



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # IL-5011

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

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

A. Successful State Systems

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development	20	20
<p>The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--</p> <p>(a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;</p> <p>(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;</p> <p>(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and</p> <p>(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

The applicant documented a strong history of State commitment to ELD programs, and services for Children with High Needs as evidenced by the State's significant financial investment and comprehensive support of ELD systems and programs serving children birth to five. As documented in the application, Illinois was the 1st state to establish statutory set-aside funding to serve children birth to three; to pass legislation which authorized universal preschool for all 3 and 4 year olds; to make health insurance available to all children regardless of family income; and to extend its definition of English Language Learners to include children 3 to 5 years, requiring local school districts to provide them bilingual education services. Financial investment included increasing the Early Childhood Block Grant (the State's primary birth to five funding stream) from \$184,171,800 in 2003 to \$380,261,400 in 2009; leveraging and dedicating \$131,472,700 of ARRA State Fiscal Stabilization Funds to support early childhood programs even though the funding could have been used for any type of government services; and, despite the recent economic downturn, the State has invested \$45 million in a Early Childhood Construction grant program. Through the early learning and development funding streams the State's annual expenditures per child, birth to kindergarten entrance, has increased from \$831 per child and \$2,546 per child with high needs in 2007 to \$1,190 per child and \$3,003 per child with high needs in 2010. The State's philanthropic sector has invested over \$72 million to supplement public investments in support of early learning systems since 2007. The applicant also documented the increasing participation of children with high needs in ELD programs, including Preschool for All and the Child Care Assistance program participation. The total number of children participating in these programs has increased from 156,000 children in 2003 to nearly 200,000 in 2011, which represents a 28% increase. Preschool for All grew specifically by 45%. An additional example of the State's commitment to high-quality early learning and development is that Illinois is one of only a few states that has defined its school principal certification as "Preschool to grade 12", requiring early learning and development training and coursework which, as stated by the applicant, emphasizes the principal's responsibility for integrating early learning and early elementary instruction. Many additional examples of past commitment are included in the application. Early Learning Standards were developed and fully adopted in alignment with K-12 core Standards, are currently being revised as noted by the applicant, to reflect a growing body of knowledge and experience gained since the

Standards were first established. Infant Toddler Development Standards have also been developed in alignment with the Early Learning Standards. A quality rating system was implemented in 2007 that provides a tiered rating system that is linked to tiered reimbursement for Childcare Assistant Program providers. Health promotion practices and initiatives are also strong throughout the state including All Kids health insurance; Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership which is a statewide mental health plan for children from birth to age 18; Consortium to Lower Childhood obesity in Chicago which along with 1200 agencies promotes health and active lifestyles. The State has also invested in systems to ensure that all children receive developmental screenings using standardized tools that identify children in need of further evaluation, though multiple identified strategies including embedding such requirements for developmental screening in many programs including contract and/or performance requirements for primary health care providers. Also addressed by the applicant was the current status of family engagement systems, which included a document that articulated the current range of standards and practices across programs, and information regarding Strengthening Families Illinois, which is a system for encouraging family involvement and strengthening and supporting families in early childhood settings. The status of the plan for the statewide kindergarten entry assessment system, which is currently substantially implemented, and effective data practices including specific data systems currently being utilized, were also included and addressed in the narrative.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The applicant clearly articulated a comprehensive early learning and reform agenda, through a detailed State Plan, that supports the State's identified vision of developing and building upon a system of universal supports and targeted interventions that every child with high needs must receive to support early learning and development and school readiness. To build towards this vision of universal and targeted supports, the applicant identified three strategic reform priorities: 1) Deepening the integration of state supports to create a unified framework for all ELD programs; 2) Connecting the most at-risk children with services and supports they need; 3) Increasing Program Quality: From Adequate to Good and from Good to Great. A narrative section was included supporting each priority including current related systems and services and targeted systems, services and activities for development and/or strengthening, which demonstrated how the applicant would build on the State's progress to date. A summary of the State Plan/Agenda articulated a clear and effective reform agenda and a path for achieving/improving child outcomes. The plan included overall goals for improving child outcomes and closing the school readiness gap and specific goals related to each strategic reform priority. Also addressed was a clear rationale for the selected criteria in Focused Investment Areas C, D, and E. The following is the applicant's identified rationale for selecting FIA: C(1) ELD Standards are at the core of a standards-driven approach to system improvement and integration; C(2) The State considers the use of assessment to support effective instruction to be central to ensuring Children with High Needs are ready for school; C(4) The State can not connect the most at-risk children with needed supports without a strong and comprehensive approach to family engagement. As noted, the State recognizes the need to better engage fragile and hard-to reach families in high quality ELD programs and has a plan to do so; D(1) A skilled workforce is key to improving program quality. The State has a plan to build upon and extend its strong Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework to ensure more EC Educators have the skills they need to support children and families; D(2) The State has a plan to integrate its current training resources across funding streams, thereby freeing up resources for more intensive professional development approaches that will allow programs to move up in tier levels; E(1) A statewide kindergarten readiness measure is necessary to assess whether early learning and development investments are leading to desired outcomes, as well as to better align early childhood and K-12 systems; E(2) Quality, integrated data systems are needed at the State and local level to track participation in ELD Programs and understand and improve children's developmental progress. The rationale as stated by the applicant provides a strong foundation for the enhancement and development of critical systems for promoting early learning and development outcomes for children.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

The applicant demonstrated a strong plan to align and coordinate early learning and development systems across the State to create a unified framework. An example is the governance/leadership structure and related goals and responsibilities. The governance structure established to implement the plan includes an Early Learning Challenge Leadership Team composed of the State Superintendent of Education; the Secretary of IDHS (Illinois Dept. of Human Services), the Director of IDCFS (Illinois Dept. of Children and Family Services), and the Director of the Head Start State Collaboration Office. A Policy and Implementation Advisory Group would include additional public and private sector involvement including community and program leadership from around the state. It is noted that during the grant period the Leadership Team would meet monthly to oversee progress on the plan. A formal structure for monitoring and performance management is included in the plan. The Leadership Team would utilize an ELC Outcomes Management System to track outcome indicators over the course of the grant. Further evidence of the plan's strong focus on coordination and integration is that a coordinated early learning budget is scheduled for the 2012 fiscal year, which includes a coordinated interagency early learning budget proposal to better align existing programs. The Chief Financial Officers from Leadership Team Departments would work in consultation with the Leadership Team and other stakeholders to develop the proposal. It is stated that this would strengthen the alignment of existing programs, assist in identifying operational redundancies, and assist in the identification of the need for new programs. An interagency management unit would also be developed with the primary responsibility for carrying out the grant activities and the directives of the Leadership Team. The applicant did outline coordinated implementation supports for key reforms through an Early Learning Quality Consortia. A strong commitment to the State Plan was demonstrated by the State's Early Learning Challenge Intergovernmental Agreement, signed by the State Board of Education, Office of the Governor, State Dept. of Human Services, Dept. of Children and Families, and the State Early Learning Council. The agreement details

assurances, responsibilities, detailed provisions that define governance structure, the Outcomes Measurement Systems, joint activities, public reporting, etc. A strong commitment to the State Plan was also demonstrated through letters of support from over 90 organizations. The applicant did outline stakeholder engagement and involvement systems/activities as well as public reporting and implementation methods that would include publicly available scorecards on the Plans' implementation. While the applicant did demonstrate commitment to the State Plan from a broad group of stakeholders, parent/family representation as stakeholders in the plan was minimally addressed.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The applicant has clearly demonstrated, by showing that the use of existing funding levels will be refocused on the objectives of the plan and will be sustained throughout the grant period, and by showing that nearly 60% of the plan's total budget is supported by funds from sources other than the grant request, the intention to use existing state departments' (Education, Health Services, and Family Services) funding to support development and implementation of the State plan/projects. This commitment is further reinforced by the stated intention to coordinate, reallocate, or repurpose early learning and development funds from other Federal, State, and local sources so that they align with its activities and objectives. Noted is the applicant's intention to dedicate CCDF Set-Aside funds to the priorities identified in this Plan. The plan, as stated, will not serve additional children nor create new programs; rather it is designed to foster cross-agency collaboration and assist the Participating State Agencies in carrying out the State Plan to achieve the State's overall goals for improving child outcomes and closing the school readiness gap. The projects are designed to build upon existing structures and support systems to strengthen the integration of state supports to create a unified framework for all early learning and development systems; (2) connecting the most at-risk children with the services and supports they need; and (3) increasing the quality of both learning environments and the instruction in early learning and development programs. The focus of the grant request is to support one-time systems building expenditures and the establishment of support structures at the state and local level that can be transitioned to existing funding and the costs identified seem both reasonable and necessary. Each participating state department has been allocated an appropriate budget to support the scope of work responsibilities detailed in the Early Learning Council Agreement. It is also noted that 27.8% of the grant request funds are budgeted for distribution to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs and other partners. Since the focus of the state's plan is to build infrastructure for continued ELD program growth, this award seems reasonable. The structure of the applicants plan demonstrates the sustainability of the plan in that there is a built-in transitioning in years 3 and 4 creating progressively less grant allocation to each project/agency and a correspondingly progressively increased expectation of matching funds. It is also noted that the expected more efficient budget requests resulting from the Coordinated Early Learning Budget Proposal process will both free-up funding and position State leadership to advocate for necessary funding. With the reported strong support of the governor and the coordinated effectiveness potential of the ELC Agreement, it is quite reasonable to expect the state investments will be continued.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

10

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

The applicant developed and adopted a statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (in 2008) which was originally available only to programs who received CCAP subsidy funding for at least 25% of their enrollment. In 2009 participation was expanded so that all full-day programs could participate, though it is stated that participation rates have been low, due to reluctance to enter the system at a low rating (rather than remain unrated), confusion about programs eligibility to participate, and the perception of little benefit of participation (as identified by a related focus group). These factors have been addressed in the current plan. Currently the system is being redesigned to include part-day preschools as well and full-day child care. A plan has been developed to ensure that all state-funded, licensed and regulated programs participate in the system by no later than June 2015. The applicant provided the revised TQRIS criteria for levels 1 through 4 and indicated that the criteria for level 5 are currently under development. Minimum elements that will be included in the Level 5 criteria were included in the proposal. The revised TQRIS documented that the system is based on a statewide set of appropriate tiered program standards that include all required elements including early learning standards, a comprehensive assessment system, early childhood educator qualifications, family engagement strategies, health promotion practices and data practices. Noted in the plan is a need to revise the TQRIS for licensed and unlicensed family child care homes/providers. The reasons cited for this were a lack of skills required by the Star levels, and lack of interest from these providers in obtaining formal credentials or implementing formal curriculum. These factors are subjective in nature and developing a separate TQRIS that focuses on "basic quality features", based on these factors is a weakness and could separate the early learning workforce and reduce consistency of quality standards. The applicant presented a clearly articulated plan to implement the new quality rating system that included goals and implementation steps including timelines and responsible parties. Also documented was the rating systems' link to the State's licensing system, and special populations of children with high needs.

	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 applicant presented a partially implemented plan that demonstrated that the State has set achievable goals for significantly increasing TQRIS participation through the redesign of the State's current quality rating system. As noted in the application, the redesign includes the requirement that every licensed child care center, or group day care home serving children birth to 5, be automatically enrolled in the TQRIS upon license renewal or initial licensing. As stated in a letter of support, all center-based Head Start and Preschool for All programs have agreed to participate in the TQRIS by June 2012. While this positively demonstrates a high level of buy-in to the State's plan, the automatic 4 Star Rating for Head Start and Preschool For All programs is a concern. Though these programs have a high level of regulatory standards, individual program's compliance with the standards is uncertain. It is noted that TQRIS will also include Part B, Title 1 and CCDF funded programs. All licensed child care centers and licensed family child care homes will be invited and encouraged to participate at the rollout of the updated system. Quality improvement and training grants will be available to providers as incentives for early participation. The applicant identified effective practices to help more families afford and/or have access to high-quality child care and maintain the support in areas of high concentration of children with high needs. An example is \$45 million in funding that the State has set aside to fund the construction or renovation (targeting quality) of early childhood facilities in the most underserved communities with a high concentration of children with high needs. A second round of funding for this purpose would take place in 2013. Developing adequate funding models through expanding collaborative, combined/braided funding, and revising a tiered reimbursement rates schedule for providers who serve primarily children with high needs are additional examples of effective practices for increasing or maintaining the supply of high-quality care in areas with a high concentration of children with high needs.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

The applicant presented a comprehensive plan which included all the required elements of a high-quality plan designation, building upon a substantially implemented plan/system for rating and monitoring the quality of early learning and development programs participating in the TQRIS. The monitoring process will continue to use valid, reliable tools administered by trained assessors including a requirement for all assessors to achieve and maintain a minimum of 85% inter-rater reliability. The monitoring process is anchored in the use of multiple Environment Rating Scales, the CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System), and the PAS/BAS (Program/Business Administration Scale) scoring systems. Two specific goals were identified: 1) Dramatically increasing the number of ELD programs assessed through a valid and reliable process, (because of a new/revised mandatory compliance process) 2) Developing a public awareness campaign to ensure parents have access to the quality and licensing history of all ELD programs. An example, the development of a parent-friendly website that includes both TQRIS and licensing violation information. Specific implementation steps were included that addressed each goal. The overall plan presented by the applicant demonstrates a comprehensive and coherent approach to increase participation in the TQRIS, and to enhance the associated monitoring process using valid, reliable tools administered by trained assessors, and increasing access to results for use by parents.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

The applicant has substantially implemented a system for improving the quality of ELD participating in the TQRIS. Current supports within that system include Specialists that provide orientations to support the TQRIS system and rating process. As stated in the application the Specialists guide providers through the process by providing technical assistance and training. Grants are also made available to TQRIS providers and must be linked to enhancements needed to support moving up levels on the TQRIS. A Statewide Accreditation Mentoring project supports and assists providers in achieving accreditation (which is linked to TQRIS levels). Financial assistance related to fees associated with accreditation is also available. Additional current supports for improvement available to early care and education programs include extensive training opportunities, Birth to Three Institute comprehensive training to all home visiting programs, and a Community Connections Preschool Model which connects children with high needs participating in home-based child care with part-day classroom based preschool programs (including providing transportation). A support system that targets hard to reach families has developed a toolkit of strategies for programs such as WIC, TANF, and other social services providers, to use to inform parents about the importance and availability of early learning programs. It is also noted that higher subsidy rates for Child Care Assistance Programs linked to tiered rating and compensation rates (wage supplements) to providers in full-day, year round programs based on education levels and continued employment are also provided as incentives. Additional practices for providing support and incentives to ELD programs interested in moving to a higher tier level, include a data system that has a portal for program directors to have secure online access to detailed reports of the findings associated with the tier level rating, which will be hyperlinked to resources needed for improvements. The applicant included many strategies and activities to support specific targets identified for increasing the number of ELD programs in top tiers, and for increasing the number of children with high needs enrolled in ELD programs that are in the top tiers. Specific strategies/activities identified by the applicant included the development of a new TQRIS orientation system that offers web-based training sessions, integrating training resources and aligning trainings with credential requirements. Other strategies included increasing the number of programs that are braiding funding which potentially increases program quality as well as increases full-day and full-year services, and providing additional intensive professional development opportunities targeted to specific quality rating tiers to raise the level of instructional quality. The identified Hard To Reach pilot project, targets recruitment of children with high needs, which is an additional activity within the State's Plan that potentially will result in increased numbers of children with high needs enrolled in top tiered programs.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

