



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # MN-5019

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CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development	20	19
<p>The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--</p> <p>(a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;</p> <p>(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;</p> <p>(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and</p> <p>(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(1)
<p>--Minnesota has demonstrated a strong commitment and extensive investments in their Early Learning and Development (ELD) programs and systems. --Financial investments for services have generally increased over time, despite some fluctuations in funding from year to year. The contributions are from multiple funding sources, particularly private sector, business, and foundations. The state has used Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funding for early childhood initiatives, and has significantly exceeded the match requirements for Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) funding (See Table A1-4). However, Title 1 funding is being tapped for early childhood in only 4 of 339 school districts, which seems a somewhat weak commitment. --The number of children with high needs served has also increased, but does not keep pace with the increase in rates of poverty among families of young children (one third of young children are living in poverty). Minnesota has noted racial disparities are also of concern - with children of color being a focus of the "children with high needs" (See Table A1-5). --Minnesota has developed legislation, policies and practices that support quality early childhood services in all of the focus areas of the RTT-ELC: Successful State Systems; High-Quality Accountable Programs; Promoting ELD Outcomes for Children; Great Early Childhood Education Workforce; and Measuring Outcomes and Progress. The Early Childhood Advisory Council, Office of Early Learning, Children's Cabinet, and Governor's support provide interagency administrative backing for high quality early childhood services. --Minnesota has a strong foundation for a successful state system, with each of the building blocks of a high quality ELD system in place. The tables in A1 6-10 document these components of their system.</p>

	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)

--Minnesota's reform agenda focuses on increasing the quality of early childhood programs, as well as increasing the number of children with high needs benefiting from those services. The Minnesota Early Learning Council developed a strong vision in 2010 that guides the work of the state. The agenda also provides a balance between improvements in direct services to children and families in high need communities at the local level (through the target communities) and at the state level through improvements in infrastructure that will improve and sustain the benefits of the reforms statewide. --Minnesota's reform agenda is based on a number of evaluation and research studies that provide a strong evidence base for a comprehensive state plan. The appendices (1-3) provide a strong plan that targets high need communities with high poverty rates, multiple risk factors, as well as strong community commitment and support for the changes. In addition to the community level changes proposed, a strong state level infrastructure will be developed or enhanced with the intention of increasing the quality and access of early childhood services. --The goal and plan presented in this section are very general. No baseline information is provided, so it is difficult to determine the ambitiousness of the goals. --The proposal describes how each of the sections addressed in the proposal (focused investments - C, D and E) are well positioned to create positive change in the state. They also provide a rationale for not addressing C 3 and 4 - because they have the elements of those systems already in place. The proposal did not include a rationale for addressing C 1. The criteria described are all linked to the state plan.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

--Minnesota has a demonstrated high level of commitment to and implementation of strategies to align and coordinate ELD in the state. The state has mechanisms for both local and state level collaboration. The newly created Office of Early Learning will be responsible for the day-to-day operations, The Children's Cabinet has policy decision-making responsibility - as well as dispute resolution authority. The Early Learning Council has an advisory role. The figure in A-2 and the tables also clarify and differentiate the advisory, legislative, and day to day responsibilities for the program. Roles and responsibilities are clearly delineated in the MOUs and charts. All signatures are available. The scope of work detailed in the appendix clarified the priority activities and the intended impacts of the grant funding (and other state and private funding). --The MOU addressed all of the Participating State Agencies (PSA) terms and conditions, scope of work, and commitment to the State Plan. Support letters from all key players illustrated the variety of supports for the plan and the ongoing commitment that currently exists for coordinated early learning and development services. --The proposal illustrated a high level of implementation and provided a high quality response to all of the requested information.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The Minnesota proposal documents extensive use of existing funds to support early learning and development from a variety of federal, state, private and local sources. The funding efforts will support the intended outcomes by supplementing the existing investments to accelerate and enhance efforts currently underway. The funding is detailed by project and by agency. The links between the funding, activities and intended outcomes is clearly described. The bulk of the funding goes to improve services and increase direct services to children with high needs. The four target communities will serve as the focus for these local activities. In addition, efforts to create a strong data system will provide accountability and a process for using data for continuous improvement. In each of the budget sections, a description of how the activities will be sustained is included in the narrative.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)
The state has developed, implemented, fully evaluated, and revised the TQRIS - Parent Aware - through state and private funding. The TQRIS addresses all of the required elements and focuses on supporting families to access high quality early childhood services for their children. Validation studies have been conducted to explore how well the TQRIS differentiates program quality levels and programs that take different pathways (accelerated vs. traditional). The TQRIS is updated on a regular basis to incorporate the latest research and validation studies, as well as public input. The TQRIS is linked to state licensing standards and the plan describes how new programs will be included in the Parent Aware TQRIS process.

