



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # KS-5013

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 12:59 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, 10. Includes detailed text description of the core area requirements.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)
--This applicant demonstrates a significant commitment to early learning and development by way of established programs, past and current legislation, policies and practices. Also, the majority of their statewide programs have seen an increase in funding and support (coming from the state-level, as well as public-private partnerships), at least over the last 5 years. This applicant also demonstrates evidence of their commitment and ability to collaborate across multiple state-level agencies, with other states, and at the national level to make change in early learning and development. Notable is the history of a working relationship between the Department of Education (the lead agency in this application), and the Department of Health and Environment, the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, and the Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, the participating agencies in this application. These existing partnerships strengthen this application because the intricacies of working together are already established and known. --This applicant provides evidence of several legislative decisions and state-level programs that have focused on improving the early childhood system in this state. These include a leadership summit, participation in a 17 state consortium, 10 years of federally-funded coordinating efforts, the development of a statewide plan that focuses on holistic health of children, a state-level advisory council on early childhood, and a council convened with the charge of developing policy recommendations to take to the Governor's office, among several others. --Moreover, this applicant provides a comprehensive illustration of their current status in the building blocks for developing and maintaining a high quality early learning and development system. This applicant has two sets of early learning standards, one focused on children and the other for early childhood programs. Both address a wide range of components and have been revised once since their inception. This illustrates the applicant's interest and assertiveness in prioritizing revisions based on current research. --This applicant does not appear to have a well-established system of assessment in place. Rather, information is presented that a self-assessment tool is embedded in their standards for early childhood programs; however, the need for revision has been acknowledged. Also, it is noted that over the course of three programs (TQRIS, the state licensing requirements, and Parents as Teachers), the elements of a comprehensive assessment system are in place. --As mentioned above, the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Plan, which has served as the informal structure for this applicant's early childhood system, is inclusive of all types of health, that is physical,

mental, and community (e.g., family supports). However, the majority of the applicant's programs within the system only address one or two of the elements of high-quality health promotion practices. For example, the state funded preschools address the health and safety requirements, but do not address health promotion activities. Similarly, programs under IDEA Part C and programs under Title I of ESEA also do not address health promotion practices. --The applicant demonstrates the existence of a well-established approach to engaging families in each of their state program and systems. These strategies include implementing policies, provision of resource guides for families, and supporting parents/guardians in learning the importance of regular well child exams. --This applicant has done some significant work on strengthening their early childhood workforce as evidenced by their working consortium of higher education institutions, the availability of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for educators, and the availability of apprenticeship and credentialing opportunities. There is one presented item that is in need of more clarification, which is the Early Childhood Unified Endorsement. It is not clear what this is and why it is a benefit to the workforce. Also, this applicant does not currently have a workforce knowledge and competency framework in place outside of their general competencies developed in conjunction with Missouri. Significant progress is necessary to have an impact in the quality of their early childhood system. --This applicant currently implements a kindergarten assessment that covers the essential domains of school readiness. Evidence is provided that the assessment was recently revised to ensure alignment with the applicant's early learning standards and the K-3 Common Core Standards. This applicant demonstrates their commitment to linking assessments with data in their proposal to include these assessment results in the applicant's longitudinal data system. --Similarly, this applicant appears to have a comprehensive and well-established set of data practices as evidenced by the existence of their School Readiness Task force and the early childhood component of their longitudinal data system. --While this applicant has proven a statewide commitment to the development of their early childhood system, there is little discussion and data about their early childhood population, including their population of children with high needs, as well as other demographics. As evidenced by Table A1-1, it is clear that there is a large population of children from low-income families. However, there are conflicting data about this. For example, it is stated that there are no data available for this population of children who are toddlers (ages 1-2), but in the same box it is stated that there are 56,840 children. Additionally, the total number of children birth - kindergarten entry who are from low-income communities is not accurate when looking at the numbers provided above. Table A1-2 is also lacking in data that do exist for this state. For example, it is stated that data are not available for the number of children who are English learners, those who reside on "Indian Lands", are migrant, are homeless, and those in foster care. This applicant does propose to address children who are English language learners in their high quality plan. Thus, it is expected that there would be data on this population. Additionally, there was no way to determine how the applicant accounts for duplication of children across programs. For these reasons, it is difficult to surmise how the investments made into the early childhood system relate to the size of the applicant's population of children with special needs.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	8

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)

--This applicant provides an overall summary of their proposed reform by describing five main goals. While these goals appear to pave a path towards a comprehensive system for early learning and development, it is still not clear how this applicant defines their population of Children with High Needs. In the introduction to this section, the applicant refers to their School Readiness Data from the past years, which defines the "at risk" population as low-income, English language learners, and children with Individual Education Plans (IEPs), but it is not clear whether these are the populations that are being targeted by these five reform goals. --As a whole package, the reform agenda is reasonable and, for the most part, achievable. The goal associated with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework (WKCF), something this applicant doesn't currently have, and the TQRIS, is appropriate given their current status. The proposal that the TQRIS will be completed towards the end of the grant cycle given the fact that it will be based on the completion of the framework, which will also inform professional development opportunities, seems reasonable. However, more specific activities for and a general timeline associated with the other four goals is not discussed here. While this reviewer anticipates learning more details about each goal's corresponding section, more information is needed here to determine whether they are in fact achievable within the grant cycle. --Appropriate rationale is provided regarding the applicant's choice on the focused investment areas and appears to match with the proposed goals.

	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)

--This applicant provides an explanation of how their lead agency and participating agencies will work together. One major benefit of this proposed organizational structure is that these agencies have a history of early childhood partnership and collaboration that has resulted in meeting intended outcomes. An example of this successful partnership and collaboration is the development and implementation of the Early Childhood Comprehensive System (ECCS) and the Early Learning Coordinating Council (ELCC). Moreover, this applicant seeks to include at least one representative from each agency in most working groups to meet the goals of their state plan. Thus, multi-agency involvement is present throughout the grant's life cycle. However, while a grant coordinator is included, no project director is identified. This is a concern because it is not clear who will be responsible for leading the grant. Also, there does not appear to be parent/guardian representation in the organizational structure. --This applicant provides a significant explanation of each agency's roles and responsibilities as evidenced by the included Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and individual Scopes of Work. Additionally, the applicant complements these documents, all of which are signed by the lead and participating agency, by specifically identifying how participating agencies are involved in each goal-associated activity. There is, however, some confusion about the involvement of several entities. First, while the Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund is listed as a participating agency, they are not included in the organizational structure (Table A in the narrative). Thus, it is not clear exactly where they fit in with regard to communication and oversight. Second, Objective 1.6 proposes that participating state agencies will work to strengthen current or create new partnerships with early learning intermediary organizations. However, it is not clear who these organizations are

and what their role will be in the state plan. Third, the core team, which is presented in the organizational structure and discussed in the section, entitled "Early Learning Challenge Team Process" is not included in the Objectives or Activities for Goal 1. As a result, it is not clear what their specific activities will be in relation to meeting this goal. --This applicant proposes a clear and reasonable plan for developing the decision-making process for each participating agency. It appears that this applicant prioritizes this process to be completed and formalized before delving into their proposed activities, with the proposal that all processes will be completed by Spring, 2012. This appears to be a most appropriate first step. There does not appear to be a dispute resolution process proposed. --This applicant's prioritization of involving local representation is evidenced by their history of involving local stakeholders and their proposal to continue implementing a successful model. One example is their proposal to include a variety of stakeholders in their Early Childhood Advisory Council, including educators, parents and families, and families of children with high needs. Another is their history of holding Early Childhood Forums (proposed in their state plan to be held quarterly throughout the life cycle of the grant), which have averaged between 80-100 state and local participants. It is clear from this applicant's participating history that there is public commitment. Most notable in this application is that the applicant sought public comment on the proposed RTT-ELC plan via holding an open public session. This step is to be commended. --This applicant provides a collection of letters of intent and/or support from a variety of appropriate agencies, including institutes of higher education, business, and local early childhood-focused agencies. However, three listed letters of support are missing from Appendix JJ.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

--This applicant provides evidence that there is a significant amount of funding outside of the RTT-ELC funds that will support their efforts as illustrated in Table A4-1. These streams include IDEA Part B, IDEA 619, Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS), the State preschool program, Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), and the master tobacco settlement. This demonstrates the state's commitment to enhancing the early childhood system. However, these figures are not included in the overall statewide budget under "Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan". --Given that the state plan is heavily dependent upon the convening of staff and contractors, it is reasonable that the majority of the budgeted funds will support these two budget categories (personnel and contractual). However, there is some concern that the majority of funds will be used to plan and a minimal amount of funds will support implementation. It is not clear whether the proposed planned activities will lead to program implementation, and thus improved outcomes for children. --The indirect costs average about 5%, which is a reasonable and fair rate for a budget and proposed plan of this size and complexity. However, the applicant did not request a significant amount of funds relative to the type of work proposed, which leads to questions about the ambition of the applicant to make an impact on children in their state. --This applicant provides a specific budget and budget narrative for each participating agency. --This applicant demonstrates to some degree how the grant will be sustained after this grant cycle. This notion is based on how the majority of the work is based on systems planning and infrastructure building, the "how": thus the work can continue on long after the RTT funds are gone.

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

5

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

--This applicant has a quality ratings system (KQRIS) in place that is modeled after an established rating system, Qualistar. The explanation of the components included in the KQRIS, along with the point and rating system is appropriate. This applicant acknowledges that their KQRIS does not currently align with the early learning and development standards. However, the applicant proposes appropriate activities for ensuring this alignment, and within a reasonable timeline. It is clear that this applicant prioritizes this work as a way to enhance their KQRIS as shown by its presence in the first quarter of the grant cycle. --This applicant provides minimal evidence as to how their KQRIS is based on a comprehensive assessment system. It is acknowledged that participating programs require sharing child assessments with families and that two types of program standards (Parents as Teachers and Head Start/Early Head Start) include a comprehensive assessment system. However, no details are provided and no proposed activities are associated with this issue. Also, because the applicant acknowledges the use of the Environmental Rating Scales only, no evidence is provided as to how child outcomes will be collected and determined. Similarly, it is explained that the TQRIS allows programs to earn points for a variety of educator credentials, trainings, and degrees. Yet, the specific point system is not available, making it difficult to determine whether this is set at an appropriate level. --This applicant appears to have an established variety of family engagement strategies, including report access, the provision of online "virtual tours", and the promotion and support of learning opportunities for families. --While it is acknowledged that several sets of program standards cover health promotion strategies and data practices, these strategies are not discussed in detail, nor are they covered in the proposed objectives and activities regarding the retooling of the KQRIS. --Also, the applicant discusses the need to monitor and align programs' licensing status with the KQRIS, yet a strategy toward meeting this goal is not proposed.

Available

Score

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

15

6

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)

--This applicant provides evidence of past commitment to enhancing the quality of early childhood learning and development programs via their description of five projects that have been implemented in the last several years. The prioritization of providing professional development opportunities to educators, providing incentives to programs, and meeting the needs of families with children with high needs is clear. However, the applicant acknowledges the current gap their state faces in having the dedicated resources to significantly enhance the TQRIS. As a result, the applicant proposes four activities for how this need can be met. --Unfortunately, these activities lack detail, and as a result, it is difficult to determine their appropriateness for meeting the proposed objective. First, the applicant proposes to create a practitioner group composed of representatives from all types of early learning programs. However, their purpose and linkage to a specific activity is not described. Second, in regard to the activity of creating a list of recommendations for KQRIS next steps, it is not clear how these recommendations will be determined and whether or not they will be based on supporting evidence. Similarly, the last three activities are based on these recommendations in the form of developing policies, guidance and protocols. Because the basis for how these are formed is unclear, it is difficult to determine whether this strategy will be effective towards meeting the proposed objective. --A major concern with this applicant's KQRIS is that while it has been in existence for 6 years, only a small portion of licensed programs in the state have participated (133 of over 7000 programs). There is an acknowledgement of this low number, and there are several activities that the applicant proposes that might increase participation (e.g., review barriers to participation and current incentives). However, there is no specific objective that includes increasing participation, which is surprising given the historically low participation rate. Also, there is no discussion of why there has been no program increase in the past six years. It is a concern why strategies to increase participation have not been conducted prior to now. While the applicant proposes to conduct an analysis to understand this, the track record hinders judgment on how successful their proposed efforts will be. In other words, it is not clear how the proposed change will increase in the next four years when change has not occurred in the past six years of the system's implementation. --Another concern is that program's quality ratings are not publicly available. This is identified as a gap, yet there is no proposed activity associated with trying to fill this need. Again, it is a concern that this is not available after a 6 year program. --Appropriately, the applicant proposes little to no increase in program participation during the first year of the grant cycle due to the retooling activities of the TQRIS. However, the overall 10% increase in participation that is proposed does not appear to be ambitious. Also, it is unclear why there is no proposed participation on the programs funded by IDEA, Part C. This program is listed as "NA" in Performance Measure B2c.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs	15	8

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)

--This applicant's KQRIS currently uses the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R), the Infant-Toddler Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R), and the Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (FCCERS-R) to measure one component of the program - the learning environment. This valid and reliable tool is appropriate and a strong tool on which to base a TQRIS. Additionally, the applicant appears to have appropriate strategies in place for training raters, as well as providing ongoing monitoring of inter rater reliability, all of which is crucial to the implementation of the Environmental Rating Scales. However, this explanation is lacking in detail and the level of rigor applied to this process is not clear. --The frequency with which participating programs are monitored (depending on their star rating) is reasonable in that higher rated stars should be monitored more frequently to ensure they are still meeting the requirements of that rating. This is a solid strategy for this applicant's KQRIS. --This applicant proposes to develop a new monitoring program for their KQRIS. There are some concerns about the planned activities. First, it is unclear why some of these monitoring processes are not currently established in a program that is six years old. While it is acknowledged that the KQRIS currently lacks the capacity to monitor programs, it is expected that decision-making processes would

already be in place. Also, this applicant proposes to develop and field test the KQRIS implementation support materials, yet no details are given about this. For example, it is not clear who and how many will participate in the field test, the process by which feedback will be gathered, etc. --Overall, the current status of this applicant's KQRIS coupled with their history of no increase in participation, is a hindrance to the belief that there can be significant change in the next 3-4 years. One would expect that this applicant's KQRIS would be more mature given that it's been implemented for six years already. Thus, it is hard to believe that changes such as are proposed can be realistically completed in less than that amount of time, in this case 3-4 years.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	8

