



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # ME-5015

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

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Criteria, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 18. Includes sub-points (a) through (d) describing financial investment, participation numbers, legislation, and current status.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

The applicant provides a reasonable description and has a demonstrated commitment and investment of the State in high quality Early Learning and Development programs for children with high needs for many years. In spite of the economy, the applicant provides strong evidence for its investment in early childhood education for children with high needs. The State has made consistent efforts to increase funding to programs over the past several years. At the legislative level, bills have been proposed and passed, which have provided evidence of the importance of high quality early childhood education for the State. For example, legislation was passed in 2007 providing funding for universal home visiting in Maine. In 2001 Maine authorized differential rate payments for child care programs that made substantial progress toward meeting nationally recognized standards. Moreover, in 2006 Maine implemented Touchpoints, an approach used to enhance the competencies of families by building strong parent-child bonds to ensure healthy development. In addition, in 2008 Maine implemented a tiered QRIS. These are just a sample of the types of legislation, policies and practices that Maine has implemented since the 1980's that have provided a strong foundation for sustainability and a high quality plan for increasing the quality of programs for children with high needs. Moreover, the applicants' Department of Education and Health and Human Service agencies have begun to coordinate management across a variety of Early Learning and Development (ELD) programs, in order to share resources, ensure consistent quality of programs and better serve children with high needs and the workforce. The collaboration is an improvement because it provides the State with a foundation in place for the continued progress as well as sustainability of the program at the end of the grant funding. Although enrollment in Early Learning and Development programs has fluctuated within the State due to changes in regulations and funding Maine has remained committed to its early childhood program. For example, while there was an increase in the number of children served in Head Start due to the AARA funding the numbers were not sustained. That said, Child Development Services served an increasing number of children with disabilities and public preschool has steadily increased from 2007 to 2011. The State provides data in the tables to demonstrate the increase in the numbers of children served, however the State has provided limited information in the narrative to provide clear evidence for the reported changes. More information would have been helpful. Furthermore, the Maine child care subsidy rules require that regulated programs receiving subsidies participate in

TQRIS, however, the practice is not standardized and therefore inconsistent. In order to ensure high quality programs for all children with high needs the inconsistencies will need to be reconciled. The State proposes to address these inconsistencies in its plan. In addition, the State has developed and implemented high quality Early Learning and Development Standards for children birth through kindergarten. The guidelines include the eight domains of school readiness and indicators for what children should know at the kindergarten level. The guidelines have been cross-referenced with K-12 standards and Head Start domains. The applicant has provided strong evidence to support the development and implementation of a comprehensive assessment system, health promotion practices, family engagement practices, workforce development, and a data system. To date the applicant had no current information on the status of kindergarten entry assessment. The State is currently working to revise the ELD Standards by surveying administrators to learn what assessments are being used. The State will use this information to raise the quality of assessment to assure the use of valid and reliable instruments. Furthermore, Maine is in the process of linking its TQRIS to the State's Longitudinal Data System. This step is appropriate and necessary to ensure access to systematic and high quality data. In general, the State has provided evidence to demonstrate its ability to develop and implement high quality programs for children with high needs and their families. In addition, given the previous investment and infrastructure the work is likely to be sustained over time.

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-------|
| (A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals. | 20 | 18 |

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The applicant has proposed a reasonable yet ambitious plan that articulates a comprehensive agenda that if implemented will likely result in improved school readiness skills for children with high needs. The overall goal of the applicant's reform plan is to strengthen the State's Early Learning and Development infrastructure by setting consistent standards of quality among ELD programs, regardless of funding streams, by coordinating the management process in a way that maximizes the use of resources to improve the school readiness outcomes for children with high needs. With this new infrastructure it is the goal of the State to update the Early Learning program standards that form the basis for quality ratings, support program improvement and provide the foundation for training resources that support the growth and development of a quality workforce. The applicant's plan is strong in that it builds on an existing structure and partnerships across agencies, which will ensure interagency coordination and long term sustainability over time. Moreover, the State will partner with private groups to save money and coordinate efforts to create strategic plans so as to be more cost efficient and effective. Because the State is already engaged in such partnerships, there is a high probability that this goal will be accomplished. In addition, the State will also partner with private organizations to expand parent education programming as well as develop data and reports and other resources to support early childhood programming. To enhance and expand the TQRIS, the State proposes to include Part B and C and develop new standards for Title 1 and public preschool programs. This is an important inclusion because it will allow the State to fill the gap and increase access to high quality programs for high need children. The State will also increase participation of Early Learning and Development Programs in the TQRIS; refine and validate the monitoring framework for ELD programs to include the benchmarks for ELL and children from low SES backgrounds and expand the linked data system to include the State Longitudinal Data System. If this goal is accomplished it will lead to an increase of high quality programs for children with high needs. The State has also proposed to increase access to high quality programs with qualified workers by providing a monetary incentive to programs. The purpose of the incentive is to raise the quality of programs while simultaneously improving the qualifications and retention of the staff. Such a program would have a strong and direct positive impact on the school readiness skills of children with high needs. Finally the State proposes to complete the revision underway to create birth through 3rd grade Early Learning Standards that are developmentally, linguistically, and culturally relevant and align with the common core standards. Training will be provided to teachers and administrators to ensure "buy in" and online resources will be provided for the early childhood workforce who works with high needs children. Quality data will also be linked to student's assessment data in the State Longitudinal Data System. Finally staff will be trained to appropriately administer, interpret and use data to make decisions and inform instruction. The full implementation of this goal will lead to high quality educational outcomes for children by changing the quality of the workforce as well as the early childhood programs. The approaches taken together provide a compelling rationale and agenda for closing the school readiness gap for children with high needs. The above-mentioned framework also provides a clear rationale for the State's justification in choosing its focus investment areas. Maine has elected to address C1 and C2 because it clearly possesses a solid foundation upon which it can build on over the next 4 years to advance the State's capacity to provide high quality programs for children with high needs. The State is currently in the process of revising its early learning standards to reflect the current research on early childhood development and to make

them more developmentally, culturally, and linguistically competent. The proposed completion date is 2012. The State has chosen to focus on revising the workforce competencies, professional, training and technical assistance, so as to incorporate the revised elements in its comprehensive data systems. Revising these elements to include the most recent information from the standards is a logical next step, in that Maine already has ELD standards and is in the process of revising them. The goal is to embed the new standards into the workforce competencies, professional development training and technical assistance and inform the comprehensive assessment system in the TQRIS. Such changes would make the system more integrated and cohesive across the State. Maine does not have a Comprehensive Assessment System, which is necessary to have a quality system and therefore this is an appropriate next step in obtaining a high quality system. Maine proposes to develop a series of initiatives to work with programs to select appropriate assessments, work with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen understanding of assessments, align, integrate and share assessments and results and finally train Early Childhood Educators to administer assessments and use data. The proposed plan is reasonable in light of the State's previous initiatives and plans set forward in the proposal to develop a comprehensive system that will improve the quality for children and families with high needs. Maine has a strong foundation to develop a common statewide Core Knowledge Workforce and Competency framework and support the Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge and skills through the work with the Maine Road to Quality initiative Early Care and Early Education Development Center. The group has begun the work necessary to align the requirements necessary for preparing a competent workforce. Maine possess the infrastructure to support successful development of this program which will lead to programs with a more qualified workforce that will have the skills and knowledge necessary to support the development of children with high needs. Finally, the State has chosen to address E (2) because it has partially implemented the process of linking the Early Learning Data system to the State Longitudinal Data system. Therefore, addressing this area is the next logical step in advancing the system so as to improve instructional practices, services to children and educators and policies. That said, while the State has created a plan that appears to be feasible, the State has not provided any pilot data on the initiatives to assess whether the goals could be met. Furthermore, while the State has put together a plan to develop a comprehensive assessment system which would include screening measures, formative assessments, measures of environmental quality and measures of quality adult child interactions. Limited information was provided on the child outcome measures which are critical to a Comprehensive Assessment System. More information would have been helpful to support the development and implementation of the proposed initiatives. While the plan holds much merit, some areas require more information in ensure the success of the proposal.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

The applicant has provided an organizational chart that offers an organizational structure for managing the grant. Maine's Early Learning reform agenda will be implemented through the State Agencies Interdepartmental Early Learning (SAIEL) sub-agency established by the commissioners of the Maine Department of Education and the Maine Department of Health. The chart provides an outline of the governance structure indicating who will oversee and implement the grant. The chart is clear and presents a good overview of the governance structure. As part of the governance structure the SAIEL will report directly to the Maine Department of Education and the Maine Health and Human Service commissioners via its Executive Committee. The MDOE will function as the primary federal contact and lead agency and will staff the SAIEL meetings. SAIEL is co-chaired by lead staff from each department. The applicant provides a complete chart that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the members of the agencies who will support the grant. The chart provides strong evidence of the commitment from each agency in ensuring the success of the project. That said the State does not provide an explicit description as to how the plan will work. Such a description would have been helpful. In addition, the applicant provides a reasonable description for how decisions will be made, as well as how disputes will be resolved. The system is based on a preexisting dispute resolution process that was developed for Early Childhood Special Education in 2010. If the dispute cannot be resolved it will be forwarded to the commissioners. The process demonstrates the commitment on the part of the participating agencies to build on previous collaborations to build a high quality plan that is likely to be successful. That said the applicant does not provide an explicit step by step blueprint as to how the actual process would work. More information would have been helpful to ensure that the process was appropriate for the proposed project. The Interagency Executive Committee will oversee and guide the implementation of the reform. The Executive Committee will consist of six members from each department. The Executive Committee will report directly to the commissioners of MDOE and MHHS. The Executive Committee will be made of senior members with expertise in Early Learning and Development. The applicant has developed a reasonable plan for making decisions such that the SAIEL will make budgeting and policy recommendations to the commissioners. If the recommendations are approved, the SAIEL will collaboratively develop and implement joint policies or actions. In addition to the abovementioned steps, the State has also included a reasonable plan that outlines the involvement and commitment of both its public and private partners. The applicant has provided MOUs from each participating agency outlining their scope of the work and their willingness to serve. It has also obtained letters of support from key organizations who will help to ensure the success of the project. That said the applicant did not include a letter of support from the University of Maine which monitors its TORIS indicating continued support and involvement in the work. This partnership is critical to the success of the applicant's high quality plan and such a letter would have been informative.

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| (A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant. | 15 | 12 |
| The extent to which the State Plan-- | | |
| (a) Demonstrates how the State will use existing funds that support early learning and development from Federal, State, private, and local sources (e.g., CCDF; Title I and II of ESEA; IDEA; Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program; State preschool; Head Start Collaboration and State Advisory Council funding; Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program; Title V MCH Block Grant; TANF; Medicaid; child welfare services under Title IV (B) and (E) of the Social Security Act; Statewide Longitudinal Data System; foundation; other private funding sources) for activities and services that help achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, including how the quality set-asides in CCDF will be used; | | |
| (b) Describes, in both the budget tables and budget narratives, how the State will effectively and efficiently use funding from this grant to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, in a manner that-- | | |
| (1) Is adequate to support the activities described in the State Plan; | | |
| (2) Includes costs that are reasonable and necessary in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of the activities described in the State Plan and the number of children to be served; and | | |
| (3) Details the amount of funds budgeted for Participating State Agencies, localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, or other partners, and the specific activities to be implemented with these funds consistent with the State Plan, and demonstrates that a significant amount of funding will be devoted to the local implementation of the State Plan; and | | |
| (c) Demonstrates that it can be sustained after the grant period ends to ensure that the number and percentage of Children with High Needs served by Early Learning and Development Programs in the State will be maintained | | |

or expanded.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The applicant proposes a reasonable budget for using funds beginning in 2012 from federal, state and local and private funding to provide continued support for high quality Early Learning and Development programs. The applicant provides a clear and thoughtful description of how existing funds will be used over the five year period to achieve the goals of the State's ambitious plan. The MDOE and MHHS commissioners have authorized budgets to provide funding from the RTT award for projects that they see as ambitious yet achievable. The State's interagency executive committee (SAIEL) has worked to ensure that the projects will be sustainable past the length of the award by taking several measures, such as working closely with the public and private partners, investing in the infrastructure, and working closely with contractors who have demonstrated a capacity to report measurable performance indicators of improved outcomes for children. That said the applicant does not provide the actual cost of entailed for obtaining state of the art performance measures. Such information would have been useful. Nor does the applicant propose a budget to increase the number of personnel who will work on the project. While the State proposes to become more efficient by combining its resources, it is not likely given the ambitiousness of its proposal that it will be able to do this without an increase in personnel. More information in the narrative and description of proposed projects with respect to personnel would have been helpful. Furthermore, the applicant does not provide enough information as to the maintenance of the infrastructure one it is completed. This is critical to sustainability and more information would have been helpful in this area. Most points were awarded for this section.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

The applicant has developed a plan that will refine, expand and enhance work on its TQRIS that was developed in 2006. As part of the expansion, the State intends to complete revisions to the existing TQRIS and ELD Standards by incorporating evidence based programs, linking and aligning them to the curriculum, increasing the health and safety standards and making them linguistically and culturally relevant. Revisions to the standards will be made such as to include specific learning trajectories in literacy and numeracy that link to the K-12 Common Core, ensure culturally appropriate measures and informed assessment practices birth through five including kindergarten screening. Moreover, the State will develop child outcome measures for the Child Assessment System on which the Early Childhood Education workforce can report in the statewide State Longitudinal database. In addition, family engagement strategies will be incorporated into the TQRIS at all steps. A standard for health and safety based on national benchmarks will be developed. The CLASS measurement tool will be linked to Steps 3 and 4 in the TQRIS, to enhance the link between research and improved outcomes for children with high needs. At the present, the State's current TQRIS and State licensing system are connected at all four steps. It is the intent of the State to expand the linked data system to include the State Longitudinal Data System, thereby enhancing the capacity of the state to use and provide meaningful and consistent data across all programs to all stakeholders. The state has provided documentation on how its tiers are meaningfully differentiated in the TQRIS for Head Start, Family Based and Center Based Care and for School Aged Children. Although the standards are measurable in their current form, the intent of the applicant is to revise the standards, and differentiate program quality and expectations for high quality programs for children with high needs. The proposed plan will scale up an already successful system that is well underway in serving children and families

with high needs. While the state has a reasonable overview of its plan, the state provides limited information in the narrative with respect to the time plan making it difficult to assess whether or not the goals can be achieved. More information would have been helpful.

| | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|-------|
| (B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System | 15 | 13 |

