is bringing state-funded preschool, Head Start/Early Head Start, IDEA B, and Title 1 programs into the TQRIS at a rapid rate. Starting with these programs is a strength-based approach which

creates momentum within the State and will allow the State to provide focused efforts to programs receiving CCDF funds entering the TQRIS. The State clearly defines operational and budgetary roles and responsibilities for the State Agencies involved. The State legislature took aggressive action by budgeting \$22M in ongoing funds to ensure the state can maintain the supply of high quality child care for Children with High Needs and to make sure families can afford high-quality care for their children. The legislation took this aggressive action to increase reimbursement rates from 50% of market value to 65% across the board. In addition, programs can increase the reimbursement based on TQRIS level from 80% for level 3 to 90% for level 4 and 100% for level five. The State's aggressive budget action and policy changes will ensure they can meet their very ambitious participation goals because programs have already indicated they are interested in the increased reimbursement rate. The State will mandate TQRIS participation for state-funded PreK programs to achieve 100% participation in 2012. Head Start and Early Head Start will achieve 100% participation by 2014.

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)		
<p>To monitor program quality, the State currently uses the Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) developed at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This instrument is scientifically based and normed and is tested for reliability and validity. State ERS assessors achieve inter-rater reliability of 85% and there is an intense coaching model established for new ERS assessors to ensure they achieve 85% inter-rater reliability as well. In addition, all ERS assessors participate in a reliability check every tenth visit to ensure maintenance of the standard. The State recognizes that the ERS is just one measure and has TQRIS verifiers who evaluate programs in areas the ERS does not address, such as professional development and management practices. Licensing visits occur annually and TQRIS assessments are required only once every two years for a program to maintain their level. However, with the implementation of tiered increase in reimbursements, the State has seen more programs move up levels in the last six months than in the previous three years. Changing TQRIS tiers has increased program monitoring. The multi-dimensional approach to monitoring is a strength of the State's monitoring plan. The State recognizes that the ERS alone is not sufficient to measure program quality but also recognizes the cost of using multiple measures. Therefore, the State has established a High Quality Plan in conjunction with the states of North Carolina and Kentucky to develop a new measure of program quality which will integrate the best of the ERS along with adult-child measures, instructional components, and curriculum implementation. The new instrument will be applicable across program types and age groups. The consortium has established an aggressive timeline for development, field testing, and piloting the new measure and will begin implementation in 2015. This progressive new measure will have a positive impact on program quality in the states involved in the consortium and around the nation as well. Participating in the consortium to develop the new measure is a strength for the State. The State has a communication plan currently in place that makes information available to parents but plans to enrich that plan to change the focus from informing parents about quality to developing parent demand for high-quality especially from parents of Children with High Needs. This plan consists of: 1) Identifying existing touch points and providing information to parents regarding high-quality. Parents also receive information about programs in the TQRIS along with the program's rating. These existing touch points include Purchase of Care (POC), Home Visitors, Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL) website, and the Help Me Grow parent hotline. 2) Initiating a public awareness campaign which will include: mailings, public events with the Governor, collaboration with local community partners, interviews with the media, public service announcements, and social media. The public awareness campaign will be spearheaded by the Governor's Office, which gives additional focus, priority, and power to this strategy. This approach is a strength for the State since these communication strategies go beyond computer-based approaches to reach out to families of Children with High Needs through multiple avenues. Each action and strategy presented by the State has a genuine focus on Children with High Needs and their families. The State demonstrates a commitment to this population in a determined effort to close the school readiness gap.</p>		

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

The State legislature provided additional funding in the state budget to implement tiered reimbursement. In the six months of implementation, this practice has demonstrated the effectiveness of tiered reimbursement and Technical Assistance (TA) in helping programs continuously improve and achieve higher levels of quality. The number of programs that moved up levels in the six months since tiered reimbursement was funded is more than the number of programs that moved up levels in the last three years. The State provides technical assistance as often as two times per month to programs at levels two-four to support their improvement. However, the State also recognizes that programs serving higher concentrations of Children with High Needs and programs in low-income neighborhoods need additional, intensive support. The State has piloted a TQRIS Plus program in which cohorts of programs receive intensive support. Directors meet monthly for training and networking, programs receive weekly TA aimed at the classroom level and guided by ERS results, and Technical Assistants have smaller case loads so they can devote more time to each program. This model has shown to be effective and the State will add five new cohorts of eight-ten programs each year of the project. By the end of the grant period, all programs in the high-risk, high-need category will be included. The State has been addressing the needs of working families through the child care subsidy program. Subsidy slots are available for every family that qualifies for assistance and there is not waiting list. Furthermore, every family that qualifies for Head Start is served in a federal or state-based program. Both Head Start and state-funded preschool in the State are half-day programs and do not address full-day, full-year services. The State identifies reluctance of these programs to use Purchase of Care because low reimbursement rates do not allow them to maintain quality as one barrier to expanding the attendance times of these programs. It does not appear the State has investigated this issue deeply and therefore has not developed a plan to overcome barriers for working families to have access to high-quality care. The State has ambitious goals for increasing the number and percent of programs in tiers 3-5 from 36 programs currently at the top tiers to 580 by the end of the grant. This will reflect an increase in the percentage of participating programs who are at the top tiers from 27% of participants to 62%. These goals would not be achievable if not for the State's clearly defined plans mentioned previously. The State has ensured it can build on a successful foundation to increase capacity and reach these ambitious goals. The State's goal for the number and percentage of Children with High Needs enrolled in top-tier programs is 100% of children in Head Start and state-funded preschool, or 3352 children, enrolled in top-tier programs by 2014. Additionally, 50% of children, or 1650 children, enrolled in IDEA Part B and C and Title 1 will be in top-tier programs by the end of the grant. Finally, 55% of children in CCDF programs, 5391 children, will be in top-tier programs. The goals for Head Start and state-funded preschool are achievable since state-funded preschool will be mandated to participate and already follow the Head Start Performance Standards, which are aligned with TQRIS standards. Although not mandated to participate, Head Start/Early Head Start programs are encouraged to through federal guidance and enter at level four due to the alignment of standards. The goals for IDEA B and C and Title 1 programs is ambitious since participation is entirely voluntary. The State has established a TA framework that will encourage these programs to participate and achieve or maintain high levels of quality. The goals for CCDF funded programs is ambitious yet achievable. The plan for these programs includes bringing even very small Licensed Family Child Care providers into the TQRIS system as well as an additional component to support CCDF programs that serve high concentrations of Children with High Needs and those serving low-income neighborhoods with intensive TA. This plan will increase the tier level for these programs and increase the quality of care for Children with High Needs. This will have a positive impact on child outcomes.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	13

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

- (a) Validating, using research-based measures, as described in the State Plan (which also describes the criteria that the State used or will use to determine those measures), whether the tiers in the State's Tiered Quality

Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality; and

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (B)(6)

The redesigned TQRIS is not in the implementation phase and has not yet been tested for validity and reliability across the State. The State does demonstrate a commitment to the quality of the TQRIS since an independent evaluation was conducted in 2009-2010 to assess the appropriateness and implementation of the new TQRIS standards. Also, the State has a historical commitment to evaluating quality as demonstrated by a 1997 longitudinal study that was commissioned by the legislature to determine the effectiveness of Head Start and state-funded preschool programs. Plans for a robust validation study of the new TQRIS have been developed and research questions have already been defined. The study will consider both the connection between TQRIS levels and program quality as well as the link between TQRIS level and child outcomes. The State's plan includes: 1) Independent contractor who will use rigorous research design methodology appropriate to each research question. An RFP will be developed that considers the prior experience in early childhood evaluation, design of a high quality evaluation plan, and cost effectiveness. 2) Multiple measures of reliability and validity will be used to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the system is conducted. Each measure will utilize scientifically acceptable methods. Using multiple measures provides a comprehensive method for ensuring that the TQRIS truly is reliable and valid. This will prevent a uni-dimensional analysis and provide valuable information regarding changes or modifications that need to be made to the system. The first research question to be addressed by this study relates to how the tiers reflect different levels of quality. This question is broken into two parts. The first part of the question involves ensuring the tiers reflect teacher-child interactions, curriculum implementation, and environmental quality. The second part of the question relates to how the elements of each tier predict quality. As the State investigates this research question, the relationship between the TQRIS tiers and program quality will be discovered. Because the new TQRIS allows for different pathways to levels 3-5, the evaluation study will be able to consider the impact of the distribution of points in the four dimensions of practice on program quality as well as child outcomes. This seems like a big step for a validation and reliability study. It is not clear whether this will be included in the initial study or as follow up.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	30	28
<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)

The State established Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) for preschool in 2003 and infants/toddlers in 2007. The ELDS were revised in 2010 based on Early Childhood Educator feedback and expanding knowledge in the field of early learning. The new ELDS reflect the Essential Domains of School Readiness but the old ELDS do not address approaches to learning for infants and toddlers. The State demonstrates a commitment to developing ELDS that are developmentally and culturally appropriate through the work of an Advisory Revision Work Group. The Work Group consisted of stakeholders who had personal and professional experience with cultural issues and the Work Group was advised by national experts in the field of early learning. Further evidence of developmental appropriateness is shown in the way the ELDS reflect developing skills rather than how those skills must be demonstrated. For example, "communicate information" may be shown through oral language, sign language, facial expression, or picture cards. This variety of responses is appropriate for a wide range of children including children who are English language learners, children with developmental delays, and other children who experience challenges. Linguistic appropriateness for adult users is shown by publishing the ELDS in both Spanish and English and by making the ELDS easy to read by adults with limited language and literacy skills. The ELDS are linguistically appropriate for children since they allow for a variety of ways for children to demonstrate a skill. Another example of the support the ELDS provide for English Language Learners is demonstrated by the recommendations provided regarding the use of the child's primary language when possible and by the recommendation to encourage parents to continue to use the primary language at home even when the early learning setting is using the secondary language. Words used in this section include "respect" and "care" which demonstrate the value the ELDS place on the child's primary language. The ELDS are aligned with the Essential Domains of School Readiness. The infant/toddler ELDS contain a category called "Discoveries", which aligns to the Cognitive and General Knowledge portion of the Domains and is a category respectful of the skills and competencies that infants and toddlers should be addressing. Strong alignment is shown between the infant/toddler ELDS and the preschool ELDS as well as between the ELDS and the State's K-3 learning standards. This alignment was investigated by an independent evaluator. The ELDS are thoroughly incorporated into the TQRIS regarding usage and training beginning at level 2 for centers and level 3 for Family Child Care. In addition, curricula and activities are required to be aligned to the standards and lesson plans based on the Standards. Implementation of the ELDS are effectively included in the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies and all curriculum must be aligned to the ELDS. Professional development is strongly connected to the ELDS. ELDS training was rolled out and attended by over 2000 Educators. Also, trainers who provide training for programs at level two or higher must be trained in the ELDS, certified to provide training in the State, and include the ELDS in the training. The Comprehensive Assessment System and the ELDS are also aligned as shown through alignment with the formative assessment measure used. The State provides for ongoing commitment to the ELDS by providing the ELDS in Spanish and English, in paper and electronic formats, and makes them available to Educators and stakeholders. The State also as created a calendar of activities based on the revised ELDS for parents to use to help ensure school readiness. In addition, the State is working in collaboration with the State AEYC to develop an infant/toddler resource for families based on the ELDS. This resource will have activities and resources for families. The State has ensured educators are supported in their understanding of and commitment to the ELDS through ongoing training. A plethora of training opportunities have been provided included training for assistant teachers, teachers, and administrators. Even professional development providers have been trained in the revised ELDS and include the standards in all training provided in the State. Embedding the ELDS in other trainings is an effective and efficient way to continue to support the deeper understanding of the ELDS.

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

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

- (a) Establishing a progression of standards for ensuring children's health and safety; ensuring that health and behavioral screening and follow-up occur; and promoting children's physical, social, and emotional development across the levels of its Program Standards;
- (b) Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators who are trained and supported on an on-going basis in meeting the health standards;
- (c) Promoting healthy eating habits, improving nutrition, expanding physical activity; and
- (d) Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual targets to increase the number of Children with High Needs who--
 - (1) Are screened using Screening Measures that align with the Medicaid Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment benefit (see section 1905(r)(5) of the Social Security Act) or the well-baby and well-child services available through the Children's Health Insurance Program (42 CFR 457.520), and that, as appropriate, are consistent with the Child Find provisions in IDEA (see sections 612(a)(3) and 635(a)(5) of IDEA);
 - (2) Are referred for services based on the results of those screenings, and where appropriate, received follow-up; and
 - (3) Participate in ongoing health care as part of a schedule of well-child care, including the number of children who are up to date in a schedule of well-child care.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(3)

