



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # FL-5008

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
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CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

The applicant demonstrates a past financial commitment to early learning and development. The state has increased funding for Early Learning and Development programs since 2007. In 2011, the state will contribute \$938,511,298 to fund Early Learning and Development Programs which includes supplemental state spending on Early Head Start and Head Start (amount not available), state funded preschool (\$384,606,382), state contributions to IDEA Part C (\$23,905,056), state contributions for special education age 3 to kindergarten (\$185,386,844), state contributions to CCDF (\$105,709,676), and TANF (\$238,902,340). Currently, approximately 20% of children with high needs in the state are being served in an ELD Program. The number of children with high needs participating in ELD programs has increased from January 2007. Most of the increases were modest. For example, Head Start/Early Head Start high needs children being served increased from 39,345 in 2007 to 40,494 in 2010. Children with high needs participating in IDEA Part C and Part B Programs increased from 44,299 in 2007 to 48,779 in 2010. Finally, high needs children in Title I of ESEA Programs served increased from 4,618 in 2007 to 5,613 in 2010. The most significant increase was seen in the number of high needs children served in state funded preschool. For example, the number of children served in state-funded preschool increased from 67,552 in 2007 to 81,005 in 2009. The applicant has a unique Children's Services Councils (CSCs) that are countywide special districts created by ordinance, and approved by voters to improve the lives of children and families. Collectively, there are 11 CSCs in the state. One of the investments made by a CSC was a pilot Quality Rating Improvement System in eight counties. This work will inform the development of a state-wide TORIS System. In 2006, Florida developed a Framework for Children which articulates its shared vision for serving children and families. The Florida Children and Youth Cabinet is composed of all child-serving agency heads. This Cabinet recently developed four key focus areas as indicators important to the well-being of young children. These focus areas include health care, kindergarten readiness scores, child abuse and neglect, and homelessness. The Cabinet has also been operating a State Advisory Council with the state's First Lady serving as the state's Chief Child Advocate. Additionally, the state describes a strong local governance structure. For example, there are 31 single- and multi-county Early Learning Coalitions (ELC) that serve each of the state's 67 counties. These ELCs are non-profit organizations that serve as community hubs for early learning and family services. This structure allows

for local implementation of state initiatives related to early learning. The state describes its current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality ELD system. The state currently uses ELD Standards for birth to age five. Florida's Comprehensive Assessment System begins with universal newborn screenings. The Ages and Stages Questionnaire has been adopted as a common statewide developmental screening tool for all children enrolled in the School Readiness Program. A comprehensive and universal formative assessment process has not been implemented in the state. Program assessments are conducted using the Environment Rating Scales but implementation varies and needs to be aligned. The promotion of health practices is implemented by various programs in the state including: Head Start, the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Department of Health, and the Office of Early Learning. Family Engagement Strategies are utilized by many programs such as: Healthy Start, Head Start, Part B Providers, Part C Providers, Even Start, Healthy Families, and Parents as Teachers. The state is building an early childhood professional development program called Steps to Success. Kindergarten Entrance Assessments have been implemented. The state is developing a system to link data systems in the state. The applicant presents compelling evidence of past commitment to Early Learning and Development Programs which necessitates a high quality planning score.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	10

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The state provides three general goals as evidence of a plan for ELD reform. These goals include improving the quality of out-of-home settings so that children with high needs have more access to and are more frequently served in these settings, increasing the expertise of childcare providers who serve high needs, and integrating and aligning early learning experiences to improve kindergarten readiness scores. Given the work that has already begun in the state, these goals are ambitious and achievable. For example, part of improving the quality of ELD Programs involves the implementation of a TQRIS System. This is a reasonable goal since the state has already begun seven pilots in the state. Also, improving childcare provider expertise is reasonable since the state has already implemented the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials. Finally, integrating and aligning services is reasonable standards for children birth to age five have already been developed. The state does not provide an overall summary of the State Plan that articulates how each section of the criterion, when taken together, constitute and effective reform agenda that establishes a clear path toward achieving these goals. The state does not provide a specific rationale that justifies the State's choice to address the selected criteria in each Focused Investment Area and why these criteria were selected. The state provides ambitious and 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. However, the state does not provide an overall summary of the State Plan that articulates the path toward achieving those goals. Further, the state does not provide specific rationale that justifies its choice to address the selected criteria to best achieve these goals. As a result, a medium quality score was given.

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

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

- (a) Demonstrating how the Participating State Agencies and other partners, if any, will identify a governance structure for working together that will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability and describing--
 - (1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;
 - (2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each

Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

The applicant presents a governance structure for managing the grant and facilitating interagency coordination. For example, the state's Early Childhood Advisory Council established in 2010 serves as the advisory body to the Cabinet. The Cabinet is made up of policy and decision makers on behalf of programs and services for children birth to 18. This Advisory Council, administratively supported by the Office of Early Learning is to serve as the project coordinating body. While the applicant provides a description of the current structure of Participating State Agencies it does not ensure how interagency coordination will be accomplished. For example, the organizational chart begins with the office of the Governor then the Lead Agency Grant Management Director before branching off into five primary state agencies including: Department of Children and Families, Department of Education, Office of Early Learning, Department of Health, and Head Start. According to the narrative, the Advisory Council will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision-making, allocate resources, and create sustainability. However, in the organizational chart provided, the Advisory council is listed in the broad group of stakeholders and does not appear to have any authority to implement the project. The applicant further describes the governance of each of the primary state agencies but fails to provide a plan for how these agencies will work together to align and coordinate early learning across the state. The state explains that day to day management of RTT-ELC projects will be under the direction of the Participating State Agency. When more than one state agency is actively involved, a single agency will be selected to serve as primary sponsor. This structure does not describe a process for coordination across agencies or decision making. Finally, the applicant states that the planning, execution, monitoring, and control of all projects supported by the grant will be the responsibility of the sponsoring state agency. The status and progress of each project will be reported periodically to the State Advisory Council. The structure presented does not describe a coordinated effort across participating agencies. The method for involving key stakeholders is not well planned. For example, the applicant explains that the State Advisory Council has the authority to establish workgroups and committees composed of stakeholders but not that it will definitely happen. The applicant presents MOUs and/or Scopes of Work between the Lead Agency and the Departments of Health, Education, and Children and Family Services that show strong commitment to the plan. These agreements include a general scope of work and do not provide enough specific information regarding the duties of each party. Several letters of support were included that demonstrate a commitment to the state plan. The state provided a governance structure for purposes of the grant but did not demonstrate how Participating State Agencies would work together. As a result, the application received a medium quality low implementation score. The state provides MOUs with general scopes of work that do not provide sufficient detail on the responsibilities of each party. The state provides letters of support that demonstrate a commitment to the State Plan. As a result, the a medium quality and implementation score was given.

Available

Score

(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	9
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The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The budget provided a description of how Participating State Agencies will utilize funds for local initiatives to support the project. The applicant provides a description of how other state funding will be utilized in the project. The office of Early Learning and School Readiness funded through CCDF will invest over \$1 billion dollars annually to support the project. In addition to public funding, the Kellogg Foundation, Microsoft, and Publix Supermarket contribute private funds as well. The budget included in the application describes how the state will use grant funding to achieve planned outcomes. The budget narrative includes funding to state agencies and relate to project objectives. The budget shows that Participating State Agencies will utilize grant funds to expand current programs that support the project. The budget tables and narratives do not show that the funds will be used effectively and efficiently. For example, the applicant proposes that the project management office will utilize a total of \$6,242,808 over the grant period to manage the grant. The narrative does not justify this budget amount with any evidence that it will cost this much to manage the grant. Further, the Office of Early Learning will utilize the majority of funding for contractual needs to complete many of the project goals. These contracts do not appear to allow the participating agencies any involvement in accomplishing the objectives. With such a large portion of the funds being used for contractual services, very little of the funding actually gets to the participating agencies. For example, the Department of Health will be funded \$2,513,378 for work on the development of a plan to improve statewide screening and assessments. According to the MOU Scope of Work, the DOH will participate in several grant activities including: assist with refining TORIS Standards, TORIS public awareness campaign, develop training on new ELD Standards, develop and implement Director's Institute, core competencies for Technical Assistance Specialists. However, the budget does not reflect the DOH's participation in these activities. The Department of Children and Family Services and Department of Education also have Scopes of Work that are not represented in the budget. Therefore, this item was rated in the low category. The plan does detail the amount of funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs and other partners as \$18,999,995. However, the state does not describe the specific activities to be implemented with these funds. Less than 25% of the grant funds will be devoted to local implementation of the state plan. This does not demonstrate that a significant amount of funding will be utilized for local implementation. The applicant provides a description of high-quality sustainability measures beyond the grant period. For example, the project will allow the state to build effective and efficient systems that will continue to serve the state with minimal maintenance once the start-up is complete. The state asserts that finalizing a system of professional development is sustainable through course fees and existing TEACH scholarship dollars once the grant funds are liquidated. Second, the project is sustainable because it will build capacity to support child care businesses and provide them with lasting resources to help them improve. The on-going cost of these resources is minimal and will be absorbed through existing training budgets. The state provides a high-quality response to the sustainability of the project since many of the project objectives require a large start-up with minimal maintenance. This area was rated as medium quality/partial implementation.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

The state has been working toward the development of a statewide TQRIS System with seven pilots in the last three years. The applicant has provided a general timeline that includes the steps needed to fully develop and implement a statewide TQRIS System. The five phase plan includes the general tasks needed before the system can be fully implemented. Some of the objectives in the timeline, however, are too general and will require further planning. For example, the first objective in Phase II is "pilot PLATINUM. Take statewide." This is a massive undertaking and the plan says it will be completed along with many other objectives in seven months. Although there are many details lacking in the plan, the basic structure of the steps needed have been included. Therefore, although the plan lacks crucial details, it does provide a necessary framework. The applicant has had a tiered reimbursement through its Gold Seal Quality Care Designation Program since 1996. In 2011, Florida adopted integrated standards for children birth to age five. These standards are aligned with k-12 standards and national core standards. This work puts the state in a good position to move forward in the implementation of a TQRIS System. The state is also in the process of developing statewide screening protocol. This screening will be utilized uniformly across the state and will allow for more data sharing across state agencies. The state has also already begun the process for the approval of formative assessment systems based on the revised early learning standards. The state has already begun much of the work in the area of standard development and assessment. Therefore, the project can focus on implementation and data sharing. With the work that has already been done, the state has positioned itself nicely for the next steps in implementing the activities of this project. The state has also made strides to improving teacher qualifications. A statewide system called Career Pathway provides both formal and informal routes to increasing knowledge, skills, credentials, and degrees. The applicant has many programs to engage families. Currently, health screening practices are implemented locally. Planning for this project includes the development and implementation of common health screening process. Finally, the state plans to implement the PLATINUM software system statewide by the end of 2012. This software will streamline data collection across the state. The state provides an average quality plan for the implementation of a statewide TQRIS System. The timeline for the plan is ambitious but it is difficult to tell if it is achievable since specific details about HOW the plan will be implemented are lacking in some areas. Since the overall plan contains relevant objectives, it scored within the medium quality range. One strength of the state's plan is that it has already completed some of the groundwork for implementation of the project objectives. For example, the applicant has begun piloting the TQRIS System and has a plan for the revision and alignment of state standards. The state has partially implemented measurable program standards that have been used in the pilot TQRIS sites. These standards are based on nationally recognized standards for Early Childhood Care and differentiate program quality levels. This area scored in the medium quality/partial implementation range.

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

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

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

- (1) State-funded preschool programs;
- (2) Early Head Start and Head Start programs;
- (3) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA;

(4) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of the ESEA; and

(5) Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program;

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

The state has minimally implemented participation in a TQRIS System. The state plans to improve participation in the TQRIS System by improving the tiered reimbursement rate for subsidized care. The state aims to increase the number of programs participating in the TQRIS System. By the end of the project: -74% of State-funded preschool programs will participate in the statewide TQRIS System -100% of Head Start and Early Head Start Programs will participate -100% of programs funded by CCDF will participate And other programs funded by IDEA Part B and C and Title I of ESEA have modest and reasonable increase goals. The state provides child care subsidies at 73% of the market rate. Programs with higher quality ratings can earn up to a 20% higher subsidy reimbursement rate. This incentive will likely improve participation in the TQRIS system. The applicant has not implemented practices designed to help more families afford high-quality child care and maintain the supply of high-quality care. The state does provide a plan to target resources strategically to improve this area. For example, targeted supports, financial bonuses and incentives will be utilized to increase the supply of higher star-rated programs. Also, private funds will be used to help successful programs increase the number of children they are able to serve. Finally, training will be developed for technical assistance providers to improve program quality where many children with high needs live. The general strategies provided do not constitute a comprehensive plan to help families of children with high needs afford care. The applicant has achievable targets for the numbers and percentages of ELD Programs participating in the TQRIS System. For example, 74% of the children in state funded preschool receive subsidized care. Therefore, the state will be able to require them to participate in the TQRIS to receive that funding. But the state has not considered a plan to increase involvement of all PreK Programs. In order to receive the higher reimbursement rate, the program must also receive high ratings. An agreement was made with state Head Start and Early Head Start Programs that they would participate in the system so a target of 100% is achievable. Other programs have more modest increase targets that are ambitious and achievable. The state received a medium quality/partial implementation score in this area.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs	15	10
The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--		
(a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency; and		
(b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (e.g., displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

The state will utilize the Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) and the CLASS Assessments in the TQRIS System. These assessments are valid and reliable. The state has partially implemented the use of both assessments since 21 out of 31 early learning coalitions use the ERS and all of the Head Start grantees use CLASS. The state has trained and reliable assessors that are used frequently. The state provides a high quality plan to use the ITERS-R, ECER-R, a checklist for family engagement, cultural competence, and health to the system. The applicant has outlined plans to assess each program every 24-48 months and has outlined triggers for reassessment in the plan. The state has partially implemented a method of informing the public about quality ratings. For example, it uses a web-based Licensing Information System which assists parents in locating quality child care. Also, materials will be developed for Child Care Resource and Referral in multiple languages and in several different formats. Smart Phone applications and Child Care Resource and Referral Specialists will be available to walk families through the system and assist them in making decisions about quality care. The state plans to develop resources in several languages and utilize multiple media outlets to inform parents about how to choose quality care. The state Child Care Resource and Referral specialists will utilize these media and in-person consultation to educate parents on quality ratings as they choose care for young children. An interesting addition is the plan to

use social media to connect with parents and provide information on quality care. The state's plan to rate and monitor early learning programs is high-quality. The state provides a high quality plan for a rating and monitoring system that has only been partially implemented. As a result, this section was rated in the high quality/partial implementation range.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	17