	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)

--Minnesota has partially implemented ways of promoting Early Learning and Development programs to participate in the TQRIS. The baseline data presented in Performance Measures in B2c indicate that currently, other than Title I programs which have a 77% participation rate in TQRIS, less than 12% of other ELD programs participate in the TQRIS (Head Start, Early Head Start - 10%, state funded preschools - 10%, Part C - 9%, Preschool Special education - 12%, CCDF funded programs - 7%). Since the state has been piloting the tool, this is understandable. The high quality plan sets targets to significantly increase the number of publicly funded early childhood programs participating in the TQRIS. --A variety of strategies are planned to increase the number of high quality ELD programs, as well as to increase access to children with high needs to these high quality programs. Private funding sources will be used to increase the awareness of the TQRIS for ELD programs. Programs that have not yet participated will receive training and coaching to prepare for the TQRIS. This preparatory training, called Building Quality, will be updated. In the four target communities additional supports for ELD programs to participate in the TQRIS will be provided. Improvement supports in the form of providing child care health consultants and in supporting children with disabilities and children in subsidized child care to access highly rated programs (4 star). These supports will be expanded throughout the state. The plan is based on previous evaluation studies.

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

--Minnesota has substantially implemented this element of their system and the quality of the plan is high. --The process for monitoring programs involves a portfolio of evidence compiled with the support of a coach and CLASS observations. The process has strong reliability and validity. Programs rated by the Accelerated pathway use their program standards along with other tools that have inter rater reliability and face validity of established program standards. The system is in place for monitoring programs. New observers will be trained and ongoing training will be provided for observers. Monitoring will occur every other year. There is strong support from private and foundation resources for community outreach. --A web-based system provides information for families and other stakeholders about TQRIS levels of quality to help them make informed decisions about choosing a program for their children. A concern with this systems is in reaching families of children with high needs, who may not have access to the computers and the internet. Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) staff are also available to help families access high quality ELD programs. The design of the Parent Aware rating and monitoring system is intended to be family focused and to help families make informed decisions about early care for their children.

	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)

Minnesota has partially implemented this element of the system, with a high quality plan for addressing increased access to high quality ELD programs for children with high needs. The pilot programs for increasing quality of ELD programs that have been developed and evaluated will assist the state in fully implementing continuous improvement strategies for all ELD programs. The approach to continuous improvement involves the use of coaches to support programs participating in the Parent Aware rating system to improve their quality ratings. This approach will be extended to the target communities. The state has piloted and evaluated strategies that provide support and incentives for families of high need children to access high quality ELD programs. These field tested incentives will be used in the target communities and expanded statewide. For example, the strategies used in the Invest Early program (see appendix 21) closed the achievement gap for children with high needs. Scholarships to high quality programs for families of children with high needs and encouraging school districts to develop high quality programs using Title 1 funding are the primary strategies to increase access to quality for families of children with high need. The performance measure table for B4c1 was confusing, and it was unclear if the targets were only for the 4 target communities or the entire state. Despite this question on the performance measure, overall the ratings reflect the highest rating for partial implementation and a high quality plan for increasing access to high quality ELD programs for children with high needs.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

--Minnesota has a high quality plan for validating the effectiveness of their system. They have already conducted a number of evaluations that have shaped the development and implementation and marketing of the TQRIS. The studies are described in Appendix 23-25 and in Table 1. The studies proposed in the plan will address how changes in quality ratings are related to children's school readiness. The evaluators are familiar with this program and have an extended history, so that they can build on existing data and knowledge to go deeper into investigating these relationships. --The initial funding for these validation studies is from private sources. New studies will incorporate private funding, CCDF funds, supplemented by RTT-ELC funds. The evaluation will be designed through a collaborative process with the Office of Early Learning. The evaluation will determine the effectiveness of quality improvement strategies and also address the impact on children with disabilities.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