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)

--This applicant already has some impressive strategies in place with regard to supporting programs participating in the KQRIS as evidenced by the multitude of networking and peer support opportunities available, as well as coaching to support programs maintaining high ratings or to increase the star rating of lower rated programs. Most notable of this applicant's current support strategies is their application system whereby programs can apply for funding for educational scholarships that can be used for college coursework, Child Development Associate (CDA) coursework, etc. Also, the one-on-one and technical assistance opportunities available to programs are an appropriate strategy. It is clear that this applicant has a comprehensive system in place to support and provide incentives to programs. --While this applicant proposes to include parents and families in a stakeholder group that will examine current practices of the KQRIS and be involved in the process of making recommendations to the Leadership Team, there is no further explanation of how families (specifically those with children with high needs) will receive support to access high-quality programs. Involving parents and families at every level of the system is important, thus this applicant seems to recognize this. However, more details are needed to understand how their participation will lead to increased access. --This applicant proposes to increase program participation in the KQRIS by at least 46% over the course of the grant cycle. (Current participation is 1%, and applicant proposes to have 3300 participating programs out of at least 7000 current programs participating by end of 2015 calendar year.) This seems not only unreasonable, but impossible given the plan and program's history of participation. Additionally, the proposed activities don't illustrate the depth with which would be necessary to make this kind of change in such a short amount of time. Also, these total numbers provided do not appear to be calculated correctly.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (E)(5)

--This applicant presents information that a study was done in 2008 that studied five QORIS systems. However, a copy of the full report or the Executive Summary is not provided with this application. Thus, it is difficult to determine the appropriateness of the study design and whether the conclusions were relevant and able to inform future policy and practice. --This applicant proposes to hire an external evaluator to design and implement a research study to determine whether their QORIS has validity, is built to provide ongoing data for review, and is able to assess how changes in ratings might have an impact on participating children's progress. Using an external evaluator can add strength to an evaluation plan due to the decrease in the likelihood of bias. A strength to his plan is the proposal to develop a logic model, as this is a method for ensuring that work flows in a consistent and strategic direction. --Few details are provided with regard to what kind of measures will be used, as well as the criteria used to determine these measures, to answer these research questions. Similarly, information on the research design is not provided here, as it is proposed that this will be finalized with the evaluator. This seems reasonable; however it would be expected that the applicant would have access to resources that would allow more detail on what type of design and measures would be important to meet this objective. It seems the evaluation plan hinges solely on who is hired as the evaluator and his/her expertise. --Additionally, no details are given with regard to activities and timeline of how and when results from this study will be used to inform policy or practice.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	20	12
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)

--This applicant has a set of early learning and development standards that were developed in response to a 2003 Title I requirement; however, these standards are currently slated for a 2012 revision and are voluntary. The current standards cover the 8 development components, including the essential domains of school readiness. They currently cover ages from birth to age 4 (preschoolers) and are closely linked with the applicant's K-12 standards. This applicant appears to address children with special needs and disabilities (those with Individual Education Plans [IEPs], for example) well in their standards (Section V); however there doesn't appear to be content related to children who speak English as a second language or those who are culturally diverse. This population is addressed in this applicant's Goal #2, but there doesn't appear to be any specific activities

associated with trying to reach this goal. --As stated above, this applicant's Early Learning Standards were developed out of a legislative requirement to align with the existing K-12 Content Standards. Thus, it is expected that this alignment exists. However, the discussion of alignment is addressed only minimally with a paragraph in Section V and because the K-12 Standards are not included in the application, it is difficult to determine the level of alignment between the two documents. --This applicant acknowledges that there is a great need to incorporate the early learning standards into a variety of other components in their early childhood system. Thus, a 3-objective plan is proposed to meet this need. Overall, the proposed activities and timeline appears appropriate for doing so. The review and revision of the standards is top priority, following by the development of policies to support universal implementation and incorporation of the standards into state-, local-, and program-level practices. This is a comprehensive approach. --The applicant appears to have a reasonable comprehensive plan in place for weaving the revised Early Learning Standards into programs, which appropriately builds upon their existing activities. These include requiring certain programs to include curricula that are based on the Standards and providing professional development opportunities on the Standards to educators.

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

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)

--This applicant acknowledges that here are several gaps in their system that hinder an effective Comprehensive Assessment System, including lack of consistent expectations for programs, no state-level coordination of assessments, no mechanism for sharing results, no state level guidance, and lack of training or state guidance. --The applicant proposes a plan to address these needs based on 3 objectives, each with corresponding activities. Given the amount of gaps that exist and the complexity that is needed to address them, this plan mirrors a basic plan, develop, implement and evaluate model in that it lacks significant detail. For example, it is proposed that training will be provided statewide to educators and providers in all types of programs, but how and with what regularity this will happen is not discussed. State- or region-specific considerations are not discussed, for example, how rural communities and family child care homes (the majority of their population for care settings) will be served for this training. --Also, Activity 3.5 is similar to Goal 1 in the State Plan in that there is significant planning. However, it is still not clear what and when will be implemented as a result of these planning activities. --The applicant does propose working with a stakeholder group on some of the activities, which as discussed earlier, includes educators. Thus, their participation is woven into the process. --Overall, the lack of detail for these proposed activities greatly hinders the ability to review its effectiveness.

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	20	13

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)

--This applicant has a significant history of engaging and supporting families through a variety of programs, most notably their 20+ years of experience implementing Parents as Teachers. There also seems to be solid, active state-level partnerships in coordinating services that promote parents engagement. On a community-level, it is impressive that this applicant has successfully implemented events organized by programs, which is aligned with the current KQRIS. Similarly, their implementation of the Parent Leadership Conference is to be commended, specifically their efforts at making attendance accessible to all as evidenced by the provision of free attendance, accommodations, and child care. Similarly, it is a strength of this application that the fatherhood initiatives within Head Start will continue. --This applicant does acknowledge that a main gap is the lack of family engagement standards; however they propose to create these over the course of the grant cycle. It is likely that these standards will be culturally and linguistically appropriate by the proposed participants of the stakeholder group that will be responsible for the review of other program standards and to set forth recommendations of standards; however this issue is not addressed specifically. --While it is stated that policies and procedures will be developed to promote use of these standards across all early learning programs, the numbers and percentages of educators who will be trained and supported on an on-going basis is not discussed. Again, it is assumed that through the established programs that enhance family engagement throughout the state, these numbers will likely increase, but specific performance measures are not presented. --It is clear that this applicant will continue to prioritize their family engagement practices, and will most certainly leverage their multitude of successful existing resources, most notably their home visiting program and partners. At this point, this is viewed as the strongest part of this applicant's state 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.	40	24
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)

--This applicant acknowledges that there currently is no statewide workforce knowledge and competency framework; thus a plan is proposed to do so. This applicant clearly illustrates the existing resources and active stakeholder groups within the state who are working on projects that would support the development, implementation, and ongoing support of a framework. This applicant also currently has a document in place that addresses knowledge and skills professionals need in order to work with children - the Core Competencies for Early Childhood and Youth Development Professionals. It is a strength to this application that there is a viable document available to build upon for developing the framework. --The applicant proposes to convene the stakeholders involved in these current efforts to spearhead the analysis and development of the framework. The timeline (toward the end of the grant cycle), however, is surprising given the amount of resources already in place. Other parts of this plan are working with fewer, if not no resources and the timeline is shorter. Also, the identification of these stakeholders is not provided. --It appears that active partnerships of institutes of higher education and other professional development providers already exist. Thus, it seems appropriate for the applicant to build upon these resources in their plan. --With regard to training providers in the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, it is not clear who would facilitate these trainings and what their credentials are. A more specific explanation of this component is needed. --Overall, similar to other parts of this applicant's state plan, the plan is generally appropriate but lacks enough detail to be able to determine whether it will meet the intended goals and objectives.

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)

--This applicant currently has a Kindergarten Entry Assessment in place (the KELI-R); although it is in the "validation process." Information is provided in the application that the assessment and its companion assessment for 4 year old children align with the early learning standards. Also, as evidenced by other sections of the state plan, it is being proposed that the early learning standards will be aligned with the Common Core Standards; this alignment between all documents will be streamlined. --The applicant also discusses the use of the KELI, yet there are no details given on whether or not this will be slowly phased out after the KELI-R has completed the validation process. This process is lacking in detail. Also, it is not clear how the KELI-R will be incorporated into the applicant's Comprehensive Assessment System. They do propose to supplement the KELI-R with other tools; however these specific tools are not mentioned. --No evidence is provided as to the kindergarten assessment's validity, reliability or appropriateness for the target population. A process by which Kindergarten teachers were able to implement the tool is provided, but it is not clear if several teachers completed an assessment for the same children with the purpose of establishing inter rater reliability, and whether the tool was validated in anyway during this time. While it states that a pilot project with approximately 30 teachers is underway, this process is not discussed in any detail. Also, because the tool is not provided in the application, it is difficult to determine its appropriateness for the population. Furthermore, whether it addresses English learners and children with disabilities is unknown. --It appears that this applicant has the foresight to plan for the implementation of the assessment to begin the Fall of 2015 as evidenced by the multi-year process of piloting the tool and analyzing results. However, Part C of the application proposes to complete this in the Fall of 2014. Thus, there is some inconsistency with regard to the timeline. --Evidence is provided that the funds used to support the implementation and data entry of the KELI-R are diverse, including private and public funding, although the majority of these sources are not specified. One source that this applicant proposes to use to support implementation is the Longitudinal Data System, but this information is not provided in the budget.

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	5

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)

--This applicant provides evidence that there is a variety of data collection systems currently available, and there is an intention to tie some of these systems together to create a comprehensive longitudinal data system within the time frame of the grant cycle. Some pieces of the system are in place while others are proposed in the state plan. --Based on Activity 5.1.3, it is proposed that by the use of national data quality standards, the data system will cover all of the essential data elements required by this grant challenge. However, as evidenced by Table A1-14, it is not clear how the individual data systems will cover all of these essential data systems because there is no clear evidence that they will be linked. --Similarly, it is not clear from the response to this criterion how the system will enable uniform data collection and ease of entry by participating state agencies and programs. As a result, data analysis could be challenging. Moreover, there is no evidence that the Department of Education will be involved in this aspect of the plan. As the lead agency for this grant, this is a significant concern. --The proposal that all agencies will be involved in the gap analysis of the data system, as well as the development of policies and procedures, is a strength in that it could enhance the exchange of data between them. --It is not clear from the response to this criterion how the data in the system will be generated and made easy for programs and educators to use and access. For example, it is stated that data will be made available to programs for the purpose of informing instruction, but it is not specifically stated how this will happen. --It is not clear whether this proposed longitudinal data system will meet the oversight requirements and comply with privacy laws.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	132

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	5

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 (F)(2)

--This applicant provides solid evidence that their current licensing and inspection system covers all child care facilities. Every child care facility is licensed or exempt by licensing through law and regulation. However, the KQRIS is currently voluntary, so it is possible that all programs will not participate in the system. --The applicant has a TQRIS in place. The strengths of the proposed plan are their solid family engagement component and their current comprehensive system to support and provide incentives to programs. However, as noted in Section B of this application, there are several concerns with the proposed plan. --This applicant provides minimal evidence as to how their TQRIS is based on a comprehensive assessment system. The specific point system for the TQRIS is not available, making it difficult to determine whether this is set at an appropriate level. While it is acknowledged that several sets of programs standards cover health promotion strategies and data practices, these strategies are not discussed in detail, nor are they covered in the proposed objectives and activities regarding the retooling of the QRIS. There is concern with regard to low TQRIS participation since the program's inception. While the applicant proposes to conduct an analysis to understand this, the track record hinders judgment on how successful their proposed efforts will be. Another concern is that program's quality ratings are not publicly available. This is identified as a gap, yet there is no proposed activity associated with trying to fill this need. Similarly, the applicant discusses the need to monitor and align programs' licensing status with the KQRIS, yet a strategy toward meeting this goal is not proposed. While it is acknowledged that the KQRIS currently lacks the capacity to monitor programs, it is expected that decision rules with regard to making selections and recommendations for identification of administration increases would already be in place. There is no further explanation of how families (specifically those with children with high needs) will receive support to access high-quality programs. This applicant proposes to increase program participation in the KQRIS by at least 46% over the course of the grant cycle. (Current participation is 1%, and applicant proposes to have 3300 participating programs out of at least 7000 current programs participating by end of 2015 calendar year.) This seems not only unreasonable, but impossible given the plan and program's history of participation.

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>--As noted in Section E1, this applicant does currently have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment, but several of the selection criteria are not met, including the assessment's validity, reliability and appropriateness for the target population; whether it addresses English learners and children with disabilities; and how the assessment's data will be reported to the statewide data system or early learning data system. --Also, the applicant received 60% on selection criteria E1.</p>		

Absolute Priority

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

—Overall, this applicant is not able to present a clear description of their population of Children with High Needs. The identity of this population is not identified and supported with data, and they are only mentioned minimally throughout the application. Thus, it is difficult to determine whether or not their plan will increase the likelihood that Children with High Needs in their state will enter kindergarten ready to succeed. —Similarly, this application did not present a comprehensive and coherent system that would increase early learning and development programs. Goals and activities were often fragmented and lacked enough detail to determine their appropriateness and effectiveness. Also, the majority of the plan sought to analyze policies, planning activities and make recommendations for future endeavors, while proposing little implementation over the course of the grant cycle. Because of this, it again was difficult to determine how the Children with High Needs, a population not thoroughly described, would benefit from these activities. —There are also several inconsistencies within the application. For example, the start date of the applicant's Kindergarten Entry Assessment is in question, as are several performance measures, both of which are discussed specifically in their respective sections. —For the above reasons, this applicant did not propose a plan that would best prepare Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # KS-5013

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 12:51 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: Criterion, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 16. Includes detailed text description of the criterion and a 'Comments on (A)(1)' section.