The applicant demonstrated a high-quality comprehensive multi-year plan for validating the effectiveness of the State TQRIS. As stated in the application, the State will implement a sequential, multi-year, multi-tiered validation plan to determine whether the TQRIS effectively differentiates levels of program quality. The validation process will address 6 overarching research questions (1. Do the quality components in Quality Counts reflect the current research base and expert opinion on quality in early care and education programs? ; 2. Are the Quality Counts components relevant to the diverse population of children across Illinois, including children with special needs, English language learners, and children at risk for poor school performance?; 3. Do scoring patterns on the rating tools indicate reliable variation given the population of programs participating in Quality Counts? ; 4. Do the quality components in Quality Counts represent distinct areas that do not overlap with other components in Quality Counts? ; 5. Do programs with higher star ratings display higher levels of quality than programs with lower star ratings? ; 6. How are the quality tiers related to external measures of quality?) which, when answered will certainly reflect whether or not the tiers in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality. The plan also includes a comprehensive validation study planning process in which an advisory committee will advise the State on research priorities, framework and the implementation plan. An RFP process will be used to select an evaluation contractor to conduct the evaluation, including a validation study and child outcomes study component. Though the complete research framework and design of the validation plan will be determined during the planning process, the applicant identified minimum elements including validation of the TQRIS components to ensure that components of quality reflect the current research base and expert opinion, and validation of the quality tier elements. It is noted that the State will broadly publicize the validation study findings with administrators, stakeholders, and policymakers and will, in collaboration with the evaluator, summarize how the findings should impact adjustments and improvements in the system. An additional component of the effectiveness study is a child outcomes study of the TQRIS, which will be conducted to measure whether the system positively impacts developmental outcomes and trajectories for young children. Specifically, an analysis of changes in child outcomes associated with tier levels. The plan also includes linking information from the child outcomes study to data within the statewide longitudinal education data system.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)

The applicant presented a partially implemented high-quality plan to enhance and put in place high-quality Early Learning Standards. An Early Learning Standards Alignment document was provided that clearly demonstrated the alignment of the State's Early Learning Standards with the State's Kindergarten Learning Standards (Common Core Standards). The document provided detailed information outlining each specific early learning standard and kindergarten standard alignment. The Erikson Institute Graduate School in Child Development determined/provided evidence that the State's Early Learning Standards for 3 to 5 year olds were found to be developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate for all children, including those with disabilities and developmental delays and dual language learners. Evidence was provided by the University of North Carolina, Greensboro regarding the Birth to Three Guidelines/Standards. It was stated that the Guidelines address all essential and required domains of school readiness. The applicant identified supports to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning Standards including updated training modules, online courses and webinar formats for training. The applicant also noted that to maximize the usefulness of the newly revised birth to five Early Learning Standards, multiple Resource Guides for EC educators would be developed, each tailored to specific types of EC educators and programs including guidance on using the standards with children with special needs and cultural and linguistic differences. Additionally, resources would also be developed for parents including tip sheets and a simplified version of the EC educators' guide. It was also noted that all participating agencies have agreed to use the new standards in all Early Learning and Development Programs. Curriculum that aligned with the Standards is a requirement in both the Birth to Five Program Standards and criteria of the TQRIS, which includes assessment systems and professional development activities.

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

The applicant presented a quality plan to support and enhance the current substantially implemented comprehensive system for developmentally appropriate developmental assessment. As stated by the applicant the State has a long history of requiring appropriate child assessment in its state-funded programs. Primary Care health care providers use approved published developmental screening tools in order to receive reimbursement for the service; all home visiting models require periodic developmental screening; and Preschool for All programs are also required to use published, valid and reliable developmental screenings. Developmental screening is also linked to TQRIS levels. In addition, formative assessments are required, for example Environmental Rating Scales are used to measure classroom quality in Preschool for All programs and in TQRIS rated programs. Measures of teacher-child interaction are assessed through the Environmental Rating Scales, and at high TQRIS levels, through the CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System). The high-quality plan targets, through specific goals and related activities, substantially increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators that are highly skilled at using formative assessments to inform individualized instruction that aligns with ELD Standards; and substantially increasing the number of leaders of ELD programs (principals, directors, education manager, curriculum coordinators, etc.) that are highly skilled in supporting standards-oriented early childhood instruction. Activities targeting improving the knowledge and skills of teachers to use formative assessments to shape intentional instruction include developing high-quality training and college coursework curricula on formative assessment and standards-oriented early childhood instruction. Additional activities include establishing high-quality comprehensive professional development including professional learning communities; developing a cadre of highly skilled coach-mentors to work with Early Childhood Educators on implementing effective standards-oriented instruction. Activities targeting increasing the number of leaders of ELD programs that are highly skilled in supporting standards-oriented early childhood instruction include training and technical assistance through training labs, content-based coaching and professional learning communities. The high-quality plan presented by the applicant addressed all selection criteria elements and evidence, and clearly demonstrated an effective plan to support the implementation of developmentally appropriate comprehensive assessment systems. Furthermore the applicant's strategy, of strongly encouraging programs to select from among a limited set of screening/assessment tools rather than mandating a single one for use statewide and providing training and technology supports for these tools, clearly supports selection assessment instruments that are appropriate for the target populations and purposes and strengthen staffs' understanding of the purposes and uses of each type of assessment. Lastly the plan's integration/coordination of assessment data will reduce the need for duplicate assessments when a child moves between programs and provide a single profile that can be accessed by each program for children who are served by multiple programs.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)

The applicant demonstrated that the State has a substantially implemented high-quality plan to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information and support to families of children with high needs in order to promote school readiness for their children. Currently the State has included family engagement in the Birth to Five Program Standards (Early Learning and Development Standards) and progressively increasing through levels of the TQRIS. Family Engagement training for EC Educators is included in the progression of ECE related credentials. Related training initiatives target staff in various types of early care and education settings to build educators abilities to build on parents strengths in supporting their children's education over time. Specific State investments in promoting family support and engagement include Home Visiting Programs, Family Advocate Centers, Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies and many Community Collaborations (which, as stated by the applicant, coordinates parent education and involvement locally across the State). The use of these well-developed resources will certainly leverage provision of appropriate information and support to families of Children with High Needs, which will promote school readiness. Identified goals in the plan include implementing progressively rigorous standards for family engagement and support in all ELD programs, and through community collaboration to engage fragile or isolated families and increase their participation in high quality ELD programs and support services. Specific activities outlined to support the first goal include developing a Family Worker/Family Specialist Credential, specifically structured around the State's standards related to family engagement and support; implementing the revised TQRIS that includes a progression of quality indicators for family engagement. Activities identified to support the second goal include developing a local process for outreach and family risk assessment screening, through community collaborations, that target referral services in concentrated high need communities. Additional outlined activities include providing training and technical assistance and specific tools for family engagement; train community collaborations to support parent leaders who can reach out to fragile and isolated families to increase participation in high quality ELD Programs. Ensuring that each community collaboration is linked to statewide Learning Networks, that are effective for building culturally and linguistically appropriate family engagement, is also identified as a specific activity to be implemented. Specific implementation steps are identified for all activities noted. The high-quality plan for engaging and supporting families addresses all selection criteria elements and evidence, and clearly demonstrates an effective plan to develop and enhance systems for engaging and supporting families in order to promote school readiness.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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

- (a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;
- (b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

The applicant demonstrated that the State has developed a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework that meets the criterion elements. The applicant documented the engagement of postsecondary institutions in aligning college coursework/professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework through college coursework being directly linked to the State's Career Lattice and Credential Framework, and by postsecondary institutions voluntarily aligning coursework with specific credential benchmarks. It is noted in the application that since the current credential system was signed into law in 2010, 47% of all higher education institutions have voluntarily aligned coursework to the credentials. The State's Gateway to Opportunity Registry, which serves as a repository for professional development, reviews each training opportunity to confirm alignment with the WKCF. The first of two identified goals associated with developing a workforce knowledge and competency framework and progression of credentials is, through the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework promote early learning outcomes by strengthening existing credentials and developing new ones. Specific documented activities related to the goal included incorporating the revised ELD Standards and information about TQRIS into WKCF, and by expanding credentials in order to improve program quality and strengthen family engagement strategies. Specific targeted credentials for expansion/development include a Family Child Care Credential, Technical Assistance Credential (for coaches and mentors), Family Worker/Family Specialist Credential, and Home Visitor Credential. It is noted that the Family Worker/Family Specialist Credential, and Home Visitor Credential will increase knowledge and competencies in connecting at-risk families with comprehensive services. Implementation steps are outlined for the development and implementation of the new/revised credentials. The second identified goal is to increase the number of EC Educators that obtain credentials and degrees aligned with the WKCF. Related activities addressed increasing the number of early childhood administrators holding a Directors Credential, and increasing the number of higher education institutions that align coursework with the WKCF. Specific implementation steps were included. The plan presented by the applicant documents that substantial implementation of the quality plan to develop a statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework to promote children's learning and development has taken place, and meets the elements of this criterion.

	Available	Score
(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	15

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

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

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

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

The applicant presented a partially implemented quality plan for improving EC Educators' knowledge, skills and abilities. The plan, which builds upon the current system, is targeted to improve the effectiveness and retention of a quality workforce who work with children with high needs. The current professional development system, which is aligned with the WKCF, provides targeted training opportunities to the full spectrum of EC Educators through many organizations that provide EC professional development. One strength is noted that these providers are offering, with increased frequency, training series and cohort opportunities that allow EC Educators to engage in a cycle of learning which is essential for integrating newly acquired knowledge into practice within their learning environments. It is also noted that many of the training series are designed to fulfill WKCF criteria and effectively support EC Educators in attaining credentials. Specific identified goals related to supporting EC Educators improve their knowledge, skills and abilities by expanding access to effective professional development opportunities

include: 1) Professional development investments are coordinated across funding streams. Related activities include establishing a consortium for workforce development, which is noted, would bring together providers including institutions of higher learning, to develop an annual master plan for EC professional development. Providers would be required to align their professional development with WKCF. Expanding the State's Gateway to Opportunities statewide on-line training calendar, including the requirement for all state funding training to be included. This updated system will also allow EC Educator to search for specific professional development related to certification. 2) An increased number of EC Educators progressing to credential higher levels in the Gateways Credential Framework and/or obtaining ESL/Bilingual endorsements. This goal and related activities build on current policies, incentives and supports for EC Educators, including increasing the statewide Professional Development Advisor Program, with priority given to EC Educators and centers that serve predominantly high-need children. Activities to expand scholarship programs are also included. 3) Providing training and professional development opportunities in critical areas of need, including early math instruction; using assessment and data to inform individualized instruction; and serving culturally, linguistically and ability diverse populations. Related activities target building partnerships with Institutions of High Education to improve strengthen coursework and expand professional development opportunities. 4) Data systems to track EC Educators development, advancement and retention are enhanced and strengthened. Related activities include maximizing ECE membership in the statewide database that maintains a permanent record of members' education, credentials and Registry training. This data system supports public reporting of aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement and retention. Enhancing the State's Salary and Staffing Survey in an additional data system related activity. These goals, related activities and implementation steps and specific related performance measures targeting increasing the number of EC Educators receiving credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs aligned to the WKCF; and increasing the number and percentage of EC Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credential that align with the WKCF, clearly demonstrate a quality plan to enhance current systems to improve the effectiveness and retention of EC Educators with the goal of improving child outcomes. However, the statistical target data (specific percentages) provided for the progression of credentials, while ambitious, lacked consistency and no rationale for how the applicant arrived at percentages was included.

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	12
<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)
<p>The applicant demonstrated that the State has a high-quality plan for a state-wide Kindergarten Entry Assessment system. As noted by the applicant, in 2009 the State partnered with leading foundations, institutes and the State Superintendent of Education to begin the process of developing a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. The applicant documented that a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Stakeholders Committee (KRASC) was formed and was charged with developing a common vision and recommendations regarding the development of a unified kindergarten assessment process. Specific goals, related activities and implementation steps target: ensuring that the learning and development status of a child in a public kindergarten classroom will be assessed using a valid, reliable, and appropriate instrument and process; that the observational capabilities of teachers will be improved;</p>

and that the assessment data will be used to improve and align instruction. Goals and activities also target reporting assessment data to the Longitudinal Data System, building awareness through a communications campaign and readiness reports, undertaking a phased implementation plan to fully implement the assessment system by the 2014-2015 school year, and providing professional development on child observation and the valid administration of the assessment process. The applicant outlined specific requirements for the assessment instrument that incorporate the recommendations of the KRASC, which have been included in a formal Request for Sealed Proposals from an outside vendor for the administration of the assessment. The specific requirements for proposed instruments include: 1) alignment of the instrument with the State's applicable learning standards and cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness; 2.) are valid, reliable and appropriate for the target population for which it will be used; and 3) are aligned with the State's participation in multi-state assessment consortia. As noted by the applicant, observational methodology of the assessment, as well as observational instruments will be used that are valid for use with children with developmental delays or disabilities and with children from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including English language learners. The State has set aside \$1,523,500 of the State Early Childhood Block Grant for SFY 2012 for implementation and the applicant has budgeted for and fully expects this set-aside to continue throughout the RTT ELC grant period, which will cover a substantial majority of the costs. In addition, the McCormick Foundation has already committed to support implementation and is in the process of reaching out to other private foundations to join in sponsoring initial expenses. It is clear that the applicants' comprehensive, minimally implemented plan, addresses all required criteria and outlines strong foundational elements for successful implementation.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

The applicant presented a high-quality plan to enhance the State's substantially implemented early learning data system to improve instruction, as well as facilitate uniform data collection and interoperability. The state currently has a statewide longitudinal education data system that includes comprehensive Birth to 5 elements. These elements, noted by the applicant, are the framework for many of the data integration and enhancement activities included in the Plan. Currently, the State has formed a Data Work Group to provide input on the design of the early childhood data system that will be coordinated with the State's longitudinal education data system. The applicant provides for full legal compliance under the ELC Agreement, ensuring that all data sharing arrangements are strictly governed by specific data access, use, and security restrictions and applicable privacy protection laws. The plan includes specific goals, related activities and detailed implementation steps for enhancing the early learning data system. The goals include 1) The collection, maintenance, and the use of Early Childhood Data is coordinated and integrated across systems, including data maintained by State agencies and Head Start/Early Start grantees. The specific related activities include establishing the legal and governance framework for the sharing of data among participating state agencies, and designating and enhancing primary systems for data on children & families, workforce and program. The second listed activity addresses and documents the inclusion of all essential data elements in the plan. The applicant provides a detailed narrative regarding the elements and primary systems in which each of the elements will be integrated. The primary systems will provide a consistent data structure and format, to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data and will enable ease of data entry. Additional activities related to the first goal address using common data standards for all State systems collecting early childhood data and integrating Head Start and Early Head Start data into primary systems. The second goal: 2) The Illinois early learning data system generates information that is timely, relevant, and accessible to support continuous improvement and decision making. Related activities address integrating referral, tracking and program information systems to ensure all high need children receive a broad array of necessary supports; and extending the Shared Learning Environment to ELD Programs. The plan clearly addresses each of the selection criterion elements and articulates high quality, ambitious yet achievable goals to provide system-wide data integration and build upon the State's fully implemented K-12 data system.