The total available points that an applicant may receive for selection criteria (C)(1) through (C)(4) is 60

The 60 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address all four selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 15 points. If the applicant chooses to address two selection criteria, each criterion will be worth up to 30 points.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)

Minnesota has a developed and implemented ELD standards and has a high quality plan for continuously improving and increasing the use of the standards. The standards are research-based and have been reviewed by experts in the field. The proposal provides evidence that the ELD standards are reflected in the Program Standards, Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and Comprehensive Assessment system. The standards will be updated to align with the K-12 standards as well as with new research findings, although the plan does not specify how this will be done. Professional development activities, including training and coaching is focused on helping early childhood staff implement the standards in their practice.

	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)

--Minnesota has partially implemented the comprehensive assessment system and has a strong plan for improving the system components. A variety of child assessment tools and processes are used, and the state will make recommendations and assist programs in choosing assessments that fit with the comprehensive assessment system and the needs of the children and families they serve. An online developmental screening system will be implemented and professional development will be provided to staff to support their increased understanding of how to choose, interpret and use assessment information in their practice. Minnesota is also planning training in early childhood mental health screening, a much needed aspect of professional development. --The state has a vision for linking all data to create a strong evidence-based decision making system. The

TQRIS, the Comprehensive Assessment System, the Kindergarten Entry Assessment and the overall data system are all linked into an impressive whole that will guide all aspects of program delivery and quality improvement. --They have an innovative approach to connecting and coordinating intervention across data sources. Minnesota is proposing a "School Readiness report card" that will integrate the data.

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)

Minnesota has implemented a workforce knowledge and competency framework and a career lattice for ECE staff and has a strong plan for expanding and aligning the reach of this professional development system. The framework has been in place and will be updated. The plan will align the teaching credentials, early childhood special education credentials and the early childhood career lattice, so that they can address the full range of ECE staff in ELD programs. The plan also outlines the expanded involvement of IHEs and inservice professional development providers.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

–Minnesota has partially implemented support for ECE in improving their knowledge, skills and abilities. Although the workforce knowledge and competency Framework is in place, of the 35,000 estimated early childhood educators in MN, there are less than 8000 credentialed ECE staff (Performance Measures D2d2). The proposal establishes a high quality plan to improve their work force, impact program quality and child outcomes. –Minnesota has many of the pieces in place and has a clear plan for expanding access to professional development through multiple sources. The new Centers of Excellence that integrate professional development across early childhood systems is particularly exciting and can impact ECE staff throughout the state. All of the professional development efforts will be linked to the core competencies. –The plan addresses multiple sources of training and uses data to guide ongoing professional development. The chart of Performance Measures do not specify the percentages (D2d2), so it is difficult to see if the targets are ambitious.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	20	19

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

Minnesota documented strong implementation of this criteria and a high quality plan. The Kindergarten Entry Assessment has been in place for 10 years, has established reliability and validity and has been used on a representative sample over time. Research indicates that this tool is appropriate for the population served, young children with high needs. It is not clear how the data will be used for improving instruction. The KEA data is linked to the statewide longitudinal data system. Minnesota indicates that they are willing to partner with other states. Their plan is to augment and refine their system. The majority of funding for these activities is from state funding (approximately 80%).

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

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

- (a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;
- (b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;
- (c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

Minnesota has implemented the key elements of an early learning data system and has developed a strong plan that builds on existing data sources. The proposed activities would link existing data sources into a system that has great potential for facilitating continuous improvement and evidence-based decisions. All Essential Data Elements are represented. The plan establishes a governance structure, and describes how MN would implement each of the essential data elements in Table E-3. The data system oversight and privacy requirements are addressed in the plan. Overall MN presents evidence of a high quality plan for an early learning data system that builds on the data elements currently implemented. MN's resources, experts and stakeholder support for this proposed coordinated data system earned a top score based on high implementation and quality of plan.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	256

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

Minnesota has partially implemented this priority and has a solid plan to include all ELD programs in the TQRIS. A current project is in place addressing Family Friends and Neighbor care (an estimated 150,000 providers) through the Child Care Resource and Referral System. The plan addresses New American child care providers, by establishing a culturally appropriate network, providing education and support, and helping them become licensed. As these New American child care providers become licensed, they would then participate in Parent Aware (TQRIS).