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The applicant strongly meets this criterion by clearly articulating a comprehensive early learning and development reform agenda that is ambitious yet achievable, builds on the State's progress to date, and is most likely to result in improved school readiness for Children with High Needs. The applicant presented a detailed High-Quality plan that is ambitious and achievable. The plan includes identifying five goals that include building a statewide system to support continuous quality improvement of the existing Early Learning and Development programs by aligning resources and policies across the partnering state agencies; revising the current rating system and implementing a single sustainable quality rating and improvement system; promoting the consistent use of Kansas Early Learning Standards, effective use of a Comprehensive Assessment System, and the development of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards to support and engage families; developing a statewide Kansas Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and implementing a comprehensive longitudinal data system that provides data for use in making data-driven decisions. Appendix S, Table A gives a detailed flow chart followed by the High-Quality Plan with complete details and activities of how the goals will be accomplished. The applicant justifies the State's choice to address Criteria (C)(1), (C)(2), and (C)(4) by citing the foundations already in place and the revisions (some already underway) necessary in each of these areas to build a strong system that impacts early learning and development programs. The applicant justifies the State's choice to address Criteria (D)(1) by explaining the need for this initial step in building a fully-implemented professional development system. The applicant identifies the need to focus its strongest efforts and resources in this area in order to support early childhood educators and the goals of its TORIS. The applicant justifies the State's choice to address criteria (E)1 and (E)2. The applicant presented the use of a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that is currently under revision and testing for reliability and validity, and therefore is included in the State's High-Quality Plan. The applicant also presented the State Longitudinal Data System and the Birth to Five Comprehensive Data System. The State's High-Quality plan includes the coordination and integration of these two systems. The applicant has provided a clearly detailed high-quality response.

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

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

- (a) Demonstrating how the Participating State Agencies and other partners, if any, will identify a governance structure for working together that will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability and describing--
 - (1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;
 - (2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;
 - (3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and
 - (4) The plan for when and how the State will involve representatives from Participating Programs, Early Childhood Educators or their representatives, parents and families, including parents and families of Children with High Needs, and other key stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant;
- (b) Demonstrating that the Participating State Agencies are strongly committed to the State Plan, to the governance structure of the grant, and to effective implementation of the State Plan, by including in the MOU or

other binding agreement between the State and each Participating State Agency--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (A)(3)

The applicant has clearly established strong participation and commitment in the State Plan by Participating State Agencies and other early learning and development stakeholders by presenting the work accomplished over the past 10+ years in developing an infrastructure that supports communities, families, and children. The applicant also provided a High-Quality Plan to continue the work to build a cohesive statewide system and clearly identifies six detailed objectives and corresponding activities needed to accomplish this - developing a state leadership team to provide unified leadership around grant outcomes, propose and facilitate policy-level changes, and maintain communication with the Governor's office; establish a State Transformation Team to provide consistency and ongoing support; create strong and effective linkages across system components; develop policies, procedures, and practices that enhance the capabilities of Early Learning and Development Programs across the state; utilize data from state and community-based programs to promote state and local policies; strengthen current or create new partnerships between participating state agencies and early learning intermediary organizations and other relevant groups. The applicant provides details and a timeline to support the work to be accomplished, the organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing inter-agency governance structures including an Organizational Structure Flow Chart to demonstrate the process. The missing component in this section is identifying a "Project Director" - someone who is accountable for making sure tasks are completed in a timely manner, as indicated in the grant; making final decisions or finding consensus among the different teams; and making sure all necessary partners are involved at each level. In addition, it appeared from the narrative, that representation was missing from parents/families and businesses. The applicant meets criterion (b) by providing three signed MOUs along with each scope of work for each participating State Agency as listed in Table (A)(3)-1, 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. The applicant meets criterion (c) by including 15 detailed and persuasive letters of support from Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, local early learning councils, and private sector partners, listed in Table (A)(3)-2. However, there did not seem to be representation (letters) from Early Childhood Educators or families. The applicant has presented a medium-quality response of a partially-implemented plan.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The applicant provides a weak response to this criterion by not detailing how the State will use existing funds that support early learning and development from Federal, State, private, and local sources including CCDF quality set-aside money; IDEA; State preschool; Statewide Longitudinal Data System grant; and the Master Tobacco Settlement monies for activities and services that help achieve the outcomes in the State Plan. However, contradicting information in the supporting tables, makes it difficult to understand the accuracy of this claim - Table (A)(4)-1 outlines funding by Source and availability for each year of the grant, while Budget Table I-1 line 14 shows "0" funds from other sources used to support the State Plan. The applicant provides a full section (section VI) on each state agency budget complete with a detailed table and narrative on how the funding will be used. Budget Part I gives the detailed overall statewide budget summaries with narratives, while Budget Part II gives detail for each participating State Agency and corresponding projects. Each budget has "0" funding sources outside of the RTT-ELC funding, which does not support the applicant's statement regarding the sustainability of each project.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

The applicant meets this criterion by presenting a High-Quality Plan to address "re-tooling" the current rating system and implementing a single sustainable Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System. The applicant acknowledges the missing components of the current KQRIS, the Kansas Quality Rating Improvement System for center-based and family child care programs. The current system assesses programs on five components: Learning Environment, Staff Training and Education, Family Partnership, Ratios and Group Size, and National Accreditation Status, giving up to 10 points for each component. One to five stars are awarded depending on the total number of points scored. Objectives 2.1 and 2.2 outline the goal and the activities for developing the new TQRIS to ensure quality (includes Kansas Early Learning Standards; A Comprehensive Assessment System; Highly qualified educators, effective data practices and the implementation of family and health promotion strategies) and align it with the Kansas Child Care Licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs. The applicant acknowledges the need to update the current standards and use the new standards to clearly and meaningfully differentiate program quality levels; monitor to evaluate program quality based on program standards; support programs to help them meet higher standards; implement quality ratings that are publicly available; and include a process for validating the system. The applicant presents objectives (followed by activities and timeline) to address these needed upgrades to the system but does not provide adequate activities

and timelines to get the work done. The applicant presents plans to analyze, propose, and assess the old and proposed system, but no plans to actually get the new system implemented. The applicant has presented a medium-quality response and currently has a partially-implemented QRIS.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

The applicant presents a low-quality Plan to maximize program participation in the State's TQRIS. The plan outlines objectives and supporting activities to implement effective policies and practices to reach the goal of having "all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate in the TQRIS", however, Table (B)(2)(c) demonstrates the goal of only 10-20% of all programs will be participating in the TQRIS by 2015 while leaving out programs funded by IDEA, part B and C ("NA" or "0"), which is not ambitious and is far from the "goal of having all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate". The applicant states that the High-Quality Plan is focused on developing a state system that will support, promote and encourage participation in the TQRIS and provide incentives and supports to help high needs families. However the objectives and activities do not address or support either of these goals and the applicant does not provide supporting detail in the narrative. The applicant has presented a low-quality response for a partially-implemented plan.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

The applicant does not provide an adequate system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. The applicant identifies that they currently use the ECERS-R, (part of the Environmental Rating Scales (ECERS-R, ITERS-R, and FCCERS-R) which is a valid and reliable tool for monitoring only the learning environment. The tool is not designed to measure child outcomes. Other components assessed are based on variable data collected by each program. The applicant states that the current KQRIS has a system for training raters and coaches and establishing inter-rater reliability, but does not provide any details around the frequency of this process. The applicant acknowledges the inadequacies of the current KQRIS and the need to implement the new TQRIS based on not having a process in place for differentiating levels of quality or a system for rating and monitoring that can be maintained if the participation of programs expands. According to the activities and timelines, focus will be on development of protocol and procedures for the majority of the funding period, with very little time for actual implementation of the new TQRIS. The activities do not specifically address providing information on quality rating and licensing information, or other data, to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs or selecting Early Learning and Development Programs. The applicant has presented a minimally-implemented QRIS with a medium-quality response.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

The applicant adequately demonstrates a developed and implemented system for improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. The applicant acknowledges the deficiencies of the current KQRIS which include a lack of intentional data collection on adult-child interactions, child outcomes, and program strategies to support learning. In the narrative, the applicant clearly outlines the High-Quality Plan for developing a system that promotes access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs by developing and implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve and provide supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs. The targets listed in Table (B)(4)(c) (1) show a very large increase in the number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the TQRIS by 2014 and 2015. In order to meet the ambitious targets, the applicant provides strong documentation of the supporting activities currently in place to help current QRIS programs. These include working with a trained Quality Improvement Coach; receiving on-site coaching; receiving a list and description of statewide and local agencies that can provide additional support, training, and Technical assistance; financial rewards and incentives to assist with program improvement; and access to training incentives and education scholarships. The applicant identifies that there is currently very little information available to help families locate a program that meets their needs, nor does the current model address Children with High Needs in specific. The activities presented in this section pertain to revising current policies and practices, rather than developing and implementing a system to support families. Based on the information in Table (B)(4)(c)(2) . with a target goal of a 10% increase by 2015, there does not appear to be a strong push to increase the number of High Needs children enrolling in top tiered Early Learning and Development Programs. 10% is quite low considering that the listed programs are publicly funded programs. The applicant has presented a minimally-implemented system for promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs, with a medium-quality response.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	8

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 does not adequately demonstrate a High-Quality Plan to design and implement evaluations 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. The applicant’s response (including the objective and activities) does not demonstrate how the state will design and implement a TQRIS that validates, using research-based measures, whether the tiers in the State’s TQRIS accurately reflect differential levels of program quality; or if the new TQRIS will use appropriate research designs and measures of progress, the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to child outcomes. The applicant recognizes the need to develop a TQRIS that leads to improved learning outcomes for all children, but the activities and timelines presented in this section revolve around planning and identifying a logic model, rather than on implementation of an actual TQRIS.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	20	12

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 gives a medium-quality response to this criterion. The applicant presents a partially-implemented plan of the current use of Early Learning and Development Standards which includes eight developmental content areas (including early literacy and mathematics) across five age groupings and apply to children who have diverse needs, speak English as a second language, or are culturally diverse. Appendix W gives the comprehensive plan complete with the Kansas Early Learning Guidelines and Standards, who they are for, and how to use them. Appendix W also provides a step-by-step guide used for linking specially designed plans for children with disabilities to the Standards. The applicant's High-Quality plan, goal 3, addresses updating and aligning the Kansas Early Learning Guidelines and Standards with the Kansas Quality Standards for Early Childhood Education Program and the K-12 Common Core Standards to provide consistency across all programs. This includes developing, aligning and implementing policies across Partner State Agencies and their Early Learning and Development departments in order to incorporate the updated standards, supporting agencies in adopting the standards, partnering with Institutions of Higher Education to promote policies and practices that require the use of the standards, and using evaluation data to support continuous improvement of the system. The applicant did not provide evidence to support incorporating the Early Learning and Development Standards in the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, as the state does not have a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	20	8

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 applicant gives a medium-quality response to this criterion. The applicant presents the current use of a Comprehensive Assessment System, but identifies that there are no consistent expectations set across the state, no state-wide coordination and a lack of focused training or guidance on assessment practices. The applicant's High-Quality Plan identifies three objectives, complete with adequate activities and timelines, to: 1) Develop and implement a statewide Comprehensive Assessment System within the TQRIS, that includes the essential domains of school readiness; 2) Assess current practices and policies to ensure a commitment to a Comprehensive Assessment System for all Early Learning and Development Programs, contractors, and Professional Development providers; and 4) regularly review the implementation of the Comprehensive Assessment System including how assessments are selected, appropriateness for the intended population and intended purpose, and evidence of improved child outcomes for Children with High Needs. The activities under Objective 3.7 are appropriate and include developing a policy for sharing information between programs that serve Children with High Needs. The applicant presented a minimally-implemented plan for the effective use of the Comprehensive Assessment System.

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	20	9

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 presents a 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. The applicant identifies Objective 3.6 - reviewing and updating current standards to ensure the inclusion of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement across the levels of its Program Standards, along with activities and a timeline to accomplish this objective by Fall of 2014. The applicant does not address 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; or promoting family support and engagement statewide, by leveraging other existing resources such as through home visiting programs, other family-serving agencies, and through outreach to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers. The applicant gives a strong response for (c) by citing the many programs offered statewide to assist families. These programs include Kansas Early Head Start, Parents as Teachers, Strengthening Families, Kansas Head Start Association, the Parent Leadership Conference, and Kansas Fatherhood Initiative. The applicant presented a partially-implemented medium-quality response to this criterion by addressing 2 of the 3 components of this criterion.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

	Available	Score
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	40	16
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--</p> <p>(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;</p> <p>(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

The applicant gives a medium-quality response to this criterion. The applicant documents that they do not currently have implemented a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and progression of credentials. A Plan has been presented by the applicant to address bringing together stakeholders from across the state to develop a Kansas Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Objective 4.1 and the subsequent activities clearly detail the work needed to be done to accomplish this including timelines for completing the work. Objective 4.2 adequately outlines the activities and timelines around building a progression of state-accepted credentials aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, to be articulated across the professional development system. However, the applicant gives inadequate information regarding who the "team of experts" will be or what post-secondary programs will participate.