	Available	Score
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Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	8
<p>Competitive Preference Priority 2 is designed to increase the number of children from birth to kindergarten entry who are participating in programs that are governed by the State's licensing system and quality standards, with the goal that all licensed or State-regulated programs will participate. The State will receive points for this priority based on the extent to which the State has in place, or has a High-Quality Plan to implement no later than June 30, 2015--</p> <p>(a) A licensing and inspection system that covers all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State and that regularly care for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting; provided that if the State exempts programs for reasons other than the number of children cared for, the State may exclude those entities and reviewers will score this priority only on the basis of non-excluded entities; and</p> <p>(b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (P)(2)		
<p>The applicant presented a plan to address all ELD Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. Specifically addressed in the plan/narrative is action needed, including a specific goal, and related activities and implementation steps, to ensure that the State's licensing and inspection system covers all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State, and that regularly care for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting (with the exception of exempt providers as noted in the competitive priority requirements statement). The applicant identified small day care homes that care for children ages birth to 5, to be included with the State's licensing and inspection system, not later than June 30, 2015. As noted, specific related activities and implementation steps were included in the plan. A specific goal stating that all licensed or State-regulated ELD Programs will be included in the TQRIS no later than June 30, 2015, was also included in the plan. This partially implemented plan in addition to steps, timelines, and responsible parties outlined in the comprehensive plan articulated in B(2), clearly articulate a high-quality plan in which all licensed or State-regulated ELD programs will participate in the TQRIS.</p>		

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	No
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
Comments on (P)(3)		
<p>Applicant provided a clear description of the plan to identify Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten entry in the response to E-1 but did not earn 70% (16-20) of points possible.</p>		

Absolute Priority

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

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

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

Comments on Absolute Priority

The applicant has designed a comprehensive plan for coordinating and integrating resources, standards, and data collection/sharing to ensure the development of a coordinated Early Learning and Development system for promoting school readiness for children with high needs, and for identifying kindergarten readiness and linking appropriate services to ensure that children enter kindergarten ready to succeed. The scope of work responsibilities for each State Agency detailed in the Early Learning Council Agreement is clearly stated and focused upon supporting coordination of resources/services and improvement of access to quality Early Learning and Development Programs for all children especially those with high needs. In addition to the plans call for a uniform assessment tool, a comprehensive TQRIS, and provides for consistent data reporting and analysis, three additional identified strategic priorities; [(1) deepening the integration of state supports to create a unified framework for all early learning and development systems; (2) connecting the most at-risk children with the services and supports they need; and (3) increasing the quality of both learning environments and instruction in ELD Programs], certainly further promote Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, and the staff training component should certainly enhance the ECE workforce.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # IL-5011

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 9:21 AM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 17. Includes detailed text description of the core area requirements.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

(a) The applicant provided evidence of increased investment per child from 2007 to the present. Specific strengths of this investment included a \$45 million Early Childhood Construction grant program and \$72 million from the private sector. (b) Most ELD programs have not shown a steady increase in Children with High Needs served since 2007. Those that increased from 2007 to present (with greater numbers of children served in the intervening years than in 2011) were State funded preschool, Title I and home visitation programs. Title I numbers were not reported for 2007 and 2008. Recent reductions in the numbers of Children with High Needs served is a weakness in demonstrated past commitment. (c) The state passed legislation in 2006 to authorize and support voluntary, high-quality preschool for all three and four year olds. A state bilingual preschool program and an extensive home visitation program are a strength of services the state offers. Several state universities with ECE degree programs are not aligned with the State's workforce framework. (d) Strengths of the state's building blocks are an award winning licensing system, early learning standards that were recently revised, existing quality rating system (since 2007) and an existing professional development system including wage supplements for staff who continue their education and stay in their position. Health promotion practices are in place for developmental screenings, health insurance for low income children and children's mental health. Family engagement strategies are built into the TQRIS. Family engagement will be supported by Strengthening Families Illinois, but how this will be accomplished is unclear. Use of the existing statewide longitudinal education data system as a backbone for the early learning data system is also a strength.

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 2: (A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals, 20, 17.

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 overarching goals for the state's reform agenda are clear, specific and measurable. The goals are high-reaching and move beyond the status quo. A Community Collaboration model includes targeting 15 high needs communities to be managed by a lead agency. The focus on high need communities appears to be achievable and is a strength of the plan. (b) The State Plan summary includes several goals that are not specific and several that are specific. For example a specific goal is (B)(4)-3: At least 45% of low income children age 3 and 70% of low income children age 4 are enrolled in high-quality Early Learning and Development Program. An example of a non specific goal is (B)(3)-1: The number of center based and school based Early Learning and Development Programs that are assessed through Quality Counts is dramatically increased. The plan responds to needs identified by the state and paints a picture of an effective reform agenda. (c) The proposal included adequate rationales that built a reasonable case for why Focused Investment Area Criteria were or were not addressed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

(a)(1) The proposal includes detailed work plans for each of the participating state agencies. A Leadership Team has been established. (2) An Inter agency Implementation center has been set-up. The Lead Directors of this center are staff from existing positions in three state departments. The achievement on outcomes on the goal of the state plan will be used for annual performance reviews of directors. A strength of this model is the development of a business plan, provided by the Civic Consulting Alliance, which will support the creation of an effective management and accountability structure. (3) An additional layer of consortia will be contracted to align and coordinate state support in workforce development, TQRIS development, community systems development and early learning research. These mid-management groups are described as an attempt to address issues with disjointed service delivery across state departments. Three of the consortia appear to be an unnecessary layer to add to the six director level positions at the B-8 Interagency Implementation Center. The research consortium seem to have a more distinct set of responsibilities. The consortium design may be an attempt to address the state's lack of regional intermediary Early Learning organizations. Dispute resolution and failure to perform were addressed in the intergovernmental agreement. (4) The plan for involving early childhood educators, parents and families was unclear. (b)(1)(2)(3) ELC signed agreements and scopes of work detailed tasks in criterion areas for which each department was responsible. The scopes of work were detailed and well-conceived. (c)(1) (2) Letters of support came from a broad spectrum of stakeholders, with a limited number of letters from local communities. Letters were specific and included pledges of tasks and policies to support the proposed work. The Chicago Community Trust gave \$45,000 to support the RTT/ELC application. The demonstrated present and future commitment in the letters of support is a strength of the application.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	13

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 state has allocated significant funds for a kindergarten readiness measure (\$1.5 million), \$2 million will be allocated for an EC educator scholarship fund with a focus on an ESL endorsement, and \$1 million for monitoring the state funded preschool program. The state is spending \$11 million per year on their quality rating system, \$2.2 million on credential development and \$1.7 million on an educator registry and training. These are significant investments in early learning and development. (b)(1)(2)(3) Funding seemed adequate to support the activities. Costs were reasonable and necessary for activities. \$46 million is allocated for contractual services overall. In the Budget by Project \$18 million is allocated for services in "Concentrated High Need Communities". Other project areas include local implementation funds such as EC Educator Development and Credential Development. The greater amount of funding for infrastructure and middle management and lesser amount of funding for technical assistance/support to local educators for improving instruction is a weakness because fewer resources are going to local community programs for educators and Children with High Needs. (c) Strengths of the sustainability plan include a local match requirement from lead entities of the community collaborations and the consortia, and a strong focus on research and evaluation as a strategy to build support for continued public and private funding. Existing funds allocated to the state plan are substantial.

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)(1-6) The TQRIS adequately addressed the required elements. Additional program standards were provided - The Birth to 5 program standards which led to confusion about their purpose in relation to the TQRIS. The Birth to 5 program standards did not address health promotion practices or effective data practices. (b) The current TQRIS system has four levels. An additional higher level will be developed. Current TQRIS tiers have meaningful differentiation but the additional level will allow for more specificity leading to higher quality. (c) The state licensing system is tied to TQRIS. Participation in the current family child care TQRIS has been very low. In other words, the TQRIS is only partially implemented for licensed family child care programs. To address the lack of implementation, the state plans to create a task force to develop new criteria for licensed family child care.

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

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

- (a) Implementing effective policies and practices to reach the goal of having all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate in such a system, including programs in each of the following categories--
 - (1) State-funded preschool programs;
 - (2) Early Head Start and Head Start programs;
 - (3) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA;

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

(a)(1-5) As of June, 2012, all state funded preschool (including Part C), Head Start and Early Head Start programs will be included in the TQRIS. Policies are proposed to require all licensed child care centers and child care homes to enroll either voluntarily or as they re-license. Requirements for licensed child care centers and family child care homes will be rolled out over three years. Incentives of grants and training will encourage early enrollment. (b) The Chicago area reimbursement rate for CCAP providers is seventh in the nation. All providers in the state get tiered reimbursement rates based on their TQRIS level. A strength of the plan to remove barriers for families is to approve reimbursed, full time attendance regardless of the parents' work hours (e.g., night shifts) for the children enrolled in level four or higher programs. (c) Based on plans for policies related to required participation in the TQRIS, goals for increased percentages of ELD programs enrolling seem achievable. However, the goals have limited ambition for state funded and Head Start Programs which are automatically enrolled. Goals for enrolling CCDF licensed centers and family child care homes seemed too ambitious. For example, the baseline for licensed child care homes was 1 home enrolled with the goal for enrollment in 2015 of 6,300 homes.

	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)

(a) Two of the four chosen assessment tools for assessing the quality of the classroom environment (FCCERS and SACERS) included no validity or reliability information in the appendix. The plan includes establishing 85% inter-rater reliability for assessors with regular reliability checks which is appropriate for these instruments. The assessors are trained, but the frequency of monitoring was unclear. (b) Information to parents on quality rating and licensing history will be provided via a website that combines existing websites on licensing history and resource and referral sites. A strength of the plan is that the licensing information will be redesigned to be more useful and understandable and a public awareness campaign will inform parents of the website information.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	15

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for 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) Strengths for supporting ELD programs in continuous improvement include training grants for professional development, coach-mentors in local school districts, wage supplements, setting-up training cohorts and providing intensive staff development for educators from programs rated 4 or higher. It was unclear how many coach-mentors would be hired or how many educators would receive additional support. (b) Plans for engaging/supporting families with Children with High Needs will be developed by community collaborations. However, all communities will use some common strategies including training parent leaders for outreach which is a strength of the plan. The plan for increasing the number of state funded preschool and Head Start children who are also enrolled in full day, year round child care is also a strength. This effort will be supported by state technical assistance. (c) The goals for increasing the number of ELD programs in the top tiers and the number of Children with High Needs in top tier programs are achievable. However, they are not ambitious goals because the state funded preschools and Head Start programs are automatically assigned to the top tiers regardless of their level of quality.

	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)

(a) An external advisory committee will be established in an effort to maximize the utility of a TQRIS validation study. The Consortium for Early Learning Research will manage this committee. The plan for the validation study of accuracy of the TQRIS tiers in relation to program quality seems well conceived. The applicant's use of research based measures for the validation study was unclear. (b) Assessing child outcomes will be phase two of the validity study to begin in Fall of 2014. A pre-post design will be used due to the limited number of ELD programs not enrolled in the TQRIS by 2014. Guiding questions for this study are comprehensive and build a credible case for a strong plan for measuring the relationship between child development outcomes and TQRIS levels. For example one research question asks, "Is there a relationship between Quality Counts star ratings, individual Quality Counts components, and children's level of school readiness at Kindergarten entry?"

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

The total available points that an applicant may receive for selection criteria (C)(1) through (C)(4) is 60. The 60 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant

chooses to address all four selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 15 points. If the applicant chooses to address two selection criteria, each criterion will be worth up to 30 points.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	20	14
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--</p> <p>(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;</p> <p>(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and</p> <p>(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)
<p>(a) The standards were reviewed by Catherine Scott-Little, a professor of Human Development from the University of North Carolina, and found to be developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate. All Essential Domains of School Readiness are covered. (b) Evidence is provided that the ELD standards are aligned with the state's K-12 standards. (c) Existing training modules will be revised to include the new standards and they will be integrated into the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The standards also form the basis for the assessment system. (d) Resource guides for educators will be developed. The guides will include specific examples of how children might display progress or mastery of benchmarks. This is a strength of the guidance plan. Guides for parents will be updated and created. This is a comprehensive plan for promoting understanding. A general weakness of this criteria is the partial implementation of several activities outlined for integration of the standards, training and promoting understanding such as the development of an interactive website for parents and educators.</p>

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	20	16
<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>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

(a) The Illinois Department of Education will not be mandating a single assessment tool for statewide use which is a strength because it allows programs to choose the assessment that best fits the population they serve. Training will be provided on selecting tools from a limited list. (b) Coursework and training modules will be developed for using assessments to guide instruction. These will align with the workforce competencies and certification requirements. This alignment is a strength. (c) Assessment data on individual children will be available (as permitted by law) through a data system. This is a feasible solution to reduce duplicate assessments because of the unique child identifier used in the data system. A strength of the plan is that each child will have a single profile that can be accessed by each program for service coordination. (d) Multiple training options for administering assessments and using the data are strengths of the application, such as professional learning communities, coach-mentors and other technical assistance/training to early childhood leaders. A weakness is that these supports are focused on staff working in programs rated at tier 4 or higher on the TQRIS rather than offering support to staff working in programs rated in the lower tiers.

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)

(a) Standards for family engagement demonstrate progressive family involvement. However, the standards focus on center activities for parent involvement such as parent/teacher conferences and provide limited information on activities to enhance family support to children. (b) Communities will identify training needs for building family engagement which could lead to varying levels of implementation and quality. The number of staff and parent leaders to be trained is unclear. (c) Strengths for promoting family support statewide include developing a family specialist credential, creating a cadre of parent leaders and tying community collaborations to the existing Strengthening Families network. Another strength is the use of existing home visitation programs that will screen families and identify high risk families to be connected to high quality early learning programs.

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)

(a) A Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework has been developed and adequately includes all the elements in the RTT-ELC definition. (b) Career Lattice was developed to show horizontal and vertical movement through the WKCF. Credentials can be earned through higher education or a portfolio process. This flexibility is a strength. New credentials will be developed to broaden expertise such as a home visitor credential. (c) 47% of higher education institutions have aligned coursework with the state's WKCF. The goal is to increase this to 95% which is ambitious, but may not be achievable if multiple courses need to be revised or added at one institution. An amendment to the state school code now allows student teachers to be paid if they had been working in an early childhood program one year previous. This will reduce staff barriers to earning higher credentials.