The foundation of the State's reform agenda is addressing the health and development needs of the whole child. Therefore, the State has developed considerable capacity in this area and will use grant funds to extend the reach and scope of their efforts. The State has established a progression of standards for health and safety, screening, and physical, social and emotional development through the TQRIS. For example, tier one requires programs to observe and document progress and report to parents two time per year, level two requires a developmental screening and curriculum related assessment, while level three requires an individual child assessment to inform goal and lesson planning. In addition, the State has established Help Me Grow as an initiative of the Department of Public Health that coordinates a comprehensive framework of screening, referral and follow up especially for Children with High Needs. Additional evidence of the State addressing health needs is the TQRIS requirement that all programs level two or higher have a supplemental curriculum that addresses healthy eating and increased physical activity. This is an innovative way to improve healthy eating and physical activity in programs since most early learning curricula have limited focus in this area. Requiring a supplemental curriculum focuses attention on this area of need while providing age appropriate information and activities and is a High Quality Plan. The State has substantial training in the areas of health standards, which include: Training for Early Care and Education (TECE) Level 1 for assistant teachers includes three hours each of health, safety, and nutrition; Level 2 for teachers includes 6 hours of social and emotional development; Health, Safety, and Nutrition courses offered for at community colleges; I Am Moving, I Am Learning; and, training through the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundation for Early Learning (CSEFEL). This is an impressive array of trainings proven to have a positive impact on children's health and well-being. The State also partners with Nemours Health and Prevention Services (NHPS) to provide a quality toolkit that includes a self-assessment, nutrition rules, planning tools, family engagement tools, physical activity guidelines, and other resources. The State has a plan in place to extend the tool kits so more programs have access and to put the training online so all Educators can access the training. Through a study by the Yale University Child Study Center in 2005, the State identified a significant issue with expulsion of children. In response, Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC) was implemented to provide a coaching-based, eight week Teacher-Child Interaction Training as well as other training for educators. Providing training directly to educators is a strength. The initiative also included training for clinicians including 80 therapists who were trained in Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) and 60 who were trained in Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT). The ECMHC program is not able to address the needs of all providers in the State and not all of the State's geographic regions are covered by the project. Furthermore, the number of clinicians are not able to meet the demand for family training. The State's plan to increase the number of ECMHC consultants and to train additional clinicians in the PCIT is on-target and will have a significant impact on children who need mental health and behavioral support and their families. The expansion of both of these projects will develop capacity in educators and clinicians to a degree that the improvements made will sustain after the grant has ended with little or no additional funding. The State has made great strides in promoting healthy eating and nutrition through the Office of Child Care Licensing and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Working together, these two bodies implemented higher nutritional standards for licensed programs. All licensed programs are required to follow this higher standard. The State has been leveraging funding to reach the hardest to reach and most in need children through home visiting programs such as the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visitor program, Parents as Teachers, Nurse/Family Partnership, and Health Families America (Start Smart). The State will now leverage the following programs to further address the health needs of the whole child. 1) The Help Me Grow initiative to increase outreach to physicians to provide developmental screening during well child visits. Also, the State will implement community liaisons to provide outreach to families to introduce Help Me Grow and provide information on health, developmental, and behavioral screenings; healthy nutrition; and physical activity. 2) The DSCYF will provide a common screening tool for Early Learning and Development Programs. Educators and administrators will receive training in year one of the project and sustained costs will be minimal. 3) Capacity for follow up care will be increased. The State anticipates a rise in the number of children for whom physical, occupational, and speech therapy is needed based on the expected increase in screenings. Therefore, the State will need additional capacity to provide follow-up indicated by screening. The State's approach to promoting healthy eating habits, improving nutrition, and expanding physical activity is a high quality plan that has the potential to impact children in a positive way. The State sets a target of 25,000 Children with High Needs receiving screening by the end of the grant period. This would be an increase of 2245 children from the baseline although the count of children may have been duplicated in the baseline number. According to Table (A)(1)-1 the total count of Children with High Needs in the State is 28,022 so the goal is reasonable but not ambitious considering the outreach efforts of home visitor projects, physicians, and community liaisons. The State has developed an excellent plan to address the health, behavioral, and developmental needs for Children with High Needs. The State's goals for impact on children should match the excellence of their plan and activities.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

The State has developed and implemented Workforce Knowledge and Competency (WKC) Framework as well as a Career Lattice or credentialing system. The WKC contains all elements required by definition and emphasizes the Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS), including mathematics and literacy, and behavior management. The progression of credentials is clear and includes beginning levels for educators who do not have a high school diploma or GED but do have introduction training to educators with a Ph.D. and from assistant and intern to higher education faculty. With this capacity in place, the State is positioned to increase opportunities for educators to move up on the career lattice through further training and education. Therefore, the State's plan to work with two and four year university programs is well-timed. These programs have committed to aligning coursework with the ELDS and with the WKC by the fourth year of the grant and also to provide additional coursework so there are relevant courses for educators to choose to improve their knowledge and skills. The letters of support from institutions of higher education provide reassurance that alignment and support will be forthcoming. Nine other professional development providers have submitted professional development curriculum to the state Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (IEEC) for approval and certification. All training must be certified by the IEEC for Educators to receive credit that support their increase in credential.

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

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 State has a history of supporting educator development and will expand access to effective professional development by increasing the number of higher education institutions that align curriculum and coursework to the WKC and the ELDS and by increasing the number of providers who offer professional development aligned with the ELDS and WKC. Alignment at the university level has not been in place in the past and four institutions of higher education have provided letters of support pledging to align coursework with the State ELDS as well as the WKC. Impressively, the State will provide TA to programs that serve Children with High Needs in high poverty areas through TQRIS Plus and this job-embedded training will be aligned to the WKC. This is an exciting strategy that will have significant impact on outcomes for children and on educator efficacy. Leadership training will also be offered to programs to increase not only the administrator competency, but also to help the administrator support development of educators. The State will implement an aggressive and exciting approach to advancement on the career lattice. The State has already made a commitment by providing \$500,000 each year. The State's plan is to add to those efforts by providing recruitment incentives to programs serving high poverty areas and/or programs serving high percentages of children who receive Purchase of Care subsidy. Ongoing wage enhancement will be

provided to educators who advance on the career lattice with a substantial increase if they are in a program that has reached level 3-5 on the TQRIS. The amounts of the wage enhancements are significant and should motivate educators to invest in their own development. For example, an educator who has completed the TECE level 1 and 2 training will receive \$500 but if in a tier 3-5 program the Educator will receive \$1000. Another strategy for moving educators on the career lattice is to provide leadership coaching for administrators which will include understanding the WKC, observing and providing feedback based on the WKC, and using the career lattice in compensating the workforce. Leadership coaching will be differentiated and intensified for programs serving Children with High Needs and for Family Child Care. These new initiatives are exciting and will have a direct impact on staff quality as well as child outcomes in programs serving children with the most needs. The State has data systems in place through the DOE that track Early Childhood Educators in public-funded programs and this data is linked to K-12 workforce data. In addition, the DOE and OCCL have data sharing agreements that will allow the State to report the following: 1) percentage of Educators at each level of the career lattice, 2) Number of Educators who obtain and new level on the career lattice, and 3) Retention rate by level of credential. The State will also track educator recruitment and retention in programs serving Children of High Needs who are participating in the incentive program to determine effectiveness and possible changes to the program. Tracking this level of workforce detail is a high quality plan to provide information to the State to inform the public and policy-makers. The State has a plan in place to align the four institutions of higher education that are not currently aligned to the WKC by the end of the grant period. Completing alignment at these institutions during the grant period is achievable and meets the goal of 100% alignment in the State.

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 State does not currently have a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Each school district performs some form of entry assessment. Most of the district assessments address literacy but not the other Domains of School readiness. This reflects partial implementation of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The State has taken preliminary steps in the Kindergarten Entry Assessment Process. The State has begun the process by investigating assessment tools currently in place across the state, determining a system of outreach to kindergarten teachers and parents, and identifying resources needed in preparation for implementation of the assessment. As part of this process the State is piloting a formative assessment instrument to test structures for professional development, technical assistance, and data sharing but has not made the decision to implement that particular instrument statewide and will investigate measures to use. The State does not elaborate on how the Kindergarten Entry Assessment will be chosen. The State also indicates that a direct assessment measure will be used to determine reliability of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment but no information is provided regarding how the direct assessment will be chosen or how either instrument will be appropriate for the target population. Finally, the narrative states that the instrument chosen as the Kindergarten Entry Assessment will be valid, reliable, appropriate to the target population, and aligned to the State’s Early Learning and Development Standards but no evidence is provided for how those things will be determined. Overall, the State’s plan lacks detail and does not provide sufficient information to indicate a quality Kindergarten Entry Assessment will be selected. Based on this

limited existing work in the area of Kindergarten Entry Assessment, the State's timeline and staffing plan seem unrealistic. The State will choose a formative assessment measure, identify a direct assessment measure to evaluate validity of the formative assessment measure, and produce a list of family questionnaires from which programs may choose; design the pilot and publish and RFP for vendors to provide the assessment measures; and partner with and train the first cohort of kindergarten teachers. All of these activities will happen in nine months between January and September 2012 and the work will be coordinated by one full-time employee. Based on the aggressive timeline and the minimal staff included in the staffing plan, timely implementation does not seem achievable. The State shows good understanding of what it will take to roll this assessment out statewide and it is clear that the planner has had conversations with kindergarten teachers to discuss their concerns. For example, the State has created an interesting implementation strategy in which teachers will only assess half of their students when they are learning to utilize the formative assessment instrument. This demonstrates an understanding that this assessment approach may be new to teachers and may be overwhelming to them when they begin to use it; however, it does not address the selection criteria teachers will use to determine which children will be assessed using the instrument or how this information will be communicated to parents. The State's plan also includes training one teacher per site to the "expert" level to provide additional support to teachers as they learn to use the formative assessment tool and providing that teacher with additional pay. This is a good approach to implementing a new assessment tool which is more complicated to use than the single measure currently in place. It should help to get teacher buy-in to the new system and therefore impact success. The State has an existing data management plan in place with other funding to incorporate Kindergarten Entry Assessment information into the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) and other work will be funded through other state and federal funds. The State identifies a sustainability cost of \$225K following development and implementation. The State will commit federal funds, IDEA, and State Assessment funding to the Kindergarten Entry Assessment.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	243

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)
The State currently has a very inclusive licensing program that requires licensure for any entity caring for one of more child. There are three sets of licensing standards: Family Child Care Home, Large Family Child Care Home, and Early Care and Education and School-Age Centers to differentiate for Family Homes serving very small numbers of children. Currently, public and private schools are exempt from licensing. Since public schools are regulated by the State Department Of Education they are not required to be licensed. The State will implement a new pathway to TQRIS participation for these programs. The new pathway will include IDEA Part B, Title 1, and State-funded PreK programs. The State expects a 100% participation rate for state-funded PreK programs and participation of 50% and 54% for IDEA Part B and Title 1 programs respectively. Private schools that are 100% private pay and relative care are not licensed and will not participate in the TQRIS. The number of children involved in these programs is very small and does not significantly impact the quality of this priority. For example, the number of children in private schools is only expected to be slightly over 600 children. By expanding TQRIS to programs covered by the DOE, the State significantly increases the number of programs and children participating in the TQRIS.

Priorities

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

0 or 10

No

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

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

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

Comments on (P)(3)

The State has not implemented a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The State has designed a plan to implement a Kindergarten Entry Assessment but has not earned 70% of available points.

Absolute Priority

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

Met?
Yes/No

Yes

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

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

Comments on Absolute Priority

The State provides a comprehensive system to improve Early Learning and Development Programs to positively impact child outcomes. The State has a concentrated and determined focus on programs and Early Childhood Educators serving Children with High Needs and serving programs in areas of high poverty. The State's focus of resources on improving reimbursement rates and tiered reimbursement rates as well as improving Educator recruitment and retention through financial incentives will have a powerful impact on the school readiness of children. The State provides several examples of commitment to early learning prior to the RTT-ELC grant application including an interagency committee to oversee early learning programs and Educators and a \$22M sustained budget increase for Early Learning and Development. These examples of support ensure the effective strategies defined in this application will be sustained after the grant ends.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # DE-5006

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 9:52 AM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 18. Includes detailed text description of the core area and a 'Comments on (A)(1)' section.

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The state provides information for the percent of Children with High Needs served in high quality early learning and development programs, which is 5%. The applicant uses this low percentage of Children with High Needs in quality programs to establish the three measureable and specific goals of: increase the percent of high needs children in Stars-rated programs from 20% to 78%, increase the percent of Star-rated programs in the top three tiers from 27% to 62%, and increase the percent of high needs children in Star programs rated in the top three tiers from 5% to 58%. The increases in targets for the three goals appear achievable. The readiness gap of the Children with High Needs will be closed by obtaining and using a kindergarten entry assessment to measure outcomes, using the data from the pilot assessments to set a baseline and future targets, and establishing a process to monitor progress toward achieving the goal. The monitoring process was mentioned without details given in this section for implementation. The state plan includes screening measures for children's health and development through the statewide framework of the initiative Help Me Grow, recruitment and retention bonuses for educators in programs serving high needs children, leadership coaching to increase program quality, increasing reimbursement rates for high quality programs, increasing program participation in the Stars system and parent awareness of the quality programs. Coordination of early learning programs and public schools is planned through readiness teams. Each focused investment area chosen and described by the state is clearly tied to the reform agenda as addressed in the summary of the state reform agenda and plan to accomplish the agenda.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

Organizational structures, roles and responsibilities of representatives of state and private agencies, and the inter-relationship of each committee was explained in the narrative and in the appendices referenced so that it could easily be followed and understood by all stakeholders involved in this initiative. The Interagency Resource Management Committee (IRMC), in existence since 2010, brings leaders in the three departments making policy decisions about early childhood programs into one body. The Early Childhood Council is an advisory council integrating participants from the public and private sector. The governance structures have specified meeting times, such as quarterly. Many of the initiatives involved representatives from agencies funding IDEA, linking to 7% of Children with High Needs having disabilities. This represented a commitment to Children with High Needs. Families were involved in roles that provided meaningful input to the initiatives. The process for making decisions is stated as based on "the goals and objectives of the State plan." The change is reviewed by any organization it impacts, and then the resolution process is started. A resolution process was included in an organizational table. The plan for initiating policies, making changes, and solving disputes is clearly delineated. The agencies and participants in some governance entities were named which indicates the basic structures currently exist and minor changes to be made are mentioned previously in section A1. Agencies serving early childhood programs appear to have cooperated in initiatives previously and the inter-agency cooperation would continue in the implementation of this current agenda. The governance structure in this application builds on structures and relationships already in existence for over a year. This strong structure provides the foundation needed for implementation of this grant. The minor changes needed substantiate the effectiveness of the current governance structures. The expectation that all child care providers will be strongly encouraged to participate in the Stars program is evident in the intent to provide alternate methods to those agencies required to follow different guidelines. Funding for the reform agenda is under the auspices of the IRMC. Letters of support from diverse groups of agencies statewide give evidence of the understanding of the reform agenda and their desire to participate in the success of the reform agenda. MOUs represent seven groups of supporters including business groups, advocacy groups, schools and unions, higher education institutions, early learning intermediary organizations, and local nonprofits. State schools were included in the MOU's as were Head Start organizations.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

Funds available to agencies to serve early childhood programs were listed with the associated funding source. Title 1 funds were not listed as a funding source for early childhood programs. An increase in the amount of funding for statewide early childhood programs was described as well as the amounts to be assigned to each project associated with the goals of the grant. The narrative of the application provides basic guidance for the use of funds that would be received as a result of this grant. Private funds used to finance a project were included in the budget table to show the commitment of the private sector to early childhood agendas. The budget tables and the accompanying narratives give a full explanation of the use of funds. Programs funded in this grant are described with target numbers of teachers and/or students served by the project to meet the goals of the state for their early childhood program. The state's annual funding directly ties to the activities of the grant to reach the goals and is adequate to support the activities. The budget summary by project gives the amount of funds allocated for each activity of the grant and these funds seem reasonable and necessary to achieve the goals. The narrative accompanying the budget tables gives specific information detailing the agency responsible for administering the funding and the activities to take place with the funding. Sustainability of programs was addressed and the funding sources for sustainability were listed. Some training programs would no longer require funds due to the completion of the training program. Some plan to address training for new teachers as they enter the system of early childhood programs and the role of coaches beyond the life of the grant would give evidence of continuation of a quality program with highly qualified teachers. Each budget category describes the activity and the number of teachers or students to be served with the funds. The budget categories address the outcomes of Children with High Needs by using some grant funds to provide physical and occupational therapists, as an example. One use of funds was confusing as stated in the grant. Funds are distributed to districts for stipends associated with the kindergarten assessment. The description in the table says the stipend is 20 hours per Kindergarten teacher at \$21 per hour in year 1. The narrative states it is \$21 per hour and 20 hours per student during pilot year 1. The length of time it takes to administer the kindergarten assessment to each child is not provided to further explain the use of stipends for teachers.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