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)

The applicant identifies a plan that demonstrates that they are fully implementing the Kansas Early Learning Inventory (KELI), a Kindergarten Assessment tool that was developed by the Kansas Department of Education and inclusive of the Qualls Early Learning Inventory (QELI). They also identify the use of the KELI-R and the KELI-4R. (a) The applicant explains that the assessment is aligned with the Kansas Early Learning Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness. (b) The applicant discusses the scoring and use of scores for the assessment but does not address the validity and reliability of the tool. The applicant does not describe the KELI Assessment as a stand-alone tool, but rather a supplemental tool to be used with other assessments. The High-Quality Plan does not address what assessments are currently used or will be used in the future. It also does not address what the KELI or KELI-R measure (behavior? environment?). (c) The applicant states that the KELI-R has been piloted with approximately 30 Kindergarten teachers to begin the validation process. Further testing and analyzing of the tool will occur through 2014, with a full roll-out in 2015. It is not clear if the assessment will be voluntary or mandatory once rolled out in 2015 - the narrative states that "students will be offered the opportunity to participate..." (d) The applicant does not provide information regarding how Assessment results would be reported to a Statewide Longitudinal Data System or an early learning data system, other than to say it will be a web-based application. (e) The applicant gives a very vague answer in response to funding. The applicant states that the KELI-R has been funded through public and private funding sources, but that the implementation will be funded "in part" through the Longitudinal Data System grant. The applicant was awarded points for having a partially-implemented Kindergarten Assessment in place that is aligned with the State's Early Learning Standards. However the applicant did not adequately address 2 of the 5 components of this criterion and therefore was scored as a medium-quality response.

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	6

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 clearly identifies a plan to enhance the State's existing early learning data system to align and become interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System. The applicant identifies an early Learning Data System currently in place that has most of the Essential Data Elements. There are other systems used by different programs and each one has at least one Essential Data Element missing (Table (A)(1)-13). However, Objective 5.1 under this criterion is focused on developing a comprehensive and coordinated early childhood data system linking multiple early childhood databases with the K-12 Longitudinal Data System. The activities linked to Objective 5.1 - 5.3 clearly support uniformity of data collection and inclusion of all the Essential Data Elements as defined by RTT-ELC funding. The information that the applicant provided regarding the Customer and Provider Portal (CAPP) and the Kansas Quality Care Profile Project were confusing and did not fit this criterion. The collaborators on this project were Health and Social Services and it appeared that the applicant was trying to "force" Early Learning and Development Program information into an existing system. It is clear that the applicant plans to develop a Longitudinal Data System, but not clear as to how Early Learning and Development programs and Early Childhood Educators will interact with the system. The applicant was awarded points for having a minimally-implemented Longitudinal Data System in place. However the applicant did not adequately address the components of this criterion and therefore was scored as a medium-quality response.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	139

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	5

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation

Comments on (P)(2)

The applicant gives a medium-quality response to this Competitive Preference Priority by providing a very short, non-committal response to the components listed. The applicant addresses (a) by stating that all child care facilities serving 1 or more unrelated children are licensed in the State. The applicant addresses (b) by stating that the TQRIS described in (B)(1-4) is inclusive of all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs. However, the applicant also states that participation is voluntary, so it is possible that not all programs participate. The applicant states that the TQRIS is inclusive of all programs that choose to participate. The applicant is awarded points based on giving a medium-quality response on a partially-implemented system.

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 applicant chose to address (E)(1). The applicant received a score of 60% for Criterion (E)(1).

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
Comments on Absolute Priority	
<p>The applicant does not comprehensively and coherently address a statewide system for promoting school readiness for Children with High Needs, throughout the application. At the beginning of the application, the applicant identifies that the rural nature of Kansas provides a special challenge to accessing support for families and children with high needs and that creating partnerships within communities is essential. However, the applicant fails to strongly address this and provide clear, detailed plans for ensuring every child is ready for Kindergarten and has access to high quality programs. When responding to Criteria in (B)(2), The applicant states that the High-Quality Plan is focused on developing a state system that will support, promote and encourage participation in the TQRIS and provide incentives and supports to help high needs families. However the objectives and activities do not address or support either of these goals and the applicant does not provide supporting detail in the narrative. In addition, the applicant does not include IDEA programs in the target numbers for increasing the number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the statewide TQRIS. In (B)(4), when presenting evidence to support promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs, the applicant provides information in Table (B)(4)(c)(2) showing a target goal of a 10% increase by 2015, which does not demonstrate a strong push to increase the number of High Needs children enrolling in top tiered Early Learning and Development Programs. When addressing engaging and supporting families in (C)(4), the applicant does not address 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 or promoting family engagement and support statewide for families with Children with High Needs.</p>	



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # KS-5013

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 3:15 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, 16. Includes sub-points (a) through (d) describing financial investment, participation numbers, existing legislation, and current status in key areas.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

Kansas has provided a comprehensive history of its work and progress of their early childhood initiatives from 2001 to present. Kansas has provided evidence of legislation, leadership, collaboration among state agencies/ departments/ offices and partnerships with the private sector. It has collaborated with higher education to support and enhance the development and delivery of the program standards for a unified license. Kansas has clearly provided relevant information that there is a need to align all child care, parent education and family support systems and services. Additionally, Kansas has indicated that the Quality Standards for Early Childhood Education for Children Birth through Eight (2001) applies to all child services and programs regardless of setting. This history is comprehensive and demonstrates Kansas's efforts to deliver a cohesive set of services and programs to young children. Kansas has demonstrated through its narrative and documentation in this section that there is solid evidence that its commitment has been strong. Kansas has demonstrated that the state has increased funding in all areas from 2007 through 2011. While there was a dip from 2009 to 2010 and again in 2011 for state-funded preschool, (Four Year Old at Risk) that increased from 2007 to 2009 approximately 23% then decreased about 14% from 2009 to 2011. All other funding for Early Learning and Development increased slightly or maintained funding each year since 2007. The funding history has clearly demonstrated that Kansas has a high commitment to early childhood. However, there is a lack of discussion as to why the dip from 2009 to 2011 took place in the preschool program, Four Year Old at Risk. No important details as to why this particular program, serving at risk children was cut. This is inconsistent with Kansas's past history to its commitment and investment of the high needs child population. More details regarding this cut are lacking in the narrative. There is an inconsistency between the discussion of the higher education supports and the Kansas credentials system regarding alignment of the degree program with state credentialing. The information reported in the tables and the discussion in the narrative indicate that the institutions of higher education have participated in the development of standards and common courses. There is no evidence presented that Kansas has had a collaborative relationship with post secondary institutions. No evidence has been presented in the tables that the post secondary institutions listed aligned their credentialing program with the State's current Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework as all are listed to be Not Available. A lack of discussion indicates that the post secondary institutions

are not highly involved in this effort. Because of this inconsistency the relationship between the state of Kansas and institutions of higher learning cannot be adequately determined. Finally, there are inconsistencies in the information presented across the tables. In listing the number of children participating in the various types of early childhood programs, Kansas does not include the licensed Child Care group in its table (this group is mentioned in Part B as a 'focus' of the original KQRIS and in Part D as a group to be included). Because of these inconsistencies, it cannot be determined which of the early childhood groups that target high needs children will be served by this grant if funded. Kansas has provided evidence of legislation, policies and practices and has fully discussed its current status in key areas that are discussed throughout this application. This application is a plan to reform a current system. Kansas clearly identifies the areas in its early childhood system to be reformed.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	14

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)

Kansas plans to build a comprehensive system that supports integration of programs, promotes child performance and encourages statewide blending of various funding streams built on an existing system that Kansas identifies in need of reform. Goals presented throughout the document are achievable but often not ambitious. There are long periods of planning with the end product of acting on recommendations and developing policies. There is little discussion of how high needs children will enter into this plan. There is no clear discussion on how Kansas will target the at risk population. There are no discussion in this section on the various types of Early Learning and Development Programs, particularly the family child care homes. The rationale provided presents an adequate discussion of Kansas's selection of the Focused Investment Areas. Kansas indicates how each of the focus investment areas are needed to improve the TQRIS and align the ELDS. The current system is outdated and needs revision. There are substantial gaps, such as the workforce knowledge and competency framework. In the discussion and the overall plan, Kansas identifies these gaps but does not give an adequate explanation as to why these areas must be improved. Kansas's rationale is poorly structured as it presents a list of what needs to be done but does not address in a justification of how these areas of reform will address the needs of High Needs children.

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

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

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

under the grant:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

Kansas has presented an intended governance chart of the overall project. The structure is not thoroughly discussed. Kansas indicates that the Governor's Office, at the top of the chart, will communicate with the lead and partner State Agencies. Kansas has provided a feedback loop model for communicating among the various State Agencies, ELC Transformation Team (responsibility to improve systems) and the ELC Core Team (responsibility to improve programs). Kansas has reported that this model and the feedback loop has been successful in prior projects managed by the Department of Education and it is capable of supporting large projects such as Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge. Kansas describes the flow of decision-making and governance. However, the decision making model is identified as the 'intended' model. This suggests that Kansas may not be committed to this current model and has not clearly defined its model of governance and decision-making. There is a lack of discussion and detail on specific groups to be included in the structure. While the Early Childhood Advisory Council and Stakeholders are included, there is no indication of who these groups will include, either by name and title or representation. Kansas has not discussed in detail who the stakeholders will include, what areas of the community, state, counties, and how business, philanthropy and parents will be included in the governance / management structure. Kansas indicates that it is critical for programs to be aligned with one another throughout the state (agencies/ departments/ offices). Kansas's goals are to coordinate and align past initiatives and build and strengthen the current system. Kansas has identified a strong organizational structure and roles and responsibilities of the partnering agencies. Kansas has clearly identified a process of communication among various teams and the oversight committee(s) to adhere to during the implementation of the High Quality Plan activities. The structure presented has been a successful model for Kansas in the past when implementing the MTSS (Kansas's TQRIS). Roles and relationships are clearly described and indicate that Kansas can successfully implement their plan and reach goals in a timely fashion. This is a strength of this application as it provides an excellent foundation for the management of the project. Kansas has presented a Scope-of-work that clearly outlines each task, identifies the participating parties with lead agency, provides a concise description of the participation, and specific objectives that will be achieved. This is an excellent overview of the work to be accomplished throughout. In most tasks, one of two agencies are the lead, Department of Education or Department of Social Services and Rehabilitation. However, other departments or state offices are also identified as participating parties. There is good representation of several State Agencies throughout each task indicating that all State Agencies will be knowledgeable of how the work will fit together and promote an understanding of each State Agency's area of expertise. Children's Cabinet Trust Fund is not in the organizational structure and there is no discussion regarding why this group is omitted. Kansas does not have a well-defined structure and vision of the governance body. It is poorly discussed in this section with gaps in needed information. There is a clear statement of commitment from the four participating agencies/ departments/ offices. Intermediary organizations are identified and a lead person with name and professional status has been listed. The agencies that signed a detailed MOU with the Department of Education (lead agency) include Department of Health and Environment, Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, and Kansas Children's Cabinet. All MOU's have signatures. A total of 15 letters of intent or support, from 19 organizations (some writers of letters had dual roles) were presented in the appendix of the application. Of these, most were from Early Learning Intermediary Organizations. There was only one letter from the business sector, two were from school districts, three were from Kansas University system. The letters of intent/ support do not represent a well rounded stakeholder group from many different facets of the community, region, state. Given the sparse number of letters and the narrow field of representation, it is unclear how knowledgeable state organizations who represent early childhood or who may contribute to this project in creative ways may be at this time.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

Kansas has presented a budget that identifies each project and expected costs. The overall budget shows that the set aside funds for grant technical assistance is short each year by about \$3,000.00. Master Tobacco Settlement funding is not included in part A1 and discussed as a funding source but was not included in the budget. All other costs are reasonable; however, because there are many activities in which the end product is to act on recommendations, develop policies, or prepare for implementation (Activities 3.6.4, 4.1.6., and 4.2.6, it is a concern that significant pieces of the TQRIS components will not be implemented.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

The current TQRIS system in Kansas has been operational for several years. While not comprehensive, it has been instrumental in promoting a quality system throughout the state. This is a strength of experience that can be brought into the current plan. However, as Kansas describes the system, it is in need of update which will be a goal of this project. Currently the TQRIS in Kansas does not include the Early Learning and Development Standards. The Comprehensive Assessment System includes only the measures of environmental quality. The presentation of its current system of training raters and coaches is a strength to the system. Family engagement strategies are discussed as families having accessibility to reports and includes an on-line virtual tour. Licensing programs and periodic checks are Kansas's current indicators of health promotion practices. Kansas has presented a comprehensive discussion with all relevant documentation that a TQRIS system in Kansas has been operational for several years. Data have been collected from child care centers that have been rated. A total of 20 reports are available for review in the appendix. Kansas reports there has been an increase in the number of centers that were in the top 2 (4+) tiers and that these have increased since 2005 when 39% of the programs rated were in the top two tiers. In 2010 56% of the programs were rated in the top two tiers. The KQRIS has all six components that define a quality TQRIS. Kansas also has in place guidelines and standards for early development. The standards meet the definition of Essential Domains of Early Childhood. A review of the document of the standards does describe how the standards may be used with parents and in examining curriculum. It does not describe how the standards may be used to measure progress in young children as they develop skills in the essential domains. Kansas clearly states that the standards are not aligned with the KQRIS and that grant funding will provide the resources to do this. The High Quality Plan identifies the activities that will be conducted to review and align the KQRIS. What is not discussed in detail is how Kansas will look at the standards to determine if review is necessary and how this review will take place in addition to alignment with the KQRIS. It is not clear if the standards will be developed into a measurable format or what will happen after 2013. Kansas has not provided enough description or evidence that the KQRIS will be ready by 2013 for implementation.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	15	5

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)

Kansas has indicated that the state has demonstrated commitment to increasing standards and professional development supports and incentives. Early in the presentation state projects (Peer Mentoring, Enhancing Early Child Care Quality, etc.) were discussed in the current status section. For each project there was a brief description that emphasized the primary purpose of each project. What is not clear is how these projects were directly related to and supportive of the KQRIS. No evidence has been presented, such as the syllabus, outline or agendas for the completed trainings or information sharing activities that focused attention on the KQRIS. Kansas does not indicate who or what institutions gave the trainings, such as, post-secondary institutions, experts in the field, an important piece of information to substantiate Kansas's commitment to high quality programs. Kansas indicates in its discussion that the Kansas Preschool Program 'process has used lessons learned from the Four Year Old At-Risk program and the CIF funded Pre-K pilot Program to develop a set of quality indicators' that are presented in Appendix K. The document in Appendix K presents goals and objectives with guiding principles. This document appears to be a draft of policy rather than indicators that are specific the KQRIS. Because there is a lack of specificity regarding the importance of this document, it cannot be determined how this document will be used in the promotion of participation in the KQRIS. Kansas proposes in its High Quality Plan that the state will promote effective state policies and procedures. The plan is achievable but not ambitious. The first activity, to create a practitioner group will be completed by summer 2012, recommendations for next steps to increase participation is due in 2013. These are long timelines for these activities. Additionally, the plan lacks specificity and

has gaps in steps. The second activity, recommendations to increase participation in the KQRIS is followed by activity 3 to develop policies that support recommendations. It is unclear how these steps will be accomplished and by whom. The table B (2) (c) identifies the number of programs that are expected to increase in the KQRIS. The percents offered by 2015 are very low and conservative. It is understood that the present KQRIS needs to be 're-tooled' yet a system is currently in place and there is a foundation established, as discussed in the sections on past performance. The evidence of past performance presented indicates that Kansas is in a position to expect higher numbers/ percents of participating programs. The expectation of increasing program participation 10% by 2015 is too low given Kansas's past experience in promoting and implementing the current KQRIS.