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

The State has proposed a reasonable yet ambitious plan to ensure an increase in program participation in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. The State already has in place regional development councils who provide technical assistance linked to quality improvement. That said the State does not provide any information for part C of IDEA. Baseline data would have been helpful to understand the current number of children being served in this area. In order to increase the participation of the system the applicant proposes to redesign the TQRIS portal to increase navigation and use of the system, facilitate updates, and support submission of applications, and professional development. Redesigning of the system will allow the State to systematically monitor the increased use of the system by programs. Furthermore, the applicant proposes to engage in additional efforts that will raise participation by programs such as incorporating public/consumer information about public preschool and the TQRIS by 2013 into Maine Health and Human Services web-based information system. In addition, they propose to develop a report card system that integrates the TQRIS and licensing data/information that would be public, and launch a parent choices website that would provide parents with access about what it means to have a high quality program as well as the steps in the TQRIS and ELD standards. The State has provided a timeline for completing each activity. However, the timeline does not provide enough specific information so as to assess the actual completion of the project. More information would have been helpful, such as the approximate number of weeks to complete each task. Maine currently provides financial incentives to parents and provides support for their children's movement into higher tiered programs. The State expects an increase demand for incentives as programs move into higher tiers within the system. In order to address this need the State proposes to put together a statewide sustainability assessment subgroup to identify existing opportunities to attract and blend private investments and public funding. This is good effort on the part of the State to use its current resources while collaborating across agencies; however the State has not proposed a back up plan to provide continued incentives in the event monies cannot be reallocated and public-private partnerships cannot be established. More information would have been helpful. Given that the State wanted to work within a framework that was ambitious and yet achievable within the proposed budget, the increased numbers of programs that will participate in the TQRIS system is reasonable. The State has proposed a plan that has been substantially implemented with a high quality response and so most points were award for this section.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

The State has outlined a reasonable plan for rating and monitoring its Early Learning and Development programs. To date, the State has indicated monitoring of its TQRIS system through its research partnership with the University of Maine. As part of their monitoring system, the State has incorporated the use of the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, the Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale, the Infant and Toddler Environmental Rating Scale, and the School Age Care Environmental Rating Scale. All tools are highly reliable and valid for monitoring programs in the State. The applicant also contends that the TQRIS application is online and is being reviewed by the State. The Maine Roads to Quality research team provides accreditation confirmation for step 4 programs, which reduces the data collection need for that group of providers by allowing them to complete an abbreviated application, reporting fewer elements. Moreover, there is currently a user friendly, online application process with licensing and TQRIS data available online, and a web-based search tool that connects families with childcare programs related to their interest, and resources which have been designed, implemented and evaluated. The State intends to continue its work with the Maine Roads to Quality research team to continue monitoring programs in the TQRIS system separately from the administration and technical assistance delivery system. The State plans to design a system to monitor benchmarks for low SES and English Language Learners, expand the linked data system to include the State's Longitudinal Data System, include a valid and reliable measurement tool for Steps 3 & 4 to link research to improved child outcomes, and develop a report card system that is public. While these are all ambitious goals, the State does not provide a letter of support from the research community indicating their willingness to collaborate with the state to achieve the above mentioned outcomes. Given the important role of this research community partnership, such a letter would have been helpful. Furthermore, the State does not discuss how it will ensure that the raters remain reliable over time, particularly as the workforce for changes. Similarly, the State maintains that it will visit programs every five years which appears to be excessively long to maintain the level of quality. This is high quality proposal that is partially implemented.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

The applicant proposes a reasonable plan to access and expand Early Learning and Development programs for children with high needs. The State currently has in place a system that provides orientation training on the QRIS through eight regional Child Care Resource and Referral sites using a standardized curriculum created by the State's Early Childhood Division. The State has developed and implemented policies and practices that have helped to improve programs. For example, it has provided training on self assessment strategies; inventoried all sources of program support across all sectors and assessed their potential to align with the TQRIS system; ensured that all child care providers are part of a statewide network to coordinate and strengthen quality improvement technical assistance across the state; ensured that the Quality Improvement planning is linked to on-site technical assistance located regionally across the state and a web-site connecting families with childcare programs; and has ensured that family specific resources have been designed, implemented and evaluated with information about what constitutes quality, the steps in the TQRIS, and ELD standards. In order to enhance their capacity to provide services to children with high needs, the State proposes to build on the existing infrastructure by developing a shared service assessment with collaborative partners to identify opportunities for collective purchasing and increase sharing of services within the early care and education community. This is a good opportunity to increase services to high need children and families. In addition, the State will re-design the TQRIS portal to facilitate greater use by providers seeking to update their Step information, which result in higher subsidies thereby providing higher quality programs for children and families. The state will also expand its training and technical assistance to include Head Start as well as preschool technical training and assistance which will provide better access of information to programs and families. One feature that is critical for families to have access to high quality programs is to have access to transportation. While the State recognizes that transportation is problem and articulates that it will provide some funding to address this issue the state does not provide an explicit plan to ensure the success of this activity. More information would have been helpful. The State's TQRIS currently offers quality bumps in subsidy to providers at Steps 2, 3 and 4 who serve low income children and families. The bonuses encourage programs to move up the steps, with the highest subsidy coming at the highest level. In addition, the state currently provides financial incentives for providers pursuing professional development and tax credits for parents using Step programs and businesses investing in quality improvement at the TQRIS program. The state proposes to enhance these supports by developing a compensation program linked to its tiered reimbursement by requiring programs to use 75% of their quality bump to enhance practitioner compensation which would lead to a more high quality workforce working with children and families in programs. Moreover, the state proposes to provide wage enhancements to individuals who achieve credentials/or certification, and a 50% match for programs that hire and retain these staff. The incentive would be provided for up to 5 years, as long as the provider remains employed in the setting. Research has demonstrated that children who attend high quality settings with a trained workforce who remain in the program over a period of years do better than children with staff who are not trained and have a consistent presence in the life of the child. In addition, the State has presented strong evidence for increasing the enrollment of children in Early Learning and Development programs based on the increased availability of Training and Technical Assistance, scholarships and financial incentives for programs to achieve Step 3 and 4 ratings. That said because the increase of scholarships are based on a public-private partnership, and the applicant has not provided an alternative, should the partnerships not lead to an increase in revenue, it is difficult to assess whether the increase in participation would be feasible. In general, the applicant has presented a high quality plan for ensuring that children with high needs have access to a highly trained and consistent workforce and therefore most points were awarded in this section.

| | 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)

The State is currently working on two studies in collaboration with a cross-State evaluation consortium of University researchers to conduct a validation study of current program quality standards and Step level tiers. In addition, the State is investigating the use of administrative data, child care licensing and data Registry (teacher qualifications and education) to detect differences at the program level by comparing licensed programs enrolled in the TQRIS systems with those not enrolled with funding from a Child Care and Research grant from the US Department of Health and Human Services. The State proposes to have the validation study completed and use the findings to improve the quality of its Early Learning and Development programs and the school readiness outcomes for children age birth through five. While this is an ambitious goal that builds on previous investments the in validation of the TQRIS system, the applicant does not provide a letter of support from the Research Consortium, making it difficult to assess whether the actual plan is feasible. Moreover, the State does not provide a full description of the measures, making it difficult to know whether the measures are valid and reliable for the children to be served in the project. In addition, given that the plan is dependent upon the researchers completing the study, such a letter outlining the scope of the intended project and the commitment of the consortium would

have been helpful. And finally, the State is proposing to create high quality programs for children with high needs; however, the State did not appear to adequately use the data it obtained from the pilot study to lay the groundwork for the proposed initiative. For example, the State found that a portion of children receiving CCDF subsidy were only .7 times more likely to be enrolled in a Step 1 or Step 2 program, but were more likely to be enrolled in a Step 4 as was expected based on licensing requirement. That said the State does not address why families attended the Step 1 and Step 2 programs. If families attended those programs because of certain barriers, then the data might have been used to address those barriers for families with children with high needs. More information in this area would have been helpful to link the pilot work with the proposed initiatives. The response was scored in the medium range.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| (C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards. | 30 | 26 |

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)

As part of its proposal the State has provided copies of its Early Learning and Development standards for infants/toddlers and preschoolers. The current Early Learning guidelines that were developed to be developmentally, linguistically and culturally appropriate for children including English language learners and children with developmental delays and disabilities. The current standards have all of the essential domains of school readiness. The current standards have been aligned with the Maine Learning Results (K-3), Head Start and Early Reading First curricula. In addition, the applicant provides evidence for both sets of standards being incorporated into Maine's TQRIS system's Learning Environment and Authentic Assessment Standards. Moreover, the Main Roads to Quality Core Knowledge Training Program includes a 30 hour curriculum for both infants/toddlers and the preschool Early Learning and Development Standards delivered by Education Specialists through eight Regional Development Centers. The State proposes to complete revisions to the ELD standards currently underway to create a birth through 3rd grade set of ELD standards that are culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate. The State will use the NAEYC's Pathways to Cultural Competence Guide to support this work. These standards will ensure a consistent and smooth transition for a diverse group of high needs children across early learning environments birth through third grade. In addition, the State proposes to create a single document that would demonstrate the alignment between Early Learning and Development Standards and the Common Core, Maine Learning Standards, and Head Start outcomes. The State committee will articulate the scope and sequence in the areas of early language, literacy and numeracy, creating a strong link between Pre-K and K-3rd grade. Such documentation would lead to consistent access to information for all stakeholders, particularly families and children with high needs providing them with information to make important

decisions. The State also proposes to create for each domain an indicator as set of references to help teachers understand development from birth through third grade with an emphasis on the transition from preschool to kindergarten children. An investment in this area will ensure that the early childhood workforce has the knowledge that it requires to provide a high quality program for children with high needs. The applicant has demonstrated a strong commitment to including Early Learning and Development Standards into programs, curricula, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the Workforce and Competency Framework and Professional Development as is evidenced by its current practices and investments. The State's TQRIS system currently includes the use of the ELD standards by requiring teachers to complete the 30 hour Core Knowledge Training Program training use of ELD standards and by requiring programs to use the ELD standards in their authentic assessment of children's development. The applicant plans to incorporate the TQRIS standards in Steps 2 through Step 4 revised ELD curricula, as well as require the use of the revised ELD standards in authentic assessment. This is an appropriate strategy and when these changes are made they should lead to more high quality programs. In addition, the applicant is currently developing a plan to ensure clear, and consistent implementation of an child assessment system. It is the intent of the State to implement this system across all of Maine's early childhood system and include the data in Maine's State Longitudinal Data System to support positive outcomes for children. This is a important step and builds on the previous work of the State in this area. To date, Maine has two separate systems that are part of the workforce and competency framework. It is the intent of the State to align the ELD Standards training curricula with the current Core Knowledge training program thereby providing a more comprehensive and integrated framework that will lead to positive outcomes for children with high needs. And finally, to support Professional Development the Mains Road to Quality, Maine's workforce initiative (MRTQ) will hire a Director of Core Knowledge Training to oversee training and technical assistance. In addition, it will hire and train Community College faculty and Pre-k collaboration coaches in expert coaching. Moreover the work of Maine's Road to Quality will include designing and developing materials to be used in professional development, and updating the Training Registry to house the requirements for becoming a trainer. If the changes are implemented they should lead to a more qualified workforce which will in turn lead to positive child outcomes for children with high needs. The proposed plan is a high quality plan that is already underway, that said the timeline provided for the completion of this work is sparse and more information would have been helpful in order to assess whether enough time had been allocated to complete each task. The majority of points were awarded for this section.

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| (C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems. | 30 | 18 |

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)

To date the applicant has in a place a TQRIS standard for Learning Environment/Developmentally Appropriate Practice which includes a requirement that programs participate in training on implementing Maine's Early Learning and Development(ELD) standards. The purpose of the training is to introduce the content of the standards and create a portfolio of authentic assessment evidence related to standards. The training is currently provided at low cost or no cost to programs enrolled in the TQRIS. In order to boost the quality of the Comprehensive Assessment Framework the State proposes to create an inventory of current assessment measures used across programs serving children birth to 5, including kindergarten screening, that are appropriate for use with children with high needs. Upon completion of the inventory the State will develop criteria for authentic assessment activities. Since the State does not currently have a Comprehensive Assessment system, this work is an appropriate next step in developing a comprehensive and integrated system of assessment that will serve children with high needs. In order to address the alignment, integration and sharing of instruments the State is proposing to develop cross-sector assessment teams to pilot test the use of data on children with high needs to develop an intervention plan. However, the State provides limited information describing the actual process. More information would have been useful to assess whether or not the approach was appropriate. This work is critical to improving the State's overall system, as having high quality measures of children's outcomes is essential to the system. In order to address alignment and integration, the State has provided limited information concerning the child outcome assessment component making it difficult to assess whether the proposed comprehensive assessment system will be successfully implemented. For example, the state cites only one measure in its plan base on a pilot study to assess vocabulary, but does not discuss any other domain necessary for school readiness. More information would have been helpful. Furthermore, while the State has provided a table which provides information on project oversight and completion and integration of projects, limited information is provided as the overall timeline for the development of the actual Comprehensive Assessment system, making it

difficult to assess whether it will be completed, given the budget as well as time frame for the project.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-------|
| (D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials. | 20 | 19 |
| <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> <p>Comments on (D)(1)</p> <p>The State has a strong foundation of workforce core knowledge and competencies from which to build its Early Care and reform agenda. The Maine Roads to Quality Initiative (MRTQ) was established in 1999 and is the State's early career and development center which supports the TQRIS. It houses the Core Knowledge Training system and the Early Learning and Development Standards. The training program logs 180 hours which can be articulated into college credits with the partnering higher education institutions across the state. As part of this application the State proposes to realign the core knowledge and competencies with the revised version of Maine's Early Learning and Development Standards. The State's intentional plan to link the Early Learning and Development (ELD) Standards to the workforce competencies and core knowledge will ensure that the knowledge, skills and abilities are linked to appropriate practices that will lead to successful outcomes for children with high needs. In addition, once the revised ELD Standards are embedded into the Workforce Competency Framework, the State will work on aligning the infant/toddler and Youth Development credentials as well as to ensure a seamless system. These credentials will also be embedded in the TQRIS Steps 3 and 4. In addition, to support the alignment of the core knowledge and competencies with two and four year degree programs providing credentials for the workforce, Maine will work with higher education institutions to ensure the seamless transition for early childhood professionals, as well as the alignment of the degree with standards set forth by institutions of higher education. To ensure that there are adequate numbers of trained professionals to work with children with high needs particularly with children living in locations with a high population of English Language Learners Maine will support the development of a new Bachelor of Science degree program that will focus on serving children and families with high need. This program will develop clear workforce standards aligned to the ELD Standards and linked to improving the school readiness skills of Maine's children with high needs. Such a program will have a direct impact on children and families with high needs because of its direct academic and practical focus on meeting their needs. Funding will be provided to align the credentials into the requirements of programs at the highest levels of Maine's TQRIS. The goal of this approach is to ensure that programs of the highest quality will include a workforce prepared to meet the needs of children with the highest needs. While this is a laudable goal, the applicant has not provided sufficient evidence to ensure that the public-private partnership will be able to sustain this goal. Additional information would have helpful in this area. Most points were awarded in this area.</p> | | |