Priorities

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

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

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

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

Comments on (P)(3)

KEA has been in place for 10 years and has been adapted and validated over time.

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>Minnesota has a strong foundation in each of the elements of a high quality ELD system designed to promote school readiness for children with high needs. There is a strong commitment to coordination of state and local resources, as well as private investments, in the TQRIS - Parent Aware. A great deal of research and evaluation has shaped the policies and systems to improve child outcomes, particularly for the most vulnerable children in MN. The commitment to increasing quality and access to quality programs in order to promote child outcomes is evident throughout the proposal. Building a strong workforce also supports quality. The proposed data systems will increase accountability and enable programs to monitor and improve their performance. The system also integrates all data systems in early childhood, the comprehensive assessment system, the KEA, and the longitudinal data system. There is clear statewide support across all sectors for this proposal.</p>	



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # MN-5019

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/15/2011 - 6:26 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Criteria, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, Available: 20, Score: 16. Includes sub-points (a) through (d) regarding financial investment, participation numbers, legislation, and current status.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

Minnesota has a long history on which to build a comprehensive and coordinated early learning and development system; however, the benefits of this foundation are not accessible to all children in the State. Recent economic issues may have eroded some of the previously strong supports. For example, in terms of the State's past financial contribution, although general fund and TANF contributions have increased by \$50 Million from 2007-2011, individual programs have seen budget reductions, despite increases in numbers of children served. Specifically state funded preschools saw a decrease in dollars in 2010 and an increase in numbers of children served in that same year. This pattern is also seen in the childcare development fund (CCDF) and early childhood family education (ECFE) programs. Only Part C services saw an increase both dollars and numbers of children served across all years from 2007-2011. While some budget decreases may be expected due to the recent economic troubles, the state was unsuccessful at leveraging other funds to supplement these losses. For example, only 4 out of 339 school districts used Title I money to serve preschool-aged students. However, the State was able to leverage private and foundation funding. The number of Children with High Needs who have been served in early learning and development programs has generally increased from 2007-2010. However, this growth too has been uneven. For example, Early Head Start and Head Start served fewer children 2009 and 2010, than in previous years. In addition, in 2009, the Early Childhood Screening served fewer children. The decrease in screening is particular because only 4% of the children served have special needs—this number is low considering national norms. An area of consistent growth, however, is in State legislation. Steadily since 2008 there has been some significant legislation. In 2008, the law for the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care was enacted. In 2009, the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) was established. In 2010 by a Task Force was created that resulted in the 2010 establishment of the Office of Early Learning. And, in 2011, the Children's Cabinet was created. This is a steady progression of legislation that is helping Minnesota be strategic about reaching out to the children most in need and is a strength of the application. Another area of consistent growth is the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system. Minnesota has been assessing a sample of children for school readiness since 2002, and benchmarks have been set using empirical support from a study conducted in Minnesota. The system is broad and with the already planned

additions, the system is becoming comprehensive. Further the State has stayed close to current recommended practices with its many relationships to researchers and research groups. Despite these strengths, there is room for improvement. Specifically, although the State mentions parent involvement across the programs, the description of this involvement is minimal, often limited to parents giving permission for assessments or program participation. Thus, the State has some real strengths, including but not limited to consistent legislative progress. However, the State also has some inconsistencies which have resulted in differential programming for children of high needs. This is particularly so in terms of budgetary support. For these reasons this is a medium/high quality response earning 16 points.