	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)

Kansas describes in detail the use of the ECERS-R as a valid and reliable tool for rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs. Kansas has indicated that raters are trained, deemed reliable and undergo inter-rater reliability checks regularly. This system as described is sound and a strength of the KQRIS. The follow-up with coaches (as described in an earlier section) is an excellent support for the program. In the reform of the current KQRIS there is a lack of discussion on how programs will be monitored including: 1) how raters will be trained, 2) inter-rater reliability will be maintained, 3) who will monitor the system overall, and 4) follow-up to ratings. How programs will be rated monitored is not fully discussed. Licensing is not discussed in full and there is no discussion if Kansas will review its licensing procedures as other components are revised, updated, and aligned. Kansas addresses the provision of quality rating and licensing information to parents in Activity 2.3.2. This is presented in a brief statement that by fall 2014, "a protocol and procedures for what data will be made publicly available to parents and develop reporting schedule." This statement lacks detail and poorly represents Kansas's overall plan to disseminate information on the ratings of the Early Learning and Development Programs.

	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)

Kansas has described that within the current system there are many supports in place for the early childhood programs and the early childhood professionals/ educators, including incentives, coaching, and list of agencies and supports that provide technical assistance. There are no current supports in place for families to access high-quality Early Learning and Development Centers. Kansas indicates through its developing system that the CAPP (discussed in E2) will increase families access to high quality centers. The description offered in E2 is brief and offers few details other than parents may enter information to do a high level screening and/ or apply for any or all benefits in all of the following programs: TANF, Food Assistance, Refugee Assistance, or Child Care. This discussion does not include information on what specific information parents may access on child care, including KQRIS ratings and early childhood provider information. The description presented in E2 is vague. It states that parents will be able to enter information to do a high level screening and/or apply for benefits in any or all of the following programs: TANF, Food Assistance, Refugee Assistance, or Child Care. There is no further discussion to discern what elements of child care the customer will be able to access. No evidence is provided in the Appendices that provides additional information. Kansas has not clearly described other strategies that will help families to access high quality Early Learning and Development Programs such as providing full-day, full-year programs, transportation, etc.) The High Quality Plan indicates intent to examine current practices and by 2014 there will be recommendations in place for policy development. These are not clear statements of how Kansas will proceed and do not indicate that a full range of supports will be considered. Kansas has not made a compelling statement that the efforts to provide additional supports to families have been made in this proposal. Kansas does not discuss in detail how the state determined the number of programs increasing at the top tier levels. Given the activities and timelines in the High Quality Plan, there is no description of how Kansas intends to increase the number of programs. Kansas indicates that it will increase the total number of programs participating in the KQRIS by 93% (133 today to 1800) in 2015. The increase in numbers of children served is too conservative (see comments in B2). Kansas has many years experience in implementing the current KQRIS and is knowledgeable of strategies that would work toward a greater participation in the KQRIS. As noted in B2 family care centers were the focus of the original KQRIS and all 20 reports indicate that 114 such centers were rated. It is not clearly stated why this group is not represented on these tables B (4) (c) (1) and B (4) (c) (2). Overall, there is a lack of clear discussion and evidence that suggests that Kansas is not likely to meet these goals by 2015. The High-Quality plan is not ambitious in developing policies and supports for families to access high quality Early Learning and Development Programs. Timelines for completion of activities are not well paced and the approach to completion is not aggressive enough. Expectations on family care is not stated and are not represented in the tables.

	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)

Kansas addresses two studies that it completed on its Qualistar mode. Kansas reports on these findings briefly but does not provide enough evidence that would indicate the soundness or robustness of the study. Neither a report nor an executive summary were included in the application so that a determination of the design, data collection and analysis could be reviewed. While these reports are not in evidence, the discussion indicates that Kansas has had prior experience in validating their system. The activities outlined in Goal 2 specify that Kansas will conduct a study to validate the re-tooled KQRIS. It plans to hire an outside evaluator and identify questions through a logic model. This is an overall strength of Kansas's plan to validate the effectiveness of the re-tooled KQRIS.

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)

Kansas provides an in-depth discussion of the history and application of its Early Learning Guidelines and Standards. The current standards are meeting the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge definition of Early Learning Essential Domains, required to be used in the state funded programs, and aligned with the Kansas's K-3 standards. Additionally, the Kansas standards are aligned with outcomes required of Part B and Part C as well as with Kansas's K-3 standards. Finally, Kansas reports that at least one university has created a course in which the standards are taught and there have been a number of trainings on the Kansas standards throughout the state. In each discussion, Kansas has provided relevant and substantial evidence that indicates Kansas has significantly imbued the standards throughout the early childhood community of the state. Kansas has indicated that the next steps are to review and revise this document and to address areas in which there are identified gaps such as providing guidance for programs caring for high needs children. Kansas also indicates that the document will need to be aligned with other components of its early childhood initiatives such as policies and professional development. Kansas has set ambitious goals for this area. These goals are achievable as activities are clearly identified with reasonable timelines. The High Quality Plan identifies committees and stakeholders that will be involved. While there is a lead agency in this effort, it is not clearly identified, nor is the membership (i.e. the participant representation of each agency/ department/ office) of the committees. However, Kansas indicates in its objectives that partner agencies will be involved and that the new standards will be reviewed to align and implement policies for successful implementation. Kansas has provided a good discussion of its efforts and demonstrates that the state has established a foundation for promoting Early Learning and Development Standards. It has much work to do and the goals are ambitious, such as having a newly revised set of standards ready for Fall 2012. However, Kansas, has clearly provided evidence that the state is capable of meeting these goals and that all relevant stakeholders, including institutions of higher education, will be involved. Finally, Kansas has indicated that its Early Learning Standards are voluntary. Voluntary participation in the use of the KQRIS does not achieve the overarching goal of the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge. This is a weakness of the Kansas's proposal as participation in the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge initiative would be mandatory for programs. Voluntary participation does not strengthen the current KQRIS system or its corresponding outcomes.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	20	4

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)

Kansas presents a background on the MTSS framework that began in 2008. This discussion indicates that the full document that is presented in the appendices is being used by school districts and there has been some work to support early childhood programs. The MTSS is the Multi-Tiered System of Supports that may be used by districts in multiple ways, but primarily to assist in understanding the principles and practices of a multi-tiered system. A review of the document indicates that there is a section on Assessment. This is the only link that could be found in the MTSS document or the narrative that clearly relates to these criteria. Kansas identifies their need to develop a coordinated Comprehensive Assessment System as Kansas does not currently have such a system in place. There is no connection clearly made to the earlier discussion of the MTSS. The High Quality Plan identifies objectives and activities that address a cohesive Comprehensive Assessment System. These objectives and related activities include training in 2013. There is difficulty in determining how these activities are conceptualized. Kansas states that there will be a 'plan' and then 'training' yet it is not specific enough. Kansas lacks definitive statements on how it conceptualizes or will approach the development of a comprehensive assessment system. This system has not been clearly defined. This lack of specificity is likely to lead to delay in completing activities and meeting goals. Overall, the conceptualization of the Comprehensive Assessment System is poorly conceived.

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	20	5
<p>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--</p> <p>(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;</p> <p>(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</p> <p>(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.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)

Kansas provides thorough discussion of its history in engaging and supporting families through its strong relationship with Parents as Teachers and other programs such as the Kansas Fatherhood Initiative and the QRIS that incorporates Strengthening Families. Kansas's High Quality Plan includes a review and revision of the current family engagement standards. Kansas indicates that these standards minimally exist in using the Parents As Teachers (as documented in the Early Learning Connections. Kansas states that family engagement standards need to be developed and aligned with the TQRIS levels. The High Quality Plan to complete this task is presented and follows the same set of activities for the Comprehensive Assessment Plan described earlier. Kansas does not have a clear definition of family engagement and this makes it difficult to determine how Kansas will proceed in the development of its standards. There are mentions of inclusion of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards, but there is no discussion of what this includes or how it was addressed in past efforts. Kansas provided too little discussion or documentation on present or next steps planned on: establishing a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards and increasing the number and percent of Early Childhood Educators trained in standards. The inclusion of Home Visitors as an identified group and home programs referenced, but there is no expansion on these two groups and how they will be included in the use of these standards. Additionally, Kansas does not discuss how it will specifically address families with high needs children. Kansas has not provided sufficient evidence and documentation that the plan to develop and implement family engagement strategies is clearly conceptualized and framed within a definition.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (D).

which are as follows:

	Available	Score
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	40	16
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--</p> <p>(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;</p> <p>(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (D)(1)		
<p>Kansas provides a thorough discussion and documentation that the Core Competencies, developed in 2006 with Missouri, are presently in use. The document includes both education standards and content standards. Institutions of higher education have been involved in the development and implementation of the standards. Teacher education programs are built around these standards, although there is no mention of which of the early childhood accrediting institutions have done so. Early Childhood providers may gain CEU credits by attending workshops or conferences with sessions and trainings based upon the Core Competencies. There is no other description of how these core competencies are used in other ways throughout the early childhood community. The document indicates that the core competencies are supported by the Children's Trust, Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, Missouri Social Services, and Missouri Department of Education. There is no discussion of other partnering State agencies that are supportive of this document and how it is used, such as the Kansas Department of Education or health and human services. Kansas identifies that the gap in the current system is that it does not have a statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and clearly indicates that the Core Competencies, addressed above, do not contain enough rigor. Kansas also identifies that there is no current system for providing ongoing professional development, there is a lack of resources and staff and an uneven distribution of resources and staff for professional development activities across the state. Goal 4 of the High Quality Plan indicates that it will support the workforce through coordination of services, professional development providers and focused professional development opportunities. The presentation of the High Quality Plan's corresponding activities and timeline indicate that at the end of this funding period, the goal's product will be a plan, policies and procedures for a state-accepted credential, and results from a report to begin planning for the implementation. While this is a significant amount of work, the end product is to begin to plan for implementation of the Framework seems ill-paced and not aggressively moving toward implementation. The 2015 end-product documentation does not ensure that the Framework will be implemented after funding. There is no discussion of who the team of experts or the stakeholder group would include. Nor does the plan indicate how post-secondary institutions will be involved in the development of this document. Kansas has not provided a detailed discussion or other evidence that indicates that the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework will be developed in a timely manner by identified experts in the field and with the support and collaboration of post secondary institutions.</p>		

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

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

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)

Kansas currently uses the KELI as the kindergarten entry assessment. It is used with a companion assessment, the Kansas Early Learning Inventory for Fours. The KELI is described as a tool to organize information for teachers to support instructional decisions. KELI is an assessment tool used in Kindergarten and first grade. It is a noted strength that Kansas has been using a valid and reliable assessment that is culturally sensitive and appropriate for children with disabilities. Kansas indicates that these assessments are aligned with the standards and with each other. There is documentation a case study has been included in Appendix O for review. The domains are described in the narrative and the report. The KELI is an observational tool. The number of items, administration, and scoring are not described. The KELI is described as being revised to align with the Common Core standards and will be named the KELI-R. A pilot has been conducted on a draft to begin the validation process. This study should be completed by 2012. Kansas indicates that the project to support the study has both private and public funding for the validation of the KELI-R. Kansas has developed a comprehensive High Quality Plan to meet Goal 5. This area is a strength of the overall proposal. There is an inadequate discussion of how the KELI-R will be reported in the Statewide Longitudinal Data System. The brief discussion indicates that the KELI-R will be web-based and that kindergarten teachers will be completing the assessment. This does not address how the KELI-R will be reported to the longitudinal data system. To be sustained, costs will be assumed within the 'system.' Kansas does not define what is meant by the 'system.'