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-------|
| (D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities. | 20 | 18 |
| <p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to improve the effectiveness and retention of Early Childhood Educators who work with Children with High Needs, with the goal of improving child outcomes by--</p> <p>(a) Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities that are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;</p> <p>(b) Implementing policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) that promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that is aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and that are designed to increase retention;</p> | | |

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

The State is proposing to build upon its previous work by providing a high quality plan to improve the effectiveness and retention of Early Childhood Educators who work with children with high needs. The State already has in place several components of a high quality plan to support the Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities so as to provide high quality programs for children with high needs. For example, the State offers a number of opportunities to support high quality Early Childhood Educators, such as a Common Knowledge and Workforce and Competency Framework, which includes an articulated Core Knowledge Training Program designed to promote children's learning and development; an articulated set of competencies for infant/toddlers and youth development practitioners; Child Development Associate competencies for practitioners working with preschool aged children; it has a common statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Core Knowledge Workforce and Competency Framework; training aligned with the State's Core Knowledge Training Program; a 180 hour Core Knowledge Training program articulated into 9-12 early childhood education credits; and finally scholarships to practitioners who wish to pursue credit bearing coursework toward credentialing or certification. In order to expand access to professional development opportunities the State is proposing to expand career pathways by partnering with institutions of higher education and increasing the professional development aligned with the Maine Road to Quality (MRTQ) initiative of early childhood educators. One goal is to work with the University Southern Maine to develop 4 year teacher preparation degree with a focus on children from the high needs population. Such endeavor would ensure that there would be a steady flow of trained teachers to workforce serving children with high needs. The program would also be sustained once it became part of the University system. The State has secured a letter from the president of the college indicating support for the development and implementation of the program. In order to ensure higher education faculty commitment to work on aligning the teacher preparation standards, revising the courses and curriculum to support the workforce faculty, will be given release time. This is an excellent approach in that it will ensure college faculty have an adequate amount of time to work on revising the curriculum and support the goals of State's program. That said, while the state has received a letter of support from the president of the University about his commitment to the development of the program, the budget description does not adequately describe compensation for release time for higher education faculty. In addition, the State proposes to provide enhancement to programs so as to increase quality programs, as well as an increase in the quality of the workforce. Programs will be receive what they call a "quality bump"- apayment above the market rate with 75% required to go toward increasing the salaries of the staff. The incentive would be provided for five years, in order to retain qualified professionals in the program. In addition, the state proposes to expand the scholarship fund to include cross-sector early childhood educators who are working on an aligned credential. This is a unique idea which will lead to an increase in the number of high quality educators available to work with children with high needs. To increase its capacity to provide aggregated data to the public the Maine Roads to Quality Initiative will be expanded to include access by licensed practitioners, public preschool teachers, early intervention specialists, home visitors and public K-3 grade teachers. In addition, the States Longitudinal Data System will link to the Maine Roads to Quality Registry and will publicly report on the early childhood education data. The data will be reported annually to the State's Interagency committee and Maine's Children's Growth Council to ensure that progress is being made and targets met so that children are provided with a high quality system to ensure kindergarten readiness. The State's performance measures provide an reasonable and achievable targets given the state's projected resources. That said, in order for the state to reach its proposed targets, faculty must be given release time to work on the tasks set by the state. However, the applicant does not provide letters of support from the participating institutions committing to giving the faculty release time and for how many semesters. Such information would have been helpful. Finally, to improve the State's capacity to publicly report aggregate data on early childhood educator development, the Maine Roads to Quality Registry will be expanded to include licensed practitioners, public preschool teachers, and Child Development Service practitioners. This expansion will allow Maine to track the progress in reaching its targets for increasing the educational qualifications of the workforce, and is the next step in providing access for children and families with high needs to a more highly qualified workforce. If these goals are met they will provide all stakeholders with information as to education, experience and credentials that

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)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies. | 40 | 32 |

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

(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

The State already has an existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System that includes all of the essential elements. The overall goal of the State is to expand the system to include the Early Learning Development program in the State's Longitudinal Data system to capture child, program, and early childhood education data, and develop a coherent process and practices for examining the interaction among those data elements and child outcomes. In addition, the State proposes that it will provide a system that will allow for uniform data collection and easy entry of the elements from the participating agencies. In 2010 the MDOE and MHHS selected three programs to participate in a pilot to test the feasibility of establishing a central web-based State repository. Researchers from the Maine Education Policy Institute are said to have been involved in the project. That said, no significant findings were reported as to the success of the pilot project, and no letter of support from the Policy Institute was included in the proposal describing their role and continued support of the project. More information would have been useful to assess whether the baseline data collected from this project would support the development and expansion of a uniform data system across agencies. As noted previously, the State already possesses a Statewide Longitudinal Data System. As part of the plan the SLDS team will leverage the MDHHS system by adding the MDOE identifier to the existing client index. The linkage system is funded through the 2009 AARA SLDS grant and allows Maine to expand the tables by adding State student identifier and other Stage agency identifiers, perform matching and data cleaning. By integrating the parts of the system, the State will be able to identify and address possible problems that may impact the successful outcomes of children with high needs. The data system was developed as part of the pilot program conducted in three programs Educare, Early Head Start and Head Start which was designed to be a key resource to local programs. The goals of the system are to establish a web-based State data system that will not provide local hardware infrastructure, will provide common data structures; provide data definitions that are consistent with the SLDs data dictionary; create standard reports that will be available to all programs from the common data system as well as the business intelligence system; to facilitate linkages with early childhood health and kindergarten readiness assessments; and to meet all state and federal privacy requirements. While the proposal is sophisticated and holds much promise because the applicant did not include any preliminary results there is no way to evaluate if the system will function as planned to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data. Such information would have been helpful. In addition to the above mentioned strategies, the State proposes to provide a core system where educators will be able to access critical data that they can use to improve effectiveness. Currently such information is contained in multiple systems making it difficult for staff to manage their careers and professional development. The educator quality management system would allow data to be pulled together in one place to support the professional development of early child educators as well as provide administrators with information to monitor progress and provide mentoring where necessary. This aspect of the plan would provide a coherent and systematic way of managing data while at the same time increasing the quality of the workforce. And finally, while the State provides a description of its data system oversight requirements and compliance with the federal, state and local privacy laws, not enough information is provided to discern whether or not the State has adequate protections to ensure the proper oversight of the data system. More information would have been helpful. In general this is a reasonable plan that will build upon an existing infrastructure to improve instruction and practices.

| | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|-------|
| Total Points Available for Selection Criteria | 280 | 228 |

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

Absolute Priority

| | Met? Yes/No |
|---|----------------|
| Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs. | Yes |
| <p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p> | |
| Comments on Absolute Priority | |
| <p>The state has demonstrated throughout the application how it will continue to build and modify its existing system to increase the quality of its Early Learning and Development programs serving children with high needs. The state has established both public and private partnerships to integrate and align resources across the states agencies as well as with private agencies to improve the quality of the early learning and development programs. Evidence for these partnerships were provided by the MOU's included in the proposal as well as the letters of support. Finally, the state has addressed the criteria within the Focused Investment areas within its proposal that it has believed would strengthen the quality of its programs and support the success of Children with high needs in its state. Thus the state has met the criteria for meeting an absolute priority score.</p> | |



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # ME-5015

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: **Reviewed**
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 8:51 AM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

| | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|-------|
| (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development | 20 | 13 |
| <p>The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--</p> <p>(a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;</p> <p>(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;</p> <p>(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and</p> <p>(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.</p> | | |

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

Maine has a long history and commitment to early learning and development programs. This history is evidenced by an overall funding increase of over \$3 million from 2007 to 2011. This includes an increase, since 2009, in the number of children served in early childhood programs using Title I funds of 32%. In addition, starting in 1977, legislation has been passed in the areas of increasing collaboration and coordination; quality and improvement; and creating governance structures, as well in other related areas. In addition, key policies and practices have been enacted that require, among other things: Kindergarten screening, coordinated implementation of services, early learning guidelines, certification standards for pre-K personnel, the creation of a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Scale and the implementation of the Touchpoints program. However, the overall increase in funding and the increase in Title I money used for early childhood programs obscures a relatively variable picture of both funding levels and numbers of children served in early learning and development programs in Maine. For example, from 2007 to 2011 there is not one program where funding stayed the same or rose each year. That is, all programs experienced decreased funding levels at some point between 2007 and 2011. And, the funding for TANF did continuously decrease over all the reported years. Thus while overall funding increased, some programs who serve children with high needs did not benefit from the overall increase. Similarly, in terms of numbers of children served, only state funded preschools had enrollments increase across all years. All other programs reported patterns of increases and decreases in the number of children served across years. An explanation was offered for this: that the quality of home visiting got better so more children could be served for less money. Further, the narrative states that in Child Development Services the cost has risen but fewer numbers of children are served due to these children's intensive needs. What is inconsistent is the information presented in the tables that states that the number of children served by Maine's Home Visiting program have actually increased steadily from 2007 through 2010. Not until 2011 does the number of children served actually decrease. Similarly, funding for the program increased from 2007 through 2009 and decreased in 2010 and 2011. Thus there is a lack of agreement between the proposal narrative and the information presented in the tables, making this part of the application difficult to evaluate. Maine's early learning and development system is characterized as a system of systems. Despite this, they have made impressive gains in some areas. Specifically, the number of elementary

schools with preschool services has risen 21% in a two year period; they have tied the reception of subsidy funding to the participation in the tiered rating system; and, they have a Kindergarten assessment. Kindergarten screening is required by statute. Finally, plans are underway to make systematic changes in the Comprehensive Assessment System. In terms of legislation, work as far back as 1977 is mentioned, however there seems to have been a relative lack of progress between the years of 2007 and 2011. In addition Maine's medicaid laws were described as unhelpful. While the history of the legislation speaks to the long commitment to young children, the recent slowing of legislation may indicate that some historical support has eroded. This may be problematic. Thus, while there are some real strengths to this application, there are also challenges in terms of consistency. Both inconsistencies in the work that has been done to this point and inconsistencies in the application itself make this a medium quality response earning 13 points.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

Maine has a three pronged goal: 1) to increase program readiness; 2) to improve children outcomes; and, 3) to close the achievement gap. In order to reach these goals, Maine has clearly stated goals and activities, persons responsible and timelines. Areas covered include: governance, parent education; and, refinement, validation, expansion, and increased participation in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS). Strengths of the proposal are that Maine already has an existing structure in place; that the TQRIS is related to both child outcomes and school readiness; that the standards are linked across the system and that there are existing public-privates partnerships. Despite these details, this section is underdeveloped. For example it is not clear how the activities in governance, parent education; and, refinement, validation, expansion, and increased participation in the TQRIS will result in the State's achievement of the three overarching goals or how it will help the State ultimately improve the school readiness of children with high needs. In addition, it is hard to evaluate the ambitiousness or the attainability of the goals. While timelines are specified and activities are linked across years, increasing the likelihood that the task can be completed during grant funding, there is no baseline data and benchmarks for how completing these tasks will impact the system in terms of increasing quality or increasing numbers of children served. Finally, the proposal does not provide adequate justification for the focused investment areas it chose to address. In summary, while there are some admirable ideas here, there is not enough information presented to see how grant activities will lead to grant goals. Overall, this is a medium-quality response earning 15 points.

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

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

- (a) Demonstrating how the Participating State Agencies and other partners, if any, will identify a governance structure for working together that will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability and describing--
 - (1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;
 - (2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;
 - (3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

Maine's Departments of Education and Health and Human Services has established State Agencies Interdepartmental Early Learning (SAIEL) as the lead agency for overseeing the proposed activities. SAIEL is composed of a Federal State Legislative Liaison, and Early Childhood Consultant, a TQRIS Program Specialist, a Director of Early Childhood Initiative, and a Deputy Commissioner of Maine's Department of Education, among others. The existence of this organization and the description of its work scope and place in the State government are strengths. However, while information about the scope of work was provided, this consisted of who was to manage which aspect of the proposal's activities. No description was given as to how SAIEL would streamline decision making, allocate resources, or create long-term sustainability. SAIEL will depend on the structures that already exist in both Maine Children's Growth Council and in the MACECD to involve stakeholders. While using existing structures is a strength, this strength is muted by the lack of parity of the two system system. Further it is not clear that all relevant stakeholders are aware of their ability to report information to government agencies, perhaps decreasing the amount of input that "filters up" to Maine's governance structure. Further there is no proactive strategy for insuring that the unique needs of children with high needs are addressed. Required MOUs were provided, as were letters of support from participating partners. A clear scope of work was presented. However, it is not clear if the scope of work will lead to the proposed work being completed. For example, one proposal is for a four-year teacher preparation degree with a focus on teaching students with high needs will be developed. This is a worthy idea, however, the participating party is listed as the Early Childhood Consultant and the Federal State Legislative Liaison. And although a letter of support from the President of a University is provided, there is no representative from higher education on the committee charged with that task. Overall, the existence of SAIEL helps to make this a partially implemented program. However, issues with regards to representation of critical stake holders makes it a medium quality response, earning six points.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

Maine describes several strategies to develop a budget to sustain grant activities. Specifically, the proposal lists private-public partnerships (i.e., the Maine Early Learning Investment Group and the Maine Children's Trust) as participants in the project. In addition the proposal states that it will use existing dollars to pay for the salaries and fringe benefits of the SIAEL employees. Existing programs will continue to use existing funds to continue to provide existing services. Maine's Department of Education has set aside \$400,000 in funds to use largely for the technical assistance aspect of this proposal ARRA funds and vendor contributions will be used for proposed activities. Associated costs will be split between the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services. Finally, the proposal suggests that there will be associated cost savings associated with the implementation in the form of joint technical assistance, policy development and rule making. Despite the details presented above, the application is not clear on how other existing funds (e.g. CCDF, Title I and II, IDEA, Head Start, Home Visiting, TANF, Medicaid, etc.) will be leveraged or used for grant-related activities. Further because the scope of the grant (i.e., how many agencies, schools, professionals, parents and children will participate in grant activities) is not well established, it is not possible to determine if the costs associated with the projects are reasonable and necessary. Additionally the costs of some key aspects of the proposal (i.e., the measures) were omitted from the budget. However, the sustainability was well-described, suggesting that changes to infrastructure will produce sustainability. The strengths in the proposal are balanced by weakness making this a medium quality response earning 10 points.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

Maine has been working on its TQRIS since 2006. It is required for all licensed programs and voluntary for others. The TQRIS already incorporates learning standards into it and plans to add CLASS, which is currently piloting in two locations. The TQRIS was developed using relevant national standards (i.e., NAEYC) and blends self-report data with licensing information and career registry information. The latter two are automatically uploaded to the web-based system, both reducing data entry time and providing fast feedback. This feedback includes suggestions on how to progress within the tiered system. Plans for the proposed project include a revision to the system, the development of child outcome measures and an expansion of the linked data system. Parent engagement will be addressed through public outreach, report cards and improvements to a parent resource website. While the existing and proposed ideas have merit, there is a lack of information about the specifics of the TQRIS. It is not clear what the programs are providing data on in their self-report so the degree to which these inputs are measurable is impossible to determine. Three factors seem to make up the TORIS: self-report, licensing and obtaining of professional credentialing. However, none of these scales are described and no discussion of how the components are weighted in the final score is described. While family engagement was addressed, it is done in a minimal fashion. For these reasons the system is considered to be substantially implemented, and this a medium quality response earning seven points.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