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 has partially implemented and provides a high quality plan for a system to support programs that participate in the TQRIS System by providing support and incentives such as: -Tiered Reimbursement which recognizes higher quality programs with higher reimbursement rates. This financial incentive will likely result in programs achieving a higher rating in the TQRIS System. -Quality Improvement Plan will be provided for each program that participates in the system. This report will highlight program strengths and needs through the PLATINUM software. The programs will also have access to technical assistance specialists and career advisors who will help prioritize needs related to achieving higher TQRIS ratings. -Access to Shared Services Florida Website. This website will allow for shared services in bulk purchasing, discounts on commonly used services, and customizable templates. This system is being translated into Spanish and will be complete and running by January 2012. This resource sharing is in keeping with the overarching goal of streamlining services across the state to improve ELD Programs. -Access to marketing materials. The TQRIS pilot projects have developed marketing toolkits that will be provided to participating TQRIS programs. -Deeper supports for lower quality programs. Programs that rated themselves low on self-assessments will have access to technical assistance, scholarships, career counseling, targeted accreditation supports, access to developmental resources, and partnerships with Head Starts. The state does not address supports to help families with high needs children access high-quality ELD Programs. The state describes supports to help families who have children with high needs access high quality ELD Programs. For example, prioritized funding allows children at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation, foster care and children of working families who receive Temporary Cash Assistance to get child care subsidies regardless of any waiting list. A plan offered by the state will provide Child Care Resource and Referral Specialists who will provide parents with support in accessing high quality programs that meet their needs. The plan is sufficient to ensure that children with high needs have access to high-quality programs. The state provides an ambitious and achievable plan for increasing the number of programs in the top tiers of the TQRIS System. For example, by the end of the grant period, 71% of participating programs will be rated in tiers three, four, or five. This is certain ambitious since the state plans to increase the program participation from 1614 to 9,609. Currently 75% of programs are rated at a three, four, or five. So the state plans to keep the same level of ratings with a significant increase in the number of programs participating. Since the state has many incentives for higher ratings and assistance built in to the system, it is reasonable to assume that these goals can be met. The state has also set reasonable and ambitious goals for the increasing the number of High Needs children enrolled in the top tiers of the TQRIS System. For example, the state plans to increase the number of High Needs Children served in the top tiers of the TQRIS from 28,577 now to 138,648 in 2015. The state provides a high quality plan for promoting access to high-quality ELD Programs for children with high needs that has been partially implemented. As a result, this section was rated in the high-quality partial implementation range.

	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)(5)

The state provides a high quality plan to ensure that the standards and levels of the TQRIS System meaningfully differentiate quality and that the standards and levels are related to improved child outcomes. For example, an independent evaluator will conduct validation studies using a cluster randomized trial. The state has proposed a high quality plan that will result in determining whether the TQRIS System accurately reflects levels of program quality. The state offers evidence of significant planning for the validation of the TQRIS System that will address associations between quality indicators and child growth. The validation study and pilot will result in determining the effectiveness of the TQRIS System. The research design described in the plan will differentiate program levels and provide crucial information about the how TQRIS ratings differentiate and validate quality. They will also provide information about how TORIS ratings relate to child outcomes. Both of these pieces of information will allow the state to validate the effectiveness of the TQRIS System. This area scored in the high quality range.

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	25

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)

The state has a set of ELD Standards that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group. For example, the standards were developed by a panel of experts including practitioners, researchers, and administrators. The panel consisted of a diverse group of experts who evaluated each domain of development. The standards were also based on current literature and applied to the standards in the programs of the panel of experts. National and state experts also provided feedback on the draft of the standards. The standards represent all domains of development including: physical development; approaches to learning; social and emotional development; language, communication, and emergent literacy; cognitive development and general knowledge. The state has implemented revised standards for Four-Year-Old children that are aligned with Kindergarten standards in the areas of early literacy, mathematics, social studies, and science. The state includes a plan to align standards for Four-Year-Olds with Head Start Standards. This would ensure that all children, regardless of the Pre-K program they attend, will be prepared to succeed in kindergarten. For example newly revised standards will be used as the foundation for a set of workforce development competencies and career ladder that will be developed as part of this plan. The state's score reflects a medium quality plan with partial implementation.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	21

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

The state has fully implemented the use of the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) as a screening instrument. The state also includes a high quality plan to track screening and referral information through the state Early Learning Data System. This system will allow all ELD providers access to individual children's screening history and track progress. This system will ultimately allow providers to identify more children and provide needed intervention services earlier. Formative assessments in the state have been left to each of the state's 31 learning coalitions. The state has not implemented a standard assessment system that is common across multiple programs. Therefore, the state plans to streamline the use of different observation-based assessments and improve formative assessment practices. This will allow the state to track child outcomes across programs and ensure that assessments are linked to relevant standards. The state has partially implemented various training programs to help educators understand the purposes and uses of assessment. For example, the state conducted a statewide training conference on assessment in 2008. Also the Florida Children's Forum developed a comprehensive training program for leaders in the field. Various other training on assessment have been provided through webinars, online courses, college courses, and conference presentations. The plan to train providers on the new statewide assessments is limited in scope. For example, the applicant proposes that programs will be responsible for training their staff on assessment as part of the state's TQRIS System. The state's responsibility is to hold programs accountable for the assessment practices taking place within the system. The state lacks a clear plan for working with ELD Programs to strengthen their understanding of the purposes and uses of assessments. The state has not implemented an effective system for aligning and integrating assessments. However, the state's plan for the Early Learning Data System and the PLATINUM software will greatly improve the state's ability to coordinate data and avoid duplication of services. The state has training for EC Educators to appropriately administer assessments and interpret the use of assessment data. For example, statewide trainings have been provided on several assessment instruments. The state provides a medium quality plan to train educators on assessment in the future. For example, the state will hold programs accountable for their assessment practices through the TQRIS. Also, the state will work with assessment publishers to develop training modules on different aspects of assessment. However, the plan does not include measurable objectives regarding when or how these modules will be delivered. The state plan for training EC Educators on appropriate use of assessments lacked details and measurable outcomes. The score reflects a medium quality/partially implemented plan.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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 fully implemented a statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency framework. This framework called Core Competencies defines standards needed for high quality early learning practices. They define the knowledge and skills necessary for providers to facilitate child learning and develop partnerships with parents. The plan presented includes embedding the framework in all EC Educator training and linking the framework to child outcomes. The state has partially implemented a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. For example, the state has a Career Pathway that provides a sequential and articulated route to qualifications, credentials, or college degrees. However, the state provides a high quality plan to link the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework to all parts of the Career Pathway. The applicant provides a plan to engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The state already has a common course catalog and common course numbering for coursework. The state has developed a statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework that has not been fully implemented across professional development in the state. The implementation and plan to link this framework to professional development was rated as medium quality/partial implementation.

	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)

The state provides a high-quality plan to initiate a Communities of Practice model in the state. Community of Practice is a job-embedded professional development that allows teachers and center directors with outside expertise and facilitation to learn new knowledge and skills as it relates to children in context of their own program. Group members establish learning goals, help each other think about better teaching practices, look at curriculum and student work, and identify issues that affect children and healthy development. They work collaboratively to assess student work. This coaching model is an alternative or supplement to formal education. This part of the plan is a strength since it offers an option for educators which is likely to increase retention. In addition to the Communities of Practice Model, the state is already prepared to pilot a professional development program called Career Pathway Training that consists of online and residential college coursework, Smart Technology, distance learning supports, and career advising. The state will consult with the National Research Implementation Network at the University of North Carolina for support in implementation of the state's professional development initiative. The state provides a plan to provide effective professional development that is aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The state has partially implemented a system for incentives to promote professional improvement and career advancement. For example, the TORIS System that has been piloted in 7 areas includes professional development and teacher education levels in the rating system. The state also provides a high-quality plan for improving career advancement for EC Educators. For example, several scholarships including TEACH, Florida Staff Credential Scholarships, Children's Services Councils will provide opportunities for teachers to attend institutions of higher education. The state has partially implemented a plan for reporting aggregated stat on EC Educator development, advancement, and retention. For example, the state is currently developing a statewide workforce study that will be released in 2012. The Steps to Success Registry will provide the state with the means to college statewide workforce data. The state provides a plan to link this registry to the TQRIS System in the state. The data provided by this system will allow policy makers to make informed decisions regarding the health of the EC workforce. The state provides ambitious targets that may not be achievable for the number of EC Educators receiving credentials from postsecondary institutions. The state targets to move EC Educators receiving credentials from an "aligned" institution from 980 to 5,000 during the grant period. This includes AA Degrees in field from 938 to 1,000 and a BA/BS degree in field from 303 to 500. Although these targets are modest, they are reasonable given that the state is planning to implement new certificate programs that will include at least 1,000 educators. However The state provides ambitious but unachievable targets to increase the number of teachers with a PhD. For example, the state aims to double the number of professionals with a PhD during the last two years of the project. This is an unachievable goal especially since there is no baseline information for current number of EC professionals with a PhD. The state's score in this area reflects high quality/partial implementation.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	20	16
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

The Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener is administered within 30 instructional days. Currently, two methods (FAIR and ECHOS) are used to assess kindergarten readiness. These methods include both observation and direct assessment. These assessments consist of all domains of development including: language and literacy, mathematics, social, science, social studies, physical, and creative skills. The state provides a chart that outlines the alignment of the assessment items to ELD Standards. Both the ECHOS and FAIR are scientifically valid. The FAIR technical report included in the plan shows no evidence between risk status and demographics such as race, poverty, and ELL. The state does not provide evidence that the ECHOS is appropriate for the target population and for English language learners and children with disabilities. The state has minimally implemented reporting kindergarten entrance assessment data to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System. The results of kindergarten entrance assessments is recorded in the Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network. This online database system is not connected to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System. The state provides a high quality plan to link data systems through a common child identifier. This link will allow early learning data to integrate into the Statewide Longitudinal Data System. The state has fully implemented funding the kindergarten readiness assessment out of the state's General Revenue Fund. This assessment is funded through resources other than those available under this grant. This area was rated in the high quality/partially implemented range.

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	18

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

The state has partially implemented data systems to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies. For example, the state Early Learning Data System consists of three elements: -Early Learning Data System- exchanges data with five different state agencies. The data gathered from this system to perform business functions such as provider eligibility, Child Care Resource and Referral services, provider payment processing, and general case management. -PLATINUM software- software needed to manage the TQRIS system. Program data is collected and the software composes a customizable report that can be used for program improvement. The software will also help the state collect accurate data regarding the quality of ELD Programs. -ECE Practitioner Professional Development Program and Registry. This software will support the establishment of a professional ECE Workforce in the state. It will give program managers and analysts complete visibility to the status of the ECE workforce. Grant funds will be utilized to link these systems to the state longitudinal data system that exists for school age children. With this process complete, the state will have all the data it needs to assess and make changes to the state's educational system for children of all ages. This combined system captures all of the data elements defined in the criteria and connects that data to the State Longitudinal Data System. The creation of a unique statewide child identifier will the facilitation of the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies. Also, unique Statewide Early Childhood Educator Identifiers will allow for the collection of accurate workforce data. The linkages between these systems will allow the state to generate timely, relevant, accessible data for continuous improvement. This system meets the data system oversight requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws. The state's high-quality data system plan has been implemented in some parts. However, the state provides a comprehensive plan that will allow for the cohesive collection of data. The collection of this data is crucial to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies. Therefore, this area was rated as high quality with partial implementation.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	209

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
Comments on (P)(3)		
<p>The state has demonstrated that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entrance Assessment that meets the selection criterion. The applicant earned a score of at least 70% on criterion (E)(1).</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
Comments on Absolute Priority	
<p>The state's application demonstrates that it will improve the quality of ELD programs to promote school readiness for children with high needs in several ways. First, the state will promote Early Learning and Development Outcomes for children by: -Incorporating ELD Standards that are culturally and linguistically appropriate across age groups. -Aligning ELD and K-3 standards. -Incorporating ELD Standards within State Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. -Working with programs to select assessments and approaches that are appropriate for the target population and purposes. -Aligning and integrating assessment systems to avoid duplication and coordinate services for children with high needs. -Training EC Educators on the appropriate administration and interpretation of assessment data to inform instruction. -Improving the knowledge, skills, and abilities of EC Educators. The state meets the absolute priority by providing a strategic plan that will significantly improve program quality and outcomes for children with high needs.</p>	



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # FL-5008

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, 16. Below the table is a detailed description of the core area and its sub-points (a-d).

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

The State of Florida has a long history of supporting the young children in its state. In terms of financial support, since 2007, total state contributions have increased by \$32 million dollars. And, the State exceeded the required match to CCDF for all years data were reported (2007-2010). Additionally, after several agencies in the state lost funding in 2009, 2010 saw nearly all of those agencies regain at least some of the funding. In the case of both state-funded preschools and State contributions to Part C, 2011 sees their highest rate of funding. However, TANF dollars have either decreased or stayed the same over this time period. In other words, between 2007 and 2011 TANF has not seen any increase in funding. Additional, State contributions for Part B and CCDF have decreased in 2011. The State provided no data on funding for Early Head Start or Head Start. Additionally, it is not clear if/ how other sources of potential funding (i.e., Title I) have been used for young children. In terms of number of children served, there is some unavailable data making complete analysis impossible. However, looking at the data that has been provided, the most recent data (2010) suggests that with the exception of Early Head Start and Head Start, the other programs have seen a decrease in the number of children served. When funding patterns and enrollment patterns are compared, there is not a clear picture of support. Some of this lack of clarity is due to incomplete data. For example, it is interesting to note that state funded preschools are at their highest level of funding and yet there are no children enrollment data for 2010 or 2011. Conversely, the number of children served in Early Head Start and Head Start seem to be increasing, but there is no data presented. Further, for the last year of data presented (2010) three of the four programs report decreases in the number of children served. Florida has a long history of legislation, policies and practice that have supported young children with high needs. This legislation includes: children services councils, the Handicapped Prevention Act, pre-kindergarten programs; regional perinatal systems; Healthy Start; Healthy Families; the School Readiness Act; and, Voluntary Universal Pre-Kindergarten. In addition, Florida has unique programs. For example, there are legislative incentives for teen parents to stay in school. These incentives target health and human services, childcare and transportation. While not technically a legislative support, it is worth noting that Florida's first lady holds the title Chief Child Advocate, this signifies, in part, Florida's commitment to supporting young children. Florida has several well-developed aspects that work to form the building blocks of a high-quality early learning and development system. Of

particular note are pre-natal health screening and home visiting that starts at pregnancy and continues through Kindergarten. Equally impressive is the comprehensive assessment system. In Florida five aspects are addressed: screening and referral; formative assessments; measures of environmental quality; adult-child interaction; Kindergarten readiness; and, overall systems evaluation. Impressively, Florida reports that 100% of the children younger than one are screened; 84% of one to two year olds and 85% of three to five year olds are screened. Additionally, Florida has been working on early learning guidelines since 2000 and has guidelines for children birth to age three, three and four, pre-Kindergarten and for children five years of age. Finally, 94% of Kindergarten children receive the Kindergarten assessment, the results of which are used in a school readiness ratings, are used to drive instruction and educate parents. However, the majority of programs have no or limited assessment in place. For example, state funded preschools and programs receiving CCDF funding reported only using screening measures. And, the quality rating improvement system is not implemented, although it is being piloted in eight counties. Finally, in terms of family engagement, there is great variety across agencies. Many organizations like Parts B and C seem to have minimal family involvement beyond that required for child participation. However, there are many innovative family involvement programs in the state, including but not limited to "Parents as Partners", "Parenting Counts", "Father Child Connection" and "Grandparents as Parents". Thus, Florida has many strengths including supports for teen parents, the support of the First Lady, an impressive comprehensive assessment system and a wide variety of family programs. However, there are some aspects of the application that are difficult to fully analyze because of unavailable information. And, other systems (i.e., the QRIS) are extremely underdeveloped. For these reasons, this is a medium/high quality response earning 16 points.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

Florida's goals for the proposed project are: 1) to increase the quality of early learning settings for children with high needs; 2) to increase professional's expertise; and, 3) to integrate and align services to increase Kindergarten readiness. To meet the goal of increasing the quality of early childhood settings, they want to focus on increasing the quality of adult-child interactions, build a Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System (TORIS) and provide incentives for providers to serve children with high needs. To increase the professional's level of expertise, Florida proposed to build on its "Step to Success" system to develop a comprehensive professional development system. To integrate and align services, Florida proposes to continue and develop their standards. Currently, these standards are aligned with Head Start standards, articulated with K-12 standards and are appropriate for use with children with developmental disabilities. Additionally, Florida proposed developing new measures that can be used to predict children's later school success. While, these are important goals, it is challenging to evaluate how ambitious they are. There is no baseline data presented and no specific benchmarks or outcomes are stated. Further, while it is important work to be able to develop predictive measures, this is expensive, time consuming work that may not be able to be completed in the project's timeline. In addition, there is no rationale to justify the State's selection of the focused investment areas. For this reason, this is a medium high quality response earning 16 points.