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

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

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

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

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

(a) As an effort in coordination, all professional development opportunities across state departments will be available on a statewide calendar on the WKCF registry. It is unclear if these training opportunities will be open to a broader audience of early childhood staff or if they are simply being posted on the calendar. (b) The state will offer a wage supplement program to obtain higher credentials and increase retention, career counseling and scholarships for educators to obtain ESL endorsements. These are effective incentives for career advancement. (c) A registry has been created to track members' education, credentials and ongoing professional development. Aggregate data will be provided through the educator registry. (d) Goals for (1) and (2) are clearly delineated. The goals for increasing the number of educators receiving credentials are ambitious and seem achievable based on the number of higher education institutions and providers in the state. The goals for the number of educators who earn existing credentials seem achievable because, for example, the goal for Credential Type 1 adds approximately 100 educators per year. The goals for new credentials are unclear because they start at a baseline of 0 and move to a 2015 target of 200%.

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	12

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)
<p>(a) A Kindergarten assessment has not been identified. A stakeholders committee recommends that an existing instrument be adopted. This would save costs of developing a new instrument. The plan has clear expectations for the tasks of the vendor related to demonstrating how the instrument will align with ELD standards and how the observational instrument will be valid for all purposes. (c) A plan is in place for statewide implementation by 2014-15, including a pilot phase and a roll out statewide. (d) The chosen vendor will be responsible for developing a web-based system for reporting assessment data. This will be tied to the state Department of Education's student information system using a unique student ID. (e) The state has \$1.5 million allocated for identifying and implementing the assessment which reflects a significant investment of funds separate from the proposed grant funds. This criterion received a lower score because a Kindergarten assessment has not been chosen or implemented in the state.</p>

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	15

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)
<p>(a) The existing student information data system has all the essential data elements. Use of an existing system is a strength because it is currently tracking children's participation in birth - 3 and preschool programs. (b) Integration with other data on children and families through other state departments is planned for completion in December, 2013. Each state agency has identified a primary data system to make the data more accessible. (c) A contractor will recommend extensions and adaptations for the current system so it can provide common standards for data sharing. Therefore, the ability of the systems to exchange data is unknown because the currently systems have not been analyzed for interoperability. (d) Kindergarten assessment data will be available to ELD programs for continuous improvement. This is a strength because the programs can see how the children from their programs perform on an assessment after they leave their program. (e) The ELC agreement between state departments includes the needed legal framework for data system enhancement. These comply with all levels of privacy laws.</p>

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	206

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

(a) The state plans to regulate small day care homes. Stakeholders will determine the appropriate scope of regulations to be developed. Funding is expected for this effort from the state General Assembly. Funding uncertainty is a weakness of this priority. (b) A plan is in place to phase all licensed child care programs into the TQRIS.

Priorities

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

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

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

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

Comments on (P)(3)

(a) The state has not implemented a kindergarten entry assessment. (b) 70% of maximum points were not earned for (E)(1).

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

This proposal coherently and comprehensively addressed the absolute priority mainly through the application's emphasis on improving ELD programs through staff development and support for increasing program quality. A few key elements make the proposed goals realistic such as focusing on communities with high populations of Children with High Needs, a strong existing birth to three service structure such as home visiting and several programs to support staff development such as coach-mentors and customized technical assistance.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # IL-5011

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 12:10 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 19. Includes detailed description of the core area, scoring rubric (Quality), and comments on the state's performance.

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 proposal describes an ambitious yet achievable reform agenda to support the early learning and development of Children with High Needs through deepening coordination of multiple delivery systems; connecting Children with High Needs to services and supports needed; and increasing quality of services to children and families. b) The narrative (3 Strategic Reform Priorities) and tables (e.g., Illinois Community Collaboration Model) describe a clear and credible path toward achieving the State's agenda and goals for example. c) The State describes the rationale to justify each of the focused investment areas, however what is missing from the narrative is how the redesigned TQRIS will actually improve child outcomes (Focused Investment Area C). Since the narrative described the TQRIS as "...not effective in propelling providers to higher levels of quality" the State plans to restructure this program. The State describes an extensive evaluation, including a child outcomes study to determine how to design a more focused and systematic approach through TQRIS to increase the quality of early learning settings. The Evaluation will not be completed before the end of the competition funding to determine if the new TQRIS Tiers will impact child outcomes. Strengths of the Plan are that a wide variety of stakeholders from state, private and local organizations will collaborate to implement comprehensive and detailed programs and strategies to support children with High Needs through existing community organizations. Focused Investment Area (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce is addressed through plans to implement a highly effective early learning intervention using the Early Learning Standards, TQRIS and professional credentialing. Focused Investment Area (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress are incorporated throughout the Plan such as the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey and educator data bases.

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

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

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

- (1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;
- (2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;
- (3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and
- (4) The plan for when and how the State will involve representatives from Participating Programs, Early Childhood Educators or their representatives, parents and families, including parents and families of Children with High Needs, and other key stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

a) Illinois describes a history of cross system collaboration and funding and includes a large group of organizations (schools, community organizations and governments, early learning and development programs, state agencies, philanthropy, business) involved in the development of the State Plan for this competition. This large group of stakeholders will bring diverse skills, strengths, and active participation when implementing the Plan and strengthen sustainability past the term of this funding. (a)(2) The Governance-related roles and responsibilities in the State Plan includes all of the required organizations for this competition. The State has chosen to build on its existing infrastructure and strengthen collaborations with public private partnerships at the state and local levels. (a)(3) The Plan describes clear roles and expectations for implementation, timelines and responsibilities however a dispute resolution plan was not described for use by organizations other than the agencies who signed the Intergovernmental Agreements. The administrators and partners involved in this Plan may find the dispute resolution a helpful tool. (a)(4) The Birth to 8 interagency Implementation Center (B-8 Center), with oversight of the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD), will manage the Plans' implementation decreasing fragmentation and establishing a clear leadership process. The Plan does not address how stakeholders such as parents and families will be represented. 9a)(3)(b)(1-3) Signed Memoranda of Understanding were provided to substantiate the clear commitment, scope of work, and roles and responsibilities of the participating Government agencies. (a)(3)(c)(1-2) Letters of support were provided from a large number of diverse Early Learning Intermediary Organizations and local early learning councils.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	13

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 clear and detailed budget to support its reform agenda. Public and private funding will be maximized through required matching funds for each of the three Consortia with increases each year through 2015. A high level of private sector support will be required to sustain services beyond the funding of this competition. The match requirement will most likely present challenges as several programs already required matches (e.g., Head Start, Early Head Start, Parents As Teachers) who may currently be struggling or unable to meet those local match requirements. One strength of the State's Plan is credentialing teaching staff in response to the high percentage of English Language Learners (ELL). Even as funding from this competition decreases, the ELL services will continue through these credentialed staff ensuring a degree of sustainability. The Plan details financial support from the State to expand and strengthen local infrastructure. This strengthening process should increase the probability of sustainability and seems reasonable and necessary.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

a) The State has a Plan to revise their TQRIS to meet the requirements for this competition. Using the Illinois Birth to Five Program Standards as a definition of commitment to high quality, comprehensive Early Learning and Development programs, the revised Quality Counts (TQRIS) will be redesigned and a 5th Tier will be added to move programs from "good to great." (b)(c) The new TQRIS plan will be an inter-agency system including child care licensing and will be subject to a continuous evaluation to determine new protocols for ratings. The State Plan does not include a description or definition of "continuously" to guide the reviewer to a clear understanding how the evaluation will be conducted. In addition, the State plans to include all early learning and development programs by requiring participation through increased child care licensing which will include programs which are currently exempt such as Head Start and Preschool For All. (B)(1)(b) A rigorous evaluation component is planned (not currently in place) to determine if the TQRIS levels have standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels and reflect high expectation so excellence. A new Tier 5 is planned to go beyond nationally recognized standards for quality. The State does not provide a rationale or cite research data to support the statement "... while Licensed Family Child Care (LCCF) providers provide safe, nurturing care that is responsive to families' needs and preferences, the majority of them are not interested in obtaining formal credentials and implementing formal curriculum within their child care program." Based on this statement the State plans to implement a component of the TQRIS for LFCC providers that "rewards home child care providers for forming relationships with high quality part-day preschool providers and ensure that children enroll in and attend high-quality preschool." This competition requires standards for programs that are commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children. Since the State did not provide any supporting evidence that this strategy has any empirical evidence, the score for this section is lower.

	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 set very ambitious goals for enrolling all licensed child care providers in the TQRIS. All Head Start and Early Head Start programs as well as Chicago Public Schools plan to enroll in the TQRIS in the first 6 months of the Plan. Although ambitious, this compressed timeline will place incredible demands on the infrastructure of the TQRIS and may not be achievable. The State Plan narrative description states the programs will be 'enrolled' and simply states it will contract with an entity to provide the ratings. Missing is an explanation of how the contractor might secure a staff of well-qualified raters within the short time frame to accomplish the task of completed Ratings. The revision of tiered reimbursement rate policies may not take into consideration supply and availability of child care when it "...anticipates that the revision will largely be cost-neutral, involving the shifting of existing resources toward those programs that provide the highest level of quality rather than providing rewards for providers who only offer quality that is slightly higher than licensing standards require." The State did not describe a plan for how Children with High Needs would have access to high quality early learning slots in their communities or expand child care slots in higher quality programs to meet the same need for slots when these funds are shifted away from existing child care slots. Setting aside state capital funds for renovations and construction of early childhood facilities is an innovative and exciting strategy to support early learning and development in communities with a high concentration of Children with High Needs. The interest generated for grants of up to \$5 M for child care facilities clearly demonstrates the needs for services.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs	15	13

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 TQRIS assessment tools listed in the proposal are valid and reliable. The State describes that raters will maintain 85% inter-rater reliability on each tool with drift (regular inter-rater reliability) checks on each tool which will support consistent ratings. The State Plan includes development of a formal appeals process in the first year of the proposal. This appeals process will support the implementation of the revised TQRIS as the State can realistically expect challenges as they mandate participation and significantly increase the number of programs enrolled in TQRIS. The proposal does not provide details regarding why a program would require a "re-rating visit sooner" than the 3-year timeline. Ensuring that families and communities increase their knowledge of what defines high quality early childhood learning and development will increase the likelihood of parents choosing higher quality programs thereby creating demand, especially if facilities are in their communities and are available at a reasonable cost. The State describes various strategies to create awareness and demand including a public awareness campaign that will offer families and individuals various approaches (e.g., website, cell phones) to access a data base for selecting an early learning setting for their child.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	15

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

a) The state description of the many policies and practices to support and provide incentives for continuous improvement are commendable (training opportunities, technical assistance, grants, scholarship opportunities, higher subsidies and wage compensation programs). B) The State does not provide a clear description of supports to families. Of concern is the Community Connections Preschool model which transports 3 & 4 year-old children in a home-based child care setting to a part-day classroom-based preschool staffed with a 'certified' teacher 4 to 5 days per week. A certified preschool teacher also visits the home child care providers to coordinate curricular activities bringing materials and resources and addresses the needs of infants and toddlers. This is an inappropriate model from several points of view. The social and emotional experience for the 3-4 year old children are that they are experiencing many changes in caregivers throughout the day (parents, home child care provider, transportation staff, teacher and possibly teacher assistants in the classroom-based program, and back to the home child care provider). Brain research tells us that good practice in early childhood settings minimize both the number of transitions and the number of caring adults in a child's life each day. Individualized attention allows the necessary time for children to develop trusting relationships and for the caring adult to fully understand each child's unique needs and learning styles. The numbers of transitions and staff these children experience would not allow for meaningful and sustained relationships. We know that academic learning does not take place in a vacuum but is closely tied to the emotional connections children experience within the context of a caring relationship. Additional research is needed to validate this model as replicable. c)(1-2) The state proposes an ambitious increase in the number of Tier 1 early learning settings in 2012 and Tiers 4 & 5 in 2014-15 for both center and licensed family child care. This reviewer is concerned about the realistic capacity for the contractor to accomplish rating this considerable number of early learning settings in a single year due to: the number and availability of well-trained rating staff to complete the task; systems to support the 'new' and yet to be completed 'Tier 5'; and willingness of programs to participate.

	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)

This state has a rich history of research and evaluation of early learning programs and has developed a realistic, yet ambitious plan for evaluating the effectiveness of the new TQRIS. The state has carefully considered current research, lack of empirical evidence for child outcomes in current research on Quality Rating Systems, statewide implementation, and tight timelines. The description for use of the Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS) tool for infant classrooms for possible evaluation. CLASS has a tool for toddler classrooms that is currently under development but a CLASS for infant classrooms does not exist.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	20	15
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--</p> <p>(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;</p> <p>(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and</p> <p>(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.</p>		
Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation		
Comments on (C)(1)		

a) Illinois plans to undertake an ambitious plan to revise its current Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) for 3-5 year olds at the same time it improves and expands its birth to three ELDS. The inclusion of a 'Self-Regulation' domain in the infant and toddler ELDS is a strength as it increases the appropriateness of the standards. The ELDS cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness. b) The Plan provides evidence that the ELDS are aligned with the State's K-3 Standards. c) The State Plan provides evidence that the ELDS are incorporated into the Program Standards, curricula and activities, and the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The Program State plans to incorporate the ELDS in the Comprehensive Assessment System and professional development activities to families and professionals about the ELDS. d) The State has a plan for statewide implementation of the ELDS through marketing, training and policy changes providing a base of understanding and use of the ELDS within certain sections of the early childhood community. The Plan does not address family child care programs which is a weakness. In addition, the plan does not address training and coaching opportunities about the Standards for lower Tiers of TQRIS, which would certainly benefit these Tier 2 and 3 programs.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	20	15

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)

Illinois has a Plan for utilizing Comprehensive Assessment Systems (CAS) to strengthen instruction in early learning settings and, ultimately, outcomes for Children with High Needs. a) The State is planning for a diverse stakeholder group to select assessment instruments that are appropriate for the target population and purposes. b) Once the assessments instruments are selected there is a thorough plan to train staffs and coaches to support implementation of the tools and use of the assessment results for instruction and curriculum design. However, the coaching and training is targeted at the staffs in the higher Tiers of TQRIS. In addition, the state has decided that it will not mandate a single assessment instrument for statewide use but rather approve a menu of 12 different tools for use by various programs. c) The State data base includes assigning a single numerical identifier to individual children which will support coordination of services and avoid duplication. d) Training Early Childhood Educators to effectively and appropriately administer, interpret and utilize data to inform and improve instruction, programs and services is included in the Plan. However, it is limiting CAS training to Tier 4 which is a weakness in the proposal.