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	4

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)

Kansas has presented a description of its plan to develop and support a Statewide Longitudinal Data System. The data system will be coordinated with the current K-12 school based system. Kansas has indicated through its High Quality Plan that there will be a 'gap analysis' in which the collaborating agencies will identify areas in which data is not currently being collected. The High Quality Plan for development of the early learning data system is achievable. Kansas has developed a time frame for this project that is not ambitious, requiring about a year to establish a governance structure. (Activity 5.1.1/ Fall 2012) to act as steering committee. Kansas does not explain why establishing such a committee would take 12 months. There is no discussion of the longitudinal data set, how data will be collected in a uniform manner or how it will be entered in a user friendly system. Kansas's discussion of building/ enhancing this data set using the CAPP system is not discussed thoroughly and is confusing. Kansas indicates that the Child Care Portal, "the CAPP will provide the essential data elements for the child care provider who voluntarily participate in the system." This statement is unclear as to how Kansas is defining child care participation, essential data elements, and voluntary. More details are needed to determine how this data set will be used by the early child care providers. Additionally, the CAPP, as described for use by parents, the Customer Portal, Kansas describes the CAPP as, "The customer will be able to enter information to do a high level screening and/or apply for benefits in any or all of the following programs: TANF, Food Assistance, Refugee Assistance, or Child Care." It is not clear what information the customer will be entering. It is not clear how accessing information about child care providers is related to entering information into the CAPP. Finally, it could not be determined if information on the provider would be linked to the longitudinal data system to measure early learning outcomes.

This system as described is a weakness of Kansas's system to build a customer friendly data set. Additionally there is a lack of coherence among the activities listed in the plan. For example, it is not clear how the CAPP and incentives for Child Care and Early Education practitioners is related to the early learning data system. There are gaps in the discussion in addressing necessary steps of building/ enhancing the data system. There is relatively few mentions of how the data set will be governed and how participating agencies will access data. The goals are achievable but the timelines for specific tasks are not ambitious in the early months of development. Finally, while the Kansas Departments of Social Rehabilitation Services and Health and Environment are collaborators on this project, the Department of Education is not mentioned in the discussion as to what role it will have in the development of the data set. Because there is a lack of specificity in the role each agency will assume, it is unclear how this goal will be met. This discussion lacks detail with regards to the development and implementation of the data system. The discussion did not address the privacy and oversight requirements.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	140

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)
Kansas has described in other sections of this application that the current licensing practices that include a licensing procedure and inspections. Licensing of child care facilities in Kansas is law. The TQRIS is inclusive of all licensed or state-regulated ELDP.

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)
Kansas has clearly demonstrated that it has a kindergarten assessment tool in place, that it is currently being revised along with an operational KORIS system and it will be aligned. Appropriate steps are being taken to ensure validity and reliability of the revised tool. Kansas did not receive 70 or more of the goals.

Absolute Priority

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

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

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

Comments on Absolute Priority

Kansas has demonstrated a strong background and experience in the development and implementation of the TORIS and a plan to re-build its current system. However, there are several areas of weakness identified in Kansas's application in which more detail and clarification are needed in the narrative and appendices. First, Kansas has not thoroughly discussed how well the state will be serving the high needs children and their families. The overarching goal of the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge is to serve this population through a quality system. Kansas has not provided a comprehensive discussion or adequate evidence that this project will be moving this population forward in school readiness through the development and implementation of this application's components. Next, Kansas has not fully developed a governance structure for this project. The descriptions of governance and decision-making process are presented as the 'intended model.' Inclusion of oversight committees such as Core Team Members, Transformation Team Members, etc. are not established and leadership is not identified. The lack of commitment to the governance and leadership of this project does not reflect a strong commitment. Kansas has not developed a viable plan for the areas which require the most development such as the Core Competencies, the longitudinal data set, Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. There is little discussion on early childhood outcomes and how these will be aligned with other pieces of information such as the ratings of the KQRIS. The plans for these activities are vague. There is no clarity in the description of these projects and they are not aggressively pursued. Final activities for 2015 indicate that plans will be finalized, recommendations will be acted upon, and policies will be developed. Little implementation of activities are planned for before 2014. The work plan is not well organized. In several instances the plan includes 8 months or longer to establish a committee, find stakeholders, etc. and then another 6 months to complete their work. This is over a third of the grant funding period.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # KS-5013

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 1:05 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: Criteria, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 12. Includes sub-points (a) through (d) describing evaluation criteria.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)
(A)(1)(a) The applicant demonstrates a commitment of financial investments in Early Learning and Development Programs since January 2007. For example, the applicant has contributed funding to IDEA Part C and Early Head Start programming since 2007. The amount contributed to IDEA Part C has either increased or remained at the previous year amount over this time period showing financial commitment to the program. (A)(1)(b) The applicant does not provide information supporting an increase in the number of children with high needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs. For example, the number of children participating in programs receiving CCDF funds has decreased over the time frame of 2007-2010. In addition, while the number of children identified in the 4-year old in risk category has gone up, funding for programs serving this population has gone down. (A)(1)(c) The applicant does have existing early development practices and infrastructure in place. For example, the state has an Early Childhood Leadership Summit that has been in place since 2000. This initiative has moved forward over the years to include participation in a multi-site consortium impacting policy in early childhood. (A)(1)(d) The applicant has certain building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, but is missing other building blocks. The applicant does have a solid history of engaging families of children with high needs and presents several strategies that have been successful in increasing family involvement. The applicant has implemented the Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, to improve outcomes for children and families, since 1999. However, the applicant does not currently have a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework in place, this is a gap in their application.

Table with 3 columns: Criteria, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals, 20, 15.

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)
<p>(A)(2)(a) The applicant presents a plan that includes goals to improve outcomes for children. However the applicant does not describe exactly who constitutes the children with high needs. This is a necessary factor to be considered in terms of ambition and ability to have goals achieved. Without this information it is not possible to determine if the plan is ambitious or achievable. (A)(2)(b) The applicant presents a clear plan to reform areas of existing programs to establish a clear and credible path to meet the stated goals. An example of this reform is presented in the applicants plan to review and revise their existing QRIS program and to include additional methods of assessment to supplement the one measure that is currently utilized. These two strategies constitute an effective reform agenda that establishes a clear and credible path toward achieving the application goals. (A)(2)(c)The applicant clearly articulates a solid rationale for selecting criteria (C1, 2, & 4; D1; E1 & 2). The applicants plan includes building on existing state programming such as the Learning Standards that were created in 2006 but also to create missing components such as a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, thus addressing numerous gaps in the existing programs.</p>

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

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

- (a) Demonstrating how the Participating State Agencies and other partners, if any, will identify a governance structure for working together that will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability and describing--
 - (1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;
 - (2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;
 - (3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and
 - (4) The plan for when and how the State will involve representatives from Participating Programs, Early Childhood Educators or their representatives, parents and families, including parents and families of Children with High Needs, and other key stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant;
- (b) Demonstrating that the Participating State Agencies are strongly committed to the State Plan, to the governance structure of the grant, and to effective implementation of the State Plan, by including in the MOU or other binding agreement between the State and each Participating State Agency--
 - (1) Terms and conditions that reflect a strong commitment to the State Plan by each Participating State Agency, including terms and conditions designed to align and leverage the Participating State Agencies' existing funding to support the State Plan;
 - (2) "Scope-of-work" descriptions that require each Participating State Agency to implement all applicable portions of the State Plan and a description of efforts to maximize the number of Early Learning and Development Programs that become Participating Programs; and
 - (3) A signature from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency; and
- (c) Demonstrating commitment to the State Plan from a broad group of stakeholders that will assist the State in reaching the ambitious yet achievable goals outlined in response to selection criterion (A)(2)(a), including by

obtaining--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

(A)(3)(a)(1) The applicant provides evidence of a solid organizational structure for managing grants. The state has a history of successful collaborations with organizations such as the Early Learning Coordinating Council and the Early Childhood Advisory Council. One example of a successful strategy is the feedback loop to ensure that all collaborators are informed and also encouraged to provide information to ensure effective organization leadership. (A)(3)(a)(2) The applicant describes the roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency and other Participating State Agencies in Table (A)(3)(1). The applicant also provides this information in the letters of support by the listed agencies. (A)(3)(a)(3) The applicant provides limited information on how these agencies will make decisions. The only information found on this criteria was that the ELC teams must complete decision making method forms. The applicant does not provide a template for these forms, or other information that would make assessing the extent to which the applicant has a high quality plan for methods and process for decision making policies possible. (A)(3)(a)(4) The applicant does not describe how or when the state will involve parents or families in the planning and implementation of the grant activities. (A)(3)(b)(1) The applicant demonstrates agreements with the Department of Health and the Social and Rehabilitation Services, as well as with the Children's Cabinet. These agreements include terms and conditions for each participating collaboration. (A)(3)(b)(2) The scope of work presented by the applicant is very thorough and is detailed by specific criteria and by participating agency. (A)(3)(b)(3) The applicant provides signed letters by each Participating State Agency. (A)(3)(c)(1) The applicant supplies letters of support from postsecondary institutions, the business community, and the state Association for the Education of Young Children. (A)(3)(c)(2) The applicant fails to provide letters of support from state legislators, adult education and family literacy leaders, or from libraries and children's museums.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	11

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; other private funding sources) for activities and services that help achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, including how the quality set-asides in CCDF will be used;

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

(A)(4)(a) The applicant proposes a plan that includes the use of existing funding to support early learning and development. The proposal includes the use of in-kind contributions and ECAC funds. (A)(4)(b)(1) The applicant does not provide a budget that appears adequate to support the goals of the proposal. For example, the applicant has listed salaries for key personnel but not does build in pay increases for the staff over the 4 years of the grant. The lack of pay increases may reduce retention of key staff which could negatively impact continuity across programmatic activities. The costs do not appear reasonable to meet the goals articulated in the application. For example, there are no funds assigned for Training Stipends. Funds could have been allocated to this area for program components that include coaching and mentoring tasks. (A)(4)(b)(2) The applicant's plan to include both full time and part time positions appears well-suited to their program goals. This is especially true of positions that will address start-up goals in programs that will be able to sustain themselves toward the end of the grant period. (A)(4)(b)(3) The applicant delivers a budget that outlines the amount of funding needed to accomplish each goal as well as how much funding each Participating State Agency will require to complete their goals. The applicant fails to list sources of additional funds available in the presented budget tables. For example, the applicant mentions utilizing funds from the Tobacco Settlement within their narrative but this information is omitted from their budget table. (A)(3)(c) The applicant proposes a plan to build on the existing infrastructure of the state, not to establish new programs. The applicant believes this method will make sustaining the grant activities after the end of the funding easier. The applicant appears to be relying on the coaching and training of early childhood providers to sustain the grant activities after the grant cycle. This does not seem to be an effective method as retention in the field of early childhood is very common. The applicant does not build in supports for the trained professionals in their role as mentors or coaches.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	4

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

(B)(1)(a)(1-6) The applicant includes successful family engagement strategies and health promotion practices in their QRIS program. However, the applicant provides limited information as to how they plan to establish a Comprehensive Assessment System. The current system includes only one assessment measure and while valid and reliable, it does not address child outcomes, a key requirement of the funding opportunity. The applicant provides limited information on their involvement of Early Childhood Educator qualifications. They state that Staff Training and Education is a component of their QRIS but they do not explain how or the QRIS point value associated with training and education activities. The applicant does not discuss the use of effective data practices in the implementation of their QRIS program. (B)(1)(b) The applicant does not describe how programs participating in the QRIS system receive points toward the multiple tiers. Without a clear understanding of the point system, it is impossible to determine how the state assesses program quality and what their standards are for program excellence. (B)(1)(c) The applicant states that the QRIS program is not currently linked with Early Learning and Development Programs.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	15	5

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

(B)(2)(a)(1-5) The applicant presents a plan that does not reach the goal of ensuring that all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate in the QRIS. The applicant plans for participation rates to range from 10% - 20% depending on the funding source. The 10-20% range seems low for the number of program eligible to participate (over 7000 in the state). For example, 10 % of the programs funded under section 619 of part b of IDEA and part c of IDEA will participate by the end of the grant cycle. (B)(2)(b) The applicant states that they will implement policies and practices to assist families to afford high quality child care centers. However, the applicant does not provide specific details on the incentives and supports to be used, making it impossible to determine the level of effectiveness of this activity. The applicant mentions the Infant and Toddler New Slot Development (Resource Referral Agency) but does not describe what this program did or the results of the effort. (B)(2)(c) The applicant's plan to set ambitious yet achievable targets for increased participation in the QRIS program is not well established. The goals are set from 10-20% which seems achievable but not ambitious given the number of early childhood programs in the state.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs	15	8

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)

(B)(3)(a) The applicant presents evidence of use of a valid and reliable assessment measure and a solid history of training monitors. The applicant utilizes the Environment Rating Scales. In addition, the applicant bases the frequency of monitoring early childhood centers based on their level in the QRIS program, either annually or biannually. This approach would seem to be in alignment with evaluation strategies utilized through other accrediting agencies such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children and would also appear to provide an incentive for the programs to meet a high-quality goal since preparing for assessment visits is time consuming and stressful for the staff. (B)(3)(b) The applicant has developed multiple methods to share QRIS ratings with families. Examples include brochures and "Virtual Tours" of centers that participate in the QRIS program. The applicant fails to detail if these methods are sufficient or utilized by families. The online component may not be effective for families who have no or limited access to computers, internet, or other resources used to review the

information presented through the Virtual Tours.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	8

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

(B)(4)(a) The applicant has plans in place to provide training and coaching incentives for early childhood programs to participate in the QRIS programs. For example, the number of coaching/mentoring hours a participating center receives is based on the tier level of the center. The higher tier level, the lower the number of hours provided, the lower the tier level the greater the number of provided coaching hours. This would ensure that the programs needing the higher amount of support will receive it while those programs that are already achieving a higher level of services still receive some support but at an appropriate level. The applicant also discusses the use of TEACH to offer CDA coursework or college scholarships. This multiple prong approach to improving Early Learning and Development Programs seems to support the goals of the applicant. (B)(4)(b) The applicant does not provide information on how they will support families with children with high needs in terms of transportation, meals, etc. (B)(4)(c)(1) The applicant sets targets for the baseline numbers of programs in the top tiers but does not discuss how the numbers will increase, or decrease, after the revised QRIS is in place. (B)(4)(b)(2) The applicant proposes a goal of increasing the number and percentage of Children with High Needs enrolled in top tier Early Learning and Development Programs. The expected increase is 2% in year 2, 5% in year 3, and 10% in the final grant year. This seems achievable but not necessarily ambitious given the funds requested.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

(B)(5)(a) The applicant proposes a plan to continue using a valid and reliable measure to assess quality across the various tiers of the QRIS program. The applicant intends to continue the use of the Environment Ratings Scales which are highly valued and utilized in the field of early child environment assessment and should provide useful information as the programs progress through the QRIS program. (B)(5)(b) The applicant does not currently have a process in place to assess if quality ratings have an impact on child outcomes. The state does plan to work with independent evaluators to develop a research design, collect data, and analyze results. This process will begin in the spring of 2012 which may be too ambitious since the applicant intends to put the contract for the independent evaluator out for a bidding process. It is unclear what their research design will be as that is a process that is

planned to go out to bid in the spring of 2012. The applicant does not provide evidence of their tier levels. For example, the point system used is not explained in the grant or appendix. There is not explanation of the activities programs can engage in to progress through the tiers.