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

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

- (a) Demonstrating how the Participating State Agencies and other partners, if any, will identify a governance structure for working together that will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability and describing--
 - (1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are

effective;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

The proposed governance structure for overseeing grant related activities is already in existence. This lead agency is the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council exists to assure interagency coordination and helps to avoid program duplication. In addition, the council can allocate resources and help support long-term sustainability. The Advisory Council works in concert with the Children and Youth Cabinet and can work with the state agencies that have statutory oversight of programs that serve young children. The Advisory Council will support in the grant administration by the Office of Early Learning. Further, the Advisory Council will work with the responsible entities with statutory oversight for implementing specific programs to ensure that the work scope is implemented and completed. Further, agreements are in place and there is a strong commitment on the part of each of the partners, as evidenced by the MOUs. Each partners' responsibilities are clearly defined. This plan is reasonable in that it works within the existing structure; however, the description (summarized above) differs from the organizational chart that has the Race to the Top lead agency directly under the Governor and both the Advisory Council and the Office of Early Learning three levels below. This contradiction is challenging to understand, especially since in the organizational chart, the agencies charged with overseeing the grant would be below the supporting departments. Further there was no concrete description of how decision would be made. The proposal provides letters of support from early organizations and other key stake holders. However, there are relatively few letters of support from local entities. Additionally, the scope-of-work described in the letters of support do not always align with the support in the budget. Therefore it is hard to determine the actual stakeholder buy-in. Finally, the issue of family participation was not addressed. For these reasons, this is a partially implement plan with a medium quality response earning six point.

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

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)

Over the grant period, Florida projects a budget of approximately \$16.5 billion dollars for children-related services. In addition, Florida has several public-private ventures that will also generate funds for children during the grant period. The proposal articulates which funding streams will support which grant related goals (e.g., CCDF funds will support the enhancement of the TQRIS). In general, Race to the Top funding will be used to cover start-up costs and capacity building. Plans for sustainability are articulated as are plans for the costs associated with sustainability. Costs associated with sustainability are expected to come from newly found efficiencies, or already existing fees. This sustainability strategy is weak because there is no projection of the costs associated with maintenance and no projections for revenue projections, particularly in terms of the expected savings based on new efficiencies. While Florida brings generous resources to the proposal, it is unclear exactly what those resources are. In other words, it seems as if the application has presented total budget figures rather than isolating out the funds to be used specifically related to the proposal's goals. Further not all budget allocations have rationales associated with them. Additionally, a large percentage of requested funds are allocated for contractual services, but a clear link between this expense and broader project goals is not made. This lack of specificity makes it difficult to determine if costs are reasonable, adequate and necessary. For this reason, this is a medium quality response earning ten points.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

- (a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--
 - (1) Early Learning and Development Standards;
 - (2) A Comprehensive Assessment System;
 - (3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications;
 - (4) Family engagement strategies;
 - (5) Health promotion practices; and
 - (6) Effective data practices;
- (b) Is clear and has standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children; and
- (c) Is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

In terms of the adoption of a tiered quality rating and improvement system, Florida has some programs related to the quality rating system in place, others in development and others planned. Currently in place, are early learning and development standards (for birth through five) that are aligned with K-12 standards, the use of screening tools, core competencies for practitioners, and a tiered reimbursement system. In process are a seven-county pilot of the TQRIS system, work on a training and trainer registry, and a web-based early learning data system. Planned are a revision of standards and 100% participation in the TQRIS. Taken together, the proposal addresses program standards. A strength in the proposed pilot and validation studies is the attention to cultural competence and child-level data. Finally, the State plans to use the State licensing standards as the foundation for the TQRIS. Florida's licensing standards have been rated highly by NACCRRRA. These are strengths of the proposal. However, there are also several challenges with the proposal. For example, although it is clear that there are differentiated and measurable ways to earn different quality ratings, there are no data that suggest that these tiers result in differential outcomes for children. This is particularly problematic. The timelines presented are short with regards to the large scope of the project. Additionally, family engagement strategies and health promotion practices are not well described. In sum, this is a partially implemented plan with a medium high quality response earning six points.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

In Florida, currently the TQRIS is voluntary. The goal by the completion of funding is to have 100% of programs that receive CCDF and Early Head Start or Head Start funding participate in TQRIS. Also, the goal is to have 100% of children with special needs attending a 4- or 5-star programs. The application states that CCDF programs will be required to participate and that Early Head Start and Head Start programs have agreed to participate. In addition, Florida aims to have 74% of state-funded preschools participate as well as Part B, Part C and Title I programs that serve young children. The proposal describes supports that will be available prior to the implementation program, which include: conference presentations, information sharing about trainings, information about the standards, and incentives (e.g., scholarships and professional development). In addition, the proposal names strategies it may use to help encourage program participation. These include incentives, private funding, and technical assistance. Finally, the plan will target programs that serve children with high needs first and other programs may participate afterwards. However, the proposal lacks some specificity making it challenging to determine the actual ambitiousness of the plan. This lack of specificity takes two forms—lack of description of mechanisms and missing information. In terms of lack of descriptions of mechanisms, it is unclear how programs will participate. In the case of CCDF and Head Start it appears as if there will be a mandate or a policy that will require participation. In the case of CCDF programs it seems as if this may be linked to the reception of child care subsidy funds, but this link is not explicitly made. More problematic is the case of programs in Parts B and C and Title I funds. In these cases, the governing agency will support TQRIS participation, beyond building relationships, there is no description of how this will be achieved. Further, in the case of these programs, target numbers of programs are identified but no information is presented for the percentage of programs the targets represent; thus, the overall impact of the target goals cannot be ascertained. Further, although families will be supported in accessing high-quality options through funding that does not increase their share, it is not clear how families will be

educated about the benefits of higher quality programs, or how families will be helped to access these programs if they are not geographically ideal. In sum, this is a minimally implemented system and a medium quality response earning nine points.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

Florida has used the psychometric properties of existing assessments to identify the tools it will use in the TQRIS. They have chosen to use the CLASS and the Environmental Rating Scales as the basis of their assessments. Currently there are 122 reliable assessors on the ERS and 200 reliable assessors on the CLASS. Assessors for the TQRIS will be drawn from this existing pool of already trained assessors. In addition, the State has determined that it needs 75 more assessors. These new assessors will be recruited from existing programs and trained by current assessors. On both instruments, assessors will be trained to reliability levels of 80% accuracy and periodic rechecks and re-certifications are required. Standard time periods for program assessment are established as well as triggers for more frequent checks. Programs who serve children with high needs will be the first to participate. Information about the TQRIS will be delivered to families using traditional and social media. Traditional media campaigns will use posters, radio, television and newspapers. Social media will include facebook, Google and the like. Florida also proposes an innovative smart phone app that will guide families through a system of questions that will help parents determine the best match for their child. For families without access to technology local Resource and Referral organizations will have this type of information. Finally, through translation of materials into Spanish and other key language families whose first language is not English can access the materials. Thus, Florida has paid close attention to many important aspects of the planning including: 1) a robust system that helps to assure that assessors will provide reliable scoring 2) information dissemination that relies on traditional media and current technology and 3) plans for hard -to-reach families including the use of Resource and Referral Agencies as well as materials for non-English speakers. These are all strengths. However, there are several places where this plan is problematic. First, since assessors are recruited from existing early learning and development program it is not clear if this will create a conflict of interest. Second it is not clear if the existing assessors, who form the basis for the TQRIS raters, will be responsible for administering both assessments or just the one they are currently trained in. This lack of information makes it hard to judge exactly how the assessment system will be implemented and its quality. In addition the proposal lacks needed details about the self assessment. Additionally, the proposal would be strengthened by decreasing the amount of time between monitoring periods, particularly for highly-rated programs as this would align more with national norms and help insure that high-rated programs maintain high-rated practices. However, the biggest problem is not with any component parts, but rather in how these parts work together as a whole. Florida is first going to target programs who serve children with high needs. While at first glance this seems reasonable it may be problematic. First, it is not clear how stable the high needs population is—it is not clear what happens to a center's priority if a child with high needs decides to attend a program that has not previously served this population. Conversely, the plan does not describe the procedure for what happens to a center's priority if a program was serving children with high needs (and thus had priority) and the children either aged-out or chose a different provider. In other words, the proposed plan lacks sufficient details making evaluation difficult. In summary, this is a partially implemented plan with a medium quality response earning nine points.

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

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

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

(b) Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early

Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs (e.g., providing full-day, full-year programs; transportation; meals; family support services); and

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

Florida proposes to increase the number of programs participating in the TQRIS. This will be accomplished through the use of incentives. Incentives include tiered reimbursement and waiving property taxes for high quality programs. Programs participating in the TQRIS will get computerized, customizable reports articulating strengths and areas for improvement, and marketing tool kits. Supports for low performing programs include: technical assistance; scholarships; career counseling; accreditation supports; and, Teachstone resources. Beyond scholarships, there is little proposed to support families (e.g., full day care, transportation, meals, or family supports) in accessing high-quality programs. This is a weakness of the proposal. In terms of setting ambitious and reachable goals for increasing the number of programs with top-tier rankings, Florida aims to increase the total number of programs in the system from 1,614 today to 9,609 by the end of 2015. This includes an increase of 37 Tier 1 programs, and increase of 2,374 Tier 2 program, an increase of 3,238 Tier 3 programs, and increase of 1,822 Tier 4 programs and an increase of 524 Tier 5 programs. These estimates are based on pilot studies. In terms of increasing the percentage of children with high needs served in top-tiered programs, Florida proposes a 30% increase in state-funded preschools; a 36% increase in Early Head Start and Head Start; an 11% increase in Part C programs; a 13% increase in Part B programs; an 8% increase in Title I programs; and, a 26% increase in CCDF programs. However, there are problems with these proposed numbers. First, previously it was stated that a goal of the proposed project was that all children with high needs would be in top-tier programs. But these projections suggest that even in programs that primarily or exclusively serve children with disabilities (which are defined as members of the children with high needs category; i.e., Part C and Part B) that only 15% of the children would be in such programs—and that is after modest gains of 11% and 13% (respectively) at the end of the funding period. Further, it was previously stated that 100% of Early Head Start and Head Start programs would participate in the TQRIS, and yet the goal by the end of funding of for fewer the half of the children in these systems to be served in top-tiered program. Similarly, 100% of CCDF programs are projected to participate in the TQRIS, by the end of funding it is projected that only 32% of children with high needs will be served in top-tiered programs. These numbers are further confusing when it is projected that by the end of funding only 29% of programs will be in the bottom two tiers and 71% will be in tier-three or above programs. If a majority of programs are in the top tiers, there should be capacity in those programs for the children with high needs. The lack of clarity in goals and lack of alignment between these projections and stated goals decreases the quality of the response. For these reasons, this is a partially implemented plan with a medium quality response earning ten points.

	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)

Currently, Florida is engaged in a standards revision. Upon completion of this work, a validation study will begin and will be overseen by an outside researcher. After this study is completed an additional validation study is also proposed. The goal of the standards revision and the two validations studies is to determine cut levels for the tiered program through the identification of quality indicators. These quality indicators will be valid in terms of cultural and diversity-related issues. Additionally, the resulting indicators will have been vetted for construct validity, predictive validity, inter-rater reliability and sensitivity. These are strengths of the proposal. However, there are some challenges too. Specifically, in terms of the proposed studies not enough description was given to the measures, so a comprehensive evaluation is not possible. Additionally, the sampling procedures are inadequate. Specifically, collecting data on one teacher per center does not ensure that a teacher's performance is representative of all teachers in that center. Finally, there was no description of how the pilot data will be used with

the TQRIS. This is an ambitious plan that if it succeeds will add important information to the entire field. The challenge is that the grant period is a small amount of time for a project of this magnitude. Nevertheless, this is a medium, high-quality response earning 12 points.