The Stars components in place since 2007 are a rating system and a technical assistance model linked to the rating system. Four areas of practice are identified as contributing to program improvement and will be addressed in the technical assistance plan. These areas are: Learning Environment and Curriculum, Family and Community Partnerships, Management and Administration, and Qualifications and Professional Development. Even though a cohesive system to provide program improvement is in effect the state began revising the Stars after a review in 2010. The revision is focused on improving programs and alignment with other early learning programs. The plan the state presents builds on the TORIS in existence and increases participation in the system in manageable steps. Steps to program improvement are specific, sequential, and supported by technical assistance. Phase 1 prepares a program for the change in the Star system through professional development requirements, an initial

site visit, and a self-assessment resulting in quality improvement goals. Phase 2 improves the quality of programs through higher ratings on the Environmental Rating Scale and earning quality points on selected standards. Technical Assistance is provided twice monthly and a program is monitored at least every two years. Phase 3 results in accreditation or a Level 5 rating. The strength of the phases is cohesive improvement through assessment instruments, professional development, and use of the standards to improve programs. Already in existence is a requirement for providers to use the Early Learning Foundations (standards) to plan activities and curriculum, child development screenings, a tiered system of early childhood educator qualifications, extensive family engagement strategies, health promotion practices, and the use of data for lesson planning and program planning. The verification of family engagement strategies requires incorporation of family engagement strategies for families of Children with High Needs. c) Stars, the applicant's tiered quality standards, are based on licensing regulations.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	15	14

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)

Throughout this section of the application Children with High Needs are incorporated into the plan. They are not addressed as an add-on factor but deliberately served through reimbursements and professional development requirements. Delaware's policy framework for Stars addresses 100% of publicly-regulated programs and covers 95% of all high needs children from birth to 5. This is ambitious and the applicant clearly describes the steps to achieve this goal. Awareness that Children with High Needs are in family child care provider settings is demonstrated by the applicant providing a plan to improve the quality of these settings. The use of Title 1 funds is addressed in this section with the intent to bridge the gap between licensed care and care provided with public funding. The applicant takes further steps to serve Children with High Needs by including a member of the state IDEA, part C, program on the Stars management team. The \$22 million investment of state funds is to increase subsidy reimbursement rates for all programs and initiate a tiered reimbursement system based on Stars ratings. This will provide financial support for programs serving low-income children with the rate of reimbursement increasing as the programs increase their Star level. The plan to increase the number of programs participating in the Star system will begin implementation the first year of the grant.

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

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)

An extensive plan is included in this section of the application to ensure inter-rater reliability. There is also a plan to monitor inter-rater reliability. The plan is a step-by-step thorough procedure indicating the applicant recognizes the importance of inter-rater reliability for data collection. The raters will use the current assessment tool, ERS, to monitor programs every two years. All the revised standards for the Stars system are not assessed by the ERS. Additional assessments could be used, such as the CLASS, and there is a plan to develop an assessment to meet this need. The assessment would be developed over the life of the grant in association with agencies from two other states. Parental input and access is the primary focus of this section. The thrust of this initiative is to educate parents as well as provide them the ability to choose quality care. The applicant uses the parents' perspective to identify places to provide information about quality child care and ensure parents are aware of providers of quality care for their child. Web sites will have information as well as home visiting providers. A communication plan is described to be implemented after the Star system is completely revised and a significant number of providers are participating in the rating system. There are components of all these plans to specifically target parents of Children with High Needs. Monitoring is frequent to encourage continuous compliance. The applicant has a high quality plan to monitor Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the TQRIS. There is a plan to provide information to parents about quality programs through various venues. Parents are the focus of this effective plan to provide information about programs to parents to assist them in choosing a program for their child and for parents to monitor the quality of the current program of their child. The state has fully implemented a TQRIS which they term QRIS. The differences in the tiers are explained. The state has previously validated the system they are using.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	18

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)

Several incentives to improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs are in existence. The current incentives will continue or be expanded. The plan includes a technical assistance component that will be revised to increase coordination among different agencies providing professional development and to expand the community of care model. There are financial incentives in the form of tiered reimbursements and workforce compensation. Children with High Needs will be served through the Stars Plus model which provides a higher level of technical assistance to support quality programs with Children of High Needs. There is an initiative for extending the hours of care in Head Start programs so these will be full day rather than half day programs and provide care for working parents. Providers will participate in the child and adult food program. Family care is addressed by placing child care centers in proximity to community agencies. The application addresses Children with High Needs in several aspects of the planning process as well as providing extended care to the high needs children in Head Start settings. The target for the number of children served in Tiers 1 and 2 seemed high, unless the outcome is to ensure more children are served in programs within the rating system. There is a continuous plan to serve more children in the care of providers with quality ratings. Children with High Needs were considered in every aspect of this plan. Throughout this quality plan it is evident the result will be access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs.

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

15

15

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

Evaluations have been used previously by this applicant to address issues of quality. As a result of the evaluations the system was revised. A previous study validated funding for a program. This validation study will be conducted by an independent research firm. Research questions that will drive the validation of this grant specifically address the issue of quality tiers with definitions to enable differentiation of levels of quality in the Early Learning and Development programs. Validation funded by this grant will also determine the relationship between TORIS program ratings and the learning and development of young children. Previous validation initiatives of the QRIS demonstrate the applicant understands the importance of validation and how validation and assessment are used to improve school readiness for all children.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	30	29

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)

a) The applicant provides a table and information in the narrative to describe the relationship of the Early Learning and Development Standards and the Early Learning Framework (ELF) to each Essential Domain of School Readiness. The applicant explains the process of revising the ELF in 2010 through workgroups consisting of representatives of state agencies and early childhood providers as well as experts in the field of early childhood education statewide and nationally. The narrative explains in detail how the ELFs were revised to be developmentally appropriate, culturally appropriate, and linguistically appropriate. The state documents the deliberative process used to develop and use high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards. b) The state mapped the ELFs to the kindergarten learning expectations, which specifically relates to school readiness. Cultural awareness became an integral part of the ELFs by including the domain "My Family, My Community, My World". Literacy is not specifically mentioned in the narrative but is clearly aligned to the ELF as shown in the chart relating the Preschool ELF to each Essential Domain of School Readiness. c) The ELF is part of every professional development training session required in the tiered rating system. The Stars standards require curricula, activities and lesson plans be based on the ELFs. Comprehensive assessments are required once a year by licensed child care providers and these assessments are used in curriculum planning. Head Start programs and ECAP programs are required to choose assessments tools from a list of tools tied to the ELFs. The applicant has woven ELFs into professional development, assessments, and tools. All of these together indicate the applicant has a cohesive plan based on children and school readiness. The parts are in place to support children ready for school through professional development, appropriate curriculum, and comprehensive assessments based on the ELF. d) The ELFs are embedded throughout this section of the application and provide the foundation for early childhood initiatives. Trainers for ECE must submit a request for certification and use the ELFs as part of their training course. Activities and a calendar have been developed for families based on the ELFs. The innovative use of basing certification for trainers on the ELF and requiring the inclusion of the ELF in the training program ensures a statewide focus and commitment to the Early Learning Standards infused in Early Learning and Development Programs.

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

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)

a) Health and safety standards are currently incorporated into the ELF. Promoting health education in licensed child care centers is required to advance up the level of tiers in the Star system. The state received a Help Me Grow Grant through the Division of Public Health, which will provide coordination of health related services to entities involved with children 0-5. The grant includes screening, referral, and follow up services for children and families. Services range from home visits, interventions, and assistance to families to find appropriate child care. The applicant integrates grants and services to provide assistance to ELDPs in meeting health and safety standards. b) Several initiatives are active and some are planned to provide training to ECE as they promote health practice in their interactions with children. Professional development and training opportunities are available for ECE in training and those already in the field. Basic health courses are required for ECE certification and included in the ECE coursework at the community college. An online training component will be added to make access easier for ongoing training. The Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood coordinates training in the areas of physical health, social and emotional health, and nutrition needs. An initiative for the grant is to train more Early Childhood Educators in social and emotional health needs of children through increasing the number of Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants. This need was identified in a system review in previous years, the initiative was started, identified as effective, and will be expanded in areas of the state that serve Children with High Needs. The training component is explained in depth and addresses many areas to improve the health of the

whole child in children birth to 5. c) The state has incorporated health, nutrition, and physical activity into the curriculum. A private entity has begun an obesity campaign. The need was identified through data collection on the status of children in the state. Food and nutrition regulations are part of the licensing requirements. d) Resources available to provide health services are the Help Me Grow Grant, the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting developmental grant, and the non-profit Children & Families First. Screening services occur through several programs including, Child Development Watch for children 0-3, Delaware Child Find for children 3-5, Early Head Start and Head Start, ECAP, Medicaid, and the state health insurance program for uninsured children. As a result of the screenings children may be served through Home Visiting Services, PAT, Nurse-Family Partnerships, and Healthy Families America. The applicant would use funds from this grant to expand screening and follow-up services. Community liaisons would increase the effectiveness of the Help Me Grow campaign by increasing awareness, ECE in Stars programs would be trained to conduct screenings, and services in the areas of speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy would be funded. Many services are coordinated to identify Children with High Needs and provide interventions for them. This coordinated plan integrates multiple health, behavioral, and developmental services for children and their families in various settings. Goals are ambitious yet achievable. There is a coordinated plan submitted to serve children from screening to needed services as identified in the screening. Children are cared for from birth to 5 seamlessly in this effective 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	20
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--</p> <p>(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;</p> <p>(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)
<p>a) The aligned standards and frameworks are for child licensing and tied to the Stars Tiered QRIS. A statewide framework is focused on building on previous knowledge to obtain higher levels of certifications or credentials. Competencies have been developed at progressively higher levels. These competencies are associated with increasing levels of credentials and certificates for early childhood workers as well as Early Childhood Administrators. The footnote cites the competencies are for alignment with training as well evaluating job performance. This is a quality, cohesive framework to ensure the credentials and degrees are reflective of best practices for early childhood educators. b) As ECEs take part in professional training opportunities, their progress is captured and reported in the workforce data base. Refinement is taking place to result in advanced credentials to meet a 2006 agenda, Early Success plan. The state uses prior agendas to improve the quality of new agendas. The applicant consistently uses the workforce framework to define credential requirements for ECE. The state comprehensively and effectively infuses the ELF in this high quality plan. c) Post-secondary institutions have had representatives on credentialing committees. Alignment has taken place for all but the higher education institutions and they have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to align their coursework with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The target date for alignment is the end of the four year grant.</p>

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	19
<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</p>		

improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that is aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and that are designed to increase retention;

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

a) Access to professional development opportunities is being expanded by requiring all providers of training to adhere to the standards of the Delaware Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals and ELF. Nine organizations have submitted curriculum for approval to the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood. This extra step of approval enhances quality and ensures alignment of professional development training. The addition of these organizations will increase access of ECEs to professional development. The state is adding the extra step of increasing effectiveness by promoting professional development through an on-going job embedded delivery system. Technical assistance provided for high-need programs through the Stars Plus system further ensures this application will serve Children with High Needs. b) Funds for scholarships for professional development are already in place and the grant will enable the state to build on an existing strategy proven effective in attracting ECE to improving their knowledge base of ECE. Criteria are established to provide scholarship incentives to ECE serving children in areas with the highest needs, such as high poverty areas, and in licensed programs. Tiered recruitment and retention bonuses are part of the plan for ECE in qualifying programs. A Leadership coaching component is included for program directors to provide feedback for staff and use comprehensive assessments to plan effective practices for the program. c) Data will be reported through data systems currently being used and are linked. Data will be reported, used to evaluate programs, and monitor recruitment and retention rates and processes. d) An increase in aligned institutions is targeted throughout the grant cycle. The focus is on advancement in the number of specialized expertise credentials obtained. This is evidenced by the data in Table (D)(2)(d)(1) and Table (D)(2)(d)(2).

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	40	32

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

(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;

(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;

(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;

(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and

(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

a) The state has woven the importance of the ELDS throughout this application. The opening paragraph states the Kindergarten Entry Assessment can only be implemented if there are strong standards in place as a foundation for choosing an appropriate, useful Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Evidence is provided by the state of the alignment of the ELDS with Common Core, K-3, and Essential Domains of School Readiness. An initiative to create school readiness teams assigns the team the creation of clear expectations for kindergarten transition linking the expectations with the Early Learning Foundations. b) There is a history of this applicant evaluating assessments for validity and reliability. A goal of this section is to accelerate the ongoing research and piloting efforts with the end result of implementing a Kindergarten Entry Assessment at an earlier date. While the Kindergarten Entry Assessment is not currently implemented, it is being chosen and validated for use in the state data system. d) Data entry has reached the first phases by assigning each child an identification number when entering kindergarten. The state is using a previous RTTT grant to develop a data system that will integrate kindergarten data into the existing system. c) The charts and narrative describe the steps to implement the Kindergarten Entry Assessment by the fall of 2014 to 100% of the students. A phased implementation process will begin in the fall of 2012. This implementation is only for the pilot assessment currently underway since the Kindergarten Entry Assessment to be used statewide in the fall of 2014 is not chosen. The integration of the pilot kindergarten assessment and the Kindergarten Entry Assessment is discussed but not clearly integrated. e) Funds from this grant will be used to implement the process of deciding the guidelines for the KEA based on the ELF, examining a KEA, piloting it in certain schools in specific cohorts chosen by representation of the diversity of early children and Children with High Needs in the area, training for assessment and coaching, and their full implementation. The state addresses sustainability by committing Federal 6111 and 6112 funds, IDEA, and state assessment funds to continuing the Kindergarten Entry Assessment beyond the time of the grant. The state provides ways the Kindergarten Entry Assessment will be used for individual students, for program adjustment, and for teacher instruction. The table of the percent of children participating in kindergarten assessment through the life of the grant was unclear in the total percent of children served each year.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	261

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	10

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

a) The current status of children in licensed child care programs reveals a high number of children receiving purchase of care subsidies (Children with High Needs) are in licensed child care programs. Regulating child care began in 1915, became the Child Care Act in 2001, and regulates the Stars program. Licensing regulations became even more important with the inception of the Stars program in 2007. The licensing agency, Delacare, set the stringent guidelines of regulating child care with 1 child not provided for by a parent or guardian in a setting for which the provider receives pay. Exemptions are explicit and clearly stated. There will be an alternative route for licensing for programs monitored by the Delaware Department of Education. The goal is for all programs serving children 0 to kindergarten to be in licensed programs, including 95% of children with high needs. The current status of children served is high. Two numbers are stated, both high percentages, yet the explicit difference in the population of children served by the two numbers is not clear. b) The Star system is currently in use with the goal to extend the number of programs in the system. The state recognizes the problems inherent in including all child care programs and set the achievable goal of including 45% of family child care providers and 50% of school-based providers. The state recognizes the Star system is not just to license a provider but to use the licensing process as a way to "define, communicate, and improve" program quality.