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)

(C)(1)(a) The applicant presents information that illustrates that they have developed standards that are developmentally and culturally appropriate. Resources utilized in the development of these standards include the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Core Competencies. (C)(1)(b) The applicant has established standards that are aligned with the states Department of Education K-12 Content Standards. This should ensure continuity of academic goals for all children. (C)(1)(c) The applicant's Early Learning and Development Standards are not currently incorporated with the Program Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, or the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Aligning to these areas would support a cohesive statewide approach to improving the school readiness of children with high needs. Without an alignment to these Standards, child outcomes would not be able to be monitored. (C)(1)(d) The applicant provides evidence of several supports to promote understanding and commitment to the Early Learning Standards. This is manifested through progress reports and trainings in conjunction with state agency partners. A cohesive understanding of the importance of the Early Learning and Development Standards should ensure that all invested agencies are providing the same information to all constituents (educators, families, etc.).

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	20	9

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)
(C)(2)(a) The applicant began working with Early Learning and Development Programs to select assessment measures in 2008. Integrating information from a variety of programs is likely to ensure that the selected assessments are appropriate for the target population. (C)(2)(b) The applicant currently trains certain early childhood professionals (special educators and Part C professionals) in specific assessment measures used in the QRIS through university programs. (C)(2)(c) The applicant articulates plans to develop an aligned and integrated system of assessment data collection through the collaboration with other state agencies. Thus, limiting duplication of services. This would seem to be a prudent decision in an effort to capitalize on existing infrastructure. (C)(2)(d) The applicant states in their narrative that there is a lack of training focused specifically on assessment practices. In addition, the applicant does not currently, nor does the applicant plan to offer educators with information on locating training opportunities. The applicant does not provide a rationale for this decision.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)
(C)(4)(a) The applicant has a strong history of including activities to enhance the capacity of families in the care and education of their children. The applicant describes their Parents as Teachers program (promotes standards for child interaction and development), Parent Cafes (provides each participant with their own Infant-Toddler Specialist to develop parent-child events), and highlights the home visitor programs (with a Parents As Teacher Curriculum). The applicant intends to create a task force of families, parents, and home visitors to evaluate whether the existing programs are culturally and linguistically appropriate. The task force has made recommendations in previous years and will be charged with moving the recommendations toward becoming standards for family engagement, an admirable goal. (C)(4)(b) The applicant does not discuss increasing the number or percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained to implement family engagement strategies. Therefore, the rating is within the Fully Implemented and Medium Quality range on the Quality and Implementation rubric. (C)(4)(c) The applicant promotes family support in conjunction with other organizations to deliver such programs as Train-the-Trainer, Fatherhood Initiatives through Head Start and the Strengthening Families program.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

	Available	Score
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	40	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)
<p>(D)(1)(a) The applicant presents a plan to develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The proposed plan includes having a draft framework by 2014 with a finalized version due by the Spring of 2015. (D)(1)(b) The applicant proposes to develop and align the progression of degrees and credentials to the framework. This work will happen in parallel to the development of the state framework (draft due spring 2014, final version due spring 2015 for both activities). These activities do not appear to be timely in terms of the requirements presented in the funding opportunity. The applicant appears to have been working on this task for the past 6 years, it seems unreasonable that they would need another 2-3 years to complete implementation of a project that is already in progress. It is unclear how this funding opportunity will move the existing process ahead. (D)(1)(c) The applicant does not present information on the providers or postsecondary institutions that will participate in the development of the framework or degree and credential alignment. The lack of engagement by postsecondary institutions is a concern. If the postsecondary institutions are not engaged in developing training for early childhood students that align with state standards there will likely be early childhood educators not trained in this standards, thereby reducing the quality of education for children with high needs and all children. The quality of this plan is unable to be determined since the credentials of the individuals or institutions conducting the trainings are not provided.</p>

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

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

implementation.

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

(E)(1)(a) The applicant has a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that includes 8 domains. However, the applicant will be reviewing and revising this assessment to better align with the Common Core. This work will include collaboration with the Department of Education. Aligning the Assessment to the Common Core should ensure continuity of developmental goals across the state. It is unclear if the KEA will be aligned to the state's Early Learning and Development Standards or will cover all Domains of School Readiness since the plan will be undergoing revisions. The applicant does not provide information to address the alignment issue after revision occurs. (E)(1)(b) The applicant states that the current Kindergarten Entry Assessment method is mostly observational and is used to provide information for instruction. The applicant states this observational tool is appropriate for English learners and children with disabilities but does not provide evidence to support this statement. For example, the validity and reliability has not been assessed and there is not a plan presented to assess the validity of this assessment on any population. (E)(1)(c) The applicant began a pilot version of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment in the 2010-2011 school year and has plans to continue the phase-in throughout the life of this grant cycle. However, the full administration of the KEA will not be implemented until the fall of 2015, one full year past the deadline set forth in the funding opportunity. (E)(1)(d) The applicant has been reporting data to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System since September of 2011 and expects to continue supplying data to the system throughout the life of this grant funding. (E)(1)(e) The applicant states that additional funding for the plans presented in this application have come from both public and private sources and an LDS grant. This information is inconsistent with the information provided in their budget tables.

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	10

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)

(E)(2)(a) The applicant does not provide evidence that they are addressing all of the Essential Data Elements in their application. The applicant clearly states that they have many of the Essential Data Elements. A Task Force was convened to identify data elements associated with school readiness. This report will be delivered in March 2012. The applicant does not discuss the existing data elements or acknowledge missing data elements. (E)(2)(b) The applicant proposes a plan to expand the current data collection plan used in school-age programs to the early childhood programs. One of the data collection programs proposed include CLARIS as a credentialing model. (E)(2)(c) The applicant describes a plan to involve agency staff, partners, and field inspectors in the collection of standard data formats and structures to ensure interoperability among the various agencies and levels. The method will provide information from multiple sources, giving a more complete picture of the data which could better inform future practices. (E)(2)(d) The applicant proposes a plan to complete the data plan by 2014 and to report findings throughout the development process. Continuous reporting should ensure modification along the time-frame as necessary to ensure improvement of programs. (E)(2)(e) The applicant proposes a plan to share data, but there is no discussion of how the applicant will comply with local, state, or federal privacy laws.

	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	6
<p>Competitive Preference Priority 2 is designed to increase the number of children from birth to kindergarten entry who are participating in programs that are governed by the State's licensing system and quality standards, with the goal that all licensed or State-regulated programs will participate. The State will receive points for this priority based on the extent to which the State has in place, or has a High-Quality Plan to implement no later than June 30, 2015--</p> <p>(a) A licensing and inspection system that covers all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State and that regularly care for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting; provided that if the State exempts programs for reasons other than the number of children cared for, the State may exclude those entities and reviewers will score this priority only on the basis of non-excluded entities; and</p> <p>(b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p> <p>Comments on (P)(2)</p> <p>(a) The state applicant does have a licensing law that requires any child care facility caring for more than one unrelated child, for over 20 hours per week, to be licensed. This is a lower number than required within the funding opportunity. (b) The applicant includes all licensed or state-regulated child care facilities to participate in the QRIS program if they wish. Participation is not mandatory but voluntary. The applicant does not provide financial incentive for programs to participate. This does not ensure that that all licensed or State-regulated programs will participate which is the main goal of this criterion.</p>		

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	No
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p> <p>Comments on (P)(3)</p> <p>(a) The applicant does have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment implemented and has plans to expand the KEA to all kindergarten programs by the fall of 2015. (b) The applicant received a score of 60% of the maximum points for criterion (E)(1).</p>		

Absolute Priority

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

that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.

Comments on Absolute Priority

The applicant does not present a comprehensive or cohesive application that will increase the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed. The applicant does present some solid evidence on the history of early childhood practices in the state, but they fail to clearly define the population of Children with High Needs. Without this critical component identified, their application lacks substance and clarity. The components addressed throughout the application are briefly described, to the point that they appear incomplete and limit the possibility of attainment or level of ambition. The applicant has plans to collaborate with state agencies to review and revise the existing QRIS program and align the tiers with credentials and degree offerings from local postsecondary institutions. However, there are no letters of support from agencies or organizations that will serve to support these activities. The applicant proposes collaborations with the Department of Health and Social and Rehabilitation Services to leverage existing funding for agency participation such as the Children's Cabinet. Yet, they omit several critical funding sources from their budget tables (Tobacco funds and the LDS grant). The applicant plans on investigating assessment measures to assess child outcomes and to align child outcomes with the K-12 standards. But the applicant does not provide a plan to assist early childhood educators in locating training opportunities in the selected measures.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # KS-5013

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 12:57 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development	20	16
<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> <p>Comments on (A)(1)</p> <p>Kansas demonstrates its past commitment to and investment in Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs in several areas. The Early Childhood Summit led the state with the seventeen (17) state consortia on School Readiness Indicators Initiative. The School Readiness Framework provided the impetus for the state work in this area which included the Early Childhood Plan, Advisory Council, Children's Cabinet, P-20 Council, School Readiness Data Initiative, Interagency Team, and Public-Private Partnerships. From the state work, it is evident that plans have been developed with the documents available in the appendices for review. A pilot rating system, Quality Standards, and child care licensing are current policies and legislation that are in place to demonstrate past commitment to Early Learning and Development Programs. Kansas does not have a competency framework. Total state spending has not increased over the last three years and slight increases followed by decreases in Children with High Needs are reported in Table A (1)-5. Table (A)(1)-3 did not provide information on Part B children served from ages 3 to kindergarten entry but did provide it for Part C. Table (A)(1)-4 demonstrates that the state provided funding from the Tobacco Settlement to keep consistent fiscal support; however, it does not indicate investment for Children with High Needs. Table (A)(1)-5 has variability in the data trends across programs but does not show a consistent increase. Part C numbers are missing, but Part B is completed which seems inconsistent since the numbers are collected and reported at the same time. Kansas provided current status in other key areas serving as building blocks for the high quality program.</p>		
(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.	20	15

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The Kansas School Readiness Framework provides a path for its reform agenda by building on some current successes. The five (5) goal areas provide a High Quality Plan in its coordination among components to improve school readiness for Children with High Needs. The first goal area addresses the coordination of the system, its practices, policies and resource reallocations so they support the system improvements necessary for meeting the Focused Investment Areas. The state describes the work of re-tooling the current Kansas Quality Rating and Improvement System (KQRIS) into a statewide, tiered Quality Rating Systems at the same time as the policy review which may prove useful in this process of state team review of policies. The five areas provide coordinating and integrating goals for building on successes while addressing Focused Investment Areas for improved child outcomes. Specific goals for improving program quality, improving outcomes for Children with High Needs, and closing the readiness gap between Children with High Needs and their peers are stated with ambitious but achievable goals. There is a concern on the achievement of goal 4 since the state does not have a common shared Early Childhood Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework in place. The activities in this area are around meeting and drafting documents with no implementation until 2015 so impact will not be measured as part of any child outcome in closing the gap for school readiness.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

Kansas detailed in its High Quality Plan the governance and organization structure to facilitate coordination, alignment, and implementation. There are numerous teams within the organizational structure listed for the Early Learning Challenge. While Table A demonstrates communication flow within the organizational structure, the project director is not listed on this graphic. It is not clear if the director has final authority or how the decision-making process will be handled. The grant fiscal personnel are listed as a separate team. The first goal area is devoted to the state level and state wide infrastructure for interagency commitment. Kansas is building off a management structure used in the Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) Framework which it found successful. However this structure was used within a K-12 system that had the same required accountability measures in place such as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) which served to drive the focus. The Early Learning Challenge does not have the same outside forces and will not have the TQRIS or Workforce Credential operational until 2015. The Participating State Agencies and broad group of stakeholders demonstrated commitment to the plan with its letters identifying leverage of existing resources. However, there were a small number of support letters for this statewide program.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The financial and program commitment through its state level leadership, numerous councils, and stakeholder groups assists the State in sustaining this work after federal funding ends. However, numerous councils do consume funds that could be allocated to programs for direct services or program improvements. Kansas selected goal areas that will lead to sustainability because the state enhanced its existing programs. However, most of the activities listed were planning meetings with the goal of developing a plan for each of the areas. The fund set aside for grantee technical assistance is at a lower than required amount. Kansas did not identify any funds from other sources to support the program, yet the state did identify earlier in the application that the Tobacco Settlement Funds will be used to support the program. Kansas provided information on use of current

funding by program area for implementation of the plan. Kansas identified goal areas that are state functions so that these activities such as monitoring for improvement and professional development will continue and be sustained after the funding ends. The state longitudinal state system is operational for early childhood programs at the Department of Education so this grant will support the data system expansion work which will be sustained after the grant. This demonstrates a thoughtful and planned approach to efficient use of funding to demonstrate reasonableness of costs and relation to the program design and objectives.