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	18
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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. <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Comments on (C)(1)</p> <p>Florida has two documents that comprise the standards. The first, revised in 2010, are for birth to four year olds. The second, for four year olds, was revised on 2011. The narrative states that the standards are sensitive to cultural and linguistic diversity and are based on current research findings; however, little evidence was given to support this statement. Periodic revisions are planned, with the next planned for 2014. All revisions were made with consultations of experts from the field, researchers and administrators. They are also open to comment from the field. The standards are cross-walked with Head Start standards and aligned with K-12 standards. The plan is to have all programs that serve young children use this one set of standards. Additional plans include using the standards to align curriculum, define workforce competencies, delineate steps on the career ladder, and be used with the Kindergarten screening assessment. Finally, the standards will be integrated into personnel standards and personnel will engage in an outcomes-based training to learn them. However, there is no description of how the revised standards will be rolled-out or how training on these revised standards will occur. Additionally, little information is given about how the 2014 revision will impact all the alignment and training efforts that will take prior to this. Thus, this is a partially implemented plan with a medium quality response earning 18 points.</p>		

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	24

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

Florida's plan for a comprehensive assessment system aims to continue in its areas of strength which include high rates of screening and referral for young children, its universal adoption of the ASQ-3, its use of pre-kindergarten assessment and its long history of workforce training in assessment. Plans include: using observations for formative assessment and to plan instruction; assessing programs; and, systems monitoring and evaluation. In addition to the ASQ-3, the State plans to put together a list of approved assessments for pre-Kindergarten programs to use in pre-post testing. The State plans to work with assessment vendors to develop training modules on approved assessments. Providers' use of this training will be reflected in TQRIS scores. Finally, the State wants to extend its already existing work on sharing information across agencies. These are all strengths of the proposal. In particular the use of high-quality measures (e.g., the ASQ-3) is a strength as is working with the vendors to develop the trainings. Working with vendors will provide ready access to the test author's expertise and will facilitate sustainability. On the other hand, a challenge for the proposal is that there is still too much local control to assure the recommended practices for assessment will be used. This is seen in the plan's reliance on multiple agencies to administer the screening measures and in the lack of the recommendation for a single assessment. All in all, however, this is a partially implemented plan, but the response is high quality earning a score of 24 points.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

Florida's Steps to Success program makes professional development available to all early childhood professionals. While Florida has implemented all aspects of a workforce knowledge and competency framework, this has been done in pilot form. A full extension is planned for 2013. Additional, Florida proposes to use grant resources to increase accessibility, affordability, availability and quality of professional development. Plans include common competencies across agencies and plans to enhance the career pathway and registry. Florida will also build off of its new Bachelor's degree in early childhood, its established 2+2 agreements and its common course numbering system by creating a universal course catalog that will include all relevant coursework from across all the State's institutions of higher learning. The existing linkages between the post-secondary institutions are a

particular strength of the application as is the emphasis on increased accessibility. However, there are challenges with the proposal as well. Namely, the alignment between course content and the workforce competencies is not articulated nor is a plan to facilitate this alignment. In summary this is a partially implemented plan with a high quality response earning 16 points.

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in Improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	12
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to improve the effectiveness and retention of Early Childhood Educators who work with Children with High Needs, with the goal of improving child outcomes by--</p> <p>(a) Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities that are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;</p> <p>(b) Implementing policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) that promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that is aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and that are designed to increase retention;</p> <p>(c) Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention; and</p> <p>(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--</p> <p>(1) Increasing the number of postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and the number of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(2) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)
<p>Florida plans to retain early childhood professionals and improve child outcomes by doing the following: integrating training modules with the registry; linking core competencies with career pathways, training modules and TQRIS; establishing communities of practice; offering scholarships; and, creating local workforce reports. Linking the professional development activities to the registry is a strength, as is the use of the "Steps to Success" program. However, the quality of the proposal would have been increased had more details been provided about the content and the method of the professional development opportunities. It is not known if these training modules use recommended practices from the adult learning literature as they were not sufficiently described. Similarly, while the use of incentives are described, it is not clear what the incentives are linked to or how effective the use of incentives alone is likely to be. However, the bigger problem for this section of the proposal is with increasing the number of aligned post-secondary institutions and the number of early childhood professionals who are progressing to higher levels of credentialing. For both the total number of aligned institutions and for the total number of credentialed professionals, there is steady projected growth, based on the baseline figures from now through 2014. From 2014 to 2015 the projected number doubles the previous growth rate and yet there is no explanation about why this burst would happen. Additionally, while actual counts are given for the number of early child professionals who are projected to obtain higher levels of credentialing, no percentage data is supplied. This makes the magnitude of the projected increases impossible to determine. In addition, some of the goal levels seem challenging, particularly, the number of doctoral-level professionals are expected to go from an unknown current number to 150 by 2015. Given the length and small size of doctoral programs, this number seems unobtainable. Thus, this is a partially implemented plan with a medium quality response earning twelve points.</p>

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

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

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)

Florida has a well-established Kindergarten entry assessment system. The system is the combination of two tools—the ECHO and FAIR. All children entering public preschool and all children who attend voluntary pre-kindergarten and attend private schools for Kindergarten are currently tested. The assessment is valid and reliable and appropriate for the population. Currently, the outcomes of the results of these tests have high stakes outcomes. They are used in determining if pre-kindergarten providers are low achieving. The process for this is undergoing changes from a rank order to a criterion-reference score where if 70% or more of children do not meet benchmark scores on the two tests, the program is designated as low achieving. However, this data is not currently linked to the statewide longitudinal data system. Funding for current and future testing comes from the State. Funds are requested to align the 4-year-old standards with the Kindergarten assessment, create a tool better able to predict later school success and develop a universal identification number to streamline data aggregating across sources and agencies. This is substantially implemented plan with a high quality response earning 20 points.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

Florida's current data collection system is old and non-integrated. However, they propose a detailed plan to enhance, expand and integrate its data and its data collection system. While the State collects most of the essential data elements already, it will expand its data collection to include additional information (e.g., information on professional development) and link data together currently collected separately (e.g., data on TQRIS and longitudinal data). The plan will help make the data uniform and easier for data entry. Further, the exchange of data will be made easier because of uniform data entry form and universal identifiers. The State does not propose using RTT-ELC dollars for this activity. And, the system complies with federal, State and local privacy laws. Strengths of the plan include the accessibility to the system for both data entry and report generation. However, the weakness of the application was in a lack of description in terms of what reports would be available and to whom. In sum this is a partially implemented plan with a high quality response earning 16 points.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	200

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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>Florida already has a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that gathers the required information. It has met all the elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12.</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>This application proposes an ambitious plan to promote school readiness for children with high needs. The basis of this proposal is several studies to improve the standards and the assessments to be used in the tiered quality rating and improvement system. Florida wants to improve its assessment tools in order to better predict school readiness, including school readiness for children with high needs. Further, the assessments will be integrated into standards and workforce competencies. Workforce data about early childhood professionals will be disseminated to directors and supervisors; aggregated data will be made available to the public via a report card. Efficiencies across systems are planned and savings from these efficiencies will be used to support the sustainability of grant activities after funding ends. Work will be completed with post-secondary institutions in order to further support professional development. And, a rationale is given for the chosen investment areas. There are many innovative and some high-risks aspects to the proposal, but if the proposed activities are successful it should result in better services and higher levels of school readiness in children with high needs.</p>	



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # FL-5009

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: **Reviewed**
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 1:25 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(1)

(a) The applicant provided evidence of positive past commitments of investments in early learning programs for children with high needs. The applicant has developed State Statutes resulting in standards for all readiness programs by approving standards for 5 year olds, standards for 3 and 4 year olds, and adopting birth - three early learning standards. The State has also shown a continued commitment to early learning and development by the implementation of a Universal Prekindergarten (VPK). With a rich history of investing in early learning programs, it seems the Applicant will be able to build on their past experiences and partnerships. (b) The Applicant's financial contribution to all early development programs increased about \$32 million over the past 5 years showing continuous commitment for improving learning outcomes for children with high needs. Based upon data, the applicant implemented a Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten that provided additional services for children from low-income families. The Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten is an appropriate approach in meeting the additional needs of high needs children in this age range. (c) The applicant has existing policies, legislation and practices that support high needs children. In 1986 State legislature passed the Handicapped Prevention Act requiring interagency collaboration for prevention and early intervention services for high-risk children. In 1980, the applicant funded a Premier Pre-K program for at-risk children through lottery funds and in the 80's developed a state-of-the-art regional prenatal system for premature babies and a program for teen mothers. In 1998 the applicant implemented a Healthy Families program in several counties with success in preventing child abuse. In 1999, the applicant passed the Florida School Readiness Act. In 2004, the State of Florida created a Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten for all four-year olds. The applicant has continuously sought innovative ways to finance and support programs for high needs children. The Children's Services Council provides funds to improve the lives of children and families. The Early Learning Partners Initiative, funded through ARRA, provides funds for standardizing assessments, accountability practices, and a comprehensive professional development program (d) Applicant is currently making strides towards implementing a comprehensive assessment system for children with high needs. An Early Childhood Educators Professional Development system is in process of being developed. There are five components to this system, funding, core competencies, quality assurance, qualifications and credentials. The applicant has a fully implemented kindergarten-entry measurement system. The applicant has a

positive history of being committed to building high quality early learning development systems that support early learning programs. The response was scored in the "High-quality" range.

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

(a)The State plans to build upon their history and vision to improve school readiness for children with high needs. The applicant has identified three ambitious yet achievable goals for improving program quality and outcomes for children with high needs. The goals are: (1) to improve the quality of early learning settings so that children with high needs have more access to and are more frequently served within these settings, (2) To increase the expertise of early childhood educators who serve high needs children, (3)To integrate and align services so that the early learning experience of the high needs child is positive, consistently meets his/her needs and results in improved kindergarten readiness scores. The goals are achievable through training, improved learning environments and data assessment. (b)The applicant chose the Focus areas C-1, C-2, D-1, D-2, E-1, and E-2 which are woven throughout the reform agenda for a comprehensive plan for reaching the three goals. Focus Areas C-1 and C-2 are appropriate focus areas for achieving Goal 1, The Applicant has revised State Standards that are research-based and developmentally appropriate for high need children (Focus Area C-1). The State will align these Standards with a comprehensive assessment system (Focus Area C-2). By addressing both focus areas, classroom instruction along with measurable outcomes will result in improving the school readiness of children and instruction. Focus Areas D-1 and D-2 are appropriate focus areas for achieving Goal 2. The Applicant has strategies for the development of a comprehensive professional development system (Focus Area D-2). The Applicant's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework provides the foundation for the development of a professional development system (Focus Area D-1). By selecting both focus areas the skills and knowledge of early childhood educators should improve as they navigate through the career paths resulting in improved child outcomes. Focus Area E-1 and E-2 supports Goal 3. The applicant has revised Standards to align with the State's Kindergarten standards and assessments (E-1). Through this alignment process the standards and assessments will provide the needed data for improving child outcomes and closing the readiness gap. As a result, a comprehensive data system will be reformed to better monitor children's progress towards the Standards. (c)The identified focus areas collectively will provide an effective framework for achieving the three goals. As a result the response was scored in the "High-quality" range.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

1) The applicant's State plan has an organization chart that described the structure for governing and management of the RTT-ETC grant. This management structure will continue to include existing collaborating councils and partnerships. The RTT-ELC Lead agency will use contracted staff for the duration of the grant. The management of this project is a large responsibility and should include more specific timelines for reporting the progress of projects. 2) Four state agencies are presently involved in an early childhood governance structure to coordinate early learning and child care services. This organization structure as designed should facilitate communication among the partners through the sharing of project progress. The applicant provided letters of support showing commitments from stakeholders for governance-related roles and responsibilities. Table (A)(3)-1 3) the applicant designated the State Advisory Council with coordinating a process for making decisions- policy, operational and resolving disputes that are developed and resolved by members. The effectiveness of the State Advisory Council in coordinating this process will ultimately depend on continuous feedback from members and their participation in the process. 4) The State Advisory Council is designated to establish and charter workgroups and committees including engaging parents and families of children with high need to plan and implement activities in the State plan. Through this process, the State Advisory Council will receive the feedback necessary to have effective workgroups and committees that make or suggest revisions, policies, or express concerns. 1b) The applicant has letters of support from stakeholders to ensure their commitment to the State Plan for improving the readiness skills of high need children. The State's stakeholders have a rich history of working together to improve the early learning programs. The State Plan has a framework for continuous involvement of stakeholders in improving the early learning environments of high children. 2b) The MOU's provides descriptions of the Scope of Work for each participating State Agency with an authorized signature. 1c) Letters of support from Early Learning and Intermediary Organizations and local and early learning councils are provided to show their support such as the Early Learning Advisory Council, Association of Early Learning Coalitions, and Alliance for Early Care and Education. 2c) Letters of intent or support from other stakeholders such as the United Way of Miami - Dade, Florida Family Child Care Home Association, and Florida Head Start's Association (Appendix A). The response was scored in the "Partially Implemented-High quality response range."

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The applicant's current budget for Early Learning is over \$1 billion annually. Federal, state, private, and local sources are listed in Table (A) (4) designating funds to be used to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan. With the State's prior investments and commitments in early learning, along with the investments of partners, this Plan could be sustained. The applicant plans to receive revenue from efficiencies so that existing funds could be invested. It is not clear as to the amount of funds to be generated by the efficiencies for sustainability. The applicant's budget narrative and budget tables describe how funds will be utilized to achieve the State Plan. The budget amount, \$99,958,777, is adequate and within the budget cap to support the activities in the State Plan for children ages birth through five from low income families. The applicant provided specific budget details in three budget summaries: Budget category, Participating State Agency, and Project. The costs are reasonable because the State and partners have financial investments in the State Plan. The budget summary identifies funds allocated by local projects for each State Agencies, localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, participating programs, and partners. The requested funds are aligned with the goals and activities in the State Plan. The budget costs are reasonable with the applicant's investing funds in the Plan. With the prior history of financial contributions of over \$1 billion annually, the applicant, partners and stakeholders will continue their support for high needs children through Memorandums of Understandings. This Plan has a probability of being sustained. As a result, the response was scored in the "High-quality" range.

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)

a. The Applicant has a tiered reimbursement system that was authorized by the State's Legislature in 1996 entitled the Gold Seal Quality Care Designation Program which is being implemented state-wide in child care centers and family child care homes. The State will build upon this existing positive foundation by validating the tiered program standards. The applicant should be able to make necessary revision for improvement based on feedback from child care centers and family child care homes. b) The present Gold Seal Quality Program is measurable but does not have a validation study of the standards or quality levels. Plans are proposed to apply appropriate statistical analysis of data to obtain measurable standards. The Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System is based on Program Standards that includes six components: Early Learning and Development Standards, A Comprehensive Assessment System, Early Childhood Educator Qualifications, Family Engagement Strategies, Health Promotion Practices, and Effective Data Practices. The TQRIS standards are measurable and based upon nationally recognized standards; the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Association of Family Child Care, and the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation Commission. Plans are being proposed to validate the tiered program standards. C) The State Plan is linked to the State Licensing System which license child care centers and family child care homes. The response was scored in the "Substantially or Fully implemented" range.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

The Applicant proposes to implement policies and procedures that stipulate that all legally operating early learning and development program types, such as State-funded programs, Head Start and Early Head Start, Funded Title I of ESEA and CCDF funded early childhood program, will participate in the validated TQRIS by 2015. Until 2015, early childhood programs will voluntarily participate in the Tiered Quality Rating System. To minimize resistance to participating in the TQRIS, this procedure allows early childhood programs the flexibility and additional time to prepare to participate in 2015. In 2015, early learning programs will be mandated to participate in TQRIS. The Applicant proposes policies and practices to help families afford high-quality child care. One procedure is to increase the subsidy of quality early childhood programs without increasing the cost to the parent. This policy/procedure allows parents an opportunity to send their children to quality rated early childhood programs. This practice will encourage early childhood programs in areas of high needs children to improve the quality of their early learning programs. Consequently, more quality early childhood programs will be available for high needs children. This is an achievable goal. The Applicant provided base-line data for increasing the number and percentage of early learning and development programs participating in the Statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. The Applicant has set appropriate targets for the participation of early learning programs in the TQRIS. Head Start and Early Head Starts have committed to participate in 2015 which allows early learning programs to participate in any 2015 programs receiving child care subsidy will be able to participate. As a result, the response was scored in the "Partially Implemented High-Quality" range.