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
Comments on (P)(3)		
<p>Criterion (E)(1) was clearly addressed. The state has many processes already implemented as well as a current kindergarten assessment that does not yet meet all the Essential Learning Domains or fit with the Early Learning Standards. The state was examining alternatives and will use this grant to accelerate the process very systematically. Teacher input and time to assess is considered in the implementation of the assessment. This is of high importance since the kindergarten teacher will be teaching the students and using the data from the assessments.</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
Comments on Absolute Priority	
<p>Woven throughout this application are the Early Learning and Development Standards (ELF) and providing for children with high needs. The ELF is the basis for curriculum, professional development for ECE, assessments, and the Star system. Children with high needs are incorporated into all programs but addressed specifically in determining assessments to use, reimbursement for the workforce that serves children with high needs, and providing specific services for children with high needs. Occupational, speech, and physical therapists will be provided with funds from this grant to provide interventions needed. Assessments are based on the ELF and are used for instruction, program improvement, and to assess if they are meeting the needs of the children of high needs.</p>	



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # DE-5006

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 3:01 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, 20. Includes detailed text and sub-points (a) through (d).

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

(a) Delaware's commitment to funding high-quality ECE services and systems is noteworthy and adds strength to the overall proposal's objective to ensure access to high quality programming for children with high needs. From 2007 to the present, the State of Delaware has consistently contributed approximately \$61.1 million annually to its comprehensive early childhood system (p. 8 and Table A(1)-4). Preceding the release of this grant, the Governor of Delaware, with the unanimous support of the Delaware legislature, invested an additional \$22 million into its early childhood system—a 35% increase in state funding. Funding priorities in the state's application include: increases in subsidy reimbursement rates for programs serving low-income families; the launch of a tiered reimbursement policy that complements the Tiered QRIS effort; and, scholarship opportunities for ECE educators seeking degrees. The state also provides evidence of public-sector and private sector partnerships to augment and expand its quality-focused statewide system. (b) The state provides clear and convincing data in age-appropriate classifications to demonstrate funding and enrollment of children with high needs participating in its Early Learning and Development program from 2007 to the present. The number of children with high needs reflects Delaware's mix of Federal, State and local funding streams. (c) An observed strength is Delaware's lengthy history of supporting and sustaining Early Learning and Development—beginning in 1992, with renewed focus and progression over the past twenty years. The timeline presented on page 12 provides milestones and accomplishments that tell a story of the state's successful journey in changing state codes and regulations, oversight and coordination of ECE activities and systems development, and ratification of key policy decisions. (d) Through tables and narrative explanation, the State of Delaware demonstrates its capacity to develop and implement a comprehensive early learning and development system. Delaware's Early Learning and Development Standards are in sync with all Essential domains of School readiness, across all age groups. A key strength is the state's integration of licensing standards, workforce competencies and program standards throughout its birth to eight ECE system. Delaware is using a \$22M infusion of state funding to further develop and enhance its Stars for Early Success program—a tiered QRIS that is rooted in the Delaware EC system. Other complementary initiatives and enterprises include a comprehensive workforce development framework that is aligned with a deep-level professional development system of continuous improvement among EC educators.

and, a partnership-driven approach to health promotion, including health literacy, promising practices, and family-focused curricula. The state references three emerging practices—comprehensive assessment systems, effective data practices and family engagement strategies—as coupling its inherent systems strengths with a compelling vision for continuous innovation and improvement. The quality of the state’s response is especially noted in its direct assessment of progress in implementing a model for kindergarten entry. Advancements have been made through a combination of research, stakeholder engagement, and trial projects—demonstrating an understanding of how sustained systems are developed and maintained. Additionally, Delaware describes its Essential Data Elements in the context of both emerging and longitudinal planning. Its capabilities and strengths include finding supportive funding streams for this effort and partnerships with multiple systems stakeholders. Most impressive is Delaware’s focus on using RTT-ELC funds to continue developing a communications campaign and ongoing engagement strategies for families eligible for, and enrolled in, EC programs. Evidence in the grant and its appendices are full of innovative plans, techniques, and strategies that will help families navigate the different agencies and partners in the sector.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The State of Delaware’s RTT-ELC application proposes two ambitious goals: (1) to accelerate the pace of progress toward stated objectives, targets and goals, and (2) to take areas of its good work within Delaware and make them great. The proposal calls for the “ambitious and rapid build up of both Delaware Stars (the state’s tiered QRIS) participants and program quality”. Targets are set in the percentage of high-needs children participating in the state’s programs (from 20% today to 78% by the end of the grant); percentage of Stars-rated programs that reach the top tiers of quality (from a current baseline of 27% to an endpoint of 62%); and, percentage of high-needs children enrolled in a top-tier program (from a current level of 5% to 58% by the end of the grant year). The application solidly addresses all areas required in the section including a well written, concise narrative that describes how RTT-ELC funding is a continuation of its present trajectory towards expansion of quality EC services and “even higher potential to increase ultimate outcomes for children, as gains in EC are amplified by improvements in the K-12 system”. Specific areas of strength in Delaware’s approach include: • A focus on addressing the health and development needs of the whole child in a variety of EC program settings. At the heart of the Delaware approach is its state vision to raise parent expectations regarding the quality of programs serving their children and empowering parents to access information that will guide them in making better decisions about early care and education. • Crafting its EC tiered strategy on core elements that will instill in parents of Children with High Needs, “a self-sustaining demand for high quality options”. • Strengthening Delaware Stars so that is not only a best-practice, unified framework for quality, but is “understood by programs, educators and families”—a system that is driven by the needs of the consumers, not the institution, alone. • A statewide framework that coordinates EC networks—mandating Stars participation for state-funded Pre-K, Head Start and Early Head Start, family child care and other programs overseen by the Department of Education and/or Department of Social Services. • Articulating a vision of going “from good to great” in EC systems integration and service delivery. The Delaware plan targets and prioritizes funding investments to detail its interest in supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems; Engaging and Supporting families, and Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services and policies.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

Delaware's application outlines a stream-lined governance structure. The State's Interagency Resource Management Committee (IRMC) is described as being the ultimate decision-maker for early childhood related policy and funding issues. Its membership includes the Secretaries of Education, Department of Health and Social Services, Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families (DSCYF), the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and the Controller General. Other key stakeholders described in the Plan include, the Inter-Departmental Childhood Planning Committee and the Early Childhood Council. The plan includes process steps, communication links, resolution of conflict guides, and an overall description of organizational roles and responsibilities. A well-constructed Governance-related Roles and Responsibilities crosswalk is provided in this section. Submitted tables provide detailed historical baseline information in all mandated areas (a)(1)-(4). The applicant refers to the data in the application narrative and effectively presents a compelling case for High Needs in Delaware's cross-agency, public-partner sector partnership model. The signature of Jack Markell, Governor of the State of Delaware is present in the application. The signatures of lead representatives from the Delaware Department of Education and the Department of Health and Social Services, are also present in the application. Terms and conditions that reflect a strong commitment to the State Plan by each Participating State Agency, are present in the application. A table of participating state agencies, including the selection criteria for participation, the participating agency, and a description of the type of participation (scope of work) is present in this crosswalk. Individually signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) from various agencies/departments are not present—all three participating state agencies signed a common MOU. Forty-three (43) Letters of Support are present in the application covering a wide span of Delaware Early Childhood and community stakeholders required, or suggested in the RTT-ELC application instructions. Groups included in this section include, advocacy groups, higher education, schools, unions, Superintendents, Political Leaders, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, local nonprofits and community Leaders, and members of the business community. Each letter is personalized and authentic, sketching out the organization's history within the Delaware EC Network, a description of its unique service offerings, and statement of the organization's commitment to supporting the goals and objectives of the Early Learning Challenge.

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)

The proposed Delaware RTT-ELC budget provides support levels that are reasonable and necessary in relation to the activities presented in it High Quality Plan. The Interagency Resource Management Committee (IRMC) is the ultimate decision-maker for early childhood-related policy and funding issues in Delaware. Overall, the State of Delaware's proposed budget appears to be reasonable and necessary in relation to the activities presented in the narrative and supportive tables (Table (A)(1)-4)and Budget Table I-1 and I-2). The strength of the State of Delaware Budget Plan is its longstanding commitment to fully fund early childhood learning and development from state, federal and private funds. The applicant states that Delaware currently commits nearly \$120M to this effort and will augment that total with an additional \$22M of state funding to supplement the RTT-ELC grant. For example, \$7M of that total will be applied to QRIS tiered reimbursement, and \$2.5M will be allocated to administrative infrastructure supports. The allocation of funding in EC programs supports the Delaware Institute for Excellence in EC, professional development of early learning teachers and providers, and expansion of funding rates for all EC programs. Delaware's anticipated funding will support (1) QRIS tiered reimbursement for high quality programs serving high needs children, (2) QRIS administrative supports, including technical assistance, grants and awards in the form of incentives, and (3) professional development in the form of compensation provided for ECE educators, and service to high needs populations.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

improved learning outcomes for children; and

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

The Delaware Stars for Early Success fulfills the State's requirement to operate a statewide, tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System that is used to assess, improve and communicate quality levels for early care. Completed tables, tiered program standards, documentation of elements, career lattice, professional development systems, and linkages with the Delaware Office of Child Care Licensing standards provide evidence of the applicant's full and complete response to RTT-ELC requirements. The State provides evidence of the alignment of the Stars standards to each of the six areas defined in the Early Learning Challenge (B)(1)(a)(1-6), as critical elements of quality early learning and development programs. Delaware has operated a statewide, tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) since 2007. The Delaware Stars for Early Success has successfully operated as a public-private partnership between state agencies, foundations, and ECE stakeholders "invested in improving the quality of child care in Delaware. The strength of the application is its optimal configuration of its QRIS, infrastructure supports and organization of its EC system—focusing on quality improvement efforts that have evolved over time. An additional strength is the State's creative inclusion of "alternative pathways", that build upon nationally recognized standards, such as, NAEYC accreditation, and Head Start Program Performance Standards. If there are Stars Standards that an entering program does not meet, alternative pathways into Stars "become the focus of quality improvement work. With nearly five years of experience, the State is now re-tooling its initial efforts with second phase goals: (1) promoting a strengths-based approach to quality improvement, and (2) raising the quality and rigor of the Stars standards and ensuring alignment with other components of the state's early learning strategy. In addition to developing innovative methods of entry into Star Levels, the hybrid model, Early Learning Foundations, (Delaware's evidence-based early learning standards) is linked to the Early Learning Challenge framework. Most impressive in the redesign hybrid model is the State's continued emphasis on the importance of leadership and stakeholder involvement. The State provides a visual crosswalk (Table (B)(1-2)) to illustrate the full relationship between the revised Stars standards and current State licensing requirements.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

The State of Delaware tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. "Delaware Stars" is thoughtfully planned, ambitious, and linked to principles and values that guide its "framework for quality improvement across all sectors of the early learning and development system". The application describes in sufficient depth the state's commitment and rationales, as well as detailing a series of policy and administrative decisions that guide its target goals. In addition to frequently cited adaptations that explain its evolving Stars systems, the state introduces, "program-by program", its new hybrid model that will impact licensed child care centers, licensed family child care programs, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, state funded Pre-K programs, school-based programs, children receiving Part C of IDEA, as well as programs receiving funds from CCDF, Title I of ESEA (information provided in Tables (B)(2)(c)). A noteworthy strength in this section is the articulation of Delaware's family engagement strategies. The applicant notes that its Family and Community Partnerships domain emphasizes ongoing bidirectional communication between families and programs. This empowerment

model, embedded in the Stars Community Partnership Standards, addresses how EC programs will promote parent access to the program, provide training and support for families as children move to preschool and kindergarten, create social networks for support, and link with community supports. A strength in the state's approach include methods of setting participation goals in the Stars system that are clearly defined and scalable for a variety of program options (e.g., licensed child care, licensed family child care homes, Head Start programs, etc.). The participation targets are matched by financial incentives and investments to help programs attain participation targets. Several innovative features, including an infrastructure fund to support capital investments and a "card swipe" data system to support real-time data collection about children's attendance and participation are mentioned. Delaware also details organizational responsibilities that are clearly tied to indicators of effectiveness—outlined in depth in other sections and supplemental materials provided in the application's appendices. The State provides evidence of 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. Specifically, the State provides multiple examples of how it will increase subsidy reimbursement rates; executing policy that will increase participation rates in programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start; and, including a portion of grant funds directed to the expansion and tied to the tiered reimbursement policy. A weakness in this section is the High Quality Plan is currently partially implemented, as noted by the State's absence of data in reporting the number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by program type found in Table (B)(2)(c).