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	20	15

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)

a) In its proposal the State describes a strong history of innovative programs to support family engagement in early learning and development programs. Utilizing the Consortium for Community Systems Development to coordinate efforts in identified communities of High Need and leveraging existing state resources such as Strengthening Families Illinois, AOK Networks, child care resource and referral agencies, doula programs, the Fussy Baby Network, World Café/Parent Café, and more will offer families a rich array of opportunities to learn how to support their children's. b) Plans to offer training and professional development to educators who engage families in early learning and staffs in home visiting programs will increase the use of specific Strengthening Families Protective Factors and strategies to build the ability to recognize parents' strengths and build on cultural responsiveness. Putting a systematic professional development system in place to support the Home Visitor and Family Worker/Family Specialist credentials reflects this state's commitment to engaging families. Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) are not specifically identified and are not strongly linked to strategies to support family engagement in this proposal. However the state does address how they will use the TQRIS and Birth to Five program Standards to engage families. c) The Plan describes family support and engagement through existing supports such as Family Advocacy Centers; child care resource and referral agencies and the Consortium for Community Systems Development (CCSD) in High Needs Communities. However, details and specific outreach efforts are not provided in the 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	15

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)	
<p>a-b) The state of Illinois has designed a common Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework (WKCF) designed to improve the early childhood workforce through credentials and degree programs. Developing credentials (family child care, home visitors) for targeted groups working with children and families will provide a long-term solution to building capacity for high quality, consistent Early Learning and Development programs and classrooms across the state. However, aligning these credentialed staff in the TQRIS was not included in the Plan narrative. c) The State successfully engaged the support of its 2 and 4-year higher education institutions to strengthen its early learning and development workforce. Demonstrated by their letters of support, the Indiana Board of Higher Education and the Indiana Community College Board both have a firm understanding of the impact of well-prepared professionals who provide high-quality care and education during children's earliest years and their roles in contributing to better outcome for Children with High Needs. The career lattice for early childhood professionals in this State will be strengthened as a result of the collaborative efforts of higher education institutions as well as other professional organizations focused on training and coaching.</p>	

	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) The Consortium for Workforce Development will align the State's existing Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework (WKCF) with professional development opportunities. b) Educators have the opportunity to progress to higher levels of credentials with supports available through programs such as a wage supplement and scholarship program. To evaluate the effectiveness of these programs, data systems to track EC educator development, advancement and retention will be strengthened. Staffs in all TQRIS programs will be required to enroll in the Gateways to Opportunity Registry, allowing the state to compile data about qualifications of practitioners as well as to support policy-making by providing decision makers with current information. c) The Gateways Registry will track education level, wages, turnover and longevity by type of care and role. However, the State Plan does not provide a description of how the state will publicly report aggregated data on advancement and retention. d) There are several early childhood state level professional development entities in addition to institutions of higher education in Illinois, so some duplication and silos exist. The State plans to streamline this system to "free up resources" and make training and credentialing more available. Specific plans for how this integration of training resources will happen were not described in the proposal. Overall, the State has an ambitious and achievable plan to increase the competency of its early childhood workforce.

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	12
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

a-c) The Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) was developed this past Spring by a distinguished group of professionals in the field of early care and education and will be implemented in every public kindergarten classroom in the 2014-15 school year. Policies for administration of the tool and training on implementation are included in the State Plan. The State will comply with aligning the KIDS with the Early Learning and Development Standards. b) The State Plan describes that it is sensitive to, and is planning for, the appropriateness of the instrument to ensure reliability with culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Illinois describes training on KIDS that will be provided to teachers to administer, use the information to adjust instruction and engage families. d) A longitudinal data system o support policy analysis, public reporting and validation of the tools is planned to support its success. e) Funding to support KIDS will be accessed from other state and federal funding source. Overall, Illinois has a strong plan to implement a statewide Kindergarten Readiness assessment, but does not have a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment currently in place.

	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)
a) The State has a Plan in place to maintain a longitudinal early childhood development and learning data base which will include all of the Essential Data Elements as well as the full array of Illinois Birth to 5 elements. b) The Plan describes how the State will establish uniform data collection across agencies and will utilize a new and innovative approach to web-based access so that data can be entered and shared by various agencies. c) Building on existing data systems, with improvements and participants phased in over time, the State will pilot test and adapt in real time to create a useful and robust data base. d) The State Plan describes several data systems that will track information on ELD programs, ED Educators, families, children and services. e) The Plan also meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with Federal, State and local privacy laws. The Shared Learning Collaborative is an exciting alliance to build an infrastructure for shared data tracking on early learning settings.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	223

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

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

and reviewers will score this priority only on the basis of non-excluded entities; and

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

The state of Illinois has a high quality plan to comply with Competitive Preference Priority 2. It proposes to implement new day care licensing regulations to include family child care homes caring for two or three unrelated children for a fee (defined as "small day care homes") by June 2013. The state plans to engage a task force consisting of stakeholder representatives to determine the scope of regulations and how they should differ, if at all, from early learning settings for more children. The state plans to conduct training to increase awareness and encourage compliance once the regulations are in effect. Since child care programs are re-licensed every 3 years, all programs will be enrolled in the TQRIS based on their re-licensure visit or by June 2015. The state's strategy to include all regulated early learning settings in the proposed TQRIS would meet criteria for 'ambitious and achievable' as the timeline and implementation steps are well-planned and include the criteria for this competition. This reviewer would encourage the state's rulemaking for family child care homes to be further defined as a provider caring for 'one or more children for a fee' to protect the health, safety, and education of all children in care. The state's strategy to include all regulated early learning settings in the proposed TQRIS would meet criteria for 'ambitious and achievable' as the timeline and implementation steps are well-planned and include the criteria for this competition. This reviewer would encourage the state's rulemaking for family child care homes to be further defined as a provider caring for 'one or more children for a fee' to protect the health, safety, and education of all children in care.

Priorities

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

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

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

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

Comments on (P)(3)

The State currently does not have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment in place. However, the State released an RFP for the State's kindergarten entry assessment on October 2011 – before the due date of this competition. The RFP includes all elements of the selection criteria including language and literacy, cognition and general knowledge (including early mathematics and early scientific development), approaches to learning, physical well-being and motor development and social-emotional development. The State plans to initiate the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) in 2012 with statewide implementation by the 2014-15 school year. The State initiated the discussion regarding the need for statewide Kindergarten readiness assessment in 2009 and formed the Kindergarten Stakeholder Committee. The Stakeholder Committee members represent administrators, practitioners, researchers and advocates from across Illinois. This groups' interest was to create a data system that would allow teachers to guide instruction, decision makers to guide policy making, and resource allocation. The KIDS evaluation will be one of the primary responsibilities of the Consortium for Early Learning Research (modeled after the highly regarded Consortium on Chicago School Research). The data collection and analysis will enrich understanding of school readiness and provide a platform for sharing data with families and the community about children's learning and the early learning and development system's response.

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

Illinois has met the Absolute Priority through its State Plan for promoting school readiness for Children with High Needs. It plans to increase the capacity and knowledge of early learning professionals, implement a statewide TQRIS, and implement a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of all components of the Plan. Learning outcomes for children will be increased through state systems to establish higher teacher credentialing, renovating and building new early learning facilities, increasing early learning licensure requirements, strengthening family supports and engaging community, governmental and philanthropic support.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # IL-5011

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 3:01 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development	20	19
<p>The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--</p> <p>(a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;</p> <p>(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;</p> <p>(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and</p> <p>(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality</p>		
Comments on (A)(1)		
<p>The response was scored at 19 of 20 points; the response is rated as a high quality response. The narrative was well organized, clear, addressed each of the selection criteria and included relevant data. The narrative and tables were consistent with one another. A case was made regarding Illinois's investments of both funds and efforts both public and private. Overall this was an extremely helpful and comprehensive response. In addressing the requirement of increasing the number of children with high needs participating in high quality programs, the applicant describes enrollment in two primary programs, Preschool For All and the Child Care Assistance Program. The applicant compares enrollment from 2003, to 2007 to 2011. While enrollment since 2003 has increased considerably, the comparison from 2007 to 2011 shows a slight decrease. The applicant does not explain this decline. One point was deducted. The applicant provided a comprehensive discussion of existing legislation, policies and practices. The current status of key areas with respect to all the required Building Blocks for a quality system were described in sufficient detail, providing a clear and impressive picture of the current status of Illinois, and reflecting extensive past commitment to early learning and development.</p>		
	Available	Score
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	20

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The response was scored at 20 of 20 points; the response is rated as a high quality response. The narrative is well written and gives a clear picture of a very complex system. The proposal specifically and clearly describes ambitious and achievable goals for improving program quality, improving outcomes for children with high needs statewide, and closing the readiness gap. This section begins with a clearly articulated vision, and strengths and weaknesses are identified. Examples of self-identified weaknesses that the applicant proposes to address in applicable Focused Investment Areas include: 1) Largely separate systems of professional development between education and childcare. 2) A mismatch in geographic distribution of high quality programs and high needs families, which restricts access for those in highest need. 3) An especially critical shortage of quality care for infants and toddlers, as too many centers and homes provide only "minimally adequate care." 4) A need for Early Childhood Educators to receive training in intentional instruction. 5) A need for integration of data systems. This analysis of the current status led to the applicant's three strategic reform priorities. The applicant is clearly responsive to the Notice Inviting Applications and lays the ground for the elements they have elected to address in sections (C), (D), and (E). The three strategic reform priorities include: 1) Expanding upon current efforts of integration of state support; 2) Connecting the most-at-risk children with the support and services they need; and 3) Increasing program quality at all levels. The applicant presents a figure of the Illinois community collaboration model that clearly illustrates how the applicant intends to accomplish these priorities. There is a useful summary table of goals for each of the strategic priorities which are then tied to specific criteria in the Notice Inviting Applications. Relevant appendix material is provided, however the narrative itself adequately addresses and proposes ambitious yet achievable goals that when taken together establish a clear and credible path to an effective reform agenda.

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

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

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

- (1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;
- (2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;
- (3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and
- (4) The plan for when and how the State will involve representatives from Participating Programs, Early Childhood Educators or their representatives, parents and families, including parents and families of Children with High Needs, and other key stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

The response was scored at 8 of 10 points; the response is rated as a high quality response with a partially implemented plan. The narrative outlines the organizational structure for the state plan clearly and comprehensively. The detail provided is sufficient and some goals and activities are already in place. A strength of the proposal is that the applicant articulates a commitment to the proposed approach with or without RTT-ELC funding. The applicant has described a detailed organizational structure for working together building upon the existing governance structure, the Illinois Early Learning Challenge (IELC) Intergovernmental agreement. The applicant has formed a leadership team within the structure, a new interagency implementation center and three consortia that will address integrated supports at the local level. A fourth consortium will address system improvement through research and evaluation. The required MOU and letters reflect excellent detail and speak of strong commitment. Exhibits in the appendix A3-1 provide the scope of work for each of the agencies referenced in the Notice Inviting Applications. This detail is very helpful in judging the response. The response reflects a high level of development of a plan to coordinate and align participating state agencies and other partners in early care and education in Illinois and plans to improve it.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The response was scored at 15 of 15 points; the response is rated as a high quality response. The narrative in A4 provides program-by-program detail of funds and how they relate to existing and proposed priorities and goals. The narrative addresses sustainability in a convincing fashion. RTT-ELC funds will primarily support investments in creating systems and infrastructure that can then be maintained with state funds. Budget tables and the narrative support the planned expenditures. Funding for leadership team positions with each of the participating agencies with full time salaries of about \$80,000 were taken as a reflection of the value the applicant placed on sufficiently senior personnel. Given that Illinois proposes a structure that includes extensive state level organized strategies to support efforts across the state, the level of funding directed to local levels seems reasonable.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

The response was scored at 8 of 10 points; this plan is rated as a high quality partially implemented plan. The applicant proposes modification of a current TQRIS system that is based on tiered program standards that include (B)(1)(a) elements 1 through 6. The modification involves the addition of a fifth tier. Work has not yet begun on this tier consequently it is rated as partially implemented. In the current TQRIS system there are measurable standards, aligned with nationally recognized standards. The applicant proposes to build upon these tiers. A strength of this plan includes using data from the validation study to examine the degree to which the tiers meaningfully differentiate quality programs levels. (B)(1)(c) the applicant has linked the TQRIS to the state licensing system as the licensing system comprises the first tier of the TQRIS. The applicant provides a useful summary table indicating where to find supporting evidence in the narrative and appendices.

	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 response was scored at 12 of 15 points; this plan is rated as a high quality partially implemented plan. The applicant has written a comprehensive and detailed response which addresses the requirements of enrolling all publicly funded ELD programs listed in (B)(2)(a)(1-5), the quality rating system, and proposes credible incentives for ensuring that children with high needs in working families are able to access high quality programs. In some cases these strategies have been piloted in some regions but implementation has not been accomplished statewide. In the narrative many specific examples of known barriers such as policies around working families and availability of adequate facilities are addressed with credible proposals. The applicant has set ambitious yet achievable targets with specific numbers and percentages of programs that will participate in the TQRIS. These targets are in keeping with subcriteria (B)(2)(c).

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

The response was scored at 12 of 15 points; this plan is rated as a high quality partially implemented plan. The applicant describes a system of rating programs that uses valid and reliable instruments that is already in place. Included among the current system strengths are procedures already in place that require at least 85% inter-rater reliability, and procedures for evaluation programs every 3 years unless they require a "re-rating" visit sooner. Use of independent monitors and agreements to use a single integrated process for quality and compliance is a strength. The applicant plans to develop a formal appeals process as the system will move from voluntary to mandatory for child care centers, (already mandatory for preschools). Such a process is viewed as necessary given the scale of this plan. Included within agreements and plans is a commitment to integrate monitoring processes across funding streams. Such an integration of processes is viewed as a strength as it is likely to create efficiencies for both programs and the state. The applicant indicates that the state already has a website that provides public access to licensing history and licensing violations. However since not many programs are registered in this system the applicant plans to conduct a comprehensive public awareness campaign once the participation in the quality rating system reaches an adequate number of high quality programs enrolled (late 2012), materials supporting this system will be developed in multiple formats and languages.