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

Minnesota is very focused on its stated goal: to improve school readiness. They are equally focused on their target population: children living in poverty, especially those who fall 200% below the Federal Poverty Rate. In order to increase the school readiness of children living in poverty, Minnesota proposes a plan that is based on accelerating their plans and using existing infrastructure (characterized by public-private partnerships). The plan is also supported by the use of implementation research. Generally, the plan is to increase the number of quality programs (and access to those programs) and to align current systems to increase children's outcomes. To do this, the State plans to do the following: invest in communities; improve early childhood programs; empower families; use evidence-based interventions; and, collect meaningful data. Explicit targets have been set: 1) to increase the number of rated centers from 7% to 35%; 2) to increase the number of personnel with Early Childhood credentials to 31%; and, 3) to increase the number of children living in poverty who attend top tiered programs from 20% to 40%. The above goals are proposed to be achieved through the creation of incentives and supports. All of this will be done with advances in governance that will provide accountability. While addressing the issues of children living in poverty and addressing the achievement gap through a focus on school readiness is clearly important, it is not clear if the proposed plan can achieve that end and it is not clear that the stated goals are ambitious enough. Specifically, the State wants to use incentive programs to increase participation in the Tiered Rating System and then provide money for parents in poverty to access these higher quality programs. While logic and the results from empirical studies indicate that higher quality early learning programs result in better outcomes for children, the best outcomes are derived from centers that provide wrap-around supports. It is not clear how this will be addressed. And, it is not clear that simply infusing funds will create the needed changes in communities. Communities in poverty have many barriers to overcome and simple funds infusion may not be able to address this wide range of cultural and functional issues. Further the stated goals actually seem somewhat modest. For example, the goal is to increase the number of centers participating in the Tiered Quality System from 7% to 35%. Minnesota started the tiered system in 2009, meaning there has been a 7% gain in one year. To reach 35% by 2015, the State would merely need to maintain that rate of growth. In addition, there was no baseline data presented about the percentage of Early Childhood teachers who are currently credentialed, so it is difficult to determine the magnitude of the proposed goal. Finally, while doubling the number of children living in poverty who can access high quality programs seems substantial, it still leaves the majority of Minnesota's children in poverty accessing poor quality options. Additionally, while it is commendable to use existing resources, especially when they are effective, a simple acceleration of these projects does not necessarily meet the essence of the idea of "ambitious". Finally, the State is clear about its relative strengths and challenges and provides a reasonable rationale for its choices in the focused investment areas. In summary, that State's plan is of medium/high quality earning 16 points.

	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 and the broad base of support for this proposal is a strength of the application. The proposal states that the lead agency for the proposed project is the Department of Education and the Office of Early Learning is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the project, as well as the primary point of contact. The proposal identifies key stakeholders and they are represented with passionate letters of support. The project also mentions other strengths such as the public-private partnership and an interactive, far reaching network that participated in the proposal development. Also a strength is that this broad base of support existed prior to the current State leadership and has often consisted of members of both political parties. Despite this broad-based support, parents were not engaged as fully as possible in the process. Nonetheless, this is a high quality response, earning 9 points.

	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 proposal clearly describes the amount of funds requested and how they will be used with existing funds. To place this in perspective, the grant is requesting \$44.9 million to add to Minnesota's existing \$354 million state investment in early childhood. Further, the state will leverage existing funds—both public and private—to support grant-related activities. In addition grant funds will be used to supplement not supplant existing funds. In fact, of the seven described initiatives, only three propose using grant funding for one half or more of the total cost. The other four goals request 1/3 or ¼ of proposed project funds from the grant. This blending of funds is an effective and efficient use of grant funding. Additionally, the bulk of the funds will be used to increase quality and access. The challenge with this proposal, however, is not with the reasonability of the costs, rather it is with the proposed sustainability after project funds end. Much of the sustainability rests on the State's ability to persuade the school districts to reallocate Title I funds to early learning initiatives and programs. Also problematic are the suggestions that the effects of the grant activities will live on (or be sustained) in the participants. The proposal suggests that the children who receive scholarships and the professionals who receive training will carry that experience forward. While this is certainly the goal, it does not meet the intent of sustainability. Surely new people will enter the workforce and new children will enter programs, sustainability needs to extend to them as well. Even if the training materials are maintained online there are multiple ongoing costs associate with the management and updating of these systems that need to be addressed. Further the idea that newly created partnerships will simply be maintained is an insufficient strategy. Finally, in the one-time-only cost areas (i.e., the assessment system) there will be costs of maintenance and continue improvement that need to be considered. Thus, the use of funds described in the application is a strength but the plans for sustainability are underdeveloped resulting in a medium quality response and a score of twelve.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

The proposal presents a well-articulated and thoughtful Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS). Minnesota has done piloting and made changes to their system based on their piloting. In addition to covering all Program Standards, the system embraces the role of the parent. In addition, much work has been to be able to use the system across agencies (i.e., with Head Start and Part B programs) by creating an accelerated pathway and crosswalks. Tiers 1 and 2 are clearly distinguished from Tiers 3 and 4, but the difference between a three and four is less well described. Further the system is linked to State licensing. Although this is a new program with only 20% usage in pilot areas, it is a well-conceived of plan and is a high quality response earning nine points.