	Available	Score
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs	15	12

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

Delaware has a process for establishing and maintaining a level of inter-rater reliability that exceeds national benchmarks (85% Delaware State versus 80% national). The applicant provides an outline of training activities to ensure the validity and reliability of Stars ratings. Salient features of its training plan include the identification and use of trained master and coached "anchor assessors" responsible for monitoring program during reliability visits to programs. The state has also developed protocols related to monitoring frequency, and identifies the Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) as a critical component of the Stars evaluation rubric. The most innovative aspect of the state's monitoring plan is its proposal to "engage two other leading states (North Carolina and Kentucky) in a Multi-state Consortium on Program Quality Assessment". Delaware projects that this Consortium will "develop, field test, and pilot a new quality scale designed to meet the specific needs of QRIS and regulatory systems". A strong body of research evidence shows that such early childhood cooperative efforts have a positive effect on improving internal systems, communications, and inter-rater supports. Key features in Delaware's system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs reflect the state's commitment to "get program quality data (both through licensing and through its tiered Stars system) in the hands of parents. The State of Delaware cites several examples of how it will make data available to parents, in the easiest form possible, to cultivate a wider understanding and recognition of high quality programs and options. This is a value statement and a guiding principle that the Stars rating system is an integral part of parent decision-making and problem-solving that will empower parents to find the best child development option for their child. Delaware also effectively links its rating and monitoring plan with two other important elements—cultivating consumer understanding of its accountability system (especially within local communities with high numbers of Children with High Needs); and, creatively including other stakeholders in widening existing communication and engagement strategies around program quality (e.g., using social media, events, and partner organizations' communication channels). The applicant provides a framework by which the State Lead Agency will provide venues of sharing information about Stars and its Stars-rated programs; an expansion of its home visiting program, enhanced information on its Office of Child Care Licensing website detailing profiles on Stars rated programs; and an expansion of its Help Me Grow initiative—including a parent outreach hotline to address questions about services available for children. Campaign timelines and interagency cooperative efforts that support Delaware's statewide "awareness campaign" were provided. The State provided examples of deep-level efforts to elevate parent participation and understanding around issues related to access to quality and EC program options.

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

20

18

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)

Delaware's approach to developing and implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs is two-fold: (1) providing technical assistance to programs (overseen by the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood), and (2) offering programs financial incentives and rewards to programs investing in quality and offering families high quality levels. The State specifically notes that it will include every child care center in the state that is defined in the most at-risk and high-need category. The State of Delaware enters this section with a bold and ambitious goal—to maximize the number of children, especially Children with High Needs, who are enrolled in a high quality early learning program. This statement is a continuous theme throughout the state's application. The state outlines three "critical areas" in which the goal will be measured: (1) significantly increasing program participation in the quality rating system; (2) increasing families' understanding of program quality and the availability of high-quality options; and (3) improving program quality and accessibility. These statements are not, however, substantiated by the data provided in Table (B)(4)(c)(2). Baseline data for programs in the State are in the low or non-participating range. One of the most innovative methods of building capacity in vulnerable programs and communities is the state's idea to create a "Directors' Community of Practice"—a well-researched method of helping people and organizations engage in sustainable, desired change. The applicant states that its expansion and improvement to its Stars program will lead to an increase of more than 12 times the number of Children with High Needs attending programs in top quality-rating tiers over the four year grant period. Performance Measures are provided in all required Early Learning and Development Programs, as well as in program related descriptors (e.g., providing full-day, full-year programs; transportation; meals; family support services).

	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)

A decided strength in the Delaware RTT-ELC application is the state's lengthy history in the field of EC program development and its commitment to the quality and effectiveness of the Delaware Stars for Early Success program. The application and its appendices are rich with data, descriptions, processes and policy advancements that demonstrate the state's "willingness to invest aggressively in continuous improvement". The state has in place a program evaluation plan that includes a recent contract with an independent research evaluator contracted to "assess the appropriateness and implementation of the initial Stars standards". Further evidence of this strength in research on child outcomes, is Delaware's 1997 longitudinal study of children receiving early intervention services as four-year-olds—tracking their performance through fifth grade in 2005. The State commissioned the University of Delaware to oversee this effort and the results found students who participated in ECAP or Head Start services met or exceeded fifth grade reading, math, and writing standards at a significantly greater rate than their peers living in poverty who did not receive such services. The State presents well thought out and articulate plans for validating its QRIS tiers to ensure differential levels of program quality across all four dimensions of practice and determine the relationship between the quality tiers in Delaware Stars and children's readiness for school. Delaware provides a well thought-out evaluation plan that includes three criteria: rigor in research design and methodology; multiple measures with demonstrated reliability; and, connectivity between formative and summative evaluation activities. The plan is of high quality; however, the State has not implemented this plan. Another identified strength in its approach is the proposed budget allocation of RTT-ELC funds (\$2M) to support expanded research on Delaware Stars—including its five quality tiers; its internal processes to assist programs in enhancing their program quality; and, deeper research in how quality impacts learning and development outcomes of participating children. The research questions posed in the application point to the applicant's conceptual and technical knowledge of the benefits to program evaluation and accountability to public investors.

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

Each State must address in its application—

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	30	29
<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)		

The State of Delaware presents evidence in its narrative and Appendices of established Early Learning and Development Standards for Infants/Toddlers and Pre-school aged children. The Delaware model is called "Early Learning Foundations (ELF), and its principles and tenets are embedded within Delaware Rules (licensing regulations) and the state's QRIS system (Stars for Early Success). The Department of Education (DOE) and its Advisory Revisions Work Groups, collaborate with the EC community, national experts and DOE K-12 specialists to revise and reflect the needs of developmentally, culturally, and linguistically diverse children across the birth to five age range. The Work Group process is highly participatory, involving a diverse range of stakeholders and national experts—a strength in the applicant's overall proposal. Work Group recommendations are guided by flexibility and align effective early learning standards with program standards. The state provides a Table (Table (C) (1)-1 Alignment of Preschool ELFs with Essential Domains of School Readiness), to illustrate the connectivity between Delaware Early Learning Foundations (Preschool and Infant/Toddler Age Groups) and the Essential Domains of School Readiness defined by the RTT-ELC Grant Application. It is evident that DOE analyzes and acts on the strength of the ELF and K-3 academic standards. For example, the state's expert discovered through a thoughtful analysis that the "backward alignment of K-3 standards to the Preschool ELF was not as strong as the forward alignment from early care and education to the state's K-3 academic standards due to weak representation of social and emotional developmental domains in the K-12 standards". To the State's credit, this unintended finding became evidence of the Delaware's full embrace of early developmental opportunities that establish a critical foundation for children's academic success and well-being—from birth through graduation. The application 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. A strength in its approach is the mandate that Head Start and the state-funded Early Childhood Assistance Program (ECAP) use the ELF for program planning—and that as a reciprocal contribution, Head Start and ECAP programs are monitored annually with the Head Start Program Performance Standards monitoring tool. Professional Development activities, resources and materials are matched with ELF and delivered in a variety of modalities—online training modules, site trainings, trainings for family child care providers, etc. Additionally, the state shows that it places great value on the ELF by making certain that ELF materials are also available for families—including an interactive-inspired calendar for families with preschool aged children, as well as a activity book for Infant/Toddlers. The latter project is being co-planned with Delaware Association of Education for Young Children and is a strong example of designing materials that include appropriate links to locally relevant family resources.

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

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)

Delaware's strategy for success in early learning and development are based on "years of research and experience support". Its application and this section specifically, notes a ten year evolution in its Early Success: Delaware's Early Childhood Plan. Additionally, the state references its numerous letters of support from the private, public, and nonprofit sectors to validate its assertion that Delaware has High-Quality Plan to identify and address the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs. Indeed, letters of support are original and authentic with many references to Delaware's RTT-ELC theme: using grant funding to scale up promising practices. In this section, all areas of the grant requirements were met in sufficient description of the state's current and projected plan. Highlights of the strengths in this section include: • In the area of providing evidence of standards to ensure children's health and safety, Delaware notes three areas that have received national recognition: (1) 2009, Let's Move initiative, a collaboration efforts between DOE's Child and Adult Food Program and the Office of Child Care Licensing, (2) 2010, the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies ranked Delaware's Family Child Care licensing regulations first out of 50 states, and (3)

Delaware's current regulatory provisions that require annual monitoring reviews to ensure licensed child care center compliance with child screenings and follow ups—within one month of their admittance to a program. • Extended and ongoing work to ensure that Delacare Rules, the state's licensing regulations that serve as the foundation for Delaware Stars, addresses screening and assessment supports and includes a progression of standards for individualized instruction and services for children. • Delaware's "intentional progression of training and professional development" available to EC educators, including links to post secondary institutions for educators entering or currently in the field. The Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood spearheads and coordinates many trainings for educators in the areas of social, emotional, behavior, developmental and health needs for children and appears to be a model for streamlining and integrating professional development opportunities throughout the EC system. • Many opportunities for family engagement in social and emotional support, including an evidence-based model of high-impact EC Mental Health that has reported success in enhancing educators' and families' skills—and has drastically reduced the incidences of pre-kindergarten expulsions, statewide. • A pro-active response to promotion of healthy and active lifestyles for children that includes an obesity prevention project, 5-2-1 Almost None. This project engages children and families around healthy eating habits and is aligned with the state's challenge to combat a statistic that 40% of children in Delaware are classified as being overweight or obese—5% above national averages. Delaware's Help Me Grow, the state's overall framework for organizing and aligning resources, meets all RTT-ELC requirements for leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual targets to increase the number of Children with High Needs. Noteworthy accomplishments in this area include: • Delaware's integration and growth of resources for the "hardest to engage populations in the highest-need neighborhoods", statewide. Particularly impressive is the state's investment in evidence-based home visiting for all high-need families regardless of whether they are participating in an early care and education program. • The state's Parents as Teachers (PAT) project targeting services for children most at risk for developmental delays. • The Delaware Nurse-Family-Partnership, a collaborative project involving evidence-base home visiting for low-income, first time mothers and their children, and their children prenatally. • Healthy Families America, an evidence-based home visiting program made available to Medicaid-eligible women in Delaware through the Division of Public Health. This project is noteworthy because of MOU provisions between the project and the PAT project; an example of thoughtfully planned, seamless transitions for High Needs children and families. • Evidence of ambitious, yet achievable targets for follow up services for Children with High Needs as set in Table (C)(3)(d). The Delaware's response in this section demonstrates creativity, effectiveness in planning and implementing critical services to vulnerable families, and full collaboration with internal state and external EC stakeholders.

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)
<p>The applicant provided in its Appendices full documentation of its Early Success, Early Education Plan developed by the Delaware Early Care and Education Council, Early Childhood Comprehensive System Steering Committee and other Delaware Early Childhood Stakeholders. The State of Delaware has a twenty year history of "comprehensively strengthening, integrating, and professionalizing its early childhood education workforce". The narrative cites Delaware as being the nation's first state to require professional development for its early childhood education workforce. Notable features of Delaware's Competencies, include, (1) alignment with the State's competency framework (2) competencies that are embedded in all forms of provider certification and training. (3) linkages to a state wide professional development and career ladder lattice—overseen by the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC). Additionally, the state has in place a series of "early childhood and school age educator credentials that are directly aligned with both the Early Childhood Competencies and the School Age Competencies". Strategies for obtaining these credentials include a mix of education or training, demonstrated competency via a portfolio, and an interview process related to the applicant's relevant knowledge and skills. The overarching strength of the Delaware Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework is its focus on high expectations for professional preparation—particularly in communities serving High Needs</p>

populations. The state's professional development approach underscores the importance of a highly focused, yet multi-strategy approach to finding, growing and keeping a highly qualified professional workforce—including coaching and mentoring, formal and informal professional development training, linkages to credentials, and provision of financial incentives and resources. The applicant provided evidence of its comprehensive and vocational education systems that are aligned with the state's competency framework. Several letters of support from postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers are provided in the application's Appendices. These letters provide evidence that postsecondary institutions have been engaged.

	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)

This section is well integrated and connected to Delaware's stated goal of ensuring children in the state's diverse ECE settings have "well-trained educators with the appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities to support childhood learning and development". The State presents a High Quality Plan, however, key elements in the plan are only partially implemented. A decided strength in the applicant's approach is the State's plan to use existing collaborations, alignment, and cooperation with a variety of institutions and organizations to expand access and improve effectiveness in the area of ECE professional development. Delaware recognizes the need to target programs serving high concentrations of high need children as a priority—allowing for an innovative financial incentive based on pre-set conditions (programs must be licensed, adopt the state's career lattice framework, and eligibility based on a set percentage of enrolled children receiving care subsidies). The State's plan is innovative and supportive of its state workforce development vision and goals. Delaware intends to provide recruitment bonuses for programs seeking to hire highly-qualified educators; wage enhancements for educators progressing along the state's career lattice; linkages to the state's tiered QRIS; and, the development of a data management system that will track educator qualifications for all ECE programs. The plan includes state ECE centers, School age centers, Large Family Child Care, Family Child Care, and Head Start programs. Many of the workforce development strategies are sustainable through the development of leadership coaches who support individuals and create local communities of practice in a variety of child care options. Additionally, the role of the State's Department of Education in overseeing the development of wage compensation guidelines and the development of the leadership coaching program offers a seamless career pathway in organizing and compensating the ECE workforce. The State has established ambitious and achievable targets for increasing the number of programs aligned to its existing and expanded Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Additionally, the state provides a clear and convincing narrative and description of the number and percentage of ECE educators who are and will be progressing to higher levels of credentials during the grant life-cycle. Delaware cites a commitment to provide public reporting of key statistics monitoring the efficacy of workforce development strategies, including tracking the percentage of educators at each level of the career lattice, number of educators progressing along the lattice each year, and, the retention rate of educators. Table (D)(2)(d)(1) indicates that "no Institution of Higher Education currently offers programs or degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework"—therefore, the State cannot currently meet the RTT-ELC threshold. To its credit, the State provides targets for postsecondary institutions gradually aligning its institutions to meet this expectation.

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 State of Delaware provides documentation and evidence that a Plan to support the establishment of a statewide kindergarten entry assessment encompassing multiple domains and multiple age appropriate measures, is in process but has not been fully implemented. The state has in place internal research to "inform potential building blocks" for such an effort, including a 2004 -2007 Kindergarten Full Day Study, provided in the applicant's Appendices. The state has explored the types and levels of resources to meet its goal and is committed to implementing an assessment that is aligned with the state's grade level expectations that include the Common Core, the Early Learning and Development Standards, and covers all of the essential domains of school readiness statewide for all teacher and children by year 4 of the RTT-ELC grant. The State's current efforts include a kindergarten entry assessment pilot program that measures all six essential domains of development. The Delaware Kindergarten Entry Pilot is using Teaching Strategies GOLD, a formative assessment system which covers all of the Essential Domains of School Readiness and is aligned with the Delaware Early Learning Foundations. This pilot, funded by the State Advisory Council has been operational since June 2011 and will end in September 2013 and will help inform the design and operations for the more robust data system proposed in the RTT-ELC application. Supportive features of Delaware's forward progress in reaching a goal develop a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades include: • The creation of a Kindergarten Entry Assessment Advisory Committee comprised of members who have expertise relevant to the process and represent the range of stakeholders statewide. • Inclusion of protocols for data sharing with DOE, community-level data sharing between EC and K-12 programs that will be governed by controls to protect confidentiality of children. • Selection of a research partner to formulate research questions and design of the project. The role and responsibility of the research partner is vague and underdeveloped. • Development of a cadre of expert teachers across districts who can provide coaching and training to both principals and teachers regarding the benefits of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment system. • Professional development funds to facilitate the development of ongoing professional learning communities using the Kindergarten Entry Assessment tool and system. • A robust target for implementing the system that will start in 2010 and be fully (100%) implemented in September 2015. The Delaware plan declares that target month/year, all kindergarten teachers and 100% of all students will be participating in the statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Again, this forward momentum indicates the State has presented a medium quality response related to the quality of the plan, and has by its own acknowledgment a plan that is only partially implemented. The State's declaration that the objective of the Pilot (KEA) is not to prepare for the implementation of this particular assessment instrument as the basis for a statewide kindergarten entry assessment, is counterintuitive to the amount of time and energy the State has spent engaging stakeholders in numerous Pilot activities, tasks and information gathering.