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

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

- (a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency; and
- (b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (e.g., displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

a) The Applicant uses two assessment tools, the Environment Rating Scale and the CLASS tools: Pre-K CLASS (for children 36-60 months) and the toddler CLASS (for children 15-36 months). Both the Environment Rating Scale and CLASS have proven validity and reliability. Both instruments are appropriate for screening children only with qualified assessors. b) Currently, the applicant has trained assessors with plans to establish a train the trainer program to increase the number of qualified assessors. Assessors must achieve an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability for the Environmental Rating Scale and the CLASS assessment. This process is necessary in ensuring that the State maintains an adequate amount of qualified assessors. The applicant will also use the Environment Rating Scale tools (ages birth - 30 months), the School Age Environment Rating Scale for programs serving school age children (SACERS) and the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale for Family Child Care. These instruments are appropriate if properly administered. Monitoring procedures (currently slated to take up to 48 months) may be too long and make it difficult to obtain timely feedback in order to make necessary adjustments. The applicant's plan to expand its existing Child Care Licensing Information System by developing a multi-media strategy seems to have the potential to reach more parents. This System will provide information on high-quality early learning programs to families whose children are enrolled in early learning programs. The use of a variety of media systems for informing families, about child care centers is a positive means for communicating with families. An innovated communication approach using You Tube, Twitter, and Facebook may only reach a small percentage of parents because of the lack of technology in the homes. As a result, the response was rated in the "Partially Implemented- High quality" range.

	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)

a) Applicant will utilize funds allocated in the budget for building support for programs to prepare them for state-wide implementation of TQRIS in 2015. The TQRIS plan proposes to use incentives, training, higher subsidy rates which will encourage participation in the TQRIS. The incentives proposed in the Plan are a tiered reimbursement, customized improvement plan, and access to the shared services Florida website. A Tiered Reimbursement plan, a customized quality improvement plan, access to the Shared Services Florida website, and access to marketing materials will provide the needed support and incentives to implement a successful state wide TQRIS. These plans/services will give programs and families support in improving quality early childhood program. Applicant will provide support for families by providing a subsidy for their child to attend a quality early learning program. Presently incentives are given to children in foster care, adoption, abuse. Through this plan additional high need families will receive subsidy. A multi media approach will be implemented to inform parents

about quality programs and licensing issues. This is an innovative approach of using a variety of media to communicate with families because some parents may not be able to access Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The applicant has already prioritized child care subsidies for children at risk of abuse and neglect. Parents will be informed about high quality early learning and development programs and know how to access them through a multi-media approach. This is a positive method of keeping parents informed about quality child care programs. Applicant has identified the number of children and number of early childhood programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. C-1) The applicant has set a high target number of 9,609 programs for participation in the TQRIS by the year 2015. Currently 1,614 programs participate in the TQRIS pilots. The target number is ambitious to achieve, however with policies and support from the partners the target can be realized. C-2) Of the 1,614 programs participating in Florida's TQRIS pilots, 30,420 children are in 4 star programs and 14,690 children are in 5 star programs. As a result, the response was rated in the "Partially Implemented High-quality Response" range.

	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)

a) The applicant proposes to obtain an independent evaluator for the Pilot Study and Validation study to ensure the standards and levels are connected to children's outcomes. The team will be researchers, and recognized experts in program quality and child outcomes. The applicant will implement two pilot phases. The design will use three level hierarchical linear models (HLM) to predict child growth from quality indicators. b) Quality indicators will be collected by trained external observers and a statistical method will be used to obtain evidence indicating relationships between better quality and child outcomes. The statistical design is an appropriate method of showing relationships. As a result the response was rated in the "High-quality" range.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)

a) The applicant's early learning and development standards consist of two documents. Document 1 provides standards for birth -4 year olds. Document 2 provides standards for 4 year olds. These standards cover all essential Domains of School Readiness as evident in the narrative and appendix. Both documents are research-based standards developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate for children. b) The Kindergarten Standards are currently aligned with the kindergarten Common Core State Standards. These standards are currently in place in mathematics, early literacy, science and social studies which shows the state's commitment to aligning the standards across all subject matters. The standards for 4 year olds are aligned to the kindergarten standards. c) Early Learning Standards have been incorporated in Program Standards, workforce standards and kindergarten assessment. d) The applicant has contractors in place to provide training to early childhood educators and program administrators on the Standards and observation- based assessments which will provide increased understanding of the Standards and assessment instruments. As a result, the response was rated in the "Partially implemented- High Quality Implemented" range.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	24

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

a) The applicant will work with early learning programs to guide their selection of assessment instruments. As a result teachers should become more knowledgeable about how to use assessment data to inform instruction. b) The applicant will provide professional development training and assistance for early childhood educators through colleges and professional development programs to increase their knowledge about types of assessments and their intended purpose. Early childhood educators will increase their knowledge about assessments. c) The Comprehensive Assessment Plan includes a process of aligning, integrating, and sharing assessment results among agencies which will avoid duplication of services. This process is an appropriate cost and time saving measure for agencies and should result in faster services for children. d) Early childhood educators will participate in professional development opportunities to increase their knowledge and skills in administering and interpreting assessment data. Children's learning outcomes should improve as a result of teachers using assessment data to inform instruction. As a result, the response was rated in the "Partially Implemented High Quality Response range.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

The applicant has been successful in building a comprehensive professional development system entitled Steps to Success that is being piloted in 7 coalitions (Miami-Dade/Monroe, Pinellas, Palm Beach, Southwest Florida, Brevard, Sarasota and Escambia). Steps to Success is a comprehensive development system with two components: A Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials. Plans are to implement Steps to Success state-wide by 2013 through the Teaching Excellence Strategy, delivering Core Competencies through 1-person courses, on-line courses, and communities of practices. With the development of the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, a consistent statewide professional development plan will be established. The Steps to Success System will also develop core competencies for every role in early childhood programs. Post secondary institutions and professional development programs will be engaged to provide training and technical assistance for early childhood educators through universal course offering and professional development opportunities. These professional development opportunities will be aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. With the colleges and training programs already established as partners and submitting letters of support this goal will be achieved. The Steps to Success will utilize a Step to Success Registry to collect workforce data. The proposed Registry is appropriate for early childhood educators because they are able to submit their accomplishments to the Registry. As a result the response was rated in the "Partially Implemented High-quality response" range.

	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)

Steps to Success, is a professional development system, which will offer affordable, available and quality professional development opportunities to all early childhood educators in the State. There are studies indicating that there is a positive correlation between improved teacher skills and child outcomes. The professional development opportunities offered through colleges and agencies will be aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, which is a component of Steps to Success. The Applicant has goals to expand incentives and scholarships that will increase the number of highly skilled early childhood educators. Many preschool staff are unable to afford college tuition. With expanding scholarships and incentives more early childhood staff will seek advanced certifications and degrees. This positive and obtainable goal will promote career advancement which may lead to career retention. Early childhood educators will have an opportunity to input data on their advancements and degrees through the Steps to Success Registry. Aggregated data about early childhood workforce should be publicly reported. This type of information will lead to a greater awareness about the needs, accomplishment, and the availability or lack of early childhood educators in the workforce. This type of data is also needed when changes in policies, laws, and funds are being solicited for early learning programs. The applicant has a plan to increase the number of post secondary institutions and professional development providers that are aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Workforce. These training providers and post secondary institutions, with early learning training expertise, are resources that support the Workforce knowledge and Competency Framework. Letters of support are found in the Appendix. As a result the response was rated in the "Partially Implemented-High Quality Response" range.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

The applicant has a fully implemented State-wide kindergarten screening instrument. The instrument does not have validity or reliability for kindergarten children due to the lack of statistical norms for this population. However, this instrument is aligned with the State's Early Learning Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains. The applicant designed the assessment instruments for internal consistency and construct validity. This instrument is based on early literacy skills that are most predictive of later reading success. For those reasons, this instrument is appropriate as a kindergarten screening instrument. The Kindergarten Readiness Screening is administered within the first 30 days each school year. A 30 day time frame is appropriate for obtaining assessment data. The goal of having the kindergarten assessment data entered into the Statewide Longitudinal Data System is achievable. Data safeguards and oversights are components of the plan and are necessary for maintaining privacy under federal, state and local laws. The applicant funds the kindergarten screening instrument through the Florida General Fund Budget. This is evident of a positive and strong commitment, from

policyholders and Department of Education, to continue to monitor the readiness skills of children. As a result, the response is rated in the "partially implemented- high quality" range.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

a) The applicant's Early Learning Data System will contain all the Essential Data Elements when fully completed for implementation statewide. The process of developing procedures for input and retrieving data and security codes for users are needed components in building an Early Learning Data System that is interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System. Presently, children must be matched with the Office of Early Learning in order to report results by students. Florida has a plan to ensure through a unique student identifier that early learning data would integrate directly into the Statewide Longitudinal Data S. Therefore a timeline of four years is a reasonable time-frame for becoming fully operational. b) Agencies will be given access to the Early Learning Data System for input and/or review of data by authorized users. This is an appropriate method for securing important data. c) The applicant's Early Learning System will allow 5 different State Agencies to have access to information. This system of sharing information will expedite access to information and services for the children. d) Early Learning Programs will be given web portals for teachers and parents. This type of system with the proper security systems in place will open up a world of information to teachers and parents in a timely manner that will drive instruction and impact learning outcomes of children e) The Early Learning Data System will have a programmatic oversight agency to ensure that regulations are being followed. As a result, the response was rated in the "Partially Implemented-High quality response." range.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	234

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

Priorities

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

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

- (a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or
- (b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.

Comments on (P)(3)

(a)The State has implemented a State-wide kindergarten assessment since 1997. In 2005, Florida's Statutes mandated statewide kindergarten screening within the first 30 days of each school year. (b)Throughout the State Plan, substantial documentation was presented on how the assessment will drive instruction, inform parents and improve child outcomes. This is a very comprehensive plan that will transform the early learning communities, families, and child outcomes.

Absolute Priority

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

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

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

Comments on Absolute Priority

The State has built a very comprehensive plan that promotes School Readiness for children with high needs by improving the quality of early learning programs. This ambitious plan would not be as attainable if the State did not have a prior foundation to build upon. The goals were thought through with the alignment of policies, stakeholders and finances. This plan is designed to improve the readiness skills of high needs children.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # FL-5008

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 4:33 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development	20	16

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

(a) The yearly total state contribution for ELD has risen from \$906.4 M in 2007 to \$938.5 M in 2012 which shows a financial commitment to Florida's youngest citizens. (b) Between 2005 and 2010 there has been an encouraging increase of children with high needs in Florida's ELDP programs, but as the application mentions, this has been positively influenced by the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. (c) A total of 165,341 or 76.2% of all 4-year-olds in the state participate in Voluntary Prekindergarten with choices of faith-based, community-based child care programs, Head Start (serving another 37,245 children, representing an enrollment of 28% of all eligible three- to five-year olds), or public school programs. VPK's description in this application is not comprehensive, and it is not clear whether all programs are free of charge to participants. In addition, from the description here, it is not clear if the individual programs that are part of this VPK are of similar quality and have uniform regulations, which makes it difficult to understand the existing system, that serves so many children in Florida. The biggest demonstration of Florida's commitment to a high-quality ELDS was seen when Florida passed a constitutional amendment to create a Voluntary Pre- Kindergarten program. Florida documented a wide variety of family engagement strategies that take place for the range of preschool setting at the present time. Especially impressive are some of the topics for programs receiving CCDF funds, because they go beyond statute and program requirements, and reach out with parenting topics for mothers, fathers, and grandparents. (d) Florida currently has many key parts for a quality early childhood program in place. They include a Comprehensive Assessment System, which has five key components, a comprehensive set of standards for Florida's four year old children, a strong health promotion strategy, and family engagement practices, as provided in their Healthy Start program. For several years Florida has required a kindergarten screen for each child within the first 30 days of attendance, and over 94% of children are given the assessment. This response is at the lower end of a high quality response because Florida has many programs already in place, but the applicant needed to add more clarity to its responses.

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

(a) The goal "to ensure that the experience of every young child in Florida who touches the system will find it inviting and welcoming, self-actualizing, and virtually seamless" is an admirable one, because systems often get caught up in numbers and credentials, and forget that each young child is a unique person who has a unique family and unique needs. Florida has high expectations to be foremost in the nation to apply a high standard of scientific rigor to the evaluation of a statewide TQRIS and to use innovative technology strategies. This is very ambitious. This application plans to expand on Florida's professional development system, Steps to Success, with the major objective of making accessible high quality professional development for every early childhood educator statewide by embedding core competencies into Florida's entire early childhood educator training. This is a valuable and ambitious goal because Florida has far to go in this area. This applicant describes how it will continually review assessments and data collection so that they can draw upon the latest research as well as answer key questions about the overall quality and functioning of the state early childhood system. In the data collection plan, which needs to integrate several systems and programs in the state, the applicant does not appear to acknowledge the difficulty of doing this, but describes the reports that will be issued instead. (b) There is a description of the overall plan here, parts of it reiterated above, that will help Florida achieve its goal of building an effective plan to reform the state's early childhood agenda. (c) No rationale was presented as part of this application to justify the state's choice to address its selected criteria. Therefore it is impossible to evaluate the state's reasons for choosing the ones it did. This is a medium/high quality response.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

existing funding to support the State Plan;