Maine has set ambitious target in this area. They expect that 100% of state funded preschools, IDEA programs, and Title I programs will implement the TQRIS system by 2015, and 91% of CCDF programs will be participating in this timeframe. Head Start is already fully participating. There are no targets set for Part C programs but they are reported to be moving that way. However, little information was given about how these targets will be met. There are existing subsidy bumps to support programs' movement up steps and there is funding for personnel to attend professional development, as well as funding for programs to become accredited. However, it is not clear how the project intends to increase participation in these incentive programs or how that participation will increase the number of programs participating in the TQRIS. Maine's DOE will require Child Development Services (CDS) to participate by 2013 but it is not clear if this is a statute or rule. There is also funding for families to access better care which is a strategy used with some success in the past. Further, incentives will be sustained with funds from public-private partnerships. All in all, there are some strengths in this section, most notably Head Start's participation rate and the participation mandate from the MDOE. However, no additional policies or practices were mentioned making the ambitious goal seem less achievable. Therefore, currently Maine has a substantially implemented plan and a medium quality response earning ten points.

| | 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)

Maine proposes to add to its assessment plan by tracking SES and ELL. Currently, Maine uses a number of tools. These tools, used to measure early learning and development programs, reflect the best knowledge in the field. Further, Maine trains the assessors to 95% accuracy, which is a high standard. However, no descriptions of the frequency that raters are assessed was provided, nor was there a mention about what happens when raters fall below this threshold. Programs are measured every five years, unless there is a problem which triggers a more frequent assessment. Despite this trigger, a five year gap between assessments is too long. Maine uses a web-based tool to provide information to parents and plans to augment this with a report card. In a study done on parent satisfaction of the web-based tool, 70% of parents reported liking it. A 70% parent approval is too low because that means that nearly a third of parents did not like getting information this way. Also, no information was given about how participants were selected for the focus groups, so it is not known if the target population—parents of children with high needs—were adequately represented in the sample. In addition, there was no information about the demographics of the 30% of parents who did not like the web site. If these parents were all from a single demographic, then this would leave a big void. Thus, this is a substantially implemented, medium-quality response earning eight points.

| | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|-------|
| (B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs | 20 | 14 |

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)

Maine has set the ambitious goal of having 100% of children with high needs in top tier programs by 2015. Currently Maine uses incentives for practitioners to increase their knowledge-base, incentives to help programs enter the TQRIS, and money to help parents off-set the cost of high quality education and care. Sustainability of incentive programs is planned with the use of funds from the private sector. In addition, a study looking at sustainability is proposed. Grant dollars will also be used for increasing the number of coaches by four. Finally, dollars will be used to purchase child safety restraint systems so that children from remote areas may be transported to high-quality settings. The proposed program targets lower tiered centers who wish to move up the tiers. Moving programs up tiers is a strength of the proposal; however, the narrative suggests that more programs will be rated as Step 3 programs than as Step 4 programs. This is suggested because the work needed to move to a Step 4 program is great. Plans to help programs complete the work to move between Steps 3 and 4 would have strengthened the application. Additionally, the goal of having 100% of children with high-needs in top tiered programs is ambitious, but probably not achievable. First, there will be more Step 1 and Step 2 programs (867) than Step 3 or Step 4 programs (754), thus lower quality programs will be more available. Additionally, it is not clear if the financial incentives and transportation will be enough to encourage all parents to make this choice. In

Maine's own pilot, while more parents with incentives chose higher quality care, not all did. There was no information about the barriers those families faced and thus the proposed project has not addressed this issue. In other words, without understanding the barriers that families with children with high needs face in accessing quality programs, the State cannot propose projects that will remove the barriers to access. Therefore, this is a substantially implemented plan with a medium quality response earning fourteen points.

| | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|-------|
| (B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. | 15 | 11 |

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) |
|---|
| Maine has an existing relationship with a research group that is already conducting several studies to examine the effect of the tiers. This group will conduct the proposed studies. Proposed studies will assess the extent to which early learning and development program quality influence child outcomes. Specifically, Maine proposes to conduct studies on the standards, redesign staff and parent questionnaires and examine the relationship between the tier ratings. Details in terms of sample size, frequency of data collections and study timelines where described. These seemed appropriate, but the descriptions of the sample of children to be assessed did not say what percentage of children in the studies would be children with high needs. Additionally, no description was given of the type of analysis to be run. Thus, the quality of the proposed studies is difficult to determine. In sum, this is a medium response earning 11 points. |

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-------|
| (C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards. | 30 | 20 |

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)

Maine has in place standards for infants and preschoolers. These standards are developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically appropriate, are appropriate for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, and cover the essential domains of school readiness. Additionally, the preschool standards are undergoing a revision. An anticipated outcome of that revision is to align the preschool standards with the K-3 standards. These standards are incorporated into program standards and workforce knowledge and competency framework. However, because the State lacks a comprehensive assessment system, the standards are not currently incorporated into this system, although there is a plan to do so. Maine has already established trainings on the standards that are accessed by professionals in early learning programs. Additionally, Maine understands the importance of the Administrators role and had planned to include them in trainings. Thus, this is a substantially implemented plan with a medium quality response worth twenty points.

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| (C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems. | 30 | 18 |

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)

Maine lacks a comprehensive assessment system, but has some important component parts in place. Maine plans to create a subcommittee that will create an inventory of assessments that are appropriate for the populations to be assessed. A specific list of assessments for children with high needs has been developed. While a list of assessments is a step in the right direction, it is not clear if this goes far enough. Using different assessments across children to measure program effectiveness is problematic. These different assessments have different levels of validity and using a variety of assessment is problematic. This aspect of the proposal would have been strengthened if a single assessment had been selected. In order to promote professionals' understanding of the assessment process, 30-hours of training is available. Additionally, the State will partner with Institutions of Higher Education to ensure that training on the assessments is embedded in coursework. However because there is no emphasis on child-level data, it is not clear how the professionals will be able to use the content of this training to improve instruction. Many aspects of Maine's existing assessment system are aligned. Further measures to eliminate duplications and coordinate services for children with high needs are planned. This response is considered a partially implemented, medium quality response worth 18 points.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-------|
|--|-----------|-------|

| | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| (D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials. | 20 | 14 |
|---|-----------|-----------|

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)

Currently Maine's workforce knowledge and competency framework includes 180 hours training on competencies that are designed to improve children's outcomes. A strength of the training is its emphasis on behavior management. However, there are gaps in the early reading and early math areas. The 180 training can be transferred for college credit and plans include aligning the early learning standards. This is a relative strength of the application. Additionally, they propose a far reaching plan that includes, among other things, an expanded registry, and a 4-year college degree. However, the impact establishing the degree will have is not clear. Currently, 13 Colleges and Universities award credentials or degrees for professionals in early childhood. While the number of program alumni vary from program to program, there is not a single institution that trains the majority of the workforce. So, without understanding where the degree would be housed, it is not possible to evaluate quality of this proposal. Further, although all the Colleges have a curricula that aligns with the workforce knowledge and competency framework, none of the Universities do. The proposal would have been strengthened by addressing how to integrate this information into these institutions. In sum, this is a partially implemented plan with a medium response earning fourteen points.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

Currently Maine has plans to create a comprehensive professional development systems addressing the needs of early professionals, as well as those near retirement. Currently professional development tied to the workforce knowledge and competency framework is in place. However, data were not presented about the effectiveness of the training. Also in place are incentives for advanced training. These incentives are stable, as they are made possible by policy. This is a strength. Less work has been done to report data on the development, advancement and retention of the workforce. However, the proposal plans to expand its system to be able to report on the number of professionals receiving credentials, workforce retention and the attainment of teacher certification. It is, however, not clear how this data will be reported to the public nor how reporting this data will increase workforce retention. To strengthen the application, more detail is needed here. In terms of increasing the number of post-secondary institutions aligned with the workforce competencies, Maine plans to use the Higher Education Consortium as a forum to bring faculty together to align curricula with competencies. However, a specific process

for this work was not proposed, nor were incentives for institution's participation discussed. This is problematic, as there appears to be a systems bias in that no 4-year Universities currently have aligned curriculum. A strong plan with considerable institutional support will be needed to achieve this goal, yet no evidence of such a plan was presented nor was there commitment from appropriate faculty, Chairs or Deans. In order to increase the number and percentage of professionals who are moving to higher levels of credentialing, Maine proposes to provide incentives, provide time release to people working to move up the credentialing ladder, and provide technical assistance to ensure common course outcomes and numberings. While there is merit to this plan, the narrative states that there are 11 target institutions and yet by 2013, the goal is to have 12 institutions in alignment. This is puzzling. Between now and 2015, the State plans to add 440 professionals with aligned credentials. However, figures about the number of students participating in early childhood degree and credentialing programs across the state in one year indicate that there were 289 completers. At this rate, during the grant period, there would be 1,156 completers. Thus, the target of 440 is low. Similarly the goals of numbers of professionals who will increase their credential type is also low. Data for the projections for Type 3 and Type 4 credentialing were not presented. The proposal states that these figures will be determined by a not-yet completed pilot study. However, their omission makes the goals impossible to evaluate. For these reasons, this is a partially implemented plan with a medium quality response earning twelve points.

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)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies. | 40 | 24 |

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)

Maine has an existing state-wide data system that includes all the essential data elements. And, Maine proposes to expand the use and functionality of the system, as not all programs currently participate in it. Currently, Maine is conducting a pilot to develop a central, web-based repository for data. This is a three-program pilot conducted by the Maine Education Policy and Research Institute. However, the actual study components are not described, there is no mention of if the pilot addresses issues of the feasibility of scaling up the pilot program from three program to the entire state, and there is no letter of support describing what kind of continued interaction the group will have with the State. Without this information, it is not possible to evaluate either the uniformity of data collection or the ease of data entry. The majority of the data the State stores is managed by the Maine Office of Information Technology. The system has planned and established linkage for State agencies to access the data. Standard reports can be generated from the system. Reports may include both snapshots and data tables. Data on front-line workers will be available to both the professional and her supervisor. However, no details were given about the components of the standard reports. Information was not given about the availability or ease of reports based on custom queries. Timelines for data entry requirements or for receiving results were not mentioned. And, it is not clear how the data system will be used for either decision making or continuous improvement. The system meets all State and federal privacy requirements. The oversight for this is provided by the SLDS Steering Committee, which meets monthly. The proposal says that this committee will expand as the early childhood data are added. However, neither the way the group function nor the responsibilities of the group are explicit. Given the sensitivity of the issue, a clear plan would have improved the quality of the response. On the whole, however, this is perhaps the strongest aspect of the entire grant proposal. It is clear that Maine has made a commitment in this area. They have an existing data structure in place. They are currently involved in several projects (supported by ARRA or other grant funds) to enhance and expand the system. And, they have proposed even further revision

and expansion for this proposal. The detail provided suggests that they have a clear plan about how to make this a workable system. However, they lacked an explanation as to how they will continuously improve the system and how the data collected will be used by the various consumer groups. It is not even clear what types of questions their data base will allow them to answer. And, issues related to privacy are underdeveloped. For these reasons this is considered a partially implemented plan of medium quality worth 24 points.

| | Available | Score |
|--|------------|------------|
| Total Points Available for Selection Criteria | 280 | 182 |

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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>Maine has proposed a plan that will build, to some degree, an integrated system that will increase the quality of early learning and development programs for children with high needs. The coordinated system that Maine proposes will result in more children with high needs more ready to enter kindergarten ready to succeed than currently. This goal will be achieved by focusing largely on standards revisions and on data collection systems. However, the proposal provides ideas for workforce development, including an ambitious plan to integrate professional development into the career lattice and registry. Additionally, post-secondary institutions will be tapped to create a new bachelors degree focusing on early childhood. All these aspects create strategic responses that will focus on Maine's needs and ultimately improve the lives of children with high needs.</p> | |



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # ME-5015

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/16/2011 - 9:43 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

| | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|-------|
| (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development | 20 | 18 |
| <p>The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--</p> <p>(a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;</p> <p>(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;</p> <p>(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and</p> <p>(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.</p> | | |

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

| Comments on (A)(1) |
|---|
| <p>The State is being awarded 18 points or 90% of the total points as evident below: a) The State's Legislature, over the course of the specified period, increased funding for Child Development Services by 48%, and the State has aggressively pursued creation and funding of public preschool programs, doubling State and local spending between FY07 and FY11. The State increased programs receiving Child Care Development Funds (CCDF) from 2009-2011, which also served as the seed money to start public preschool programs; funding for these is now embedded in Maine's school funding formula. b) The State indicates that the Child Development Services (CDS) system has served a steadily increasing concentration of children with high needs, diagnosed with autism, multiple handicaps, and/or other health impairments. The State expressed that high need children need a much higher frequency, intensity and duration of services, which is why the expenditure rate for the system has grown at a faster rate than the numbers served. CDS plans to move all of the contracted providers of special education services into the TORIS, and over time help them move to higher steps. This occurred by increasing the quality of the programs serving these high needs children. c) The State has demonstrated existing and progressive early learning and development legislation, policies, and practices by the introduction of MRSA Title 5, §24001, established the State's Children Growth Council (MCGC). Governor designates MCGC as the State Early Childhood Advisory Council. The State's Expanding Inclusive Opportunities Team is established, a federally funded initiative designed to build on existing State efforts to provide inclusion opportunities for children with disabilities and their parents. d) The State's inconsistencies at the local level slightly reduce the high quality response. The State admits to inconsistencies at the local levels, because MDHHS' child care subsidy rules require that regulated programs receiving subsidy must participate in TORIS, which incorporates ELD Standards. MDOE, through MRSA Title 20-A §4502(2), requires public preschool programs to follow the ELD Standards. The State's ELD Standards for children from birth to kindergarten comprise of the State's Early Childhood Learning Guidelines for children ages 3-5 and the Supporting the State's Infants and Toddlers standards for children prenatal to two years of age. These tools articulate what children should know and be able to do at developmental milestones, and lay a critical foundation for the young child's later success in school, work, citizenship, and personal fulfillment. They are age appropriate for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.</p> |

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-------|
| (A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals. | 20 | 17 |