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

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

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

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

transportation; meals; family support services); and

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

The response was scored at 16 of 20 points; this plan is rated as a high quality, partially implemented plan. Many elements of the infrastructure necessary for implementation are in place and a number activities will be accomplished in 2012. The plans described in this section comprehensively address the required elements of (B)(4)(a), which includes policies and practices that provide support and incentives for programs to continually improve at all program levels. In responding to (B)(4)(b) the applicant proposes specific strategies for reaching out to families with children with high needs to make programs accessible. In response to (B)(4)(c) targets are set for increasing programs at top tiers and also increasing the number and percentage of children with high needs enrolled in early learning and development programs. Specific targets are provided and while ambitious are achievable. The targets set in Performance Measures (B)(4)(c)(1) and (2) are ambitious in that total program enrollment in the TQRIS goes from 669 (baseline) to 16,451 by 2015, and that all children with high needs are targeted for enrollment by 2015. The targets are viewed as achievable due to the number and range of supports that Illinois has in place to encourage enrollment in the TQRIS. Examples of strategies to support enrollment include a coaching system for Directors and developing and implementing outreach strategies for families that are hard to reach. The applicant offers detailed plans for these activities and with these plans creates a clear and credible path.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

The response was scored at 15 of 15 points; the response is rated as a high quality response. The narrative contains detailed accounts of how Illinois plans to contract for both required studies; 1) Validation of the TQRIS system; 2) Evaluation of how well the levels in the system relate to children's readiness for kindergarten. Within this evaluation, they plan to look at differences in performance according to different populations. In the beginning of this section and throughout the application provided detail that reflects an understanding of the literature and difficulties in the design of this type of work. The applicant specifically describes how they intend to address these difficulties. The applicant has incorporated the elements of obtaining feedback on the degree to which their TQRIS tiers relate to quality of different types of program accreditation.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

The total available points that an applicant may receive for selection criteria (C)(1) through (C)(4) is 60. The 60 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant

chooses to address all four selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 15 points. If the applicant chooses to address two selection criteria, each criterion will be worth up to 30 points.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	20	16
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--</p> <p>(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;</p> <p>(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and</p> <p>(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)
<p>The response was scored at 16 of 20 points; this plan is rated as a high quality partially implemented plan. The applicant describes the recent revision, (2010) and current status and alignment of the birth to three and three to five standards. A strength of this proposal is that these standards are high quality and address essential domains and are developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate. In regards to (C)(1)(b) the applicant has provided evidence of alignment of standards with the States K-3 academic standards. The applicant provides evidence of incorporation of standards into curriculum activities, assessment systems, knowledge and competency framework and professional development activities. The applicant has documented a strong comprehensive approach to revising the standards. This process of revising the standards involved the work of a broad based task force and national experts. This process of revision also included an alignment cross-walk of the standards with the Illinois K-12 learning standards performed by the Erikson Institute. An analysis of the alignment with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework was also performed. This work has been completed except for age specific benchmarks for all standards which will be completed by March 2012. Documentation of the quality (C)(1)(a) and alignment (C)(1)(b) is supported in appendix materials including a letter of support from the Erikson Institute. Evidence of commitment to use of ELD standards by all programs are provided in agreements included in appendix B. In regards to (C)(1)(d) the applicant has training in place regarding the ELD standards. Given the revisions that were recently accomplished, the applicant has detailed plans to expand this training by developing resource guides tailored to specific audiences and development of web based supports.</p>

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	20	16
<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>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

The response was scored at 16 of 20 points; this plan is rated as a high quality partially implemented plan. The applicant provided a succinct and informative statement regarding the relationship between the skill level of educators in using assessments to improve student outcomes. In response to (C)(2)(a) the applicant will work with stakeholders to refine selection of instruments and approaches to target populations. The applicant proposes working with higher education to develop a curriculum regarding formative assessments and standards oriented early childhood instruction in the first months of the project. The majority of work in development of this strategy has occurred. Faculty in higher education will be a focused target audience for this training (C)(2)(d) The applicant has begun to implement cohorts of coach-mentors who are well versed in the curriculum to support the workforce in implementing effective use of assessment. This plan is high quality. In response to (C)(2)(c) the applicant plans to address the issue of aligning, integrating and sharing assessment results by replicating the approach already implemented by the city of Chicago across all programs funded by the the city of Chicago. The applicant plans to implement this approach, used with success in Chicago, state wide. The applicant also plans to implement a single child record in its data system for children served by multiple programs. This approach, is viewed as a strength as it should facilitate coordination and avoid duplication of assessments.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)
The response was scored at 16 of 20 points; this plan is rated as a high quality partially implemented plan. The applicant describes an already developed progression of quality indicators for family support and engagement as part of the Illinois TORIS. The applicant identifies that, while the state has standards, there is need for further development of strategies to assist local communities to adopt outreach strategies tailored to the individual communities. To assist communities in these efforts, the applicant will adopt or adapt a universal family risk assessment tool and support its use. The applicant describes an approach of building upon existing strengths in parent leadership models already in place in Illinois.

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 (b)(1)

The response was scored at 16 of 20 points; this plan is rated as a high quality partially implemented plan. The applicant has documented a longstanding commitment to development of a professional early childhood workforce including a well established Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework (WKCF) which is aligned with a progression of credentials, degrees and professional development opportunities. These opportunities are well distributed throughout the state. The response is viewed as partially implemented because the revision of the Early Learning Standards and the TORIS necessitates a review of the WKCF. The applicant has a specific plan for this review and revision as necessary. The Illinois WKCF meets the minimum criteria as outlined in the definition provided in the RTT-ELC Notice Inviting Applications. The WKCF consists of seven specific content areas and three embedded threads including: 1) children with special needs; 2) culture and diversity; and 3) individual and group guidance. Benchmarks tied to knowledge, skills and dispositions are provided to content areas. Content areas and benchmark and aligned multiple professional standards. In regards to (D)(1)(c) the applicant has documented extensive engagement of post secondary institutions and other progression development providers in development of the WKCF, the profession of credentials and the design and delivery of professional development opportunities. The applicant proposes expanding credentials to address two areas of need: 1) increasing program quality with Family Child Care and Technical Assistance (Coach) credentials and 2) outreach to at risk children with a Family Worker/Family Specialist credential and a Home Visitor credential. While not yet implemented extensive and detailed planning has gone into conceptualization of these credentials. The applicant has set an ambitious but achievable goal regarding an increase in the number of post-secondary programs where coursework is aligned with credentials. This ambitious goal is to increase the aligned programs 50 percent who are currently aligned to 95% of IHE.

	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 response was scored at 16 of 20 points; this plan is rated as a high quality partially implemented plan. The state of Illinois already has a number of supports in place to assist Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills and abilities. IHE and professional organizations already offer many opportunities which are aligned with WKCF which is a significant strength. The applicants plan in regards to (D)(2) is viewed as partially implemented because of the work yet to be done to build upon this platform. A strength of the plan is the fact the participating state agencies have committed to coordinate training efforts across funding streams, develop of training consortium, and to develop an online training calendar. The applicant proposes to expand existing and to develop additional strategies targeted to assist the retention of ECE's. These strategies include individualized career counseling; scholarships to support English as a second language or bilingual endorsements. In regards to (D)(2)(c) the applicant proposes to improve upon its existing capability to track the development, advancement, and retention of Early Childhood Educators. The applicant proposes the development of a Gateway to Opportunity Registry. Individuals will enroll in this registry and it will contain a permanent record of their participation in training. Participating agencies have agreed to make enrollment a requirement. This registry will provide a basis for a public reporting of aggregated data. In regards to (D)(2)(d) the applicant has set specific, ambitious and achievable targets for increasing the total number of aligned institutions and providers from 37 to 79, and the total number of ECE's credentialed from 85 to 1200. The applicant has also provided specific target in numbers and percent of ECE's who move up the progression of credentials including a forecast of the numbers who will obtain the proposed new credentials.

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)
<p>The response was scored at 16 of 20 points; this plan is rated as a high quality partially implemented plan. The applicant describes efforts that began in 2009 to develop a common statewide kindergarten assessment process. Final recommendations for a tool, the Illinois KIDS were issued in April 2011. This initial effort was a partnership of private foundations and the State Board of Education. An RFP has been issued for an outside vendor to oversee the implementation of the KIDS. based upon this initial work and the specifications already developed for the scope of work to be done by the vendor this plan is judged to be partially implemented. The KIDS is accepted as a valid tool for assessment of kindergarten readiness. The strategy of involving a vendor to perform independent assessments is viewed as a strength. A specific plan for beginning implementation of the KIDS statewide by the 2014-15 school year is included.</p>

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	16
<p>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--</p> <p>(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;</p> <p>(b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;</p> <p>(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;</p> <p>(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</p> <p>(e) Meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

The response was scored at 16 of 20 points; this plan is rated as a high quality partially implemented plan. This proposal details a comprehensive and currently implemented approach to this requirement. Illinois has enacted legislation authorizing a P-20 longitudinal data system. This system contains the Essential Data Elements and the proposed unified early childhood data system will be coordinated with the Illinois award winning P-20 longitudinal data system. Agreements and commitments have been obtained from all of the relevant agencies as part of the proposal. This data system will address data on children and families, workforce and programs. Agreement has been obtained to use Common Education Data standards to facilitate data interoperability. There are specific plans and commitments to integrate Head Start and Early Head Start data into the plan. An existing referral, tracking and program information system will be redesigned and integrated into the approach. The already existing multi-state shared learning environment will be extended to ELD programs. Illinois has articulated a comprehensive approach to this criterion.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	237

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

Proposal contains a clear description of current status of programs with respect to Illinois regulations. Proposal provides a clear explanation of how they will phase in regulation to enroll all programs by June, 30, 2015.

Priorities

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

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

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

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

Comments on (P)(3)

A score of 80% was awarded on E1 and therefore the applicant meets the threshold criterion for competitive priority points.

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>Illinois has detailed an excellent high quality achievable plan to promote school readiness for Children with High Needs. Illinois has many strengths to build upon and they are using existing resources to great advantage. The proposal narrative gives clear descriptions of the existing system, plans that are in process and steps to be taken over the next four years. the applicant demonstrated that it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by implementing and aligning resources across agencies; by designing a high quality TQRIS. the applicant has documented strategic investments that have been and made an additional investments in promoting outcomes, in a highly quaified workforce and measuring outcomes and progress.</p>	



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # IL-5011

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/16/2011 - 12:50 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 14. Includes detailed description of the core area and sub-points (a) through (d).

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

The state's response is strengthened by increasing investments and a commitment to continued levels of service for children with High Needs. The state exhibits strong commitment to supporting state-funded early childhood programs, and has high licensing standards. However, current status in several key areas is not strong (see below) and for these reasons, this section is scored in the medium range.*** (a) The state's history of financial investment in early childhood is significant, and the state's response is strengthened by a record of preserving funding in light of economic hardship, particularly by prioritizing children with High Needs in considering eligibility for these programs. In particular, the state has increased spending per child since 2007 for both the general population and children with High Needs. Increases in subsidy reimbursement and tiered add-ons demonstrate a commitment to quality in the services provided. *** (b) In general, the state has maintained the level of participation for children with High Needs across early learning programs, and increased spending per child, indicating that it is committed to increasing quality levels (rather than just adding slots to mediocre programs). *** (c) The state demonstrates strong existing early childhood practice and policies, evidenced by collaboration across systems (Head Start, Preschool For All, home visiting programs) and a strong state infrastructure supported by regional "hubs" for the implementation of services. Several policies are in place to support high standards and expectations, such as requirement of teacher certification in Preschool For All programs, inclusion of early childhood content for principal certification, requirements for preschool to be included in bilingual education requirements and eligible for the associated reimbursements, and five increases to the subsidy reimbursement rate in three years.*** (d) Current status in key areas is reflective of progress; however, current status leaves significant room for advancement, which is outlined in the state's plan: • Early Learning Standards: In the process of refining standards for B-5 (including infant-toddler standards) to be more clearly articulated with development and milestones (rather than a catch-all for everything leading up to kindergarten-readiness) • Comprehensive Assessment Systems (CAS): It is not clear that the state's current status in CAS is coordinated or comprehensive. State-funded programs are required to participate in developmental screening and formative assessment; however, it is not clear that the efforts are coordinated across programs in terms of choice of assessment, nor utilized for instructional and programmatic decisions. Measures of environmental quality and

teacher-child interaction are only required at the top tiers of the TQRIS (Quality Counts) and only a limited number of these programs are currently participating in the TQRIS. • Health Promotion: The state's current status in health promotion is relatively strong. Although the All Kids health insurance access program has reduced service capacity, it does remain focused on serving children with High Needs, and the state utilizes a variety of strategies to address mental health for children and families. • Family Engagement: The state's current status in family engagement is strengthened by the Strengthening Families Illinois (SFI) framework, which is integrated across state funded programs. However, the details of family engagement strategies described in Table (A)(1)(9) are fairly generic and do not offer detail of commitment to high family engagement standards. • Development of Early Childhood Educators: The state outlines Gateways to Opportunity (a career development pathway/continuum) that outlines increasingly progressive standards, along with supportive practices through Great START (a system of supports and incentives to retain qualified staff. These are strong programs with significant investments and reach across a range of educators. • Kindergarten Entry Assessment: The state's current status in this area is not strong. However, the state has put out an RFP that would require all necessary elements of a strong Kindergarten Entry Assessment and plans for full implementation by SY2014-15. • Effective Data Practices: The state has in place a data warehouse and data sharing agreements, as well as the intent to integrate early childhood data with the entire P-20 system. One strong element of current data practices is the workforce registry component, but overall, the area is weakened by a lack of means to collect data in a coordinated and comprehensive manner that would facilitate the use of such data to inform instruction and policy decisions.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	12

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's rationale for its reform agenda is ambitious, but it is less clear that the goals are achievable. The state presents a strong case for increased coordination and access to services for children with High Needs, but a weaker case for how the TQRIS will be leveraged as a tool to improve program quality (and the associated child outcomes). For these reasons, this section was scored in the medium range.*** (a) The goals outlined by Illinois' reform agenda are ambitious, and some of the goals are achievable given the plan outlined by the state. Goals to include all licensed programs and state-funded programs in the TQRIS is achievable since the plan is to make this a mandatory requirement. However, it is not clear how the state plans to increase the quality of these programs once they are enrolled in the TQRIS. The state plans to have increasing numbers of children with High Needs enrolled in programs that rate in the top tiers of the TQRIS, but it is not clear that there will be a sufficient number of programs in the top tiers to meet this capacity, nor the support needed to access these top tier programs that is frequently missing. In other words, the top tier programs are usually more expensive, or not as common in High-Need communities, and there is not a strong plan to support access for children with High Needs to attend them. Goals for improving outcomes for children are addressed by reform priorities such as increased integration of supports and programming for children with High Needs, and increasing access for services through universal screenings and stronger referral and follow up systems (note: it is clear how these priorities will address the lack of access to health services, early intervention, and community resources, but less clear how this will connect with making high quality early childhood education more available and accessible to children with High Needs). Illinois' plan to close the readiness gap rests on increased coordination and access to services, but it is not clear how the TQRIS revisions will contribute toward these goals. *** (b) The summary of the state's overall reform agenda is linked to the state's description of areas where improvement will bolster children's success. The case that the state makes for increased coordination and improved access to services such as physical and mental health services, early intervention, and community resources is reasonable. However, the fact that the strategy for improving program quality rests primarily on making participation mandatory for all licensed and state-funded programs (although the plan mentions briefly increased professional development and integration of standards) is lacking in depth-- simply mandating participation is unlikely to result in improved program quality if appropriate supports are not in place. The state's plan does not establish a clear and credible path toward improving program quality in a way that will improve outcomes for children and translate into improved school readiness. *** (c) The state's rationale for selection of focused investment areas (FIAs) is explained sufficiently. Although the rationale does not go into great depth regarding why the selected FIAs will best achieve the goals, the rationale is logically constructed and reasonable.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

Overall, the state's plan to establish governance structure and garner a commitment to implement an expansive scope of work by the participating state agencies is strong (see below). One weakness is the lack of terms and conditions reflecting a strong commitment of existing financial resources. For these reasons, this section is scored in the high-medium range. *** (a) The outline for governance structure is located within the master "agreement" containing scopes of work for all participating agencies. 1. The organizational structure is well outlined, and builds on existing infrastructure. Further, it establishes a leadership team dedicated to effective management of the RTT/ELC activities, as well as the Birth-8 Center to oversee implementation. 2. Roles and responsibilities are very clearly outlined in the associated "scopes of work" located in the master agreement in the appendix for criterion A. Each activity within the grant is delegated to a particular participating agency, according to the grant criteria and FIAs. 3. Decision making and dispute resolution are well-outlined in the master agreement in Appendix A. 4. One strength for incorporating stakeholder input is the central role of the Illinois Early Leadership Council (which already represents many stakeholders, such as private sector, parents, higher education). However, the state's plan to use the community and school report cards as another method to incorporate stakeholder feedback is less strong. It is not clear how stakeholders would provide input, or whether this is simply a means to disseminate information about the educational systems and outcomes. *** (b) The master "agreement" located in the appendices describes the roles and responsibilities of each participating state agency. Terms and conditions in the master "agreement" did not address leveraging existing funding from participating state agencies toward the implementation of the state's plan. However, "scopes of work" for each participating

state agency are comprehensive and address the plan's priorities for young children. And, it is very clear throughout the "agreement" that the state plans to maximize the number of programs who become participating programs over the course of the grant period. Appropriate signatures were in place.*** (c) Letters of support represented a broad variety of stakeholders from higher education, private business, foundations, early childhood associations, and elected officials.