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

(a) The description of the organizational chart, did not match the narrative. An example of this is the Advisory Council, which has more authority in the narrative than its position on the chart showed. It appears from the organizational chart for the RTT-ELC, that the Lead Agency Grant Management Director will directly supervise five primary state agencies, including DCF, DOE, OEL, DOH, and the HS CO, as well as a broad group of six stakeholders. It shows in this organizational chart that the RTT-ELC Director is in charge of all those state agencies, and it would not be appropriate for that position. This is an error, because the Grant Management Director should be under the lead agency director. As described in this application, Florida has several different agencies responsible for its variety of early childhood programs. The Children and Youth Cabinet appears to be the conduit for the support of this application by all the involved agencies. However, that was not specifically clear in the proposal. The RTT-ELC coordinating council, which they named the State Advisory Council, will facilitate interagency coordination, and staff will develop policies and operational procedures. Decisions will be made by workgroups that represent the agencies, and will be agreed upon by members. Resolving disputes will be part of the policies developed, and then reviewed and resolved by members. This appears to be a good plan. The Early Childhood Comprehensive Services (ECCS) is a described initiative which involves a broad range of public and private agencies and organizations, parents, and communities who share the goal of promoting the health and well-being of children from ages birth to age five. Florida's ECCS initiative is housed in the DOH, and appears from its description to be an organization that will be supporting Florida's initiative. In A(4), the plan is for Florida to involve representatives from participating programs, parents, and other stakeholders by establishing and chartering work groups and committees. This response is not adequate, because Florida names only one way to be involved with this RTT-ELC (work groups and committees), and did not describe the other ways of including and engaging interested programs and families of children with high needs in this initiative (b) The appropriate MOUs from participating state agencies and other entities are enclosed in the Appendix. Each was signed by the director in the agency, and all describe, among other things, the scope of work, responsibilities of the lead agency, and what will be done if the lead agency fails to perform the work it promised. It appears that all the participating agencies have signed on in support of this grant. (c) There were dozens of letters of support for this application from Florida legislators, leaders of higher education, and different educational and social service programs from all across the state. They described their interest in receiving this grant and hopes for possible collaborations and positive outcomes for Florida's young children, especially those with high needs. This is a medium quality/ minimally implemented response.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

(2) Includes costs that are reasonable and necessary in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of

the activities described in the State Plan and the number of children to be served; and

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

(a) The plan put forth in the application is that investments outlined in the Florida RTT-ELC proposal will result in realignment of existing funding so it is targeted more effectively to make more efficient systems, and cover the cost of capacity building in the state, in order to improve outcomes for children with high needs. This is an appropriate use of RTT-ELC funds. On Table (A)(4) many participating state agencies, programs, and partners are named, as well as the funds that they will financially contribute in support of this grant, over its four-year life. The amounts are substantial, and show that that programs will financially support this initiative for the benefit of Florida's young children. (b) The RTT-ELC funds will cover the costs of capacity building, such as using the grant to help more programs achieve Gold Seal accreditation, and therefore the personnel costs are higher in the first three years. The grant will also pay for new assessments for children and early learning programs. The costs appear to be reasonable and adequate for the implementation of the application, but some of the budget lacks specificity, and parts are not aligned with the goals of the program. (c) This applicant suggested that the grant funding from RTT-ELC would be sustained by the quality set-asides that are part of the Florida Child Care and Development Block Grant, as well as by course fees. Those are both positive ways to continue some of the work funded by this program but funding from these areas are probably not enough. This is a medium/high quality response.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

(a) Florida will not have its TQRIS fully implemented until September 2014-December 2015. In that case, the RTT-ELC funding and expectations will be over, and institutionalization may not have a chance to take hold. (This is Phase IV, and Phase I has been four years long.) Florida already has in place a TQRIS, with one to five stars, for Centers and Family Child Care Homes, including four out of the six required standards (early learning and development, a comprehensive assessment system, early childhood educator qualifications, and family engagement strategies). The areas covered are quite detailed, tiered, and comprehensive. The program standards are measurable and differentiate program quality levels. However, health promotion practices and effective data practices are not included, which is a weakness. Florida's Early Learning and Developmental Standards will continue to serve as the foundation of all of the state's program standards, ensuring consistent alignment to learning expectations. They will be integrated into TQRIS to increase use of the standards. A health screening checklist is planned as part of this RTT-ELC application. However, the plan entails using the results of the checklist in order to refer children to resources in the community. That is not adequate to address the health

standards for this application. For Effective Data Practices, they will replace an older data system with the Early Learning Data System, which will be made up of two systems, the Early Learning Data System and the PLATINUM, and all early learning and development programs will have access to PLATINUM through RTT-ELC. This funding will enable fuller automation of the TQRIS. The plan is appropriate but not inclusive of the other ways this data system could be used. (c) The state child care licensing standards will serve as the foundation for Florida's TQRIS. However, its plan includes strengthening licensing standards, streamlining oversight and monitoring, and helping programs move through a system of continuous quality improvement. The plan is in its infancy stage, and its connection is not thoroughly explained in this application. The reviewer could not read the narrative or understand the purpose of the graph entitled "Rationale for Ratios" on page B-11, because it was undecipherable. Therefore, it was not taken into consideration in the evaluation of this application. This is a medium quality response, partially implemented.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

(a) All legally operating ELDLP program types in the state will participate in the validated TQRIS by 2015, and some other preschool programs can choose to participate in TQRIS. All Head Start and Early Head Start programs in the state have agreed to participate in TQRIS as it is expanded statewide in 2015. Because of the nature of Head Start's clients, and the number of children with high needs that they serve, as well as their model of leadership and supervision, it is invaluable to have those programs collaborate with the state of Florida, and buy into the TQRIS, even though it may not fully take place until 2015. Florida's goal is to have all children with special needs, in Section 619 of Parts B and C of IDEA, served by four and five star TQRIS programs. If the family would prefer to use a program that is not currently a 4 or 5 star program, a partnership will be developed between the early learning coalition and the program to support quality improvements. This is a good plan to ensure that the children who need the best programs will have access to them. It is ambitious and may not be an achievable goal, because Florida's initial plan is just to include a number of programs in TQRIS, and raising so many programs to a 4 or 5 star program, so that children can be placed in them, is probably not achievable, especially since the TQRIS will not be fully implemented until 2015. The DOE in Florida will reach out to school districts implementing early childhood programs funded through Title 1 to encourage their participation in TQRIS. This is not adequate, because this would not satisfy the RTT-ELC goal of having all publicly funded programs involved with TQRIS. With RTT-ELC funding, more than 10,000 early learning and development programs are planned to be assessed by 2015 with the validated TQRIS standards. This goal is an ambitious and probably not achievable, because the statewide outreach to programs that serve children with high needs is planned to be through conferences and other trainings, mostly places that many of these programs may not be represented. Receipt of RTT-ELC funding will enable Florida to require programs receiving child care subsidies to participate in TQRIS; this represents 75% of all centers and 55% of all family child care homes. This is an ambitious goal, because family child care homes are needy of support, but it is also an achievable goal. (b) Florida did not give a strong or thought-out response to how it would help more families afford high-quality child care. The application stated that it would have a more effective targeted program to assure that families can access high quality child care programs without an increased expense, and would map resources that support the access. That is not a detailed response to this need. (c) Florida's goal to increase Head Start and programs receiving CCDF funds' participation in their TQRIS is ambitious (100%) and probably not achievable, because 100 percent of these programs across the state would be very difficult or impossible to achieve. In other kinds of programs, the targets in the Table (B)(2)(c) do not include percentages, but the increased numbers of programs in two categories, Parts B and C of IDEA, have expectations of gaining 100 programs in TQRIS each year, which is overly ambitious and probably not achievable either. This is a medium quality response, partially implemented.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

(a) It is positive that programs in Florida will use the ERS and CLASS, which are valid and reliable tools, in English and Spanish for staff trainings. Florida plans to ensure that tools and training are available in Spanish to make certain early childhood educators whose preferred language is Spanish can access quality improvement tools and resources. This applicant did not describe what the self-assessment would contain for the lower tiers of the TQRIS. The time frame for reassessing top tiered programs, such as 36 or 48 months, is not acceptable because program changes require much closer monitoring for quality control. As part of this initiative, and since they do not already have them available, Florida will develop checklists on family engagement and health promotion, heavily relying upon the Head Start Performance Standards and tools from other respected organizations. In general, Head start's Performance standards are well thought-out and generally accepted among early childhood professionals, so this is a good place to start. The applicant plans to train more assessors in areas of the state where capacity is not sufficient, and at the same time, implement reliability practices to ensure high quality assessments. However, the state does not expect to have completed this training until 2015, and there was no description of the implementation process for the training in the proposal. (b) Florida plans to add to its information presently available to parents through enhanced Child Care Resource and Referral functionality, even using a smart phone app to help generate information about quality early learning programs that meet their child and family's needs (available in English and Spanish). The important use of the TQRIS here is that parents can "shop" for four and five star-rated programs through this tool. It is not clear if the applicant's plan will make information more available or understandable to parents, however, because the accessibility of the Internet, especially to parents of children with high needs, may not be an easy option. This is a medium-quality response, partially implemented.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

(a) Florida is providing incentives, such as tiered reimbursement and technical assistance, to programs to support continuous improvement. These financial incentives could well support the applicant to increase the numbers of programs involved in TQRIS, if the amount of funding and professional development are sufficient to encourage programs to participate. (b) The applicant described financial incentives, but did not address activities such as providing full day, full care programs, transportation, meals, and family support services to help working families that have children with high needs. (c) To increase the total number of programs in TQRIS from 1,614 today to 9,609 at the end of 2015 is ambitious and may well not be achievable; especially the steep increase in programs between 4,000 and 9,609 in the year between 2014 and 2015. The state's goal is to have every program participate, but that increase in numbers of programs in one year is huge. (c) It is conceivable that programs that remain in Tier 1, especially, and maybe Tier 2, after a couple of years of involvement in the TQRIS, may drop out if they can, rather than be represented by the low number in state-wide outreach. (c) The targets in the table on page B-61 and 62 for the percentage of children with high needs who are enrolled in programs in the top tiers of Florida's TQRIS may not be ambitious enough, if Head Start at 49% has the highest number. It seems as if it would be possible to move state-funded preschools (at 40%) and other public schools preschools for children with high needs to a higher level than described on the chart. This is a medium-quality response, partially implemented.

	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)

(a,b)The pilot and validation TQRIS studies, completed by an independent evaluator, are a strength of this proposal. They are well thought-out and thorough, and the design, using a randomized study, appears to be able to find out if Florida's TQRIS plans and procedures will lead to the desired increase of outcomes for children, especially children with high needs. It would be positive for the applicant if the proposal included the names of the measures they would use in this section. If completed thoroughly and as planned in this proposal, the research design should be able to validate whether the TQRIS measures differentiated levels of program quality. If this is the case, outcomes for the State of Florida would be of interest and a resource for other early childhood programs and policies. This is a high quality response.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

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

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) Florida's Early Learning and Developmental Standards consist of two updated documents that describe a continuum of growth across multiple domains from birth to kindergarten, and are in place as of October 2011. This is a good basis upon which to build, using the RTT-ELC guidelines and funds. In addition, there is evidence that Florida attempted to be developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate for its population. (b) There is evidence that Florida's Standards for Four Year Olds align with K standards in more than early literacy and mathematics, but in this application it was not described how that takes place. (c) Florida's Early Learning Standards are the basis of their RTT-ELC plan, so all aspects of the system are aligned or planned to be aligned with them. Various Florida programs have different eligibility criteria, funding administration, and program standards, but Florida's important goal is to unite them around a common set of expectations for children (Early Learning and Developmental Standards) in order to build state-wide systems. Training in these goals will be given to all programs across the state. (d) Florida is in the process of moving every early childhood program in the state to one set of early childhood standards. In this way it has made a commitment to similar standards across all early learning and development programs. This is a high quality response, substantially implemented.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	24

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

(a) Programs presently receiving School Readiness funding in Florida are required by law to conduct a pre- and post-test of children, but they use a variety of different instruments. As part of their RTT-ELC plan, the state will first create a list of approved observation-based early childhood assessments, and then the Early Learning Coalitions will begin moving toward the use of one specific assessment system that will provide better and uniform information to the state's data system. This is an important goal, and the fact that Florida plans to move to multiple acceptable assessments first, and then to a single one (probable Teaching Strategies GOLD) later, demonstrates how essential but difficult this will be to do. However, the total timeline to do this may take too long to affect outcomes of children. (b) In the past, the state has dedicated resources to working with early childhood programs to strengthen their understanding of the purposes and uses of different types of assessments. The Florida Partnership on School Readiness commissioned the Birth to Three Screening and Assessment Resource Guide 2004 in order to help programs make informed choices in their selection of assessment tools, and in 2008 the Florida Children's Forum conducted a statewide training conference on the Making a Difference series. The statewide system of training will be strengthened under this proposal, but research has developed new expectations and methods, and instruments have been updated and changed, so these out-dated trainings will not be of much use in this RTT-ELC proposal. (b) Florida has a plan to develop consistency in the reliability and

validity of ERS scores across the state, and to introduce the CLASS for early learning programs, as it is part of its TQRIS. The state will also provide training to the Early Learning Coalitions to help early childhood educators' understanding of the purposes of the TQRIS. This is an appropriate plan. (c) The state plans to create the Florida Early Childhood Research and Evaluation Committee, consisting of the best researchers in Florida and nation as well as representatives from each program area. The research committee will develop a monitoring system to analyze data in order to develop a reporting plan about program quality and school readiness that will give families and other interested members of the community information, and to oversee the evaluation of the system to determine the impact that it is having on children. This is a constructive way to share information. (d) Assessment is a critical part of Florida's reform agenda, and programs will be held accountable for their assessment practices through the TQRIS, which will strengthen their interest in buy-in. However, it is still important that the individual child care providers as well, be given incentives, because that may help their programs, in turn, be more successful. (d) The state will offer a combination of state-generated training on assessment, and training given by assessment publishers. The plan is not well-developed because Florida did not explain how it would use their assessment data to inform and improve the quality of individual practice and programs. This is a high quality response, partially implemented.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

(a) Florida plans to build a strong quality assurance system that allows the state to assess the linkages between its core competency training, and the state's professional development system, and outcomes for children. It was not clear from this proposal how that would be done. (b) It is difficult to understand the chart on page D-6. It appears that the anticipated modifications to training requirements to current child care licenses align with the new RTT-ELC core competencies and standards, but there is not enough background information given for the column on the left, especially as it relates to time. (For instance, in Current Child Care Licensure Training Requirements does "40 clock hours of training" need to be completed over a lifetime, or over a year? Are there any guidelines as to how long is it expected to take to earn the 40 clock hours of training?) (c) This application states that, "through RTT-ELC funding, Florida will create a universal course catalog across all higher education institutions and degrees to ensure comprehensive alignment between degree programs, early childhood education coursework, Core Competencies, and the Early Learning and Developmental Standards." It may take years for colleges to change their courses, just as it takes much time to make changes in the early childhood education world. In addition, colleges would definitely have to be a part of creating this universal course catalog, and this does not appear to be the case in this application. This shows that Florida has an ambitious but unrealistic plan to engage postsecondary education in this application. This is a medium quality response, partially implemented.