	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)

Minnesota's Tiered Quality Rating Scale is fairly new; however, it is a thoughtful system. Two years prior to implementation, free training was conducted. Agencies that participated in the training had a higher participation rate than those that did not. Thus, the proposal indicates it will use a variation of this approach again. The System has been piloted and has begun to be implemented. The State believes that the System is easy for consumers to understand and has aggressively marketed the system. The State plans to maximize voluntary participation in the program through use of incentives. These were successful in their pilot testing. In addition through an accelerated process, they hope to increase participation of State funded preschools and Head Starts. In order to increase access to high-quality programs, the State proposed the use of strategies like co-payments based on family income and size, not on cost of education and care. Further, the proposal suggests reimbursement for Head Starts. Additionally, the State has set very ambitious goals. They aim to increase Head Start participation by 68%, participation in IDEA funded programs by 76% and in CCDF programs by 28%. Unfortunately the policies and practices that need to be in place to reach these goals are less well described than the goals. In fact, even though it is stated that to implement one strategy would require legislative action, the plan for that is not mentioned. Despite the lack of attention to the policies and practices, this is still a high-quality response earning 12 points.

	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 proposed system for rating and monitoring the quality of the Early Development Programs is well described. There is an existing infrastructure in place to disseminate information to parents and materials have been translated in to the languages of the primary immigrant groups. However, the plan suggests the use of web sites to help parents navigate across agencies and much of the detail of the tiered system is described as being available through the web site. While this is a fine and probably necessary strategy, given the target group—children living in poverty in dense urban location and sparsely populated rural areas including Indian Land—the sole use of a web site is not likely to be successful. These populations often have limited or inconsistent to internet connections, and it is not clear if this English and/or written information will be accessible to the target consumers. The plan also involves using self- assessments and coaches to prepare centers for the quality rating. Minnesota has successfully used both of these strategies before. Finally, in terms of reliability and validity, the proposal has strengths and challenges. For example, the plan for training raters is excellent as is the plan for assessing inter-rater reliability. This plan went as far as to address what would happen if reliability fell below a cut- off point. However, the proposed measure, CLASS, was never described in terms of its validity nor were other types of reliability (i.e., test re-test, multiple forms) were addressed. These issues were likewise not addresses in relationship to the accelerated path. Overall this section was of medium high quality earning 12 points.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	13

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for 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 plan proposed for providing support and incentives to help programs improve have been piloted in Minnesota and include an aggressive marketing campaign about the tiered system as well as dollars for programs to use for training and supplies. Further, portable subsidies to parents were recommended. However, much less attention was given to supports to help families (i.e., transportation, full day programs, full year programs). Despite, this the goals for increasing the number of top tier programs and the number of children who can access them are ambitious. Given this, this is a substantially implemented, medium quality response earning 13 points.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.	15	9

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 core question that the evaluators who work with the State of Minnesota will ask is: what is the correlation between the tiered ratings and children's school readiness? For this proposed project they will use multiple assessments, build on previous research and use high-quality tools. Past studies have shown that Minnesota's tiered system is correlated largely with language measures but not with math skills or aggression. In addition, 4-star programs out-performed other tiers on some assessments but in others they were indistinguishable from 3-star and automatically rated 4-star programs. This is problematic. The entire project assumes that school readiness is correlated with participation in high-quality programs, and yet the assessment system does not dependably differentiate between three and four stars. Further, no plan (other than large sample size) was given to try and remedy this problem. For this reason, this is a medium/high quality response garnering nine 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	28

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)

This section of the proposal is well-developed. The Early Learning and Development Standards were developed using the best information in the field and are evidence-based. The Standards were vetted by experts and community members. Additionally the Standards are applicable to diverse learners. Finally, the standards are sensitive to both infants and toddlers as well as preschool-aged children as there are two sets of standards. The Standards are aligned with the State's K-12 standards. Finally, the standards are tied to professional development. This is a high quality section earning 28 points.