	Available	Score
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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	10
<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>Comments on (P)(2)</p> <p>The State of Delaware has provide ample evidence of its lengthy history in recognizing the importance of regulating care for children. The 2001 Delaware Child Care Act meets all specifications and standards required in the RTT-ELC grant. The licensing system is inclusive of EC programs that are not otherwise regulated by the state and exceeds its standard by requiring licensure of "1" versus US ED definition of "2 or more unrelated children". The State of Delaware application is steeped with crosswalks and descriptions of its Stars QRIS system. The state's goal of reaching 100% coverage of several types of early learning and development programs is far reaching and attainable given the ample number of existing regulatory supports and regulatory standards, community and EC endorsements, and, exemplary cooperation from multiple state departments and entities.</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>Comments on (P)(3)</p> <p>The State of Delaware does not have an implemented Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA)that meets selection criterion (E)(1), nor does the State's score in (E)(1) meet the required threshold of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		

Absolute Priority

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

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

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

Comments on Absolute Priority

The State of Delaware provided a comprehensive, innovative plan for improving the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs that meet all standards listed in this section and are fully embraced by DOE and EC stakeholders and community partners. The applicant addressed how it intended to use RTT-ELC funds to further its financial investment in a comprehensive EC system that aligns resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and is designed and implemented as a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. The state's application addresses the Focused Investment Areas and provides examples of Delaware's effective, accountable systems of EC programs for children birth through eight years of age.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # DE-5006

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 8:27 AM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Criteria, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 18

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

The application makes a strong case in support of the state's commitment to and investment in high-quality early learning programs. The recent 35% increase in state spending is a particularly strong example of this commitment, especially when most states are cutting early childhood expenditures. The timeline presented in the proposal also provides evidence of a steady history of commitment. The Interagency Resource Management Committee (IRMC) and the Early Childhood Council (ECC) provide an organizational structure to support the state's efforts, especially in the area of communication and collaboration. Previous steps Delaware has taken, especially the substantial state funding allocations, have provided a very strong foundation for the proposed grant activities. The legislature's unanimous approval of a \$22 million budget allocation stands as strong evidence of the state's commitment to improving the quality of its early childhood programming. The application expresses the key elements of the plan in terms of "core strengths," "critical needs," and "emerging practices." The clear focus of the plan is on improving quality, especially for Children with High Needs, and on increasing the number of Children with High Needs receiving high quality services. The state has already established a statewide TQRIS, comprehensive early learning standards, and effective health promotion practices. The state has also begun work on establishing a Comprehensive Assessment System and on fostering high quality family engagement practices.

Table with 3 columns: Criteria, Available, Score. Row 2: (A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals, 20, 19

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The application outlines a plan that is reasonably ambitious yet achievable and builds on the State's progress to date. The state's plan is ambitious in that the goal is to increase the percentage of high-needs children enrolled in top-tier programs from 5% to 58% by the end of the grant period, although a higher target would also have likely been achievable. The current plan is achievable because it builds on prior work and takes a multi-pronged approach by increasing participation in the TQRIS and increasing the quality of the workforce. The plan also takes a holistic approach to service provision, aligns standards across age groups, and differentiates based on needs. The application also provides a solid rationale for the selection of criteria within the Focused Investment Areas. Delaware is specifically addressing (C)(1), (C)(3), (D)(1), (D)(2), and (E)(1). The main rationale for the selection of these is that each already has a strong foundation, and the state would be moving them "from good to great." Another strength of the plan is that the criteria not selected are also not ignored, and the application outlines where work on each of the remaining criteria is embedded in the plan.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

The application describes a strong existing governance structure in the state. The IRMC is described as "the ultimate decision-maker for early childhood-related policy and funding issues in Delaware." The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the IRMC and all of the partner agencies are clearly articulated. This entity allocates funds and coordinates resources, training, planning, and policies related to early learning in Delaware. The decision-making and dispute-resolution processes are reasonable and are illustrated in the organizational chart provided in the appendix. In addition, the Interdepartmental Early Childhood Planning Committee and the Early Childhood Council provide support in the form of coordination of participating agencies and activities. These entities also involve participating programs and parents and families, including those of Children with High Needs. The application includes an MOU among participating agencies and a Scope of Work outlining each agency's responsibilities. Letters of support from many stakeholders provide further evidence of the plan's achievability. The letters are particularly notable, because they seem to be authentic, enthusiastic, and persuasive.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

Delaware commits around \$120 million each year to early learning and development. These funds come from public and private sources, as well as from competitive grants. As previously mentioned, the state has recently committed a \$22 million investment in early learning. The application outlines the sources for all of these funds and how they are used. Much of the plan for use of grant funds centers on capacity-building activities (e.g., professional development for early childhood program leaders), under the assumption that the benefits of such investments will endure beyond the grant period. This is a wise stance for a project of this nature. The budget, as presented, is adequate to support the activities described in the state's plan and includes costs that are reasonable and necessary. The budget details the amount of funds budgeted for participating state agencies and other partners, and especially given the \$500,000 annual allocation for ongoing training, the activities seem sustainable.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

The state's Stars for Early Success program is a TQRIS used to assess, improve, and communicate quality levels for early learning programs. The system is based on standards in four domains: (a) Learning Environment and Curriculum, (b) Family and Community Partnerships, (c) Management and Administration, and (d) Qualifications and Professional Development. The system also includes components related to health promotion. Most elements of the system are fully implemented at this time, and full implementation of all elements is planned during the grant period. The state has evaluated the system and, as a result, redesigned it to more effectively meet the state's needs. The redesigned version will be implemented in 2012. The standards and levels of the TQRIS, as presented, are appropriate for promoting high quality services. The tools for measuring quality in each of the domains are well established and appropriate. The current system does not address "Approaches to Learning," and information about the current Comprehensive Assessment System is limited. The state has made and continues to make an impressive effort to ensure that Stars standards are appropriate, measurable, and of high quality. The standards meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and they reflect high expectations of program excellence. Finally, the TQRIS is linked to the state's licensing system. Given Delaware's strong licensing standards, the threshold for the TQRIS is high.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

The application presents a very strong plan for incentives to increase participation in Stars, and the elements of this plan are partially implemented at this time. Low current rates indicate that the state has not yet maximized participation. Although current participation is somewhat lacking, by the end of the grant period, the state expects to include 100% of publicly regulated programs and at least 95% of all Children with High Needs, from birth to five. Publicly regulated programs include programs from every category. Strong incentives are provided via tiered reimbursement, and initial priority will be given to including programs serving high needs neighborhoods. Investments will also be made in improving provider infrastructure and implementing a card swipe system for data management. The state's financial commitment is evident through the reimbursement schedule. By increasing the number of early learning programs in the TQRIS and increasing the quality of the programs already in the TQRIS, the state is providing solid supports to increase families' access to high quality child care, especially families who have Children with High Needs.

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

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)

Stars uses the ERS, which is a valid and reliable tool, and there is an effective system in place to establish, ensure, and maintain inter-rater reliability. Delaware is also involved with a multi-state consortium to develop and pilot another tool that will expand the ERS to include measures of other factors, such as teacher-child interaction quality. This tool is expected to be fully developed by the end of the grant period, and it will provide a substantial enhancement to the ERS that will help Delaware, as well as other states. The state currently monitors programs annually. The state already has a web site where quality data are made available to parents, but it also has plans to substantially increase parents' awareness of and reliance on the quality rating system. The state has identified a wide range of effective outlets and methods to communicate more broadly with parents, especially parents of Children with High Needs. This information campaign is very well planned and is very likely to accomplish its stated goals.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	19

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)

As previously mentioned, Delaware has a well-established TQRIS and an ambitious yet achievable plan for increasing participation in it. The application proposes several effective strategies to increase the number of programs participating and increase the number of Children with High Needs being served by programs in the top tiers. Specifically, the state will work to bring more high quality programs into the system and to move lower quality programs up in the tiers. Delaware's plan includes mechanisms for both incentives and support to encourage and enable programs to move up in their TQRIS rating. In particular, the state plans to provide financial incentives for educators working in high needs neighborhoods and tiered reimbursement that will reward programs that improve their quality rating. The Stars Plus program targets high needs programs for intensive technical assistance, at both the center director (e.g., the Directors' Community of Practice support program) and classroom (e.g., weekly TA with a mentor who has a reduced case load) levels, which is an effective approach to helping programs make meaningful and lasting improvements. Using a cohort model for technical assistance, Delaware expects to include every center in the state that falls into a high-needs category, which is a substantial strength. A major effort to increase access to Children with High Needs is providing the support necessary to help half-day programs expand to full-day programs.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	14

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

The application provides solid evidence of a longstanding state commitment to validate the Stars system. This has included contracting with well-qualified independent evaluators and studying the longitudinal outcomes of the state's early childhood programs to make improvements. This practice will continue, and the state has begun plans for a cross-sector data system. The goal of the validation plan include (a) validating the tiers of the Delaware Stars for Early Success program to ensure differential levels of quality across all four dimensions of practice and (b) assessing the relationship between the quality tiers in Stars and children's school readiness. The application also outlines a sound and rigorous research plan to be used in this evaluation to answer important questions about the system and about its effectiveness for evaluating program quality, the characteristics of the programs that participate, and its effects on child outcomes. The process will use valid and reliable measures, and the plan will tie validation into school readiness. Finally, the state's involvement with the multi-state consortium that is working to enhance the Environmental Rating Scales by adding an adult-child interaction component is a major strength of the plan.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	30	28
<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)

The application provides a description of Delaware's Early Learning Foundations (ELFs), which are the state's standards for infant, toddler, and preschool learning. The standards have been fully implemented and have undergone review for cultural and linguistic appropriateness and for inclusion of children with disabilities, children with developmental delays, and children who are English language learners. Alignment with K-3 standards was a critical factor in the development of the ELFs, and both backward and forward alignment were considered, which is a thoughtful and effective approach to alignment. The ELFs are linked to curricula, activities, and assessment and are built into the state's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and professional development activities, although one weakness of the plan is that the alignment of standards to assessment is accomplished through links to the curriculum rather than directly between the standards and assessment. The plan includes effective supports to promote understanding of and commitment to the standards, including making the ELFs available in multiple formats and languages and providing materials (e.g., calendar, activity book) for parents to increase their understanding of the ELFs' usefulness.

	Available	Score
(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.	30	25
<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)

Delaware's application outlines a "whole child" approach, which encompasses health promotion activities. The state has a long record of success and recognition in this area. Delaware Rules have gained national recognition for promotion of health, nutrition, and safety and extends across all types of early childhood programs. The Help Me Grow grant provides screening, referral and follow-up, particularly for Children with High Needs. The state provides opportunities for professional development on basic health, safety, and nutrition. The state already includes health promotion as part of its current training programs for early childhood providers. The plan also includes several effective strategies for promoting referrals and family engagement. The intent is to use grant funds to scale up existing practices. The plan is certainly achievable, given the strong foundation of established practices in the state, but the targets are not particularly ambitious because leveraging the state's resources and existing practices could accomplish more. There is no explanation why there is no increase over the grant period in the targets for the number of children participating in ongoing health care as part of a schedule of well-child care.

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	20
<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>Delaware has a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The state also has in place an effective career lattice of credentials. The early childhood and school age educator credentials are directly aligned with both the Early Childhood Competencies and the School Age Competencies. These competencies are fully integrated into the TQRIS. The state has engaged postsecondary institutions, stating "Higher education institutions have supported, through their representation on the P-20 Council and the Early Childhood Council, the development of the state's competency frameworks. As a part of this State Plan, all higher education institutions in Delaware have agreed to actions that will bring their 2 and 4 year programs into full alignment with the Delaware ELFs." Letters of support provide ample evidence of this engagement with higher education.</p>		

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	19
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to improve the effectiveness and retention of Early Childhood Educators who work with Children with High Needs, with the goal of improving child outcomes by--</p> <p>(a) Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities that are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;</p> <p>(b) Implementing policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) that promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that is aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and that are designed to increase retention;</p> <p>(c) Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention; and</p> <p>(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--</p>		

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

According to the application, "Delaware aims to further improve professional development for educators by both expanding access and improving effectiveness." To expand access, all higher education institutions in the state will align their course offerings and curriculum with the state's Competency Framework, making a greater quantity of high quality professional development accessible to educators. All professional development provided will also incorporate the framework. The state will implement an effective compensation strategy that targets recruitment and retention, along with increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials, particularly in high needs areas. This strategy includes providing substantial bonuses for degree attainment and retention. The state will set eligibility criteria for the compensation program that focus on those programs with the greatest need. Another area of focus will be on developing skills among leaders, which is a significant strength of the application and will add to the sustainability of grant efforts. The likelihood of sustainability is substantially enhanced by the allocation of \$500,000 (from the state's \$22 million allocation) to T.E.A.C.H., which supports the participant in achieving a Child Development Associate credential, Associate's degree or Bachelor's degree. It provides tuition, travel, release time and compensation to the scholar, and supports the employer by requiring the scholar to make a commitment to remain in the field. The Department of Education has already developed and implemented a database to track the qualifications, credentials, and employment status / retention of all early childhood educators in publicly-regulated programs. Using this database, the state will report the percentage of educators at each level of the state's career lattice, the number of educators attaining a new level of the career lattice each year, and the retention rate of educators, broken down by the level of credential they have attained.