	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)

(a) This section describes a plan for job-embedded professional development for teachers and center administrators, using outside expertise and facilitation so that they can learn new knowledge and skills as it relates to the young children in their own programs. This is an effective way for caregivers of young children to improve their skills and knowledge. (b) Florida Steps to Success Career Pathway is a framework that defines standards for high-quality early education competencies that address expectations across a continuum of training, education, and experience, ranging from entry-level early childhood educators to those with extensive experience, and/or certifications, and degrees. (b) An interesting fact is that out of all the early childhood educators in child care programs across Florida, less than 4% report college degrees. And in the nation's largest Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program, paid for by state funds, only 29% of early childhood educators hold a Bachelor's degree. In addition, among Florida's Head Start grantees, 30% hold Bachelor's or graduate ECE degrees. It appears that that Head Start in Florida has more teachers with degrees than publicly financed programs open to all young children in the state. In this proposal it is said that many early childhood educators struggle with access to degree programs, but access may not be the only issue here. It might be helpful to the success of this application if the applicant looked at additional incentives, such as stipends, to increase the participation in professional development. (b) The suggestion that on-line Career Advising will be used to access, among other things, applications for different academic scholarship and financial award opportunities to improve skills is cumbersome and does not lend itself to much use, especially for those lowest level workers, the ones you want to increase their skills. For this proposal to be successful for the least skilled workers in a program, program leaders and administrators will need to personally encourage and assist their employees to take advantage of incentives, if it is at all difficult to access, it will not prove to motivate child care providers to use it. Florida has some innovative ideas for using different forms of technology in support of many of its plans, including Career Hub for career advising. They may or may not work, but the ideas are creative and worth pursuing. Chart (D)(2)(d)(2) shows clearly that Florida does not have enough information about the numbers and education levels of its present early childhood workforce. This may be because the data has not been gathered in a systematic way before, and it may also reflect the instability of the field itself. In some ways, those on the lower end of the credential and education ladder may be a "moving target," because they may not stay in one center for long, or they may move from one program to another. However it is approached, this chart is incomplete and shows that Florida has far to go to identify and train its early childhood workers. (d) Florida's targets for increasing the number and percentage of early childhood educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials is incomplete, because the state did not indicate how many possible workers it has at each level. Consequently, its goal percentages are not available, and therefore it is not possible to evaluate the ambitiousness or achievability of its goals. This is a medium quality, partially implemented response.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

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

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

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

(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used.

including for English learners and children with disabilities;

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

(a,b) The kindergarten readiness assessment is aligned with Florida's early learning standards and, when complete, will cover all the essential domains of school readiness. It also appears to be valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population. (b) This proposal describes how evaluations would be administered by VPK providers, and those with the lowest percentage of children deemed ready for kindergarten are considered "Low Performing Providers" and possibly put on probation. There is no indication that children's skills at the beginning of their year in VPK (a pretest) are taken into consideration, and there is no indication that Florida is looking at the classes to see if they are serving children with high needs, including second language learners and disabled children. Florida may want to look at a growth model, and this may be more fair to the teachers and programs. This plan, however, which evaluates outcomes at kindergarten entry, may be a deterrent to programs accepting children with high needs, second language learners, and children with disabilities, the exact opposite of the purpose of this RTT-ELC application. (c) Florida already funds the kindergarten readiness assessment system, a requirement of the RTT-ELC competition, out of its General Revenue Fund. One of the applicant's goals is to have a universal student identification number that follows a child from the onset of services (VPK or earlier) through their experience in the PK-20 system. This unique identifier, possibly started before preschool, would allow more accurate longitudinal data on children in order to show the outcomes of various services provided to children, a goal of this RTT-ELC RFP. This is a high quality response, substantially implemented.

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

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

(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

(a) Over the next four years, Florida will use RTT-ELC funds to complete three systems which are planned to capture the essential data elements defined in the criteria and connect that data to the Florida Department of Education's (FDOE) Single Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). The way they will be linked is somewhat unclear, however, and not described. In addition, the time it will take to implement this seems excessive in light of this four-year grant period. Florida presently has a good start on a Coordinated Early Learning Data System, and has plans, in general, to incorporate all the required and necessary data elements. With the awarding of this RTT-ELC, they will include uniform data collection with unique identifiers, standard data structures, and it will generate information that will be useful for programs, providers, and the young children of Florida, as well as other stakeholders in the state. Florida says that they will meet the Data Oversight Requirements as their plan is put into place. This is a high quality response, partially implemented.

	Available	Score
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Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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>Florida demonstrates that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection Criterion (E)(1) because all elements in Table (A)(1)-12 are met.</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas 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>Florida has met this priority in its application because, reflected in the above evidence, plans, and data, Florida has shown that it is capable of building a system in its state that increases the quality of early learning and development programs for children with high needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to be successful. In this application Florida has described its goals and plans to increase the skills of teachers in their Head Start programs, as well as with providers in other programs that serve children with high needs. In addition, Florida already has in place their Early Learning and Development Standards, which can be built upon with additional resources from RTT-ELC. The KEA is implemented, and data can be used to look at services provided to children with high needs.</p>	



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # FL-5008

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 7:04 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 requirements.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

Florida demonstrates a commitment to serving children with high needs in its system of early education, including a focus on serving children with special needs. The state identifies that about half of its children live in poverty (defined as 200% of federal guidelines); the state also notes that 26% live in poverty defined as 100% of federal guidelines), and that about 3% of the children have developmental disabilities. Less than 1 percent of children are identified as belonging to one of the other special need groups in this grant application. The state describes efforts to target early childhood education programs to children with high needs. Examples provided include the inclusion of children in need of protection into their programs of subsidized child care. The state demonstrates strong financial commitment to Early Childhood Education (ECE), particularly related to funding for pre-k. The state has provided more than \$300,000,000 yearly, and with the exception of 2010, the funding has increased. The state has exceeded its match to CCDF yearly. The state has increased the number of children served in its birth to 5 system since 2007, with the exception of a small drop (737 children) in programs funded by CCDF. The state reports a total of 654,000 of children from low income families, and serves about 140,823 children (21%) in pre-k, EHS/HS, Part C or B, Title 1, and CCDF. The state of Florida has multiple sources of services for children birth to five and a decentralized system of providing these services, a feature that the state views as a strength given the diverse nature of the land, its rural and urban features, and multiple cultures. Florida is one of three states that provides voluntary universal pre-k, serving about 76% of all 4 year old children. Early Head Start/Head Start (EHS/HS) are also important providers of services to high need children in the state, serving about 3% of infants and toddlers and 28% of 3 and 4 year old children. The state has a program in place to serve children with special health care needs and children who have been maltreated, recognizing the special services that these two vulnerable groups need. The state has started to make an investment in mental health services to children birth to 5 by training more than 200 mental health providers to work with young children. Healthy Start plays an important role in the state providing screenings and identifying women and infants at risk. The state developed multiple Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS), beginning in 2000. The state is working to improve these standards for children birth to 5 and to have them approved in October 2011. The state reports efforts to develop a Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS). The state demonstrates success in its screening related to the EPSDT system, with

100% of newborns screened through Healthy Start and above 85% screened during well-child visits. The state has identified the ASQ as the screening instrument, and screening is implemented in most sectors providing services to children birth to 5. The state reports the formative assessments, environmental rating scales (ERS), and adult-child interaction Measures are not required for most providers in the state system, but makes enhancing the CAS a goal of its application. The state reports a statewide, substantially implemented kindergarten assessment system, utilizing the ECHOS and FAIR, instruments with evidence of reliability and validity. Further, the instruments are aligned with the domains of early learning, cover the essential domains of school readiness, and are included in the statewide data system. The state does not demonstrate high quality health promotion practices within its ECE system. For example, health promotion activities are part of state licensing requirement and evident in CCDF programs, EHS/HS, and pre-school, but not in Part C programs or Title 1 programs. The state indicates that Health Literacy is only found in EHS/HS program, though families of high need children often lack access to health information. The status of the state's key areas demonstrate Florida's commitment to early learning systems. The state provides significant funding for early learning programs and has dedicated resources to meeting the needs of high need children, particularly children involved with child protective services. The state's score reflects that of a high quality plan.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	10

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The state articulates goals toward a reform agenda. The lack of baseline data makes evaluating how achievable the goals are difficult. The state has identified three comprehensive goals: improving the quality of out-of-home settings for high need children, increasing the expertise of EC educators, and improving kindergarten readiness. The state links all of these goals to improving child outcomes for children with high needs but does not articulate a comprehensive plan or clear path to achieve these goals. The state intends to implement a TORIS, building on the piloted QRIS system that has been evaluated in 7 counties. The state indicates that they have a professional development system, although data on the number and qualifications of its EC workforce is largely not available (see Table A(1)-10). The state's more comprehensive goal is improving the readiness of children with high needs for kindergarten success. To accomplish this goal, the state plans to align the ELDS with the k-12 standards, improve data systems, enhance the CAS, and develop a new kindergarten assessment. In line with these goals, that state has identified the development of ELDS and supporting effective use of the CAS for criteria C, both goals for criteria D and both goals for criteria E. The state does not explicitly provide a rationale that justifies its selection of the focused investment areas. Overall, the state provides a plan in the medium/low range.

	Available	Score
(A)(3) Allgning and coordinatng early learning and development across the State	10	4

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's plan for managing the grant is of concern. The application is contradictory, indicating in one place that the State Advisory Council will be the lead agency and in another that the Office of Early Learning is the lead agency. If the Advisory Council is the lead agency, this agency does not meet the definition in the grant directions for a state level agency. The Advisory Council is funded with start up funds from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). The state does not indicate how long the funding lasts or plan for funding continuation. The state does indicate that the Office of Early Learning will administratively support the Advisory Council. Additionally, there are multiple agencies involved in early childhood education at the state and local levels, creating a complex, multi-funded provision of services. The state does not address how quality gain in the system will be sustained after the completion of the grant. The state provides a decision-making process in its application. The state identifies that the Advisory Council will make decisions that are not required by statute rule or the RTT Grant by majority vote. The Advisory Council will determine the policies related to disputes between members or work groups related to the RTT grant. Of note, the MOUs identify the Office of Early Learning as the lead agency, and the Office of Early Learning is identified in the budget section as the lead agency. The state does not have an extensively articulated plan for involving programs, early childhood educators, parents and families in the planning and implementing the RTT grant activities. The state indicates that the Advisory Council will have the authority to establish and develop work groups related to RTT activities. The state provides MOUs from appropriate state agencies, including the Office of Early Learning, Florida Department of Education, Department of Children and Families, Department of Health. The state also provides letters of support from key stakeholders, including Head Start programs, schools boards, colleges and universities, and foundations. Overall, the state describes minimally implemented partnerships and collaborations between state agencies and limited engagement with the early learning community. The state's plan is of medium quality.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

(b) Describes, in both the budget tables and budget narratives, how the State will effectively and efficiently use

funding from this grant to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, in a manner that--

- (1) Is adequate to support the activities described in the State Plan;
 - (2) Includes costs that are reasonable and necessary in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of the activities described in the State Plan and the number of children to be served; and
 - (3) Details the amount of funds budgeted for Participating State Agencies, localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, or other partners, and the specific activities to be implemented with these funds consistent with the State Plan, and demonstrates that a significant amount of funding will be devoted to the local implementation of the State Plan; and
- (c) Demonstrates that it can be sustained after the grant period ends to ensure that the number and percentage of Children with High Needs served by Early Learning and Development Programs in the State will be maintained or expanded.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The state has a quality plan to continue to use existing funds that are dedicated to supporting early childhood education. The state provides documentation of state spending at more than 1 billion dollars annually. Unique programs funded by the state which support their goal of professional development are WAGES and Teach, along with foundation funding for the creation of a state blueprint for professional development, the development of training modules, a coaching model, and coordination for a common course catalog for early care education courses. Some aspects of the state's budget tables and narratives do not adequately address how the expenditure enhances the effective and efficient use of funds to support the state plan. For example, the state plans to hire a legal consultant at 100% FTE at a cost of \$75000 annually, totaling \$300,000 for the grant. The state does not indicate why this legal counsel is important to implementing the state plan. The state plans to contract out significant portions of the RTT grant, totaling \$76,941,575 for the total grant period. Contracting out such a significant portion of the funding, tasks, and responsibilities creates concerns about the state's capacity to maintain gains made through RTT funding. The state plans to purchase assessment instruments but does not articulate a plan to continue procurement of these instruments. The state's budget narrative does provide funding to implement the goals of its plan. For example, the state provides appropriate funding for training in the CLASS and ERS. The state's plan for sustaining gains in the early childhood system is not clearly articulated. For example, the state provides that additional funding for continuation of gains made through RTT funding will be obtained through costs savings realized through increased efficiency. The state indicates that it will sustain its professional development program partly through TEACH scholarships, which have been available to date, but the state does not indicate how long this funding will last. Overall, the state provides a low/medium quality response.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

- (a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--
- (1) Early Learning and Development Standards;
 - (2) A Comprehensive Assessment System;
 - (3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications;
 - (4) Family engagement strategies;
 - (5) Health promotion practices; and
 - (6) Effective data practices;
- (b) Is clear and has standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children; and
- (c) Is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

The state provides that they have a tiered quality reimbursement system in place since 1996 and a piloted TQRIS system. The state has some areas within the TQRIS system that are strong. In the piloted TQRIS study, the state identifies that 82% of the children were high needs. The state has a plan to develop and adopt a TQRIS system state wide. The state has a plan to link child outcomes to the TQRIS system. The state's plan for a statewide TQRIS system includes ELDS, a comprehensive assessment system, ECE qualifications, family engagement strategies, health promotion, and data management. The state indicates that their tiered quality reimbursement system standards are measurable and meaningfully differentiate quality and high expectations for programs. The state has not provided evidence that the TQRIS system meaningfully differentiate tiers and does not report findings from the piloted TQRIS study that was completed. Instead, the state reports the demographics of participating agencies and funding levels for the evaluation. The state acknowledges that the TQRIS program standards have not been validated or linked to child outcomes, but the state proposes a pilot plan and validation study using RTT funds. RTT funds will also be used to increase the number of Gold Seal (high quality) programs in the state by providing funds for accreditation, technical assistance, and training on the CLASS. The state's plan involves enrollment of all legally operating programs into the TQRIS at the entry level. The state does not indicate clearly which programs are required to be licensed in the state. Overall, the state has partially implemented the TQRIS and provides a plan that is of medium quality.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	15	7

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's plan to maximize the number and type of programs participating in the TQRIS is hindered by the decentralization of the provision of ECE programs. The state anticipates that 74% of the pre-k programs in the state, who also receive subsidy payments, will be among the first to participate. The state does not indicate if the additional 26% of programs will participate. EHS/HS programs have agreed to participate, and the state has a goal of placement of children with special needs in a high quality center in the TQRIS system, through new cooperation with the local LEAs. Title 1 programs will be encouraged to participate. Finally, other programs can choose to participate. The state goal of statewide implementation of the TQRIS system is vague. The state notes that it will implement the TQRIS system with legally operating providers. The state's emphasis and repeated use of the term legally operating is concerning and raises the question of whether and to what extent illegal child care is provided in the state, and what action the state takes to regulate the provision of ECE. Florida currently has a tiered reimbursement system and its subsidy program reimburses at 73% of the market rate. To increase the number of children with high needs in high quality centers, the state plans to develop websites and apps to geo-code early learning centers by star-rating. The state will use this system to target resources to increase quality centers where there are numbers of children with high needs. Further, as noted above, there are early learning programs outside of the licensing system, and the state has not designed an incentive program or strongly articulated a plan to include these programs in the system. The state's goals for participation in different sectors are at times ambitious, but not clearly achievable, and other times, achievable but not ambitious. The state reports that 17% of pre-k program participate and the goal is 74%, 11% of EHS/HS center participate, goal 100%; 0% of part C, B and Title 1 programs participate, and the goal is 0%, 0% and 10% respectively; and 14% of CCDF funded programs participate and 100% will participate by the end of the RTT grant period. Overall, the state has partially implemented its TQRIS and provides a medium quality plan for participation of multiple programs.