	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)

In order to effectively implement the assessment system, Minnesota will establish a Data Systems Task Force. The ultimate goal of the task force is to link all levels of data collection while eliminating duplications. Currently, Minnesota has liberal guidelines for acceptable assessments, a goal of the proposed project would be to limit the number of acceptable assessments. However, how this will be done is not well described and it is not clear if this goes far enough to solve the problems created by the use of multiple assessment. The proposal is particularly concerned with supporting practitioners in the use of child monitoring assessments. In order to do so, they have identified key barriers (i.e., access to training) and propose to eliminate these barriers through online instruction. Finally, although it is mentioned a number of times throughout the section, it is not clear how data that are collected to inform instruction will also be used to inform policy. Thus there are many good ideas here but the section lack specificity on how these ideas will be operationalized, therefore this section earns a medium high score of 24 points.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

This proposal states that a great workforce is one of two keys to the proposed plan. Minnesota currently has a career lattice and registry. This has room for novices in the field and allows for growth through Master's qualified personnel. In addition, Minnesota has a competency framework. This framework is currently under revision and a goal of this proposed project is to complete this revision. The framework is based on current knowledge in the field. However, a downside is that licensed teachers (i.e., Part B teaches) do not fall under this framework. It is a goal of the project to bring this group in, but the process for doing so was not discussed. In addition, the project has an agreement with a consortium of post-secondary institutions to embed this information in their classes; however, how this will work at the University-level was glanced over. This needs more elaboration as Universities contribute significantly to this workforce. Therefore this section is of medium high quality earning 16 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)

The overall goal of this section is for Minnesota to double the number of post-secondary programs aligned with the core competencies; however, it is not clear how this will be accomplished. In addition, professional development will be offered in assessment as well as cultural and linguistic diversity—areas determined through an examination of Minnesota-specific data. In addition, the proposal aims to decrease the barriers of cost of training and accessibility using free, online training. Also, the plan will develop and use consultants, coaches and mentors. Interestingly, a named area for training was the Individual Growth and Development Indicators, which are valuable assessments, but are not part of the proposed assessment plan. Other than free training, additional incentives were not mentioned nor was the reporting of aggregated data. For these reasons this is a partially implemented, medium quality response earning 12 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)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	20	18

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

Perhaps due to Minnesota's extensive experience with Kindergarten assessments, this is a well-developed section. The proposal seeks to link the Kindergarten assessment with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System. However despite the experience Minnesota has with the system, they did not clearly describe how the system works with diverse learners. Further this project does not rely on grant funds. This is a high quality response that earns 18 points.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

This section presents many details about the current systems, its limitations, how it will be expanded while protecting privacy. This plan is detailed and thus seems manageable. This is a high quality plan and earns 20 points.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	226

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

10

8

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

Minnesota has a lot of experience to draw from to address this priority. The goal in this part of the proposal is to increase the number of participants in the Tiered rating system. To do this, the State plans to target in-home child cares of new immigrants, while specific benchmarks were not mentioned, a detail plan about how to incorporate this marginalized group was given. This is a high-quality response earning eight points.

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	Yes
To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--		
(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met, or		
(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.		
Comments on (P)(3)		
Table A(1) (12) is complete with either all elements either covered or planned--apart from this competition.		

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 main goal of this project is to increase the school readiness of number of children who are living in poverty. While the application is uneven in spots, what comes through is the State's commitment to this goal. Additionally, it is clear that the State is committed to reaching this goal largely through its tiered system and supportive data collection system. The State has a long history of data collection and that data has been used to direct the nature of the programs in Minnesota and to target this grant application so sharply on children in poverty—their data shows poverty to be the single largest barrier to school readiness.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # MN-5019