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The State provided a high-quality response, and therefore received 17 points or 90% of the total points. The State strongly demonstrated a continuous commitment to improving program quality, school readiness and closing the readiness by the combining two of the state's key agencies Department of Education and Health and Human Services. What is paramount about the consolidation of the agencies is their more than ten years of experience working together, which allows the State agencies to effectively integrate objectives, opportunities, and resources. This long standing relationship will be an assurance to their statewide plan being successfully implemented, and the timeline for implementation is ambitious yet achievable. Moreover, the combining of resources will excel in the strategic repositioning of the resources, and strongly position the State Plan for continued success over an extended period of time. The State's early learning and development reform agenda is masterfully structured by the state's government and private stakeholders. The Governor's Office, the State Senate and Legislature are all key components in the state's educational reform agenda. In addition, Maine's educational goals are clear and credible based on program quality and outcome. The State did not attempt to implement new strategies for this endeavor, but improve on the current high quality programs currently in place. Notable points: a) The State indicated their SLDS will be expanded to coordinate with MDHHS data systems (including TQRIS) in order to allow linkages to MRTQ Registry, Child Link and State's Families Home Visiting. Integrated eligibility software will be installed to facilitate consumer ease of access and reduce error rates for the multiple programs offered by MDHHS. The decision support system and the development of reports specific to early childhood programs will also be strengthened and expanded. The State implied that extend the collection of authentic assessment data and use it to differentiate activities and supports for high-needs children by adding collection of data linked to the ELD Standards in home visiting and CDS programs. b) The State's strengthened infrastructure will include updated early learning program standards that form the basis for quality ratings, supports for program improvement, and related training resources aimed at cultivating a top-quality early childhood educator workforce steeped in the most effective practices for educating high-needs children. The State Plan strengthens the State's early learning and development infrastructure by setting consistent standards of quality among ELD programs regardless of the funding stream that pays for their operations, and coordinating their management in a way that maximizes resources and increases access for high-needs children. c) The State developed ELD Standards in 2005, and has implemented a cross-departmental group to revise them to reflect new research on early childhood development, and to make them developmentally, culturally and linguistically competent. Completion is planned for summer 2012. This grant will support embedding the ELD Standards into revisions of workforce competencies, professional development (MRTQ), training and technical assistance, and inform the process of refining and incorporating the elements of high quality comprehensive assessment systems into the TQRIS. The State has developed and is using an ELD Standards that will be high-quality with the current revision and will be implemented statewide.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

The State of Maine provided a high-quality response, partially implemented plan, and therefore received 7 points. The State demonstrates an unwavering commitment to aligning and coordinating the Early Learning Development Programs (ELDP) across the entire State by currently having two significant participating state agencies with a decade of alliance. The incorporation of other lead state agencies such as the Attorney General, Department of Education, and DHHS are the foundation for other participating agencies to continue to collaborate to fulfill an already existing and highly effective state initiative. The State Agencies Interdepartmental Early Learning (SAIEL), an interdepartmental sub-agency originally established by the commissioners of MDOE and MDHHS, is already in place to effectively organize, assemble, and arrange resources to meet the state's goals. Moreover, the present structure, SAIEL, is evidence of the State's ability to work together with other participating agencies, and other partners to facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability as outlined. This State appears to excel in developing synergy. The SAIEL serves as MDOE's and MDHHS' cross-agency working platform. The sub-agency placement of SAIEL is intended to fill the gap in policy, communication and administration of resources related to innovative ELD State programming and infrastructure. The State provided the required MOUs and the participating agencies vow strong commitment to the State Plan. The State provided the evidence to warrant a quality score as the rural State is large in mass, but the largest city is comprised of less than 66,000 citizens, nevertheless, the State is skilled in formulating and implementing strategic plans in 33 plantations, 424 unorganized townships and 5 federally recognized tribes. A key point to note is this state has townships that are basically geographic separated, and to have stakeholders, legislators, local community leaders, to make Early Childhood Statewide priority demonstrates excellence in a critical leadership role and full commitment educational excellence at all levels.

| | 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)

Maine provided a medium/low-quality response, and therefore received 8 points. The State provided a budget that effectively control costs through economical (majority of funds are seed for direct programs) utilization of personnel (will not be hiring any new staff). What is most recognizable about this budget is the State's ability to be successful in reducing costs and maintain the high quality and program effectiveness. The State plans to leverage funds from other entities, and will not be using any of the grant funds for personnel or fringe benefits. The State did not explain clearly on how they will fully use existing funds to support early learning and development from all the federal, state, private and/or local sources. This section could have benefitted from a more detailed response. The budget narrative was not concise, for example, purchase a laptop for personnel. The budget listed no funds being used for employees or fringe benefits, whereas, more than \$10,000 per year is allocated for supplies. In addition, the State did not clearly indicate whether they were reimbursing the State DOE for the line items under MDOE Supplies. The State's budget entails nearly 50% of the total requested funds are being outsourced, listed as contractual, and more than \$11,800 per year is allocated travel. Ninety-six percent of the budget is proposed go out to local partners, intermediary organizations, or communities for local implementation of the State's reform agenda. The State of Maine indicates a solid commitment to the children with high needs in their state. The State expresses a long-term commitment to early childhood education, but the State does not have any concrete evidence of specific long-term sustainability.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

The State provided a high-quality response, partially implemented, and therefore received 7 points or 80% of the total points. The TQRIS systems is extremely effective and based on the information provided, the State handled the implementation of the TQRIS with exceptional mastery of professional skills and cooperation from a host of participating state agencies. All the State Program Standards are being implemented with national accredited tools to ensure positive performance indicators that will achieve and surpass goals. The State plans to implement several other assessment tools such as CLASS, and with the incorporation of the other nationally accreditation institutions to this system, the TQRIS will generate superior results. Also, the State licensing system is linked to TQRIS. Maine could have benefitted tremendously by expanding more on their plan and experiences, such as, placing more emphasis on their family engagement strategies. Also, the State must ensure their health promotion practices are linked to the rural underserved children. The State family's engagement strategy must be expanded as well to the rural communities and will require relationship building prior to implementation. The State has had a TQRIS implemented and active since 2008 and has used a pilot program for two years prior. Maine expresses that since its 2008 implementation, their TQRIS has incorporated the State's ELD Standards, providing a critical link between quality indicators and children's development. The State will strengthen this work by linking ELD Standards directly to curriculum in TQRIS programs, by deepening the supports (training and technical assistance) offered to programs enrolled in the TQRIS, and by adding authentic assessment data collected in classrooms to Maine's State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) to better track children's developmental progress and measure program effectiveness. To ensure that Maine's children with high needs have access to high-quality programs, the State's plan includes strategic investments in parent outreach, including the creation of a public report card system for TQRIS programs, and improvements to strengthinme.org, a parent resource website. Maine's TQRIS has set clear standards for Child Care Centers, Family Child Care Homes, Head Start Programs, and School-Age Care. The standards include Compliance History/Licensing Status; Learning Environment/Developmentally Appropriate Practice; Program Evaluation; Staffing and Professional Development; Administrative Policies and Procedures; Parent/Family Involvement; Family Resources; and Authentic Assessments. At each quality step, ELD programs must meet all of the standards to qualify for that rating. The State indicates their licensing system for ELDs are linked to receive Maine's licensure, for ELD programs must meet minimum standards for health and safety. The TQRIS builds on the licensure system by incorporating a standard addressing compliance. All licensed programs are eligible for Step 1. Each step requires compliance with State licensing standards plus progressively more exacting expectations in other areas.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

The State provided a medium-quality response, fully implemented, and therefore received 12 points. a)(1-3) The State plans to redesign TQRIS, develop a public preschool plan, and launch a Parent Choice website; these additions will demonstrate accuracy, thoroughness and orderliness in the policies and practices that will be implemented. The State currently has vouchers, subsidies, and scholarship in-place to assist families with high-quality affordable child care. One key and impressive progression of the State is their desire to incorporate Early Head Start and Head Start to participate in the TQRIS. Maine's public schools must secure MDOE approval to begin a preschool program and receive State subsidy for it. They are required to follow basic rules set forth in Chapter 125 Basic Approval Standards: Public Schools and School Administrative Units, and submit annual information through the Basic School Approval Report EF-I-29. Public/Consumer information about quality indicators is currently not available. The MDOE Public Preschool webpage will be updated to include information and links to these sites. The State will, from January 2012-August 2012, work with a MDOE Early Childhood Consultant and with MDHHS TQRIS personnel, the Four Year Old Resource group, and administrative leadership from a sampling of approved public preschool programs to develop a strand of preschool sites to be included in

Maine's TQRIS. The State plans to provide Public/Consumer Information about public preschool and the TQRIS will be incorporated by 2013 into the MDHHS web-based information. All of Maine's Early Head Start- and Head Start-funded ELD programs participate in the State's TQRIS. Through its contracts, MDOE is moving all Child Development Services (CDS) providers into TQRIS by 2013. The State appears to not have responded to subsections 4 and 5. (b) Maine currently provides financial incentives to parents and to providers to support movement to programs at higher TQRIS Steps. Scholarships for professional development and credentialing are also available to ECE. The State will provide incentives over the next four years. However, they anticipate increased demand for incentives due to higher numbers of providers moving to higher TQRIS steps, and a greater number of parents using these programs. In order to cover these costs, SAIEL will appoint a statewide Sustainability Assessment (SA) subgroup to identify existing opportunities for attracting and blending private investment with public funding, and to explore opportunities to use multiple resources to support ELD programs. The Shared Service Assessment subgroup will make recommendations to SAIEL by June 2013. This effort will support the development of a sustainability plan to maintain financial incentives for programs in the top tiers of the TQRIS. (c) The State has set ambitious yet achievable targets performance measures for increasing the number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the statewide TQRIS. These targets are progressive and obtainable.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

The State provided a medium-quality response, partially implemented, and therefore received 9 points. The State and its participating agencies are masterful at making effective use of all stakeholders' resources. Although, the state has indicated a strong partnership with other private, public and state entities, some of the partnership only have Letters of Support and would benefit from MOUs. a) The State, likewise, has demonstrated experience in making use of optimum resources, but the incorporation of the listed environmental rating scales will require more personnel to be hired. The requirement for the ERS is not just assessing, but providing technical assistance as well. The State has planned use the ERS throughout the state, but there is no concrete plan to how the State will administer this program throughout their large and diverse populate areas. Moreover the State indicated providing assessments to Early Child Care providers every five years, which is not high quality. The State must provide on-going technical assistance in order to reach high quality. The State has four environmental rating scales as a tool to monitor their programs for validity and reliability. Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R), assesses quality in group preschool programs for children ages 2 to 5; Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale (FCCERS), assesses quality in family child care programs conducted in a provider's home; social development, and adult needs. The tool highlights a program's areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. Infant and Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS), assesses quality in infant and toddler programs (birth to 30 months). School Age Care Environmental Rating Scale (SAECERS), assesses quality of beforehand after-school group care programs for children ages 5 to 12. b) Child Care Research Partnership (CCRP) will develop regional teams of three to four people, who will be trained to conduct the ELD program monitoring reviews. These teams will consist of ECE professionals currently working in child care settings, Child Care Education Specialists, and a State agency representative with responsibility for the final monitoring report. Maine currently has several strategies in place to help parents learn about the TQRIS, program quality rating data, health and safety violations, and licensing history. Maine contracts with eight RDCs located across the state to serve as resource and referral networks for parents seeking ELD programs. Also, a website ("Parent Choices") with a search tool that connects families to child care programs relating to their interest and resources has been designed, implemented and evaluated. In August 2011, researchers at the Muskie School of Public Service, Child Care Research Project were contracted to conduct two parent focus groups charged with reviewing the website's appearance, function and content, and making recommendations. The parents' comments were used to improve the site.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

The State provided a medium-quality response, partially implemented, and therefore received 12 points. The State provided evidence that supported a partially implemented program. a) The State stated a plan to provide wage enhancements to practitioners. This is great idea, but the State did not expand on how the plan would be implemented. As for the targets set for achievement, the State demonstrates effective use of their educational and training programs to improve their Early Learning and Development Programs performance. The State's technical assistance endeavor needs a comprehensive plan in order to reach the high needs children throughout the rural parts of the State. The State's financial awards and incentives program must have a budget spending plan. b) The State indicates a desire to have low income families connect to high quality care, but provides no funding to minimize cost. The State plans to, by June 2012, implement a SAIEL-appointed ad hoc group that will conduct a statewide Sustainability Assessment (SA), designed to gather data identifying opportunities for collective purchasing and increasing shared services within the early care and education industry. The ad hoc group membership will include representation from the current Quality Initiatives partners (the eight RDC's, Child Care Plus ME, and Muskie) as well as from MDOE. The State plans to SAIEL will develop a statewide TQRIS Advancement Fund to distribute a percentage of SA-identified funding to regions based on the total number of children with high needs within the region. SA will explore financial incentives for Training and Technical Assistance, Financial Awards/Incentives, Higher Subsidy Reimbursement Rates, and Teacher/Practitioner Compensation. The State plans to add four FTE Collaboration Coaches to strengthen collaborations among public preschools and Head Start, Early Head Start, and other community child care programs that are at top TQRIS tiers. In addition, the State plans to use outside funding to address a more direct need affecting the ability of high-needs children to participate in high-quality early learning and development programs: transportation. In the rural state, there is virtually no public transportation, so distance is a barrier to accessing high-quality programs. High-needs children without access to reliable transportation often can't participate, and the State plans to make 2,800 school buses part of the solution. c) The State has set ambitious yet achievable targets performance measures for increasing the number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the statewide TQRIS. These targets are progressive and obtainable.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

The State provided a high-quality response, therefore received 13 points. Maine has the funding and started an internal study by their State institutions to validate and measure the effectiveness of their TQRIS. Maine will be able to pinpoint areas of needed improvement, set ambitious growth goals, and work cooperatively with other participating state agencies toward the identification of areas needing immediate improvement. The State's high score is accredited to their continuously examining administrative effectiveness and seeking better procedures to ensuring school readiness. a) The State indicated that through a research partnership between USM and MDHHS there is a commitment to validate and evaluate many aspects of the TQRIS. Since Maine established the TQRIS in 2008, they have been working with a cross-State evaluation consortium of University researchers to conduct a validation study of the current program quality Standards and Step Levels (tiers). This validation study design includes random selection of programs based on Step Level and program type over a three-year period of TQRIS implementation, 2008-2011. The State will test whether using these measures in the ongoing validation of the Standards will result in information that is better able to measure how a teacher improved their practices. Another project that will commence in Year One is a review of the literature, re-design and pilot testing of the staff and parent questionnaires. These measures were selected and implemented almost five years ago, and research is now emerging that can inform revisions. b) The measurement and assessment tools (Environmental Rating Scales) the State is to use are nationally accredited and best practices. These tools will provide the State the needed data to implement statewide and provide the necessary process improvement to maintain this endeavor. The State has another component, Child Care Research and Data Capacity grant, to detect differences at the program level comparing licensed programs enrolled in the TQRIS with those not enrolled in the TQRIS. During Year One, MDHHS will undertake a study to test the feasibility and value of adding an additional classroom observation measure, the CLASS, to the ERSs, which are the current measures (ECERS-R, FCCERS-R, etc.).