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

15

9

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

- (a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency; and
- (b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (e.g., displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

The state has a plan to monitor programs that participate in the TQRIS system. Currently, the state has been using the CLASS and ERS to monitor programs through the subsidy and TQRIS system. They identify 122 reliable assessors for the ERS and 15 CLASS assessors. Both CLASS and ERS are reliable and valid, although CLASS is not available for infant classrooms and the state does not identify an alternate for monitoring caregiver infant interactions. While the CLASS and ERS provide excellent data to evaluate a program, they do provide information on all aspects of a program's quality. In addition to the CLASS and ERS, the state plans to monitor assessments, family engagement, cultural competence, health information, and professional development. These monitoring aspects of the state's plan will largely be implemented through checklists, which leaves the quality of monitoring in question. All of the monitoring assessments are linked to the draft TQRIS schedule for star ratings, with 5 stars being the highest. The frequency of the monitoring visits is troubling. A program can move from level 1 to 2 on the basis of a self assessment. For level 3, 4, and 5, monitoring visits will take place every 24, 36, and 48 months respectively. Although the state identifies conditions that can trigger a monitoring visit earlier, given that staff turnover is a systemic problem with implications for young children, program quality can vary and the monitoring periods will not address this. The state currently provides information on the web that is accessible by parents and providers, and the information includes compliance/noncompliance inspection reports. The state plans to expand this system to include tools for parents to locate high quality child care. The state also plans to develop a multi-media strategy to provide parents information they need for obtaining high quality care, including information in multiple languages, social media and through the Child Care Resource and Referral. Finally, the state's plan includes a parental education aspect, building on their current Everyone's a Teacher campaign, which will educate parents about the importance of selecting a high quality early childhood program for their children. The state's plan to provide information to parents utilizes multiple methods and is of high quality. Overall, the state has partially implemented the monitoring system and provides a medium quality plan. The plan's strength is in the outreach to parents.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	2

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for 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)

Florida identifies policies and practices that are both universal and targeted to working with families with children with high needs. The state seeks to increase quality in its early education programs through a tiered reimbursement system. Once programs reach the highest level, the Gold Seal designation, the program receives higher rates of reimbursement and do not pay property taxes. These business incentives are designed by the state to promote higher quality for all programs. The state anticipates that programs will participate in PLATINUM and through this online program, participants will be provided customized quality improvement plans. The state's plan for program continued participation in this system involves a yearly payment, and the state does not address how programs will be encouraged to continue participation. The state plans to target supports for programs serving children with high needs. These supports include technical assistance, professional development, Teachstone resources, and partnerships with HS. While there are some strengths in this targeted approach, the plan lacks specific details. For example, the details of the HS partnerships are not delineated, rather, the state notes that the partnerships will vary based on local needs and resources. The state's goals related to program participation in the TQRIS are difficult to evaluate. The table for B2(c) indicates that there are 20,059 programs serving children birth to 5, excluding Part C and B programs. In table B 4(c)(1) the state's goals related to participation in the TQRIS system have a total number of programs enrolled at 9609, which represents the number of programs funded through CCDF. Further, the state has a goal of 7% of these programs achieving the highest level in the TQRIS system. This goal is achievable but not ambitious. The state does identify that 23% of programs will achieve a 4 star rating. The state's plan to target children with high needs is clearly articulated. The state plans to develop marketing materials to educate parents, particularly parent of children with high needs, to enroll in quality early childhood programs, linked to the TQRIS system. While family education about the importance of high quality care is important, this approach lacks ambition. Further the state's goals related to the number and percentages of children in top tiered programs are troubling. First, the state is reporting on the number of children with high needs who are participating in the TQRIS, not just the top tiers. Additionally, the goals are achievable, ranging from 10% to 50% of children with high needs participating in a program in the TQRIS, but not ambitious in all areas. Overall, the state has a partially implemented plan for improving quality and has provided a plan of low quality.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

The state presents a plan to design and implement evaluations to identify whether the TQRIS tiers reflect different levels of program quality. The state's plan includes exploration of multiple variables in the plan and statistical modeling to explore differences. The state identifies that an outside evaluator will undertake this study, but does not identify a contractor. The state does not identify who is currently evaluating the pilot study of the TQRIS system. The state does not identify measures it will use in exploring the impact of teacher, classroom, center and program qualities and the relationship to child outcomes. The plan explores the relationship between the program characteristics and child growth, defined as gains from fall to spring. The state does not address how changes in quality ratings are related to progress in school readiness. Overall, the plan the state proposes is vague and of medium low quality.

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

Each State must address in its application—

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

worth up to 30 points.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	30	20
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--</p> <p>(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;</p> <p>(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and</p> <p>(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (C)(1)		
<p>The state's plan to put in place high quality ELDS has some strengths and some areas of concern. The strengths include a plan to train all teachers and providers of early learning on the ELDS, and evidence that the ELDS are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and cover all the essential domains of school readiness. The state represents that the standards for 4 year old children are aligned with the kindergarten common core state standards, in literacy, math, social studies, and science. This alignment exceeds the requirement set forth in the RTT grant. The state has a goal of integrating the ELDS with workforce development policies and the career ladder. Florida states that it will interface these two data systems, but does not describe the linkages in any detail. The state's plan for professional development is not cohesive, beyond training related to the core competencies. The state does plan to link professional development to child outcomes. Concerns about the state's plan include the use of 2 sets of standards, a birth to 4 set and a 4 year old set. The timeline for revising these standards is also of concern. The state plans to put effort into training teachers and administrators in the ELDS and then revise them in 2014, with a goal in developing 1 set of standards. Overall, the state has partially implemented the ELDS and presents a medium quality plan.</p>		

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	13
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to support the effective implementation of developmentally appropriate Comprehensive Assessment Systems by--</p> <p>(a) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to select assessment instruments and approaches that are appropriate for the target populations and purposes;</p> <p>(b) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purposes and uses of each type of assessment included in the Comprehensive Assessment Systems;</p> <p>(c) Articulating an approach for aligning and integrating assessments and sharing assessment results, as appropriate, in order to avoid duplication of assessments and to coordinate services for Children with High Needs who are served by multiple Early Learning and Development Programs; and</p> <p>(d) Training Early Childhood Educators to appropriately administer assessments and interpret and use assessment data in order to inform and improve instruction, programs, and services.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (C)(2)		

The state has a plan to support the implementation of a comprehensive assessment system (CAS), and this plan is implemented in some areas. The state provides screenings through multiple systems, reporting that 100% of newborns are screened at birth and 84% or above are screened under the EPSDT system. The state has also adopted the ASQ for screenings in early education programs. The state identifies gaps in its screening procedures, indicating children in the child welfare system are under screened and that the referral process for evaluations and possible intervention needs improvement. The state proposes an evaluation to improve the referral process and a plan to increase buy-in from participants, but does not propose a plan to improve these deficits. The state has a decentralized system of implementing its early learning programs, and this is evident in the assessment system, where local Early Learning Councils determined the assessment tools used. In the state's plan, a list of approved assessment tools will be identified based on the tools psychometric properties, ELDS, and web-based data reporting capabilities. The state does link assessment to curriculum. The state identifies a goal to training EC educators in assessments. The state proposes expanding use of the ERS and the CLASS as part of its program assessment system through monitoring. This includes training additional assessors through the Early Learning Councils. The state does not address infant caregiver assessment, which the CLASS does not assess. The state's kindergarten assessment system is fully implemented, aligned with the ELDS, and covers the essential domains of school readiness. The state proposes the development of the Florida Early Childhood Research and Evaluation Committee made up of key stakeholders and experts. This committee will monitor and report to the governor and legislature on the state of the system, provide information to the community, and evaluate the impact of the system on children. These are broad goals and detail on how this committee will achieve them is lacking. The state plans to reduce duplication of screening and assessment results through their data systems, by identifying one screening instrument, and limiting assessment options. The state has provided training, webinars, conferences, and college courses to train EC educators in the CAS areas. The state's plan for future trainings in this area are provided through training modules it hopes to create through RTT funds. These modules include: understanding the constructs to be measured as defined by the ELDS, conducting good observations, connecting observations to constructs, determining where the child is on the rating scale, and using the information to inform instruction. While the development of training material is an important first step, the state does not describe a plan to implement these trainings. The state has partially implemented its CAS and provides a medium quality plan.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

Florida has a professional development system, Steps to Success, that is being piloted in 7 early learning coalitions, and a plan for statewide implementation by 2013. Professional development is linked to the Core Competency framework, and professional development is linked to improving child outcomes. The state plans to enhance professional development by linking it to child care license. The state is working with higher education in the state, and notes that 27 of 28 community colleges provide an associate's degree in ECE and 13 provide some type of BA degree in ECE. This high number of programs reflects positively on the states efforts in the area of professional development. The state has a plan to train additional individuals in their Outcome Driven Training, a classroom coaching model of intervention. The state does not articulate a clear progression of credentials and degrees. The state proposes two track, one based on training and one working toward a degree. The training path includes the development of an Advanced Professional Certificate, based on training modules and the core competencies. The state has partially implemented its plan and details a medium quality response.

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

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

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

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

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

The state has multiple professional development opportunities, and programs to support credentialing and degrees, although a clear progression is not delineated. There seems to be two tracks for EC educators. One track is through various credentials already in place or planned for development. The other is through the college/university systems. The state identifies numerical targets for these various credential/degrees, but does not provide percentages as the total number of early childhood providers is unknown.. It appears that a significant amount of information related to professional development is unknown. Professional development is job embedded, with coaching to support professional development. The state provides Career Advising, which assists providers in identifying scholarships and financial assistance and college opportunities. The state has a TEACH program, and reports 3500 participants. This program assists EC providers with assistance in obtaining a degree or Florida Staff Credential (the state does not define this term). The state does not offer a substantive incentive plan to support EC providers in improving their skills and knowledge. The state vaguely refers to an infusion of scholarship and incentive payments that will subsidize the Steps to Success system, and relies on colleges and universities to find foundation funding to support higher education for EC providers. The state has not proposed a partnership with a group of colleges to develop a comprehensive plan, including funding, to support EC educators in obtaining degrees. The state plans to report aggregated data on ECE development, advancement and retention utilizing its Registry system, the new data management system to track professional development. While the state has this plan, it again appears that a great deal of work is needed to establish baseline data. It is difficult to evaluate how realistic the targets are related to professional development without knowledge of where the system is to start. While additional training is useful, other providers of ECE, including Head Start, have mandated that teachers need degrees. The state's plan does not provide a clear pathway toward a degree or incentives for degree attainment. Overall, the state's plan for professional development is partially implemented and the state proposes a plan of medium quality.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

The state's kindergarten assessment system is substantially implemented and covers the essential domains of school readiness. Validity has been established and internal reliability is strong. Test/Retest reliability is reported at .45, in the moderate range. The state administers the assessment within 30 instructional days of enrollment in kindergarten. Currently the results are not integrated into the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). The state has a plan for a unique student identifier, starting upon entry into the early learning system, and to integrate the kindergarten assessment results into the SLDS. The state has a plan to revise one of its kindergarten assessment instruments to align it with the ELDS. The state reports that assessment is a priority for the state and plans to continue to fund the kindergarten assessment. Overall, the state has substantially implemented the kindergarten assessment, and has a high quality plan to build on its current system.

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

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

(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

The state plans to build a separate early learning data systems, with unique child identifier to interface with the SLDS. The state has a plan to develop or enhance three separate systems, each with a different function. The Early Learning Data System will contain eligibility information, Resource and Referral information, payment processing, and case management information. The Professional Development Registry will track the training and education of its workforce, building on a system used in the Department of Children and Families, which is responsible for licensing. The state does not identify what data will be stored in this system, noting that data elements will meet the National Registry Alliance, and that enhancements will support interfaces for online training and automatically place practitioners on a career pathway. The PLATINUM system is closely linked to the TQRIS system and will contain program assessment data (CLASS, ERS), screening data, child progress data, child care licensing and additional quality measures. The state provides a plan related to how the information will interface with other data management systems. The multiple systems contain all the essential data elements. The flow chart provided by the state describes the flow of information visually presenting the data management systems, and that multiple state agencies and providers have access to relevant information. The state indicates that their data management systems provide oversight for quality, privacy and integrity, or a transparency policy. Overall, the state provides a partially implemented plan and proposes a high quality plan.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	159

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

Priorities

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

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
Comments on Absolute Priority	
<p>The state has proposed a plan to improve the system of early childhood education, with particular attention to children with high needs. The state provides evidence that it has a large number, about 50 percent, of children birth to five who are from low income families. The state is one of few states in the nation to have universal pre-k and provides multiple ways in which its history, practices and policies demonstrate commitment to quality early learning in the state. The state's current system for providing early childhood education is spread across multiple agencies at multiple levels in the state, from the state level to counties and localities. The task of integrating these multiple systems is a challenge, one that the state recognizes and puts some effort into addressing. The state proposes the development of a TQRIS system to improve the quality of its programs across the state, a TQRIS that was piloted in 7 counties and one that the state plans to take statewide by 2013. The state has a plan to validate differences between levels. The state has a tiered reimbursement system tied to quality improvement. The state proposes to enhance their Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS), a key system in their plan to improve the quality of early learning. The state has identified a screening instrument, ASQ, for use across all programs in the birth to 4 system. The state indicates that it will identify assessments approved for use across the state, noting that there is wide variation across the multiple Early Learning Coalitions. The state does not tie assessment to a specific curriculum, but does propose ties to the ELDS. The state has started to implement the ERS and CLASS, and proposes to train additional assessors and widely implement these assessments with links to the TQRIS system and program assessment. The state has a fully implemented kindergarten assessment. The state currently has 2 sets of ELD standards, one for birth to 4 and one for 4 year olds. The state has a plan to revise these standards, creating one document. The state's plan for professional education is disparate. The state plans trainings and expanded credentialing related to professional development. The state has a less developed plan for degreed early childhood educators. However, the state does provide funding for 3500 providers to attend higher education through the TEACH program, although not all of these participants are degree seeking. Overall, Florida's plan builds on some of the systems that it has put in place and proposes to enhance the quality of some key areas. The plan lacks specificity, and details would have enhanced the proposal.</p>	