	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)

The state's plan effectively addresses how existing funds will contribute to implementing grant activities, and outlines reasonable allocations for funding based on project (for example, a significant amount of funding is dedicated to technical assistance to TQRIS programs to improve quality during the grant period). The state outlines a plan to transition projects to non-grant funds gradually, and describes the plan's intent to sustain projects after the grant period ends. However, there are some areas where it is less clear that the state will be able to maintain the expansion experienced in certain areas of the state's plan (for example, monitoring and quality improvement for the large number of new programs to be included in the state's TQRIS). For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium-high range. *** (a) The state's plan outlines the use of existing funds (including quality set-asides through CCDF) toward grant activities across participating state agencies (ISBE, IDHS, IDCFS). Through these commitments, the state describes its intent to accelerate the work already underway in the state using the grant funds provided, rather than reorganizing or redirecting funds. The description of each source of existing funding and the means by which this funding supports grant implementation is comprehensive. In particular, the state's plan describes significant commitment from the private sector to fund the grant activities not only during the grant period, but as a means to sustain the work after the grant concludes. *** (b) Budget tables and narratives outline how grant funding will be used to support the implementation of the state's plan, broken down by participating state agency. Costs appear to be appropriately allocated by project (for example, licensing outreach requires proportionally less funding compared with the implementation of advanced data systems, both based on the type of work being undertaken and the overall significance towards the priorities of this grant). *** (c) The state's plan describes the intent to transition grant activities to non-grant funds in a gradual fashion over the course of the grant period. One aspect of this plan includes having providers themselves gradually assume financial responsibility for "authentic assessments", and the state does not provide evidence that this will be feasible for providers, which weakens the credibility of this aspect of the sustainability plan. This plan is supported by ongoing and relatively stable support from the private sector, and the decision to maintain funding within programs—choosing to supplement existing funding streams with grant funds rather than overhauling the funding structure for early childhood. The state also makes the case that the evaluation activities embedded within the grant activities will allow the state to demonstrate the positive impact of these important activities and leverage additional public and private dollars based on the accomplishments during the grant period. It is less clear for some projects that the intent to sustain grant activities without grant funding will be feasible. For example, although the state's plan outlines how it intends to fund TQRIS monitoring for newly included state funded preschool programs, it does not address how it plans to fund monitoring and quality improvement to the large number of licensed early childhood programs who will be included in the TQRIS once participation in mandatory.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

Comments on (B)(1)

The state's plan begins with a reference to the Illinois Birth to Five Program Standards, a list of statements meant to serve as guidance for helping all early learning programs align on some basic level (Appendix (B)(1)1). However, these "standards" are relatively generic and undefined, lacking any benchmarks or descriptions of what evidence would be required to meet the expressed standard. The state's plan acknowledges that these Program Standards are not meant to meet the requirement of "Tiered Program Standards", but serve as a way to meet the needs of all early learning programs (not exclusively child care programs). The program standards for Quality Counts (Illinois' TQRIS) are intended to serve as the "tiered Program Standards" for consideration against the federal definition. However, the state's plan lacks specificity and detail regarding several key elements of tiered Program Standards (see below), particularly in the areas of early learning standards and comprehensive assessment systems. Since these two elements are likely to have a major impact on promoting school readiness and closing the achievement gap, this is a clear weakness. Specificity and detail are also lacking regarding meaningful differentiation between star levels, especially with regard to the automatic assignment of 4-stars to all programs participating in state-funded preschool programs or Head Start. Because the state outlines a significant achievement gap at kindergarten and notes that lack of school readiness is a pervasive issue in the state, particularly for children with High Needs, we can infer that these programs are not already operating at top-tier (4-star) levels of quality. For these reasons, this section is scored in the low range.*** (a) 1. The TQRIS standards incorporate the Early Learning Standards, but not with depth. Programs at the 3-star level must "consider" the standards in curriculum planning, and the 4-star level simply refers to being accredited (and it is unlikely that accreditation status guarantees alignment with the state's early learning standards). 2. The TQRIS does not meet the requirements for a comprehensive assessment system. At the 3-star level, it is stated that an assessment tool must be used, and the 4-star level refers to "above adequate levels of child assessment". It is not clear what is meant by this statement, or how "above adequate" would be defined. 3. Director qualifications are not tiered (and rely solely on "licensing standards" across the star levels, leading to confusion regarding why it is treated separately at all, since licensing is the baseline for this system), but staff qualifications are tiered and represent increasing levels of credentialing, referring to the state's career development framework. 4. Family engagement levels build in a tiered fashion, outlining increasing requirements as star-levels increase, but these also lack depth. 5. Health promotion practices appear to rely on the Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) and the definitions within the scales for "minimal" or "adequate", but this is not cited. 6. Effective data practices are not addressed, except where they overlap with the requirements of the Program Administration Scale. *** (b) The TQRIS is not clear. Several important pieces of information are missing, most notably how many and which age-level classrooms are rated at any given site- reference is not made to selecting age-appropriate versions of the ERSs (the Infant-Toddler version has some different scoring and scaling that may make a difference to the way that the TQRIS is breaking scores down and reweighting them). Also unclear is the state's proposal to include the CLASS instrument in the development of what will be the 5-star designation (it is not clear whether the program plans to use the toddler version of this tool, or how it will rate interactions in classrooms where children are too young for the selected tools). Further, in the Appendices, the state writes that it is not clear that the tiers represent meaningful differentiation between levels of quality for the 2 and 3 star levels. Although the standards may meet the requirement of "reflecting high expectations" because of the automatic assignment of a 4-star rating for programs who are accredited, it is not clear from the narrative that participation in Preschool for All or the state's Head Start programs would be a reasonable "automatic" 4-star rating. *** (c) The TQRIS is clearly linked to licensing standards, as this represents the first tier, or 1-star level of this system.

	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)

Although the state's plan is ambitious, it is less clear that the goals are achievable, given the information presented in this criteria section. However, the state offers some reasonable and responsive ideas to increase access to high quality child care for children with High Needs. For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium range. *** (a) The state plan outlines the intent to maximize program participation in the Quality Counts TQRIS by making participation mandatory for all state-funded or licensed programs (excepting home visitation and reimbursable services through Part C and B of IDEA). This includes the required categories within this sub-criterion, and is a strong stance to maximize participation.*** (b) The state's plan to help more families afford high quality care will include a revision of the subsidy reimbursement rates (using data from a study determining the true cost of quality), to increase accessibility at the top-tier level and promote and incentivize improvement for programs. Another strategy is to remove policy barriers that keep families with High Needs from being able to access full-day, year-round child care services. These are strong strategies to help more families to access child care. Targeted investments to renovate and construct early childhood facilities are underway in communities with high concentrations of children with High Needs. This should increase the accessibility of care in areas with High Needs, and provision of "high quality" services is a requirement for funding, but it is not clear how this will be enforced or monitored. *** (c) The state's plan to include all state-funded and licensed programs in the TORIS program is very ambitious. It is less clear how this will be achieved, given the large number of additional programs that would be entering the system (almost 10,000 new programs). This kind of expansion is likely to require extraordinary levels of funding and administrative time, rating and monitoring, improvements, and training, which are not addressed in this section. A clear and credible path to achieving these ambitious goals is not evident.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs	15	5

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for 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's plan to enhance the systems through which information about quality child care choices is made available to parents is strong. However, the state's description of the plan to rate and monitor early childhood programs participating in the TQRIS is missing some essential pieces of information (see below). For these reasons, this section is scored in the low range.*** (a) The three tools intended for use by the Illinois TQRIS are the ERS tools, the Program Administration/Business Administration (PAS/BAS) tools, and the CLASS tool. According to the tiered standards for Quality Counts, the ERS scores are broken down by subscale and/or weighted in different ways than the authors intended. Information is not provided on the reliability/validity of using the scores in this way. Information is provided on selecting the age/population-appropriate version of the ERS tools, but this same information is not provided for the CLASS tool(s). It is not clear if CLASS will only be used for the Pre-K population, if the Pre-K version will be used in infant-toddler classes, or if the toddler version of the CLASS has been approved for use within Illinois' TQRIS. The state's plan outlines that raters must maintain 85% interrater reliability, and that reliability visits must take place every 6-10 assessments (although it is not clear whether this means 6-10 classrooms or 6-10 programs). Other information not provided in the state's plan includes: how many classrooms within a program will be rated, which ages of classrooms will be included in the assessments, how ratings will be assigned to preschool programs housed within elementary schools, how and who will train raters, why three years was determined to be an appropriate length of time between monitoring visits, and how information not collected through onsite ratings visits will be submitted/collected and scored.*** (b) The state already has a system in place to publish ratings through the TQRIS system and to post licensing violations. The state's plan to improve this system is strong and includes an enhanced parent-friendly interface, making information accessible through additional forms of technology, using parent-friendly language to describe licensing violations, and a public awareness campaign designed to drive parents to this information to increase the chances that they will use this information in selecting care for their child.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

The state describes the supports and incentives that are in place across the state, very few of which are linked to the TQRIS program. Supports are not coordinated (except by being offered through the resource and referral programs, which is only briefly mentioned) across the state and it is not clear that programs in every community would have access to similar levels of support (or information related to how high needs areas will be targeted). The state's grant activities are centered around increasing numbers of children enrolled in full-day, year-round care, especially in communities with High Need, which is a reasonable strategy, although only partially defined (see (b) below). The description of how programs will be supported within the TQRIS system is not well developed. For these reasons, this section is scored in the low range. *** (a) The state's description of supports/incentives offered for programs' continuous quality improvement includes trainings, technical assistance, wage supplements, scholarships, and participation in programs such as the Community Connections program (an innovative model that allows children enrolled full-time family child care homes the opportunity to attend part-day high quality classroom based programs). However, the majority of these supports and incentives are not tied to the Quality Counts TQRIS and participation in TQRIS is not necessary to access them (although once all programs are mandated to participate, this will be a non-issue). Further, these supports seem to be sporadically implemented across the state, without a means to integrate and coordinate the way that programs receive them. Some districts and communities participate, others do not. The only TQRIS specific supports/incentives are an orientation to the Quality Counts program (which is required for all participants and includes some basic training on processes of TQRIS and the measurement tools used by the program), and grants made available for training or quality enhancements. No information is provided regarding how many grants or how much money has been invested through this program, and it is very unclear that the scope of this grant program will be able to support the 10,000 new programs entered the TQRIS over the course of the grant period. *** (b) In previous sections, the state outlines a tiered reimbursement framework, and enacting policies that will remove barriers for full-day, year-round services for families that need them, both of which are strong. The Community Connections model

(described above) is an innovative idea that is responsive to the community where it was launched. However, it is reaching only 400 children and the state's plan to expand or offer it in other communities is not well-developed. The state's plan also describes a concentrated effort to recruit "hard to reach" children and families in communities with concentrated need. However, because the strategies for these efforts are undefined (the state has put out an RFP to garner pilot ideas), it is not possible to evaluate the strength of such methods. *** (c) The state will automatically increase the number of programs in the top tiers by rolling all publicly funded classrooms into the TQRIS and awarding them an automatic 4-star rating. However, this does not represent a meaningful increase in the actual quality available across the state. Assigning automatic 4-star ratings to programs technically increases the number of programs with 4-star ratings, but does NOT increase the amount of high quality programs that exist in the state (and therefore doesn't represent a meaningful increase). The state outlines a "Roadmap to Quality" process by which programs will indicate their intent to apply for a higher star rating (2, 3, 4, or 5), which means that programs will have support from a mentor/coach and significant technical assistance (TA) prior to their official ratings visit. This process is vague in terms of how it will be organized, the content of coaching/mentoring, the frequency with which the TA will visit the program, the timeline for TA, or how the state will support the huge number of individuals who will be required to provide TA on this scale (and how they will be trained, among other concerns). The state lays out a more detailed plan for helping programs move from a 4-star rating to a 5-star rating, which primarily includes coaching on the Instructional Support domain of the CLASS instrument. This domain has been linked to positive outcomes for children in terms of academic achievement, and so is a worthwhile investment to increase school readiness; however, all of the programs eligible for this TA would have already been in the "top tiers" of the TQRIS, meaning that this program is not increasing the number or percentages of programs in the top tiers. *** The state's primary method to increase the number of children attending "top tier" centers is to assign automatic "top tier" ratings to a large number of programs, which will technically accomplish this goal, but will not change the level of quality experienced by these children. Aside from this method, the state plans to increase the number and percentage of children enrolled in tier 4 or 5 through intentional outreach to "hard to reach" communities (see (b) above) and the hope that Preschool for All will expand (and that when it expands, they will target communities with High Needs). This strategy is not strong because it rests on hope for increased funding from the state, rather than a strong plan to allocate funding for targeted expansion.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