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| (C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards. | 30 | 24 |
| <p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--</p> <p>(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;</p> <p>(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities, and</p> <p>(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.</p> | | |
| Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation | | |
| Comments on (C)(1) | | |

The State provides a high-quality response to a partially implemented plan, and therefore received 24 points. a) Maine has had preschool standards in place since 2005, and infant toddler standards in place since 2007, as well as a 30-hour MRTQ (Maine Road to Quality) Core Knowledge Training Program in developmentally appropriate strategies for implementing the ELD Standards in early childhood settings. Both sets of standards are also embedded in Maine's TQRIS in the Learning Environment and Authentic Assessment Standards. b) The State indicates their current standards are aligned with the Maine Learning Results Standards Head Start outcomes and the Early Reading First curricula, but did not clearly indicate a mathematics component. The State provides evidence that supports a revised ELD Standards that will maintain all of the essential domains of school readiness, but they will incorporate research published in the last five years on early childhood development and learning, particularly in the areas of early language, literacy and numeracy, English language learners (ELL), cultural competence and diversity. They will use NAEYC's Pathways to Cultural Competence Program Guide (April 2010) to guide this work. The State plans a cross-sector ELD Standards Committee to create a single document that shows alignments between ELD Standards and the Common Core, Maine Learning Results standards and Head Start outcomes. A subgroup of the ELD Standards workgroup is developing a plan to ensure clear, consistent implementation of a four-pronged assessment system. This system includes 1) screening measures, 2) formative assessments, 3) measures of environmental quality, and 4) measures of quality adult-child interactions. The CAS will be implemented across all of Maine's early childhood system and the data from these assessments will be included in Maine's SLDS. c) State provides evidence that supports the ELD Standards is embedded in Maine's infant toddler competencies and evidence of demonstrating the competencies is tied to specific activities completed in the accompanying MRTQ training. For school-age competencies, the use of the Common Core is included with demonstration of competency linked to the National Institute for Out of School Time's Links to Learning Curriculum, which will enhance the State's the ELDS. d) Maine has shown a strong commitment to the incorporation of the ELD Standards into program standards, curricula and activities, CAS and Workforce Knowledge and Competency Frameworks. The State has piloted training and technical assistance in two regions of the State. Center Staff developed online resources for early childhood educators working with high needs children. Also, through regional Resource and Development Centers, Education Specialists already offer training in the ELD Standards on a regular basis.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

The State provided a high-quality response, partially implemented, and therefore received 24 points. a) The ELD Standards subcommittee will create an inventory of current assessments used across ELD programs serving children birth to 5, including, but not limited to, kindergarten entry screening tools. The subcommittee will use this information to develop criteria for authentic assessment activities birth to kindergarten entry. This will include a list of criteria for selection of assessment tools that are appropriate for use with children with high needs, and that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. b) Once the ELD Standards have been revised, by early summer of 2012, they will be incorporated into the 30-hour ELD Standards training, which currently embeds content on selection of appropriate assessment tools. This work will be led by the MRTQ Core Knowledge Training Program Director and MRTQ curriculum and instruction staff and will be completed by summer 2012. The revised training will be delivered to all ELD programs, including child care, Head Start public preschool, early intervention, early childhood special education and home visitors. Training using the revised ELD Standards will be provided to ELD programs in Years 2 to 4 by the MRTQ curriculum and instruction staff. c) The State will use CLASS and the Environmental Rating Systems assessments. These assessments will be aligned and integrated into the public preschool and CDS programs. Training will be designed on the use of program assessments to improve quality of care. This module will be embedded in the MRTQ Leadership Institutes training (for child care directors) on use of program assessments. The State did not clearly articulate clearly how they will share assessment results. Nevertheless, the chosen assessment tools will avoid duplication. d) The State will develop and pilot cross-sector assessment teams at two regional pilot programs to use assessment data on children with high needs and develop joint intervention plans in these settings. The pilot cross-sector assessment teams will be evaluated using a case-study approach to document the assessment process. Maine will design and implement a credit-based training on the administration of assessments (formative, screening, environmental and teacher) and the use of assessment data at the teacher and program levels as a way to inform program improvement activities and child-level intervention. This training will be embedded in the teacher preparation degree program and offered through Professional Development Centers (continuing education). The State will also develop and implement

training on the use of curriculum-based measurements (CBM's) to inform instruction around school readiness targets for high-needs children.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

The State provided a high-quality response, partially implemented, and therefore received 16 points. a) Maine indicates a capable foundation of workforce core knowledge and competencies from which to plan and implement its early care and education reform agenda. MRTQ, established in 1999, is the State's early career and development center, providing a hub for professional development activities in the State. MRTQ houses the Core Knowledge Training Program, which includes training on the ELD Standards and the 180 hours of training can be articulated into college credit. b) The State has common Core Knowledge Workforce and Competency Framework which includes an articulated Core Knowledge Training Program designed to promote children's learning and development. Maine has articulated competencies for infant and toddler and youth development practitioners. Once the State revised ELD Standards are incorporated into Maine's Core Knowledge Workforce and Competency Framework, the State's next step will be to ensure that Maine's Infant Toddler, 180 Hour, and Youth Development credentials are aligned with them. c) The State's Early Childhood Higher Education Committee was established in 1999 to promote the transfer of credit among higher education institutions through formal articulation agreements, to add new Early Childhood programs to meet the state's growing need, and to eliminate barriers that prevent people from pursuing their professional development goals in the field. Maine's previous work will support the alignment of the state's core knowledge and competencies with two and four-year degree programs in Maine by bringing together higher education faculty to align coursework and teacher preparation standards that align. This will ensure seamless transitions for early childhood educators who wish to progress toward a credential as well as further embedding the ELD Standards into the coursework offered in these programs.

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

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

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

- (1) Increasing the number of postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

The State provided a medium-quality response, partially implemented, and therefore received 12 points. a) The state indicated that alignment is critical to ensuring that, at each level of credentialing, early childhood educators are progressing along a consistent set of workforce competencies. The State's wage incentives will be offered to early childhood educators who achieve credentials and continue employment in the sector (an incentive payment will be provided each year for up to five years to recipients who remain at their early childhood education settings). Maine's MRTQ Registry will be expanded to offer participation to all licensed, public preschool, and Child Development Services program practitioners. The State will use the Registry to track progress of early childhood educators in reaching increased levels on the career lattice. The State's MRTQ membership will be expanded to include access by all licensed practitioners, MDOE public preschool teachers, early intervention specialists, home visitors and public K-3 teachers. The SLDS will link to the MRTQ Registry and will publicly report on the early childhood educator data. d) The State is setting ambitious achievements such as providing incentives to early childhood educators who achieve an aligned credential and providing release time to early childhood faculty at higher education institutions for working on aligned standards for teacher preparation. d)(1) The State indicates a current baseline of 9 institutions offering ECE degrees. The State Plan is to increase the number of institutions one per year over the next two years. The State plans to increase the number of Early Childhood Educators in the workforce at a rate a 100 per year. The State's target is to provide incentives to early childhood educators who achieve an aligned credential; and provide release time to early childhood faculty at higher education institutions for working on aligned standards for teacher preparation. d)(2) The State did not provide clearly their plan to increase the number of EDE, but their performance measures indicated obtainable and achievable targets. The State plans to increase the number of early childhood educators achieving higher levels by ensuring their credentials are aligned with the NAEYC teacher preparation standards and Maine's Core Knowledge and Workforce Competency Framework.

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)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies. | 40 | 34 |

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

The State provided a high-quality response, fully implemented, and therefore received 34 points. a) Maine has an existing, statewide SLDS that includes all of the Essential Data Elements. The State indicated a unique statewide child identifier to link data on that child to and from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) and coordinated early learning data system. The State's MDHHS program managers selected three programs for a linkage pilot with MDOE: Early Head Start, Head Start and Educate, which together represent over 3,000 children. These programs are not currently part of a statewide database since they are locally maintained and complete their own individual federal Program Inventory Reports. b) The State indicated that most MDOE and MDHHS data systems are both hosted and managed by the Maine Office of Information Technology (OIT), although MRTQ and Maine Families Home Visiting maintain separate data systems. The linkage system will enable Maine to expand the client index tables to add State student identifiers and other State agency identifiers, perform matches using the existing matching algorithm as needed, and perform data cleansing and validation. c) Currently, the State's Educator Quality Management System data for and about educators in Maine are maintained in multiple disparate systems making it very difficult for individuals to manage their careers and take advantage of available professional development opportunities. The ARRA SLDS grant project includes a component that will provide a core system that educators can access for critical data they need to improve effectiveness. The design of this component is based on Maine's involvement in the CCSSO Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), and on evaluating teacher support and data systems in other member states. d) The State indicated key components with their data system, such as, browser-independent web-based secure access for educators such as educational technicians, teachers, superintendents and principals. The data system will allow superintendents, principals and program directors assess to monitor educators' progress and offer online mentoring programs. The data system will be integration with the SLDS data warehouse and educator credentialing system for data collection, reporting and analysis and provide training for administrators and end-users. e) Maine responded that the steering committee maintains all interagency and external memorandums of understanding that include data use guidelines and compliance with federal, State and local privacy laws. The steering committee will be expanded as new early childhood components are added to the SLDS. The State did not provide any of the guidelines or compliances, and they did not provide clear response for their plan.

| | Available | Score |
|--|------------|------------|
| Total Points Available for Selection Criteria | 280 | 213 |

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

Absolute Priority

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

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

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

Comments on Absolute Priority

The State, with a high commitment to school readiness, has developed a productive system that increases the quality, and demonstrated plans to improve the Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs. The State plans to thoroughly address the strategies to reach the State's diverse population spread out in a vastly rural region. The state of Maine has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to nurturing the growth and development of high quality ELD programs that serve children with high needs. They have made progress in the rural state in increasing access to ELD programs for high-needs children, increasing the quality of ELD programs paid for through certain funding streams, and assuring early learning a place in our educational systems. The State will coordinate efforts with other agencies involved in early learning and development programs in Maine, to maximize resources and services available to Maine's high-needs children. The State plans to improve their ELD programs – regardless of how they are funded – subscribe to shared standards of high quality. The State has a plan to develop a highly competent and effective early childhood educator workforce in this state. Finally, the State plans to improve how data is collected and the make collected data an integral part of how ELD programs operate and make decisions.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # ME-5015

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 5:29 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

Financial investment in Early Learning and Development Programs from 2007-2011 by the state of Maine shows an overall increase in funding. The amount of financial investment is adequate for the numbers of Children with High Needs as identified in the application. From 2007 to 2011 the State of Maine invested over \$383 million in early childhood and development programs. The number of Children with High Needs in programs in Maine has remained relatively stable. Child Development Services identified speech and language delays as a need of over 50% of the children and proposed a plan to provide services for the children to address the identified need. The application provides clear and specific historical documentation of the early learning and development legislation, policies, and practices in the state. Legislation addressing early childhood as it affects this application began in 1977 and is ongoing. Policy initiatives for early childhood concerns began in 1995 and continued to 2008. Practices implemented as a result of legislation passed and policy decisions made, from 1987 to present, provide programs and services for the early childhood population of Maine. Standards for children 3-5 have been in place since 2005 and standards for infants and toddlers to age 3 have been developed and used since 2007. Both these standards are being revised as a result of new research and the new Head Start guidelines. The revised standards will include recent research for English language learners, cultural competence and diversity. There is a group already in existence to revise the standards. A group of people working on revising the standards are working on a Comprehensive Assessment System to be implemented statewide and linked to TQRIS. The data results will be used for planning, curriculum development, and family engagement. Health promotion practices and family engagement standards are currently implemented and part of TQRIS. Early Childhood Educator professional development has been an initiative in the state since 1999. An initiative began in 2010 to develop a plan to improve professional development for Early Childhood Educators (ECE). Many different Kindergarten Assessments are used throughout the state. If the legislature approves a common Kindergarten Assessment in 2012 the process will begin to identify a common kindergarten assessment. Data on the status of children entering kindergarten is not included in the application. The state provides evidence of on going financial and policy commitments for children in early education programs.

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The State has in place a cohesive system to provide the foundation for achieving the goals of the grant through this ambitious early learning and development reform agenda. The goals stated provide a governance system built on existing agencies and involve a newly created governance entity. A plan is provided in the application to use current data systems and link to the TQRIS as well as to expand the TQRIS. The TQRIS is linked to child outcomes and school readiness. There are specific plans for using the data from the TQRIS to improve programs for children from birth to kindergarten and improve school readiness. A goal is to develop a public-private plan to ensure sustainability for early learning and development programs. The plan specifically addresses Children with High Needs by expanding the TQRIS to include Part B- and Part C- contracted providers, Title 1 and public preschool programs. Benchmarks will be established for English language learners and low socioeconomic children. Support will be provided to support families of Children with High Needs as they search for access to programs for their children. Standards will be realigned to be consistent with early childhood programs throughout the state, linked to professional development, assessments, and workforce competencies. Plans are in place to develop the qualifications and training of the early childhood workforce through a state-wide, cohesive plan. The rationale for this State to focus on the criteria selected in each Focused Investment Area supports the early childhood reform agenda of the state and proposes funds through the grant be used for projects that will increase the accountability of the TQRIS. Maine addressed (C)(1) and (C)(2) in Focused Investment Area C based on the current strong foundation for these criteria. Initiatives to improve school readiness will result from improvement of the TQRIS.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

The governance structure, State Agencies Interdepartmental Early Learning (SAIEL), is presented in a broad organizational chart and further described by listing each position, agency, and current staff in a table. The Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services currently coordinate services, based on information in the narrative of this section. Many agencies and departments are already in existence and involved in early childhood issues. The SAIEL presents a governance structure to bring existing agencies into a framework tasked with supporting the goal of interdepartmental coordination to support early childhood learning programs. The state is using governance structures in existence to build on and create governance structures designed to continue serving the early childhood population. The coordination of services to serve children from birth to kindergarten is to result in pooled resources, effective implementation, and efficient delivery of services. The sustainability of this governance structure is possible since many agencies and representatives of early childhood interests and services are currently in existence and will continue to be funded. A dispute resolution process will be based on mechanisms already in place as the result of an agreement between the MDOE and MDHHS interagency agreement on Early Childhood Special Education signed in 2010. This section of the application did not address the involvement of parents or families of Children of High Needs. Letters of support from tribal organizations were not included in the list of agencies submitting letters of intent or support for this application. MOUs between the Maine Department of Education and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services contain assurances, responsibilities, and a recourse process. Letters of support are from United Way, Maine AEOYC, the State Head Start Association, and Fight Crime Invest in Kids. Strong evidence was provided for agencies already aligned and coordinating services for achieving the early childhood reform agenda. The state presents evidence of an integrated system to achieve the goals identified as necessary to serve the needs of the early childhood population.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