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	22

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)

This section of the application presents the state's plan for developing a process for selecting and implementing a statewide kindergarten entry assessment. The plan is partially implemented at this point, since a pilot is underway, but there is not a current statewide kindergarten assessment in place that addresses all the Essential Data Elements. All districts are currently using some form of kindergarten assessment, but this grant would allow Delaware to expand the assessment offerings to address all the Essential Domains. The plan as outlined in the application is likely to result in a high quality plan for implementing kindergarten assessments and using assessment data. However, the sequence of activities described seems to be an extremely inefficient approach to the process. Rather than select or design a valid and reliable tool or set of tools using generally accepted selection criteria and pilot that measure's implementation, the state has elected to pilot the process with an instrument that may or may not be the instrument used. This approach does not take into account the likelihood of different instruments posing different challenges, so much of the process could need to be revised again once the actual tool or tools is selected. The plan, while quite detailed, does not seem to address many of the elements of this criterion.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	243

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

The state has a fully developed TQRIS in place, and the application has a clear plan in place for refining the system and for substantially increasing the number of programs in the TQRIS. The TQRIS currently targets nearly all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the state and has goals for increasing the number. However, not all Title I and Part C programs are targeted for inclusion. The licensing and inspection program covers all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the state.

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)

The state has not already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The state addressed selection criterion (E)(1) but did not earn more than 70% of the points available.

Absolute Priority

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



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # DE-5006

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 9:56 AM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 20. Includes detailed text for each criterion (a-d).

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

a) Delaware has shown a consistent financial investment in early childhood services throughout the past 5 years even with the fiscal deficits faced by the state. More importantly, in March 2011, the Governor established early care and education as his newest spending priority and achieved legislative approval for \$22M targeted at increasing high quality programming for high needs children in the state. These two factors show Delaware's outstanding commitment to early childhood services. b) The number of children served has shown relatively small increases over the past 5 years, however, the largest increases were seen in the "hardest to engage" families and children. This is evidenced by the increase in home services, as seen in the introduction of the Nurse-Family Partnership and programs receiving CCDF funding. This represents an increased richness to the services offered statewide to families of children with high needs. c) Delaware has outlined 10 years of legislative commitment to supporting early childhood development beginning with the establishment of the Interagency Resource Management Committee (IRMC) which is made up of leaders from 3 state agencies: Department of Ed., Department of Health and Social Services, and the Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families. This committee was charged with coordinating early childhood services in the state. In 2006 they revised their statewide plan for early childhood service. A year later they established a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement system (QRIS), which in Delaware is called "Stars for Early Success". Stars was designed to assure quality across programs. Both the IRMC and the Early Childhood Council (ECC) are working together toward policy development and the IRMC assembled an interagency strategic planning committed to develop the current grant application goals and plan of action. Over the years, there has been a focus on increasing the number of stakeholders, including providers. Because Delaware is such a small state it is a perfect setting to launch policies and put in place legislation. Their policies show sensitivity to the changes in the field, as exemplified by moving from "early care" to an emphasis on "early learning and development". Delaware is a model for statewide implementation of policies and legislation. d) Delaware used data from current programs to evaluate the status of their early childhood services and organized their findings in terms of their strengths, critical needs and emerging practices. - Delaware has implemented statewide standards for care, licensing, workforce competencies and have aligned these with Common core standards for early grades. In addition they have implemented a QRIS known as the

Stars program, which includes incentives for meeting the standard. They also have statewide standards for workforce development, as well as, credentials that are aligned with these frameworks. They have shown creativity and resourcefulness in partnering with private sources and granting agencies to develop models for new programs such as "Help Me Grow" or other programs that provide family home visiting. - As for their areas of need, they highlight the need for coordinated data collection and analysis from kindergarten screening assessments. Delaware is now piloting a common assessment tool for all kindergarten age children. This in itself shows forward thinking and is in line with the current grant goals. They understand the need for using the data and hope to do so in the coming years. - Delaware recognized three areas for development, which include: implementing a comprehensive assessment across different types of programs and age groups, better use of their data to make decisions and an increase in family engagement. Despite their acknowledgement that these are areas of need, Delaware has shown good movement toward each of these goals already. The major focus is coordination of efforts across programs and continued focus on a comprehensive statewide system, which is applicable to this grant competition.

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

Delaware has presented a four tiered plan for improving outcomes for all children statewide. Their plan is clear, well thought out and builds on the progress they have made to date. The main goal is to accelerate the pace of progress and to develop a national model of excellence. Because of the achievements documented in section A1, this seems like a logical and achievable goal. a) Delaware highlights areas of weakness in their current work as a rationale for their selected goals. Specifically, regarding the implementation of their QRIS (Stars program), they state that the tool is used inconsistently across sites and only 5% of children with high needs are currently enrolled in programs with high quality programs (top 3 tiers of Stars). They appropriately propose increasing the number of high quality programs and the number of children with high needs enrolled in these programs. Their goal is a 12 fold increase, but because of their current level of development it is reasonable to conclude that they would achieve it. Secondly, they indicate the current lack of outcome measures regarding kindergarten readiness and the need for resources to implement a statewide kindergarten screening program. They articulate well, the need for these baseline data to determine the nature of the gaps between children with needs and their peers. They state that these data will be used to set targets for improvement. They set ambitious yet achievable goals for both program quality and child improvements. b) Delaware clearly outlines a hierarchical strategy for addressing key areas within early childhood programming. The elements include an integration of health services, professional development, high quality programming and school readiness using kindergarten screening to track progress. They assure that coordination of these areas will improve services to children with needs across programs within the state. In discussing each element, they highlight areas of current development and propose the next step to make these elements more effective. For example, related to health care, they talk about the "Help Me Grow" program and the need for expanded capacity so that screening, mental health and nutritional supports are available to children with high need. This is an excellent example of using the targeted grant to improve on the implementation of programs that the state has developed. As they discuss each of the four key areas in their plan, they illustrate with specific examples how the money would be used to expand each area. They present a clear, concise and realistic plan for extending their current program to serve those with high needs statewide. c) Delaware is proposing using the grant as a catalyst for the refinement and further development of current areas of strong practice within their state. Their goal is to create exemplary services that could become national models for service delivery to young children. The priorities within C, D and E that they have selected are in line with their goals and the goals of the grant. Each of these priorities will allow them to address the four elements in their plan for improvement outlined above. They also include a rationale for excluding areas and for example E2 (data analysis) because they have other systems or resources they can use to enhance early learning data analysis. The inclusion and exclusion of information adds to their application strength because it shows that they have clearly thought through the process.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

a) Delaware already has a well-established governance structure for the policy led by their IRMC. They propose using this existing structure to manage the grant. This is a strength for the grant application because the mechanisms are in place and have been shown to work. In addition, the IRMC has recently put in place policies related to early childhood services in Delaware that are in line with the goals of the RTT-ELC grant. This includes coordinating services statewide, improving quality of services and increasing access to high needs populations. Delaware has included a flowchart showing the governance structure in their appendix. This structure includes clear lines of authority and communication and integrates appropriate agencies and departments within the model. It also indicates the process for conflict resolutions and the role of the IRMC in this process. b) Delaware has included an MOU signed by the Department of Education, Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families, and Department of Health and Social Services. These are all members of the already established governance supervisory team (IRMC). The MOU shows a strong commitment to the State Plan. It describes assurance and responsibilities of all parties, with the purpose being to establish a framework of collaboration. Delaware is fortunate to have in place a structure from which to draw on for this ELC grant project. In addition, they have summarized the scope of work and identified participating parties and their roles and responsibilities for grant related activities. The plan is detailed and clear, the assigned participants are appropriate and the responsibilities are goal directed and coordinated. While many different participants are involved in each task, this is appropriate because of the services they are offering and the different service mechanisms e.g. Head start, IDEA, home visiting, etc. c) Delaware has obtained letters of support from all 10 state Early Learning Intermediary Organizations and local early learning councils. They have also obtained letters of support from 6 additional categories of stakeholders, including; advocacy groups, higher education institutions, schools, unions and superintendents, political leaders, local nonprofits and community leaders, as well as member of the business

community. Each letter indicates a strong commitment to the state plan. Delaware highlights specific letters of support that represent commitment to goals of the plan. For example, Head Start endorsing 100% participation in the Stars evaluation program. Commitment like this will be essential to the success of the plan. Delaware has done a nice job of gaining support from a variety of critical stakeholders.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

a) Delaware has demonstrated how existing funds are used to support early learning and development activities within the state. The state commits \$120M annually to early childhood services, including a combination of federal, state and private funds. They have also received grants e.g. ACA Competitive Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Development Grant. The Governor has increased annual state funding for early childhood education by \$22M which applied directly to the targets of the current grant proposal. Allocation of these funds is summarized in the grant. The Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Education are the two primary funding sources for the state on an annual basis. Delaware has described in the grant how these funds are allocated and apply to the grant in table A41. b) 1) Delaware has described how they plan to allocate funds to support the specific 14 activities proposed in the grant application. Three agencies would primarily be involved in the implementation of the plan including: the Department of Education, Department of Health and Social Services, and the Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families. Delaware has summarized the projects that each of these agencies would be responsible for overseeing. 2) They have shown how the state plans to spend the funds within each of the projects across the 4 years of the grant. The expenditures, including personnel, contracts and materials primarily, are both reasonable and necessary as they related to each of the targeted projects. 3) Delaware has described how participating state agencies would allocate funds toward the plan. This information is presented by projects and by budget category (e.g. personnel, supplies, etc.). These budgets are appropriate to the provider and the project goals. c) Delaware presents a plan for insuring sustainability of increased high quality services to high need young children in their state. The primary costs are from three components: the QRIS tiered reimbursement program for high quality programs serving high needs children, QRIS administration such as technical assistance, grants and awards, and the increased compensation provided for early childhood educators based on credentials, training and serving a high need population. Sustainability will be possible because of two fundamental activities that will build capacity within the state. These include professional development and a capacity to recognize and address health, developmental and behavioral needs of young children. Professional development will give leaders the skill to manage, retain educators and increase overall quality of services. Increased capacity to recognize and address health and developmental issues, achieved through training of care providers, will provide Delaware with an army of early childhood educators who are better trained and therefore better prepared to provide quality care for young children in the state. Delaware has met the standard of sustainability.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

a) Delaware has been using a tiered QRIS since 2007. They have developed their own system called Stars and have used it to assess and improve the quality of services for young children in their state. A redesigned version is planned for dissemination in January 2012. The system assesses four areas of performance: learning environments and curriculum, family and community partnerships, management and administration, as well as, qualification and professional development. Programs earn "Quality Points" across the 4 areas. The redesigned Stars standards are aligned with the 6 critical elements as defined by the RTT-ELC challenge. Delaware's Stars system 1) evaluates whether curricula are aligned with the state Early Learning Foundations (ELF) standards, 2) requires screening and determines whether data are used to differentiate instruction, 3) promotes use of states Career Lattice professional development model, 4) family engagement through daily/ weekly communication, family events and accommodation, 5) requires programs to implement curriculum related to healthy lifestyles including eating and exercise, 6) requires use of individual data to inform goal and lesson planning. The Stars tool is a comprehensive evaluation instrument and if utilized effectively has the potential of serving as a guide for program change and as a measure of actual change. b) Delaware has shown that the Stars standards are measurable, clear and differentiate level of program performance. They are using the ERS to observe and evaluate the quality of the learning environment. Differentiation between levels of performance are directly related to nationally recognized high quality standards, such as, an increase in level of education of staff, increased family engagement, and curriculum aligned with state standards such as the ELF. In addition, the state has solicited input from a variety of stakeholder for comments and review. c) Delaware has outlined using a table format how their Stars standards are aligned with the current state OCCL licensing requirement. The key areas that Stars focuses on are curriculum and professional development. In many cases, the Stars standards exceed the state licensing requirements. This is a strength and should lead to better differentiation of program quality and serve as a useful guide to direct and measure improvement.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

a) Delaware has set a goal of 100% participation for licensed centers in the Stars system. A combination of a tiered reimbursement system, revised standards and scoring system, and more support for technical assistance to programs are the key components of their plan. Delaware presents current status for the 5 types of publicly funded Early Learning and Development programs, and they clearly outline how they will achieve increases in participation for each. The strategies and goals for participation differ depending on the agency, i.e. Head Start, licensed child care centers and licensed family child care programs. This shows a sensitivity to the characteristics of each type of service model. They propose using grant resources to support capacity-building investments through 2 measures: an infrastructure fund so programs can make investments in equipment and technology, and the introduction of a "card swipe" data system to relieve the administrative burden with the increase in participation. The system would register data for each child and programs to increase visibility and accountability. The goals for enrollment by licensed center based programs are aggressive but given the careful planning and the current state of the state's administrative systems, it is achievable. Attention to resources is also critical, both as it represents new financial demands on programs for capital expenditures as well as it increases demand on the administrative aspects of the program. Delaware has done a nice job of addressing these needs. Delaware has the systems in place for implementation of the QRIS but their current levels of participation indicate partial implementation status at present. b) Delaware's commitment to increase high quality child care of high needs children predates the grant competition, as indicated by the Governor's recent allocation of \$22M. The state will use this additional money to increase reimbursement rates for all programs so more resources are available to programs who serve high need children. They also are initiating a tiered reimbursement system based on the Stars rating system so children who are in program that receive a level 5 rating (the highest) are eligible for reimbursement at 100% of the market rate. While reimbursement systems are common among states, this level of reimbursement is unique to Delaware. c) Delaware presents baseline (current) data for the percent of Early Learning Development Programs that participate in the QRIS system. The current status of participation is very low across programs. Given this, the targets are very aggressive for Head Start and state funded preschool. That being said, the timelines presented for these increases in programs participating in the Stars system are reasonable given the state's plan.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

a) Delaware already has a system for training assessors on the Stars system. The standards for inter-rater agreement are 85% and a system is present for maintaining high levels of agreement over time. This is an important feature in implementing a system like Stars. Agreement is necessary to have confidence in the resulting data. Programs are monitored using the Stars system at least once every 2 years. An innovative feature of Delaware's plan is the proposed Multi-State Consortium on Program Quality Assessment with North Carolina and Kentucky. They highlight the need for one tool that assesses components of high quality programming which includes aspects of teacher-child interactions and curriculum implementation. They propose combining the ERS (which they currently use) with the Stars and adding additional items to reflect these missing elements. They propose a new measurement system by the end of the grant period. The interstate collaboration and concern for more quality of instruction measures are both strengths in this plan. b) Delaware's plan for engagement with families involves "education and empowerment", which involves using a variety of sources to communicate standards to parents and then providing reliable information about quality of programs so parents can make good decisions regarding selection of a program for their child. This is a great idea. This leads to sustainability because parents now have a "self-sustaining demand for high quality options." Delaware has identified "touchpoints" (points of parent contact) to use to disseminate information to families, including programs targeting parents of high needs children. In addition they will increase public awareness through a communication campaign led by the Governor's office. Their timelines include a phase where more programs are recruited to enroll in the Stars system, with a priority to programs that serve children with high needs. This is critical, because the data from the