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)

Kansas provided a description of its current Kansas Quality Rating and Improvement System (KQRIS), which is based on the Qualistar Early Learning System. While not aligned with the Early Learning Standards, the system did include general standards focused on curriculum and the use of the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scaled-Revised (ECERS-R). A system of training for raters and coaches, implementation manual, pre-rating manual, and a quality rating report is provided as part of the system. However it is not clear how the centers move through the tiers. From its inception in 2005, 1% received a star rating, in 2005 (this date seems to be a misprint since it can not move from 1% to 39% in the same year) 39% were ranked in the top tiers and in 2011, 56% were in the top two tiers. This scale up and system of training in place demonstrates that Kansas will be able to implement the newly designed TQRIS system to address this area. Currently the state has a partially implemented plan. Kansas identified the areas that it must address to meet the requirements for a High Quality Plan updating and including the Early Learning Standards, updating licensing, increasing participation, and identifying a defined system of tiers and incentives. Promoting teachers/provider skills in supporting early literacy and other readiness elements will assist in improved learning outcomes for Children with High Needs.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	15	6

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

Currently, there is a minimally implemented plan. The plan includes objectives and activities to develop policies that support recommendations to increase participation in the TQRIS. This seems duplicative with goal 1 which is a state policy review. This would have been stronger with more defined activities outside of policy review area. Kansas identified targets for the TQRIS by December 2015. The targets are set at 10% of Early Learning and Development Programs which are part of the TQRIS. Currently, there are approximately 6,000 licensed programs in the system but only 133 participated in the TQRIS over the initial six year period of operation from 2007 to the present. 10% of participating agencies by 2015 is about 600 programs which seems that will be an ambitious, but not an achievable target. There may be an increased impact on Children with High Needs in quality programs through the Part B/C and 4year old at risk programs. However a 10% increase will not reach a sufficient level of children. There is a reference to providing family incentives and support to high needs families as they look for high quality early learning and development experiences. However, it could not be evaluated since there no information was provided on what types of family incentives would be provided.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs	15	6

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

Kansas provided a minimally implemented plan. The current Kansas rating of Early Learning and Development Programs is based on the Qualistar System which has many of the required components but does not measure child outcomes. Kansas noted that the current system does not have a process for validating the system in place with data to differentiate levels of quality with a focus on child care. The state indicated that they will make decision rules for quality but since the program was implemented for six years, some of these rules should have been developed with a review of what worked. The retooled KQRIS will address all assessment components while the redesigned system impacts all sectors of early childhood programs across the state. It is not clear how the raters will be trained and how inter rater reliability levels will be determined. There is a large organizational structure with carefully documented consistent application of the redesigned tool necessary to reach the number of programs in the system. This is a large scale up; however, the state has demonstrated its capacity to scale up with the MTSS Framework in the K12 system. Kansas provided a plan for implementation of the retooled KQRIS which will begin in the fall of 2014. Information on the model for the monitoring process, rater trainings, and integrating data to support the program were missing components of this section. A committee will decide how the data will be released and displayed publicly. Since the state currently provides data in part of the system, a K-12 sample data display with possible suggestions for improvement would have strengthened this section.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	8

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)

Kansas has a partially implemented plan. Currently Kansas provides some financial regards and incentives to assist in program improvement. Programs have access to training incentives and education scholarships to be used for college or CDA coursework. However the incentives do not address Children with High Needs or differentiate the process for improving quality for these children. The targets listed are low for Children with High Needs especially since the programs most children with disabilities attend are publicly funded. Peer support opportunities and networking for coaching support in different tier levels is an appropriate strategy to support teachers. Objectives and activities for this goal area are to create stakeholder groups, review of current practices and create a list of recommendations. The state did not provide information on how it will serve home based children, which the data indicates the majority of children served. The state did not identify any incentives for working families. Kansas currently provides incentives to assist in program improvement. It was unclear how the current incentives promoted or did not promote the program improvement that the state was looking to achieve.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	8

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)

Kansas participated with four other states in a small study conducted by the Midwest Child Care Research Consortium in 2008 to examine the TQRIS systems. Results indicated that quality rating and improvement systems are generally an effective approach for raising quality in child care and demonstrated that KQRIS is a reliable and valid system particularly in relation to accreditation and Environment Rating Scales. The report conclusions identified in the narrative cannot be verified since the 2008 study not provided as part of the evidence. There is no system to support improved child outcomes in the present system. Kansas recognizes the need to develop a system to address Children with High Needs as part of the data based system. The plan will address the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs and improve child outcomes in learning, literacy and developmental outcomes. An independent evaluator will be selected to validate the Early Learning Challenge Project by designing a logic model to identify the outcomes and research questions. Identification of the logic model would have strengthened this section so the state identified the outcomes it wanted with the refined TQRIS as part of the Early Learning Challenge. The completion of the study is listed as summer 2012 but there is no plan on how the results will be used, how parents will access this information and how this will improve services to Children with High Needs.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	20	12
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--</p> <p>(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;</p> <p>(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and</p> <p>(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (C)(1)		
<p>Currently, the state has a partially implemented plan. The Kansas Early Learning Standards are voluntary and linked to the K-12 content standards for continuity of standards from birth to 3rd grade in eight development content areas across five age groupings. The standards are included in professional development, higher education courses, and early childhood unified professional standards. However, there is no requirement for higher education institutions to incorporate them into all early childhood licensing programs. Appendix W provides examples of how to address Children with High Needs for IEP development. Part B and C programs both require early childhood outcomes aligned with the Standards and collected on all children as they exit the programs. Outcomes, cross walks and alignment activities were completed for former versions of the Standards for coordination of all early childhood programs and this will be completed again. Kansas demonstrated that it can update standards and provide supports to promote understanding. The Early Learning Standards are not identified as embedded into Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework which resulted in a lower score. There is an activity (3.2.5) identifying the Department of Education as promoting inclusion of the Early Learning Standards in the upcoming work on the teacher education standards. Kansas did not demonstrate that the Institutions of Higher Education will incorporate it in courses or that the Department of Education will require Institutions of Higher Education to do so as part of the licensing requirements. The state did not provide evidence on how the Early Learning Standards are incorporated in the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p>		
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	20	12

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)

Currently there are multiple program specific requirements for assessment but none support the effective use of data for child outcomes. Within school districts, preschool programs have been integrated within the Kansas MTSS framework from 2008 and implemented several pilot programs in specific areas. The Inter-agency Team has developed a grid which identifies the different screening and referral requirements across programs in the different funded programs to begin the process of improving efficiency and avoiding duplication. This is a first step in the process. However, many of the assessments are for program eligibility rather than child skills and progress for improved outcomes. At present there is no fully defined coordinated Comprehensive Assessment System, but through this High Quality response, a system within the tiered rating and improvement system that includes the Essential Domains of school readiness resulting in data based decisions for Children with High Needs will be developed. Objectives and activities are appropriate for implementing a Comprehensive Assessment System with the selection of appropriate assessments identified. The applicant did not sufficiently explain why Objective 3.5 is necessary. The applicant indicated that a review of current practices and policies was completed for the MTSS framework several years ago during the pilot. This is a duplication of efforts that is not necessary if pilots provided useful information. The applicant did not provide a clear discussion on why instruments in Objective 3.7 are not consistent across programs for meaningful data analysis. The state identified the system as fragmented by simply addressing different program requirements but the state did not fully define a coordinated Comprehensive Assessment System. The state identified the problem sufficiently but the narrative did not provide sufficient information to address this other than planning meetings up to 2015.

	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)

Kansas has demonstrated a commitment to and recognition of parents in the primary role for their child's Early Learning and Development. This commitment started twenty years ago with Parents as Teachers, Early Head Start (which has met or exceeded expected outcome), Home Training Visitation Task Force, Strengthening Families Plan, Parent Leadership Conference, and Fatherhood Initiative. The many opportunities which the state developed to include family support is a strength within the state. Kansas has provided a foundation for supporting families and can leverage these existing resources for future development of the High Quality Plan. Kansas has identified the need to develop family engagement standards that are implemented in a progression aligned with the TQRIS levels. These standards would be developed by the current stakeholder groups with experience and expertise from the home visitors and strengthening families staff. The work of the stakeholder group will be incorporated into the Family Engagement Standards. However, there is no reference to adding the Family Engagement Standards to the Program Standards for Early Childhood Educators or integrating the Standards within the Early Learning and Development Standards. Specific performance measures of increasing the number of early childhood educators were not provided.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

	Available	Score
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	40	16
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--</p> <p>(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;</p> <p>(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (D)(1)		
<p>Currently there is minimal implementation in this area since the state does not have a common Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The State identified a priority to develop a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework which incorporates existing documents. After the development, policies will be implemented for professional development and higher education programs with training for early learning and development professionals beginning in 2015. The applicant did not indicate if there is a requirement for all providers across the three types of training opportunities or if it is voluntary on part of the providers. The applicant did not indicate how the state would monitor implementation of the common Framework. The applicant did not indicate if there will be a common statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Framework. There is no information on who are the post secondary institutions and providers to deliver this training as well as what credentials will be necessary for being a professional development provider under the common Framework.</p>		

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

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

(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)

Kansas has a partially implemented plan. The Kansas Early Learning Inventory-Revised (KELI-R) is the draft kindergarten assessment tool covering Essential Domains of School Readiness which was piloted with 30 kindergarten teachers as part of the initial validation process. Results are being analyzed for further pilot revision in the 2012-13 year. During the 2013-14 year a stratified random sampling will be conducted with voluntary participation in the Fall of 2015. Currently, the KELI-R is being piloted in state funded preschool program and the Four Year Old at Risk program. The applicant did identify the KELI-R implementation funding through the LDS grant as part of the web based application, while the development was funded through private and public funding. Since start up and development costs are funded through the grant and private funding, continuing costs will be sustained within the system, which is a strength of the application. Currently, the KELI is the assessment tool used in kindergarten and first grade in nine domain areas with the purpose to organize information for teachers to support instructional decisions. The KELI-4 is the kindergarten tool for the Four Year old at risk preschool. Neither tool is aligned with the Kansas Early Learning Standards, but the KELI is being revised to better align with the Kansas Common Core standards. Kansas did not indicate why a tool that is in revision would be aligned to the Early Learning Standards. Kansas has outlined objectives and activities to address the alignment with Updated/Revised Early Learning Standards, develop reports and share results, and use data within the longitudinal data system to determine impact. The state has a process and expectation for data use which is necessary to support school readiness and close the achievement gap for Children with High Needs. Kansas did not indicate how or if there is a plan for the teachers to receive training in administration and use of the KELI-R. Kansas did not indicate that the KELI-R will be required statewide as a kindergarten entry test. Kansas did not provide any objectives or activities for the roll out of KELI-R and phase out of the KELI. Kansas did not identify why the KELI is being revised to align with the Updated Early Learning Standards since the updated assessment is the KELI-R. While not stated, it appears that both assessments will continue since there was no identified phase out plan of the KELI. The KELI-R does not seem to be required since the programs are provided with the opportunity to participate.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

Kansas has minimal implementation for this element. Kansas has a School Readiness Task Force that has identified the data elements within four components of family, community, educational environments, and the child. The state indicated that the system is being extended based on past efforts and as part of the State Longitudinal Data (SLDA) grant funding, existing K-12 data warehouse, and the P20 data mart. However, the applicant did not build off the existing system. It appears that one state agency is building a separate system instead of extending past efforts as the state identified. The Customer and Provider Portal (CAPP) and Quality Care Profile Project is designed to address the social services as well as the beginning framework to track professional development for child care providers. This system is scheduled for startup in January 2012. The state identified the Quality Care Profile as a voluntary system and at some future time may link with teacher education data bases and the SLDS to provide a complete picture of the child's inputs. Kansas does not have a system that is timely, accessible, and relevant to use for continuous improvement with a voluntary system and an incomplete data set. The applicant did not identify the steps to meet the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies or facilitate the exchange of standard data and general information that is timely, relevant, and accessible for decision making. While the goal area identifies the need to provide data to make informed decisions to close the gap, the applicant did not identify training plans, especially in the child care system on assessment results and instructional planning. Kansas did not explain how the use of incentives spent on getting participation

in a voluntary system is more important than increasing knowledge and skills of the providers. The applicant did not address and explain privacy and oversight requirements.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	157

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	5

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)

Kansas has a system that requires every child care facility to be licensed if: any person is providing child care to one unrelated child more than 20 hours per week or if caring for two unrelated children for any number of hours, regardless of payment. The Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System is available for licensed Early Development Programs but there is no requirement to participate. It is an entirely voluntary system so it is unclear if all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs will participate.

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)

Kansas has implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment and is in the process of revising and piloting a new web based application during fall 2012 with a sample. All elements are met in (A)(1)-12 in the Essential Domains of School Readiness except for the results part of a Statewide Longitudinal Data System. The applicant received a score below 70% on criterion (E)(1) thereby not meeting the competitive preference priority.

Absolute Priority

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

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

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

Comments on Absolute Priority

Kansas did not comprehensively and coherently address clear detailed plans for building 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 failed to consistently address Children with High Needs throughout the application. While the applicant stated gaps in the current system, there was no coherent plan to address each area. All of the goals focused on policy development without a comprehensive implementation plan. Resources were not aligned and integrated for strategic improvements for program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Building and enhancing a data system to improve instruction, practices, and services is an example of how resources were not integrated and aligned to improve and promote outcomes for Children with High Needs. Additionally, the TQRIS will not reach the majority of the programs. The state had six years, from 2005 to present, to scale up the KQRIS program but reached only 2% (133 of 6,000) of eligible programs.