Maine's application clearly provides information about current funds used for early childhood programs, including those serving children in need of early intervention and special services. For example, CCDF funds are used to support quality improvement initiatives. The outcomes of the state plan are listed in (A)(2). Each goal and project is coded using the criteria of the grant application. The budget table for the Maine Department of Education lists each goal and the funding it will use each year of the grant for the specific project. For instance, A3 is Governance. The amount the Department of Education will spend each year of the grant toward the project is given. Tables supply the information needed to describe how the project will use funds in relation to each federal budget category. The budget funds projects to a degree necessary to complete the project with the outcomes stated. Costs are reasonable. The association of costs and projects correlated in the table makes accountability for funds transparent. The use of funds from each state agency is directly tied to outcomes of the grant. One table lists the project code assigned in the application, the activity associated with grant goals, the scope of partners involved and the purpose of activity in relation to State Plan. A significant amount of funds, 96%, will be distributed to partners and cooperating agencies. The state will continue to apply current funds to early childhood programs. Sustainability is ensured since the grant funds will be used for infrastructure improvements which require only initial funding. Funds will be applied to initiatives joining private and public organizations focused on serving the early childhood population of the state. The narrative states 96% of the funds will be allocated to organizations outside of state agencies tasked with supporting the reforms in early childhood education. Policies and structures for early childhood education have already been developed in Maine. This will make implementation of the grant immediate and oversight of the funds effective.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

This applicant has a TQRIS system based on the standards for program quality. This indicates substantial implementation of this project. The current system will be refined by aligning early childhood standards and assessments throughout the state. Workforce credentials will be aligned with the standards. The rating system currently has a data base of a small number of programs. State-wide programs, including public school sites and sites using IDEA funds, will be rated through the TQRIS. The state plan is described and activities proposed for the use of grant funds are seamlessly incorporated into the state plan. The expansion of the TQRIS proposed in the grant will increase the participation of early childhood programs and lead to an adherence to redesigned statewide standards. The tiered progression of the TQRIS is based on best practice standards from NAEYC, NAFCC, and COA. Measureable standards for child care providers and Head Start centers are provided in the appendix. The CLASS will be added as a monitoring tool and used to assess providers in tiers 3 and 4. Measureable standards for every program, or universal standards for the revised TQRIS, are not provided. Licensing compliance is step 1 on the tiered system. Progression up the tiers is highly linked to the workforce registry.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

The state provides a plan to promote full participation in the TQRIS, including state-funded preschools, Early Head Start and Head Start, and ELD programs funded under Section 619 (Part B) and Part C of IDEA. There is a work plan to bring State-funded preschools into the TQRIS by 2013. The State is currently providing technical assistance, financial incentives to programs to increase in quality, and scholarships to TQRIS programs. Projects are in place to provide a foundation for an even stronger, expanded, TQRIS. The proposed plan is to systematically use existing and pilot preschool programs and the resulting data to set standards for future incorporation of preschool programs into TQRIS. The target for programs participating in the TQRIS is 100% with the exception of programs using CCDF funds, which have a target of 91%. The number of sites to be incorporated each year is gradual, yet significant, and designed to reach the final target of 100%. This is ambitious. It is an achievable goal. This plan builds on practices, policies, and systems already in place. Data is used to refine the process of incorporating more sites into the system with standards for quality. Financial incentives are in place for parents to access care for their high needs children. The state anticipated an increase in the request for incentives for professional development and for caregivers and plans to enlist the private sector to assist in this initiative. The SAIEL will appoint a statewide Sustainability Assessment subgroup to identify opportunities to use public and private funds to ELD programs and parent access to these higher quality programs.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

A monitoring system is currently used with the TQRIS. The current monitoring system will be expanded to include tools for assessing sites serving various ages of children, clear definitions of the data to be collected, development of monitors and a monitoring system, and the frequency of monitoring. Monitoring tools used will be the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised, the Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale, the Infant and Toddler Environmental Rating Scale, and the School Age Care Environmental Rating Scale. There is a plan of action to address the results of the monitoring visits based on the monitoring tools. Reliability of the data is built into the process. Research indicates early childhood providers change sites or obtain new positions without incentives to stay at one site. Although the state's plan provides monetary incentives to early childhood staff, a timeline of monitoring every five years, rather than more frequently, may not be frequent enough to consistently monitor the quality of a program. Benchmarks for English language learners and low socioeconomic children are in the goal but not specifically included in the activities to achieve the goals of the plan. A point of contact for parents in Maine will be the Regional Development Centers to serve as resource and referral networks for parents. There will be a website parents can access to choose a child care provider that meets their qualifications for a good fit for their child. Parents were involved in the evaluation of the visual and accessibility aspects of the TQRIS website. Information will be added to the website about preschools. The state has multiple venues for parents to learn of quality child care providers for their children. The quality of the plan to develop reliability of the data and monitors, reduce bias, provide assistance to early childhood centers in need of improvement, and incorporation of public school sites are strengths in this application. This is a high quality plan that is substantially implemented.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

Children with High Needs are addressed throughout this section by increasing the number of high needs children served in the higher tiers of the TQRIS, meeting safety requirements by equipping school buses with seat belts, and providing communities technical support and guidance through an increase in the number of Collaboration Coaches. The applicant will use data collected from successful CCDF programs to increase the quality of other programs in the state. There is a sequential, achievable, measurable plan to promote the attendance of Children of High Needs in the two highest tiers of the TQRIS. The applicant addresses the increased cost of serving Children of High Needs by providing financial assistance to centers providing care for Children of High Needs and the educators providing the care. The applicant presents a plan for increasing the quality of care for Children of High Needs using a systematic process to serve children as soon as possible in quality settings. The applicant has further strengthened their application by recognizing and addressing the issue of sustainability of this initiative. The plan is ambitious and achievable. The State provided evidence of a substantially implemented plan with a high quality response.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(3)

Evaluation of the TQRIS system using a cross-State evaluation consortium is already taking place to validate the rating system. Current validation of the TQRIS allows the applicant to address the next steps to improve the TQRIS: design or choose appropriate assessment measures; support a research study to redesign and review the Standards; and design and implement a study to relate the outcomes of the rating process to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness. The design of the research is presented along with a timeline to obtain results by the end of the grant in 2015. Since implementation and validation is already underway for the TQRIS the State proposes to use grant funds specifically for the validation of the TQRIS in relation to the outcomes of improvement of program quality and school readiness. This goal impacts the services of Children of High Needs directly and in a timely manner.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

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

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)

Several projects planned to meet the goals of this grant began prior to this grant as a result of funding from previously awarded federal grants. This application presents a plan to build on the infrastructure provided by previously funded grants and awards. Current research, within the last five years, will be used to provide alignment of previous Early Learning Development standards with the Common Core standards, Head Start Guidelines, and NAEYC's guidelines. Guidelines provided by national entities such as Head Start and NAEYC require their guidelines to be culturally and linguistically appropriate for each age group addressed in the standards. The quality guidelines lead child care providers to base their programs on learning activities that will lead to school readiness. After the alignment of early childhood standards across programs and across the state, including K-3 alignment, the standards will be embedded in the Core Knowledge Training Program workforce competencies, and higher education standards in both two- and four-year degree programs. An expert coaching model will be the technical assistance model through the Center for Curriculum and Instruction. This initiative is

based on prior successful experiences in the state using the coaching model in an Early Reading First grant. The integration of early childhood standards into all supporting elements of early childhood program provides convincing evidence this cohesive plan will ensure children are ready for school. The goal of the center is stated to be training to enhance the instruction of teachers who work in programs of children with high needs; any childcare provider program. Professional development activities are consistently focused on knowledge of the Early Learning and Development Guidelines. Additionally, cross sector assessment teams will develop joint intervention plans. The collaboration of agencies for professional development, interventions, assessments, and curricula based on standards provides evidence of commitment among agencies and between agencies in the state to promote commitment to, and knowledge of, Early Learning Standards in all programs serving the birth to 5 population and focusing on children with high needs. The current MQRT training introduces the development of a portfolio of authentic assessment evidence related to the standards. Otherwise the comprehensive assessment system is in a planning phase and minimally implemented. The state has a strong, high quality response.

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-------|
| (C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems. | 30 | 18 |

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) |
|---|
| <p>The State will inventory current assessments and use this information to develop criteria for selection of assessment tools that are appropriate for use with children with high needs, and that are culturally and linguistically competent. Assessments discussed in this application will be chosen or designed based on alignment with the Early Learning Standards. Training modules will be developed after the ELD standards have been revised so the knowledge of standards is built into the training model and the skill set of ECE. The plan states assessments will be given by teams and the data collected will be used to develop interventions for children with high needs and improve program quality. Data from assessments will be used for instructional purposes. Administrators will be trained on the administration and use of the assessments. The plan is systematic and focused on the goal of collecting data and using the data to improve programs for children from birth to kindergarten. An assessment integration planning and implementation toolkit will be developed for programs serving children with high needs. These initiatives are cohesive and specifically address linking the ELD standards to a comprehensive assessment system. The Curriculum Based Measures will be used to inform instruction to lead to school readiness for Children with High Needs. This is a cyclical process of assessments, training, using assessments, instructing based on assessments, and making changes based on comprehensive assessments. This provides training to those supervising the programs and ECE, administrators, as well as the ECE working with the children in programs designed to lead to school readiness. This plan is minimally implemented and a high quality response.</p> |

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

A workforce initiative established in 1999, Maine Roads to Quality (MRTQ), provides evidence of the State's commitment to early childhood career development. Training is based on the current standards. The applicant proposes to use grant funds to realign the core knowledge and competencies framework with the of Early Learning Standards after they have been aligned with the Core Standards and the Head Start standards. The purposeful initiative will align workforce competencies, community college early childhood programs, and university programs involved in the training of early childhood educators. For example, a new bachelor's degree program is proposed to focus on teaching students with high needs. This quality plan specifically addresses improvement of the workforce for Children with High Needs. A Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework leading to children's learning, development, and based on outcomes is a strong framework to support the learning experience of the early childhood population. The workforce will be trained, there will be a progression of credentials and degrees for an expanded group of ECE, and a Bachelor's degree program focused on Children with High Needs will be established. The effectiveness of the use of grant funds for this purpose is reported quarterly. The plan presents a system for a statewide quality training of early childhood educators to result in quality early childhood programs.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

Maine currently offers a common statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Core Knowledge Workforce and Competency Framework. Maine will embed the aligned credentials into the requirements of programs at the highest levels of Maine's TQRIS. This plan effectively integrates systems to expand access to professional development aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Maine currently offers scholarships to practitioners pursuing credit-based coursework toward credentialing or certification. In this plan, educators who complete training to effectively work with children in the early childhood setting will receive a monetary incentive. Tiered reimbursements, a "quality bump" in pay, and a scholarship fund will provide incentives for early childhood educators to continue their professional development and remain at one program for a period of time. The will meet the goal of educators progressing to higher levels of knowledge of skills to work with children from 0-5. Quality training for early childhood professionals will be provided by university educators and collaborative coaches. A committee of early childhood educators is in the process of developing a training curriculum based on the newest research in the area of early childhood education and based on standards. The plan is for the SLDS to link to the MRTQ Registry and publicly report on the early childhood

educator data. The targets for increasing the number of early childhood educators receiving credentials from post-secondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Core Knowledge Workforce and Competency Framework are ambitious yet achievable and will effectively support early childhood educators improve their abilities. There is also an ambitious and achievable goal for early childhood educators progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Core Knowledge Workforce and Competency Framework. An innovative part of this plan is the establishment of a Bachelor's Degree program focused on Children with High Needs at the University of Southern Maine. This high quality response to a partially implemented since there currently is not a system to publicly report aggregated data on Early Childhood Educators.

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)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies. | 40 | 40 |

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

The state already has an SLDS that includes all the Essential Data Elements and will be expanded to link the capabilities to all DHHS early childhood programs. Assignment of identifiers for Educare, Early Head Start and Head Start sites is expected to be completed in 2012. The beginnings of uniform data collection by participating agencies and programs began in 2010 with funding from another grant. This makes it possible for other child care programs and Maine Families Home Visiting to be added to the system in a timely manner, late 2012 and 2013. Common data structure framework is already achieved based on prior activities as the result of prior grants. The state provides clear goals for the data system, key functions for the planned educator quality management system, and a link to the data in the Maine Roads to Quality Registry. This system will also allow access to professional development programs and training for administrators. This is designed to serve early childhood educators over the time of their service in Early Childhood programs. Compliance with oversight requirements and privacy laws are completely explained. The applicant gives key goals and steps to accomplish the enhancement of an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies. Information that will be included in the data system are self-assessments, templates for educators to build individual learning plans aligned to State and local standards, and the ability for administrators to monitor educators' progress. All factors are addressed in this section of the application. It is a cohesive, forward looking system building on the funds from another grant. The state has a plan for the data system and as funds are available the state enhances their vision to accomplish the task efficiently. The substantially implemented plan has a quality response.

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-------|
| Total Points Available for Selection Criteria | 280 | 256 |

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

Absolute Priority

| | Met? Yes/No |
|---|----------------|
| Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs. | Yes |
| <p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p> | |
| Comments on Absolute Priority | |
| <p>The state's application describes the status of the current implementation of the state's early childhood reform agenda. Many initiatives are in progress and at various stages of implementation. The applicant documents the history of the state in recognizing the importance of early childhood education. The state has a plan for each section of the grant. Budget expenditures are focused primarily on section B, a Quality Tiered Rating System. The proposed system will produce data which will improve program quality. There is a cycle of training people to administer the assessments, using the assessments to provide training in identified areas of need for program quality improvements, using the assessments to identify interventions needed, and using the data for the outcome of children ready for school. The ultimate goal stated is to use grant funds to accelerate projects designed to give every child the experiences needed to succeed in kindergarten.</p> | |



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # ME-5015

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 10:50 AM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 17. Includes detailed text description of the criterion and sub-points (a) through (d).