Stars evaluation will be necessary for parents to make informed decisions about programs. This is followed by a communication campaign focused on parents that is ongoing through the touchpoints identified. Delaware will spend the first year developing materials, training, etc. to disseminate through the touchpoints. This is also critical.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	19

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

a) Delaware already provides technical assistance and grants to help programs improve in their quality. Delaware also proposes using a tiered reimbursement program and workforce compensation as new avenues to improve program quality. They also propose upgrading their technical assistance support by expanding on their Stars Plus program. This includes a Directors community of practice which is a way for program directors to network, increased classroom technical assistance and increased professional development opportunities. Delaware proposes that after 2 years of Stars Plus support, programs will have improved their Stars quality so they no longer need this level of support. The timelines proposed are realistic and the result should insure sustainability. b) Delaware proposes using the "purchase of care" program, which is a state subsidized program for families of children with high needs, to increase the availability of full day/full year care for working families. Head start programs have identified that they would support increasing to full day child care options for families. Delaware is approaching this in a practical and creative manner by increasing reimbursement rates within the existing purchase of care system. They also highlight the range of additional family supports that will be made available to families, such as, within Stars building relationships between community resources so services to families can be more comprehensive, and making sure children have nutritious meals through the Child and Adult Care Food Program. c) Delaware has set ambitious yet achievable goals. The data from the tables (B4c1&2), outline how the state will achieve the initial goals stated in the grant. Delaware's projected participation is higher for state funded preschools and Head Start which is appropriate because of the nature of these programs. The percent of programs serving children with high needs rated in the top tiers would increase as well as the children with high needs enrolled in these programs would increase by over 50%. Given the plan in place the proposed increases are realistic.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

a) Delaware has plans to conduct research to both validate that the Stars tiered system differentiates levels of program quality across the identified 4 areas of practice and to determine the relationship between quality and children's readiness for school. This is an important project for Delaware as they are basing all of their training and support efforts on the data achieved using the Stars system. Validating these measures is critical to the development of a state of the art tool that could be used across other states. b) The research questions they articulate are right on target. Key to this effort will be having the data to ask the research questions. The proposal of increasing the number of programs using Stars and using a common kindergarten screening tool from which to assess the impact of high quality Stars ratings on child outcomes will be critical. Hiring an independent agency to conduct the study is also an excellent choice so as to insure there is not bias in the data.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)
<p>a) Delaware has a set of standards for infant/toddler and preschool programs called Early Learning Foundations (ELF). These standards were recently revised (2010) which are referenced in full in the grant appendix. A review of the documents reveals how these standards meet the criteria for being developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate across age groups. Of note is their description of inclusion of children who are language learners, and the importance that caregivers be able to speak the language the baby is learning in their home or if not, treat the language spoken in the home with respect and care, using important words like "mother". In addition, these guidelines are in alignment with the Essential Domains of School Readiness as illustrated in table C1-1, with the addition of creative expression as part of the Preschool ELF standards and not part of the school readiness domains. b) An analysis of the K-3 academic standards show that they are in alignment with both the preschool and infant/toddler ELF standards. This analysis was conducted by an independent researcher and documentation is summarized in the appendix. c) The Stars program requires that curricula and activities for all young children are aligned with the ELF and that lesson plans are based on ELF standards. Programs licensed by OCCL are required to assess children. All of the Head Start programs are using Teaching Strategies GOLD which is aligned with the ELF's in Delaware. A review of the recommended assessment indicates that Delaware is using state of the art assessment tools, particularly for children on the autism spectrum (VB-MAPPs). Assessments are used to prescribe curricula for children. The ELF is an integral part of the Delaware Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals competencies, standards and self-assessments. ELF's are also directly linked to the Delaware Early Childhood Career Lattice which prescribes a progression of professional development for child care providers. In addition they address the need for training professional development providers. d) Delaware has incorporated ELF</p>

standards into the Stars system, Delacare Rules and Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals as a way of insuring that individuals who care for children understand the standards. The state has also created materials to engage families in some of the standards. This is area where Delaware could increase their efforts. The public awareness campaign outlined in the earlier section is one way to address this effort.

	Available	Score
(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.	30	28

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)

a) Delaware has shown a commitment to ensuring children's health and safety over the years and in 2010 they were ranked first out of 50 states for their family child care licensing regulations by the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. In addition, monitoring children's health and safety is built into the Stars system. The ELF standards have a Physical Development and Health Domain. Finally, Delaware has received a grant "Help Me Grow" which provides a comprehensive framework for screening, referral and follow-up especially for children with high needs. It is a phone based resource and referral system for families. One of the focuses of the program is to coordinate developmental screening, access to early intervention or special education to children with disabilities. This initiative will allow for the coordination between child care, educational and medical services particularly for children with high needs. Delaware has shown high commitment to children's health through this initiative. The model has potential for national dissemination. b) Delaware has shown how health and safety standards are built into the professional development for health care providers. They also provide a variety of prevention trainings addressing issues such as obesity, exercise and nutrition. Of note, is the national recognition of one of Delaware's health care programs "First Years in the First State: Improving Nutrition and Physical Activity Quality Toolkit", which was included in the First lady's Healthy Kids Healthy Future initiative. Delaware plans on using grant money to increase nutrition training which would be tracked by data systems as part of the overall plan. c) Delaware has policies on healthy eating habits, nutrition and physical exercise embedded in their Delacare Rules. They have received national recognition for having the best practice for nutrition regulation in licensed childcare. The revised version of Stars incorporates these health related regulations into their curriculum planning section. In addition, the Nemours Health and Prevention Services has launched an obesity prevention program called "5-2-1 Almost None". Professional development includes education on these topics. d) The primary mechanism statewide for organizing and aligning resources related to developmental screening, referral and follow-up is the Help me Grow program. Delaware has numerous programs to provide developmental screening from Child watch which is an early intervention program to Head Start. They also require vision and hearing screening at points during early childhood. In order to reach the "hard to engage" population in the neighborhoods of highest need, they are implementing more home visiting. The recently received grant funds to help support these efforts. Again they have a track record of providing these services but have more recently begun a Nurse-Family partnership, state funded that will increase quality home support to low-income first time mothers. In summary, the state has accessed grant and state funding to support a variety of services to children and their families. They will use the RTT-ELC funds to "scale up" current practices to enhance community engagement, expand on screening and increase their capacity for follow up. For example, to implement an evidenced-based screening for all children enrolled in programs participating in Stars, on an annual basis, will require additional funding. This funding will support training, monitoring and purchasing materials, etc. but once the program is part of the Stars evaluation and professionals are trained the effort will be sustained by Delaware state funding. Delaware's plan incorporates current practice and uses the grant resources to disseminate these practices statewide which is in line with the goals of the grant.

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	20

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)

a) In 1989 Delaware was the first state to require professional development for its early childhood workforce. They have had a fully implemented Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework since 2002. These competencies include standards for knowledge for professionals working with young children. Competencies are aligned with OCCL regulations which specify hours of professional development, and licensing requirements for programs including Head Start and family day care. The revised Stars system requires that service providers use the competencies outlined in these frameworks to elevate qualification levels and improve services. Delaware has identified reasons why to date, these competencies have not been integrated consistently across the state, including lack of incentives and that fact that they are not fully integrated into institutions of higher learning. The RTT grant will help support efforts to remove these barriers. b) Delaware has 9 step credential hierarchy that is specified in the Delaware Early Childhood Career Lattice. These credentials are aligned with the competency framework. They are now introducing advanced credentials that focus on specialty areas such as inclusion, administration, infant/toddler, etc. c) Delaware's vocational high school systems have aligned their coursework to the state competency framework. Institutions of higher education are engaged in the process and have agreed to align their coursework with the state ELF's. They have written letters of commitment which are included in the grant and Delaware has agreed to set aside resources to help with this program development. Delaware has a multi-faceted approach to professional development that will lead to an integrated and higher level credentialing for early childhood professionals in this state.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

a) Delaware proposes 3 strategies for expanding access to professional development. They include: Higher education institutions offering coursework that is in alignment with the state's competency framework, increasing the number of providers who can offer professional development opportunities, and ensuring resources to offer tiered reimbursement. These are all consistent with evidence presented in the current proposal. Delaware will use the Stars to provide incentive for more rigorous training leading to moving up the tiers of quality within the system. Delaware states that improvements in professional development will increase the impact of their technical assistance (Stars plus) and their Leadership coaching. Childcare professionals will have the background to better understand and assimilate the support into their teaching. The plan creates a self sustaining infrastructure for training that should result in better trained professionals at all levels throughout the state. b) Delaware is proposing a plan that includes reimbursements and salary increases to encourage participation in career development activities and enhance retention. They will focus their resources first on programs in low income areas which is in line with the goals of the grant. They will also provide leadership training to program directors of early childhood centers to help those administrators gain the skills to provide on the job training and supervision. Skills that are targeted include: observing, giving feedback, promoting assessment practice, etc. They will offer the most intensive support to the highest need programs. By increasing salaries and improving supervision Delaware is building a culture that fosters professionalism among childcare providers that is so important for these individuals who have the responsibility of providing care for our most vulnerable citizens. c) Delaware currently has data systems to track information on educator qualifications, credentials and employment status. Delaware is able to provide statistics to the public regarding credentials, retention and credential advancement within the state. d) Delaware has presented ambitious yet achievable targets for both increasing the number of institutions providing professional development that aligns with their competency framework, and increasing the number and percent of early childhood educators who are progressing through their Lattice hierarchy and pursuing specialty certificates.

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	30
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

a) Delaware sees the purpose of a state wide kindergarten assessment as providing information that would inform individual instruction and needed support, as well as providing aggregate data for state and local policy makers. Historically, Delaware has been a part of a pilot study looking at full vs. part day kindergarten services. They found that student outcome performance was better for those enrolled in full day even though there were a greater number of high needs children in that group. This speaks to Delaware's commitment to research and making evidenced based decisions. Delaware has also solicited input from relevant constituents like teachers, school district leaders, parents and early childhood providers as they begin to make decisions about what type of assessment to conduct. Delaware is currently piloting the use of Teaching Strategies GOLD, a formative assessment tool that includes all essential domains of school readiness and is aligned with the state's ELF's. These data will be invaluable in helping Delaware make their selection of an assessment tool. They envision using a combination of a formative assessment tool and a parent questionnaire at the kindergarten entry assessment for all children. The purpose of the pilot study is to evaluate process and implementation not to determine the assessment tool. It is not clear from the application when a decision will be made about whether to adopt the Teaching Strategies GOLD tool or a different formative assessment tool statewide, or how the pilot data will be utilized in making this decision. Because the Teaching Strategies Gold tool does meet the State's Early Learning and Development standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness, it would be an appropriate tool for the state to adopt, using the RTT grant criteria. b) Delaware proposes validating their formative tool with a direct assessment that focuses on literacy and mathematics. They propose using an outside assessor on a sample of children. It would be helpful to have examples of direct assessments that the assessors could select from and an explanation of how it is different from the formative assessment that the state decides to use. It is unclear how would the decision regarding the direct assessment tool be made. The grant application, however, is addressing the issue of selecting a tool that has already been validated. Delaware indicates that they will select a tool that is valid and reliable. It would be helpful to have reliability and validity data for the Teaching Strategies GOLD tool which they have selected for the pilot study. c) Delaware proposes phasing in the statewide kindergarten assessment across years with 100% participation planned for the final year of the grant. They plan on beginning implementation of the state wide kindergarten assessment during the second year of the grant. The plan has a reasonable progression of implementation that seems achievable. The one caveat is that the assessment tool has not yet been identified. If the tool is identified within the next academic year, Delaware will be able to meet their targets for implementation. Because they are conducting a pilot study they will have the data they need to make a decision regarding an appropriate tool for statewide implementation. d) the mechanism for entering and housing Kindergarten early assessment data is already in place through the Delaware Department of Education. The Delaware K-12 RTT project includes a longitudinal data system and this is under development with the plan that kindergarten assessment information will be included. Privacy and security protections are being built into the system. e) Delaware has shown that funding other than grant sources will be used to support the implementation of the kindergarten entry assessment project. They plan to use Federal 6111 and 6112 assessment dollars, IDEA and State Assessment funding streams.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	264

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	10

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

a) Delaware's licensing system is comprehensive and inclusive of all early childhood programs. They also have a long history of regulating child care. Their definition of childcare is more stringent than the RTT-ELC definition (regulation is required for programs caring for 1 or more children). Delaware has a set of policies articulated in detail in the "Delacare" rules document. Few programs are exempt from licensing. In addition, 93% of children birth to 5 who receive purchase of care subsidies are in licensed programs. The state has met this priority. b) Delaware has a QRIS is the Stars system. It is currently being implemented across the state. Delaware's goals is for all providers to use the system to improve quality of services to young children, however, their goals for the grant are for 100% participation for 3 main program types: licensed child care centers, Head Start and State-funded Pre-K programs. Participation for family child care providers and Part C of IDEA are less ambitious because of the nature of the services and other monitoring agencies like DOE. Delaware has presented an ambitious yet achievable plan to increase participation statewide in the Stars system. Their plan is clear, well thought out and achievable. They have brought all of their years of experience, in a state that has had a long history of early childhood regulation, to bare on the current proposal. It is a good plan.

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
Comments on (P)(3)		
<p>Delaware has met this competitive preference priority by addressing the selection criteria in E1 and receiving more than 70% of points. They are piloting a kindergarten assessment and have commitment from stakeholders to put a statewide K assessment in place over the next 4 years. They also show a high commitment to improving the quality of early childhood services, especially for children with high needs. For example, they propose using "readiness teams" in high-need communities. These teams will include educators and community members who will provide services to high need children. Delaware's goal is to prepare all children for kindergarten. In addition, they have a commitment to evaluating their performance using research, often in collaboration with the University of Delaware. Delaware shows a clear understanding of the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry and have a plan for data analysis looking forward.</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
Comments on Absolute Priority	
<p>Delaware has met the absolute priority. They have described how they would use their Stars system to both evaluate program performance and as a tool for improving performance. They have shown how they will achieve their goal of increasing the percent of high needs children enrolled in high quality programs. Their approach is multifaceted and creative. They have demonstrated how they would align resources and policy across state agencies to implement this QRIS that is already in place in Delaware. Because Delaware already has many systems, standards, guidelines and working groups already committed to improving services for young children in the state. They are in a good position to move forward toward the goals of the RTT-ELC grant initiative. They clearly describe their plan within each of the focused investment areas. The plan is ambitious yet achievable.</p>	