The state's plan to undergo a validation study is strong (see (a) below). Although the state's child outcomes evaluation plan is less strong, the state is thoughtful in acknowledging that the grant period will not be the ideal time to take on a child outcomes study, but plans to garner as much information as possible during this time, as well as outlining (and describing funding for) a future research agenda when the program is more mature. For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium-high range.*** (a) The state's plan to validate the TQRIS tiers is thoughtful, specific, and well-defined. In particular, the state's intent to examine whether the "automatic ratings" at the 4-star level of Preschool for All and Head Start programs is necessary. The state's evaluation strategy offers specific research questions, rationales, and proposed methodology, all of which lend strength to the plan. The state's intent to use this validation information to further define (and refine) the tiers within the state's TQRIS system is appropriate. *** (b) The state's plan to undergo a child outcomes study includes a caution from the state that this type of research may not be appropriate at this stage in the program's development. However, the plan to build upon the validation study to examine the impact of the tiers on children's development will provide important information to the state about the progress being made through the TQRIS system. Although the state rightly points out this weakness in their plan, it is compensated for by their intent (and commitment to fund) an ongoing evaluation process following the completion of the grant period. These phases in the evaluation plan are more likely to demonstrate the types of impact that the TQRIS has on program quality change and its impact on child outcomes when/if the program is more stabilized in implementation statewide and program improvement strategies are underway.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	20	14
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--</p> <p>(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;</p> <p>(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and</p> <p>(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (C)(1)		
<p>The state's progress in developing early learning standards is substantially implemented, and the state's plan to finalize this process (create benchmarks for B-3 standards) is strong. Early learning standards align with the state's academic standards (K-12) well. Plans to incorporate the standards into program standards, assessment, and other areas (see (c) below) are only partially implemented. For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium range.*** (a) The state includes evidence for the developmental, cultural, and linguistic appropriateness of their early learning standards through expert reviews that confirm its appropriateness (input and review from stakeholders, Ms. Little and from the Erikson Institute). The standards now differentiate between two age groups (B-3 and 3-5), but benchmarks are only in place for the 3-5 category (discussed in the narrative, benchmarks were not noted in the standards themselves). However, the state has developed a plan to establish benchmarks for the B-3 standards as well. The B-3 standards cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness, but the 3-5 standards do not explicitly address approaches to learning.***(b) Early learning standards are aligned with K-3 academic standards, as evidenced by a crosswalk located in the appendices and review by the Erikson Institute.*** (c) The early learning standards are incorporated to a limited degree in the Program Standards for the state's TQRIS, and state-funded and Head Start programs incorporate them in curriculum planning. The standards are partially incorporated in the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and professional development activities, and the state's plan addresses updating these inclusions as well as rolling out the updated 3-5 standards and instituting the B-3 standards' inclusion in the Framework and professional development activities. Incorporation into assessment practices is not well-defined (although brief mention is made of updating assessment technologies and incorporating the standards into the kindergarten entry assessment plans).*** (d) The state's plan to develop, update, and distribute resource guides for educators, parent guides, and web-based supports is only partially implemented, but the plan addresses the basic needs for stakeholders to incorporate and utilize the standards appropriately. Plans to revise training modules and update assessment tools are promising.</p>		

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	20	11

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 outlines its existing efforts to require high quality, comprehensive assessments in early learning programs, which are limited due to low levels of current participation in TQRIS. Following the expansion of TQRIS, many more programs will fall into this category and the plan will be more fully implemented. However, the state's plan is limited by the relatively small number of programs it intends to provide with intensive levels of training and support (see (d) below), and a failure to adequately address some aspects of the Comprehensive Assessment System (such as measures of environmental quality). For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium range.*** (a) The state's plan outlines the ways in which it is already working with early learning programs to select appropriate assessment tools and strategies for target populations and purposes: requiring published, valid screening tools for programs under the Early Childhood Block Grant, requiring published, valid tools to be used at the higher levels of the TQRIS, and supporting specific assessment tools through the provision of training and technical supports. Although this approach guarantees some level of quality with regard to the assessments selected, it does not provide guidance in terms of ensuring that the tools are appropriate for the intended purpose or population.*** (b) The state plans to increase educators' understanding of different types of assessment through a contract with an institute of higher education (IHE) to develop curricula to be shared with other IHEs and training organizations. One strength is the requirement to situate this training within the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. One weakness is a lack of detail regarding how this information will be disseminated to professionals in the field. Should the curricula be incorporated into the IHEs' degree programs, new professionals will be better equipped; however, this does not address the need for existing professionals to deepen their understanding about assessment purposes and types. *** (c) To address the need for aligned and integrated approach to assessment, the state's response holds up Chicago as an example of a city that has successfully integrated and aligned its approach to assessment. Although this is a demonstration of partial implementation, the state's response does not discuss plans to share or expand Chicago's successes into other parts of the state. The state's response addresses assessment duplication through their data infrastructure: data can "follow" children to new early childhood settings during a transition, and children receiving multiple services will be captured under one profile. (d) The state's plan to train early childhood educators on assessment administration and use of data for informing instruction is strengthened by its inclusion of early childhood leaders. The plan is well constructed, expands on an existing coaching model already in place in the state (Prevention Initiative), and addresses the multiple professional development needs of early childhood educators (planning, observation, reflection). However, this plan is very limited by the fact that it will target only programs who are already a 4-star designation and, according to the table for (C)(2)-1.2, will impact only programs participating in Preschool For All or Head Start.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)

The state's tiered program standards establish a progressively increasing requirement for early learning programs to engage families in their children's education and development. However, the requirements in the TQRIS are relatively generic and not rigorous, and information regarding the appropriateness (cultural/linguistic) of this progression is not provided. The state's plan to increase the number of educators trained in family engagement is minimally implemented, but does include the creation of a new credential for individuals working with families. Although the state promotes family engagement statewide, there is a lack of coordination among programs or between communities that weakens the state's ability to provide a comprehensive, high quality system. For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium range. *** (a) The Birth to Five Program Standards outline baseline expectations for family engagement in Early Learning Programs across the state. Although not strong, the TQRIS program standards do offer increasingly progressive benchmarks for engagement of families in early childhood settings. These standards are limited by the fact that they currently exist only for classroom-based programs, and do not offer information regarding the appropriateness (cultural/linguistic) of the progression.*** (b) The state's plan to increase the capacity for trained and supported educators in the area of family engagement is minimally implemented: training of this kind is reflected by the progression of credentials for educators, and the state plans to track such trainings using future data infrastructure tools. The state acknowledges that "one time workshops are of limited value", but does not explain how it will alleviate these concerns through its plan for training and supporting educators around family engagement, except to say that many of the training providers are increasingly trying to provide trainings in "cohorts" or "series" (located in section (D)(1)). The state's plan to develop a Family Worker/Family Specialist Credential will strengthen alignment and integration with professional development systems already in place (Gateways to Opportunity).*** (c) The state outlines the current promotion of family engagement efforts statewide: family advocacy centers exist in 22 high need communities and utilize the Strengthening Families approach, home visiting programs reach families with High Needs at the time of their children's birth, and resource and referral agencies provide information about the TQRIS, quality and other family supports. Locally, communities develop individually responsive strategies to address the particular needs of the parents they serve. However, because the state plans to have communities developing solutions locally through Community Collaborations (supported by the Consortium for Community Systems Development), it is not clear that a balance will be maintained between being responsive to the needs of individual communities and quality control across the state. Some areas where localities will develop individualized solutions are: coordination of intake and referral, identifying training/TA needs, leveraging resources, developing metrics for tracking progress, and parent empowerment. Because the state's plan is to allow communities to develop and incubate strategies, it will be difficult to assess the quality of strategies 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	15
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--</p> <p>(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;</p> <p>(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

Overall, the state's existing Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and associated progression of increasing credentials as outlined by the Career Lattice are well organized and designed to promote learning and outcomes. This system is partially implemented across a number of IHEs and the state's plan to continue expansion and alignment is sound. For these reasons, this section is scored in the high range. *** (a) The state's existing Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework (WKCF) consists of the Gateways to Opportunity Content Areas with leveled benchmarks and the associated Career Lattice. The content areas (human growth/development, health/safety, curriculum, interactions and environments, family/community, personal/professional development) and threads for focus within each content area (special needs, culture/diversity, individual and group guidance) are aimed at promoting learning and improving child outcomes.*** (b) The Career Lattice and associated credentials/certificates represent an increasing progression of requirements, experience, and professional development necessary for increasing levels of responsibility and compensation. The Career Lattice and descriptions of Credentials are integrated with the WKCF content areas as evidenced by appendices. The integration and alignment of these tools is well-organized and intentional, and guided by the Professional Development Advisory Board. The state plans to create several new credentials (family

child care credential, technical assistance credential, family worker credential) to further professionalize and integrate the expanding roles of early childhood educators with a focus on program quality improvement. *** (c) IHEs in across the state have begun to align with the WKCF and career lattice structures. The state plans to continue to require increasing alignment over the course of the grant period, in partnership with the community college leadership organizations. The state has a substantial articulation agreement in place between community colleges and four year colleges to support students along a path from earning an Associate's degree through the transfer to a Bachelor's program. The state's plan outlines efforts to further align coursework and continue to support two year college students to earn four year degrees. Further, the state has made supportive adjustments to policies regarding payment during student teaching to facilitate working adults seeking a teaching credential.

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

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

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

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

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

The state's existing structure of scholarships, professional development funds, wage supplements, and advising support are strong. However, it is not clear how the state's planned activities will enable the achievement of the target goals for increasing the number of credentialed professionals moving through the career lattice. For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium range.*** (a) With regard to providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities, the state's plan lacks substance. The state's response outlines how it will establish the Consortium for Workforce development, designed to coordinate professional development in an intentional manner, including generating new training where needed (a non-specific response). And, the state outlines a plan to expand the functionality and number of trainings listed on the Gateways to Opportunity Training Calendar. However, neither of these efforts is designed explicitly to help increase the number of trainings offered in any substantial way, nor to increase access to these trainings (unless the primary barrier to accessibility was lack of awareness about what trainings were offered, in which case the calendar/database of trainings may increase access). Increased access may be promoted by the state's existing Gateways scholarships or child care resource and referral training funds, but it is not stated that these funds will be increased or specifically targeted to teachers of children with High Needs (except for the scholarship fund to help teachers achieve bilingual designation). *** (b) The state's existing framework for policies and incentives designed to promote professional development, career advancement, and increased retention is strong. The state has an existing system of scholarships, professional development funds, support in the form of advising, and a wage supplement incentive program to promote retention. The state plans to increase access to career advising services, and expand funding for scholarships directed towards increasing the skills of educators working with bilingual populations, both strengths.*** (c) The state plans to significantly increase participation in the state's "Registry" system (collecting data on retention, salary, professional development) by making participation required for several groups. Although this "Registry" will not be publicly available, it will be the basis for enhancing the Illinois Salary and Staffing Survey, so that this publicly distributed document contains richer and more accurate data. This sub-criterion is strong.*** (d) The state outlines a structure of targets for increasing the number of postsecondary institutions with programs aligned to the WKCF and the numbers of providers who receive credentials from these institutions, as well as targets for the number of providers at each level of the career lattice over the course of the grant period. However, the state's plan does not include the accompanying rationale for how these targets were determined, and therefore it is not clear whether the goals are ambitious or achievable. It is also not clear what mechanisms will be responsible for the increases of educators receiving credentials and moving through the career lattice, since the state plans to implement minimal increases to scholarship funding.

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	12
<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)

Although the state has done significant planning around a Kindergarten Entry Assessment, this project has been only minimally implemented. The state's plan is contained in the Request for Sealed Proposals (RFSP) that has been released, and would require the successful vendor to meet the requirements of this criterion in order to be awarded the contract. The state's response provides sufficient information to demonstrate thoughtful planning, inclusive oversight and guidance from multiple stakeholders, a commitment to developmental appropriateness, careful attention to training/support for reliable administration, and the type of broad-based support necessary for successful implementation. To the extent that it is possible, the state has provided information to address the sub-criterion. However, the state's plan is only minimally implemented given that a vendor has not been selected, an assessment has not been selected, a pilot has not been conducted, and the state does not currently implement a statewide common Kindergarten Entry Assessment (meaning that several sub-criterion cannot be fully evaluated). For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium range.*** (a) The state plans to select a vendor who proposes to modify an assessment to align with the state's Early Learning Standards.*** (b) The state plans to select a vendor who proposes an assessment which is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the Illinois population, including English language learners and children with disabilities. *** (c) The state outlines a phased implementation plan that meets the requirement of this sub-criterion (implemented by SY2014-15). Further, the state outlines a strong plan to monitor and evaluate the early phases of implementation for the purpose of formative evaluation and modifications of administration and training.*** (d) The state plans to select a vendor who constructs a web-based application suitable for inclusion in the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (as permitted by privacy laws). *** (e) The state outlines plans to fund the Kindergarten entry assessment in significant part by the state and also through private sector support (almost 70% is non-grant funding).

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	16
<p>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--</p> <p>(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;</p> <p>(b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;</p>		

(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)

Illinois' state plan for building and enhancing the early learning data system is complex, and consists of multiple databases and projects to subcontract to different vendors. The state's plan has been partially implemented, and will establish three "primary systems" to serve different stakeholders. Although the state has established legal requirements to coordinate systems (data sharing agreements, common standards, and a shared learning environment), it is not clear how the state will accomplish this task without fragmentation. The state's plan for a Shared Learning Environment (see (d) below) is strong. For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium-high range. *** (a) The state's plan would address all essential data elements through the creation of three primary systems (Children & Families, EC Workforce Data, and EC Programs). The purpose of the primary systems is to establish consistency and aggregate data for accessibility. *** (b) The state's plan outlines the use of the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) model to build on prior work in this area. The state's response describes the agreements in place between Participating State Agencies to use common early childhood data standards, and use extensions/adaptations for individual agency needs. *** (c) Data sharing agreements and the legal foundations for those agreements are already in process and data will be shared through a common data warehouse, and through the use of CEDS (see (b) above). However, it is not as clear how the three "primary systems" themselves will be linked, rather than establishing three silos of information available to different stakeholders. *** (d) The Illinois Shared Learning Environment would provide an innovative, comprehensive, user-friendly platform that utilizes cloud technology to make data available without delay.*** (e) Data System Oversight Requirements are met by the P-20 Longitudinal Data System Act, which would also cover the early childhood systems.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	169

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

The state's plan is partially implemented, but will meet the requirements for both sub-criteria in this competitive priority. For these reasons, this priority is scored in the high range. (a) The state's plan to include all programs in the licensing system is comprehensive and includes information on legal requirements, an appropriate timeline, outreach, and education for programs who will fall under the new regulation. (b) The state's plan, as outlined in section B, will incorporate all licensed, state-funded, and Head Start programs into the TQRIS system. However, this policy is not yet in effect.

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	No
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
Comments on (P)(3)		
<p>CPP3 is scored "no" because (a) the state is not yet implementing a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that would meet the elements in Table (A)(1)-12. The state did complete this table according to the terms that were listed in their Request for Proposals seeking a vendor to develop such an assessment, but the vendor has not been selected, and neither has an assessment. Table (A)(1)-12 requires the current status of the kindergarten entry assessment, not the status of the state's plan or RFP. Therefore, the state did not meet the requirements of this sub-criterion. And, (b) the state was awarded fewer than 70 percent of the available points for selection 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>Throughout the state's proposal, plans reflect the state's commitment to serving children and families with High Needs, and closing the kindergarten readiness gap. Although the state's TQRIS plan is only minimally implemented, there are ambitious goals for expansion. A thoughtful evaluation plan outlined in B(5) will help to ensure the success of this expansion. The state relies heavily on outside vendors and contractors, as well as individual communities to incubate and introduce innovative ideas within the guidelines of the grant proposal. However, the state's strong administration structure, record of thoughtful consideration prior to issuing RFPs, and inclusion of input from a wide variety of stakeholders will help to ensure that projects undertaken within the grant period are of high quality.</p>	