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

Maine's application provides evidence of a strong, ongoing, statewide commitment to early childhood learning and development. The state legislature has maintained appropriations, even in the face of budget deficits, and increased funding in several areas. The state's public preschool program for four-year-olds provides for funding 10% above the per-pupil expenditure for students in grades K-12. Approximately half of all public schools in Maine now offer preschool programs, almost double the number five years ago, and expenditures for state-funded preschool programs have increased dramatically since 2009 (\$4,115,453 in 2009, \$7,337,017 in 2011). Still, the state's funding history is somewhat uneven across time and programs, and the narrative provides only limited data to explain this phenomenon. Of particular importance is Maine's commitment to quality and its plans to increase quality. Its existing programs have demonstrated very good outcomes, and plans are in place to improve outcomes for Children with High Needs. For example, Child Development Services (CDS) plans to move all special education providers into the TQRIS. Similarly, RTT-ELC funds would be used to bring all public school preschool programs, Head Start/Early Head Start programs, and programs funded through Child Care Development Funds (CCDF) into the TQRIS. The application provides a clear explanation of the history of early childhood-related legislation, policies, and practices that adds to the evidence in support of Maine's commitment to early learning and development. The state's Early Childhood Learning Guidelines were adopted in 2005 and refined in 2011. Although no statewide kindergarten screening assessment is in place, schools are required to use a screening tool of their choice. Criteria for selecting appropriate assessment instruments are recommended, however, use of the criteria is not required, which could result in the selection of inappropriate instruments. The state has been working since 2009 to fully integrate the TQRIS with the State Longitudinal Data System, and the description of the current system indicates that is of high quality. Many of the state's early childhood programs incorporate elements of high-quality health promotion practices, especially health and safety requirements, and all elements are well represented in the current TQRIS. Family engagement is also an integral part of most programs and is represented well in the TQRIS. Workforce credentials for several areas are currently based on workforce competencies, but the percentage of educators in the state that hold each credential is not known because educators are not required to enroll in the state registry.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The state has proposed an ambitious yet achievable plan for improving program readiness, improving outcomes for children, and closing the readiness gap. Central to this plan is a strengthened infrastructure for supporting early learning and development. The state appears to recognize the problems of an uncoordinated approach and has taken appropriate steps to improve efforts, both in terms of provision of high quality services and cost efficiency. The creation of an interdepartmental agency to coordinate early childhood services, policies, and practices is expected to lead to more coherently collaborative work. In addition, a public-private partnership, in conjunction with the existing non-profit Maine Children's Trust, is expected to enhance parent education efforts. Quality will be enhanced through expansion of the TQRIS to additional providers and through inclusion of the Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS) to evaluate teacher-child interactions. A particular strength of the application is the plan to continually collect and analyze evaluation data. Finally, the application provides strong rationales for each of the State's choices of criteria within the Focused Investment Area. In each case, the needs for the criteria selected were clearly presented and some criteria not selected were addressed in an implicit way through other project activities. Although the state does not have a statewide kindergarten entry assessment, there was no rationale provided for not addressing (E)(1).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

The application includes a strong plan for participation of critical state agencies and other important stakeholders, and the plan is substantially implemented at this time. The plan includes an interdepartmental agency (State Agencies Interdepartmental Early Learning, SAIEL) to coordinate project efforts and assure effective communication and decision-making. The fact that the proposal's work will be carried out by only two state agencies helps to reduce bureaucratic stagnation and allow for maximum efficiency. Specific plans were provided for such issues as resolving disputes. The Scope of Work clearly outlined specific expectations of various participants. An MOU between SAIEL and Maine Children's Growth Council (MCGC) was provided. In addition, letters of support from a variety of critical participating agencies and organizations were provided. Many of the letters provided details about the nature and extent of the agency's involvement. There is, however, no letter provided from the University of Maine to indicate that they will continue their TQRIS monitoring work. Finally, the MCGC includes participation from numerous stakeholders, including representatives from philanthropy, business, law enforcement, child abuse prevention, parents, the Child Care Advisory Council, and the Head Start Directors Association.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The budget and budget narrative provide detailed information about existing state funds and how they will be used to support the RTT-ELC project, as well as how RTT-ELC funds will be used, but the plan lacks detail regarding sustainability beyond the grant period. The application explains how the RTT-ELC will enhance current services and build capacity for higher quality implementation. Beyond this capacity building, public-private partnerships seem to be the only ways sustainability is addressed, which makes continued efforts vulnerable to the variability of private support. The explanation of how Maine will use existing funds includes coordination of MDOE and MDHHS data systems for Head Start. The reduced duplication of efforts is likely to lead to increased efficiency. The use of funds is efficient and costs are reasonable, but it is unclear how some of the services will be expanded with no increases in personnel. There is limited detail, for example, on how more programs will be monitored or how more professional development will be provided in a largely rural state without additional personnel. The application allocates 96% of the budget to local partners, intermediary organizations, or communities for local implementation, which is a substantial commitment.

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)

Quality for ME is Maine's TQRIS. The system has been in place since 2006, which supports the state's contention that it is substantially implemented at this time. A central focus for the state's RTT-ELC project is to bring more programs into Quality for ME and move more programs to Steps 3 and 4 (the two highest ratings in the TQRIS), but there is little detail provided about how the plan will be implemented. The application states that the purpose of the TQRIS is to "give families and caretakers a simple tool to help recognize and choose quality child care; give Maine child care programs help in improving their quality; help Maine measure how well supports to child care programs are working; and help Maine join other states in measuring and supporting quality child care for families," but the family engagement strategies in the plan are minimal. In 2005, Maine adopted a set of Early Childhood Learning Guidelines as standards for programs throughout the state. In 2011, these guidelines were refined to incorporate new research on early language, literacy, and numeracy, as well as to enhance their cultural relevance. The standards are clear and measurable, meaningfully differentiate levels of program quality, and reflect high expectations of program excellence. The application outlines plans to use widely recognized assessments, such as Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS), Infant and Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS), Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale (FCCERS), and Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS) to improve program quality. All licensed programs are eligible for Step 1 in the TQRIS, but there is no requirement of participation to qualify for licensure. The planned tiered program standards include all required elements, including a Comprehensive Assessment System, Early Childhood Educator qualifications, Family Engagement strategies, Health Promotion practices, and Effective Data practices. Most of these elements are strong, but Family Engagement is minimally addressed (i.e., Touchpoints and Strengthening Families are mentioned, but no detail is provided about how these will be used). Specific programs (e.g., Child Care Plus ME) are noted as serving Children with High Needs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

The application identifies detailed plans, including a specific timeline, for bringing all early childhood programs into the TQRIS. The application provides a plan for increasing monetary incentives for participation, but sustainability of this plan relies on public-private partnerships, and no specific plans for sustainability are provided. The application provides data regarding current baseline levels of participation and the goal for increasing participation during each year of the grant period. The expectation is for 100% of state-funded preschool, Early Head Start and Head Start, programs funded by IDEA, Part B, and programs funded under Title I of ESEA will participate by the end of 2015. This is an ambitious goal, but given the past resistance to participation described, a goal of 100% may be overly ambitious, so achievability is unclear. There is no indication why 100% participation would be considered realistic now when participation in some categories has been historically low. No targets are provided for programs funded by IDEA, Part C, but it is noted that these are in-home services. Still, no explanation is provided about why these services could not be included in the TQRIS. Also, 91% of programs receiving CCDF funds will be expected to participate. No explanation is provided about why CCDF programs would not reach 100%, even though it is expected of all other programs. Finally, details are unclear how about how some populations of Children with High Needs will access High Quality Child Care.

| | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|-------|
| (B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs | 15 | 11 |

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)

Maine's TQRIS has been in place for several years, so the plan has been substantially implemented at this point. The application outlines plans for continued use of widely recognized environmental rating scales to monitor program quality (e.g., ITERS, ECCERS). The unique needs of Children with High Needs are adequately addressed by the differential use of the various Environmental Rating Scales. Plans for ensuring that monitors are well trained and that inter-rater reliability can be established and maintained are outlined, as well. Specifically, the state partners with the University of Maine, which hires assessors who are required to maintain 85 percent reliability to anchor raters who are trained to 85 percent reliability with the authors of the ERS tools. However, the state indicates a plan for monitoring programs every five years, which seems inadequate to ensure maintenance

of program quality, especially given the typical attrition rates of personnel in early childhood settings. Although use of the CLASS is mentioned elsewhere in the application, no plan is described for how CLASS data will be used. The application does provide a clear plan for sharing program evaluation data with parents. A website with a search tool that allows families access to information about child care programs has been designed, implemented and evaluated. Parents were involved with the design of the website. However, no plan for sharing information to parents without internet access was provided. This could especially pose problems for Maine's population of families who have Children with High Needs (e.g., families living in poverty, homeless families), given that they are least likely to have computers and internet access.

| | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|-------|
| (B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs | 20 | 14 |

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)

Although no clear incentive plan is outlined in the application, a plan for forming an ad hoc group to develop an incentive plan is in place. The group would assess the sustainability of financial incentives available to child care providers who commit to continuously higher levels of quality service by moving up the TQRIS levels. The application provides specific plans for helping families access high quality services. In particular, four Pre-K Community Collaboration Coaches will be hired to strengthen collaborations among public preschools and Head Start, Early Head Start, and other community child care programs that are at top TQRIS tiers. Also, as a support for working families, the state will use RTT-ELC funds to equip more school buses with child safety restraint systems to increase the availability of safe and appropriate transportation across the state, especially in remote, rural areas. The goal of 100% of Children with High Needs in High Quality Child Care is ambitious, but given the results of a pilot program, it is not clearly achievable. The state's previous pilot program substantially increased the percentage of families choosing high quality programs, but the pilot did not achieve 100% with its sample. No plan was articulated to increase incentives, so it is unclear why the goal is higher than what the pilot accomplished. It is also unclear why the state has elected not to emphasize a goal of moving more programs into Step 4 of the TQRIS.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

The state already has two projects underway validate the TQRIS. One is a multi-state study by university researchers, and the other is a project funded through the US DHHS. The state intends to enhance these ongoing efforts by investigating the extent to which the outputs of the rating process are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness. The plans for these studies are clear and very well-conceived, based on established standards for project evaluation. Overall, the plan for validation is extremely strong, but a few minor weaknesses in the explanation were present. First, little detail is provided about plans for data analysis. Also, it is unclear the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness. Finally, there is no letter of support from collaborators to provide evidence of the intent for continued collaboration.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| (C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards. | 30 | 24 |
| <p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--</p> <p>(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;</p> <p>(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and</p> <p>(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.</p> | | |

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

| Comments on (C)(1) | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>As previously mentioned, Maine has early learning standards in place that address all the Essential Domains of School Readiness. Those standards have recently undergone review and are being revised to ensure alignment with K-3 standards and to ensure that they are developmentally, linguistically, and culturally appropriate. However, details of this review and revision process are not provided. The new standards will reflect research published in the last five years on early childhood development and learning, particularly in the areas of early language, literacy and numeracy. The standards, presented in the appendix, are incorporated in curricula and activities. The standards are also embedded within the state's TQRIS and Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and the application describes reasonable plans for professional development activities to support teachers' implementation of the standards through the Core Knowledge Training Program. This includes the hiring of a new director and master trainers. The current system does not include a Comprehensive Assessment System, but appropriate plans are underway to establish this component.</p> | | |

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| (C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems. | 30 | 20 |

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 application describes a general plan for the development of criteria to assist programs in selecting assessment tools that are appropriate for Children with High Needs, but no detail is provided about the process to be used, where the criteria will come from, or the qualifications of the subcommittee for making these determinations. The plan also includes an appropriate and feasible plan for assisting providers in understanding the purposes of the assessments and appropriate uses of assessment data, including a 30-hour ELD Standards training, a training module on how to link child assessment data to SLDS, and embedding the content in the USM teacher education program. Although the state has completed extensive previous work with the environmental rating tools and has identified the CLASS as a potentially appropriate tool for assessing adult-child interactions, the application remains vague when it comes to assessment of child outcomes. Beyond the establishment of selection criteria, there is little reference to child outcome assessments. There is mention of Curriculum-Based Measurement, but no explanation about how or why CBM would be used is provided. The plan for aligning, integrating, and sharing assessments and results is somewhat vague.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

| | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|-------|
| (D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials. | 20 | 19 |

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

The application outlines a sound plan for developing a common, statewide Workforce and Competency Framework that is likely to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes. Most of the work under this criterion will be carried out through the Maine Roads to Quality (MRTQ): Early Care and Education Career Development Center, which serves as "a hub for professional development activities" in Maine. The purpose of MRTQ is to "promote and support professionalism in the early care and education field." The center is housed at the University of Southern Maine. MRTQ houses the Core Knowledge Training Program, which includes 180 hours of training on the ELD Standards that can be articulated into college credit. It provides a high quality career "lattice" to document progression through various steps of the statewide progression of credentials and degrees. The state plans to embed the credentials in the TQRIS. MRTQ also provides professional development in healthy, safe environments; observation and assessment; child development; developmentally appropriate practice; guidance; relationships with families; individual and cultural diversity; and business and

professional development. Through the Early Childhood Education Higher Education Committee, Maine has a strong system in place for engaging postsecondary institutions. In particular, the plan will support the development of a bachelor's degree program focused on Children with High Needs.

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-------|
| (D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in Improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities. | 20 | 18 |
| <p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to improve the effectiveness and retention of Early Childhood Educators who work with Children with High Needs, with the goal of improving child outcomes by--</p> <p>(a) Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities that are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;</p> <p>(b) Implementing policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) that promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that is aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and that are designed to increase retention;</p> <p>(c) Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention; and</p> <p>(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--</p> <p>(1) Increasing the number of postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and the number of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(2) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p> | | |

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

| Comments on (D)(2) |
|---|
| <p>A strong plan for implementing Maine's educator quality management system by 2013 is presented. Funding from the RTT-ELC grant will expand this system to include early childhood educators and providers and will link to the data within the MRTQ Registry. A new bachelor's program at the University of Southern Maine will focus on the education of Children with High Needs and is a notable strength of the proposal. This program will include clinical experiences with model classrooms from Early Reading First projects. The state also intends to embed the aligned credentials into the requirements of programs at the highest levels of Maine's TQRIS. Providers at the higher steps of the TQRIS receive payment at above the market rate. They are required to use a large portion (75%) of this "quality bump" money to increase staff salaries, which should serve as a strong retention incentive. In addition, reasonable wage incentives are provided for educators who achieve credentials and for those who continue working in the field. The state's plan for publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention is somewhat limited. The application only includes a plan to link the MRTQ registry to the SLDS and to report these data to SAIEL and to the Maine Children's Growth Council.</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)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies. | 40 | 33 |
| <p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to enhance the State's existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System or to build or enhance a separate, coordinated, early learning data system that aligns and is interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and that either data system--</p> <p>(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;</p> <p>(b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;</p> <p>(c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data</p> | | |

formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data;

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

The state has a substantially implemented plan and, once fully implemented, the data system is likely to meet the state's needs. A data system with all Essential Data Elements is currently in place, and the application outlines plans to enhance the system to include all the elements expected by RTT-ELC. A pilot is being conducted with the Maine Education Policy Research Institute, which will increase the likelihood of success when the system rolls out statewide by providing an opportunity to identify and solve problems in advance. The application lists specific features that make the system user friendly, including standard report formats, integrated systems, and common data structures. These features should promote effective exchange of information among agencies and generate information that is timely and accessible for early childhood educators. The system will allow agencies to share data easily, and the application suggests that this will occur while safeguarding privacy appropriately. However, the plans for data oversight are extremely vague.

| | Available | Score |
|--|------------|------------|
| Total Points Available for Selection Criteria | 280 | 224 |

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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>Maine meets the Absolute Priority by comprehensively and coherently addressing 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 plan includes descriptions of the state's TORIS, early learning standards, and Comprehensive Data System, along with plans to improve the quality of the early childhood workforce.</p> | |