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 10:22 AM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Criteria, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 16. Includes sub-points (a) through (d) regarding financial investment, participation numbers, legislation, and system components.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)
The proposal has stated that Minnesota began measuring the school readiness at kindergarten entry in 2002, showing a history of this effort. The results have consistently shown that only about half enter kindergarten fully prepared across the multiple domains. A1a The proposal shows a history of investment with the 1974 of Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) parent education program. The proposal identified use of multiple funding streams to address needs of Children with High Needs. The State indicates awareness of revisiting use of Title 1 funds, demonstrated by the 2011 increased student funding by \$50 per child. State has identified uses of multiple funding sources, which is a strength. A1b The State indicates that it has increased the number of Children with High Needs participating in most Early Learning and Development Programs from 2007 to 2010, but increases vary, and children who are homeless were not identified explicitly. The State identified barriers including geographical, racial and economic disparities throughout the state; family needs; infrastructure needs; staff training needs; program challenges including home based programs with one provider showing where needs are. Table A-1-3 has identified Early Childhood Mental Health Infrastructure Grant but has a paucity of information with regards to its use. A1c The proposal highlights some of Minnesota's key laws, policies and practices as follows: Successful State Systems; High-Quality, Accountable Programs; Promoting ELD Outcomes for Children; Great Early Childhood Education Workforce; and Measuring Outcomes and Progress. The applicant has indicated that work has been done on developing Successful State Systems - Minnesota Legislature Statutes section 124D.141, subdivision 2008 by establishing a State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care, mandated by the federal Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007. The State amended the law in 2010, and established a Task Force that recommended establishing a state Office of Early Learning (Minnesota Statutes section 124D.141, subdivision 2). The Task Force was formed and supported through a public-private partnership. Based on the Task Force's recommendations, the Minnesota Office of Early Learning (OEL) was established fall 2011. This evidence shows that an infrastructure exists and will continue with this grant. Key statutes for High-Quality, Accountable Programs include Minnesota's school-based pre-kindergarten program; Minnesota's Head Start program; Minnesota's Child Care Assistance Program and child care quality supports. In 2009 Minnesota adopted legislation establishing Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System framework.

Additional legislative programs include School Readiness Connections pilot, in 2007 the Pre-Kindergarten Allowances pilot, and 2011 the Early Childhood Education Scholarship program. The State has implemented statutes regarding high-Quality, Accountable Programs; they include the school-based pre-kindergarten program "School Readiness", Minnesota's Head Start program; Minnesota's Child Care Assistance Program and child care quality supports. In 2009 Minnesota legislated established Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System framework - Parent Aware. Also legislation establishing high-quality programs, School Readiness Connections pilot, the Pre-Kindergarten Allowances pilot 2007, and the recently-enacted Early Childhood Education Scholarship program, 2011. The promotion of ELD Outcomes include: Children special needs, Intervention for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (Part C) program and Preschool Special Education. In addition in 2003 statutes requiring county boards to arrange or provide a mental health screening for high risk children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems were enacted. With regards to developing a Great Early Childhood Education Workforce; 2007 began an early childhood and school-age professional development system and related grants. With regards to measuring Outcomes and Progress the state appropriated funds in 2002 establishing as statute in 2006, the School Readiness Study. A1d The proposal includes information on the following key building blocks used to create a high quality early learning and development system. They include: Early Learning and Development Standards in place since 2000, along with other evidence-based program quality indicators, which together form Minnesota's parent-focused, research-based Parent Aware Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. This includes Program Standards requiring assessment and curriculum that support and align with ELD Standards. Parent Aware TQRIS Program Standards and Core Competencies for Early Childhood Educators include family engagement and health promotion practices. Additional supports for children with high needs are identified as ECFE, Head Start, the Department of Health, and local communities all offering home visiting program. The proposal does not provide sufficient information on how home visiting programs will be aligned. Development of Early Childhood Educators including the Minnesota Core Competencies, describing what Early Childhood Educators should know and do, and a Career Lattice and Registry that enables Early Childhood Educators to track their progress toward degrees and credentials that are aligned with the Core Competencies. Kindergarten Entry Assessments information is found in the tables. Specific training on Children with High Needs, needs to be a focus. This is questionable and has not been explicitly identified. With regards to addressing effective data practices - Minnesota has a number of existing data systems that house ELD data, and all Essential Data Elements are available across those systems. The issue of alignment is not clearly addressed. The proposal includes completed tables A(1)-1 through A(1)-13.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

A The proposal indicates that the state will continue the work that has been done and aims to increase the number of quality programs, link data systems, improve the fidelity of screening procedures, and change children's outcomes. These are all admirable goals. There is a question of aligning the child outcomes indicated in this proposal. B The State plan strategies include investing in high need communities, improving the quality of where they learn, empowering families to make choices, focusing evidence-based professional development and providing meaningful data to inform decision-making for the public and policymakers. The proposal has identified four Early Learning Challenge Target Communities to test cumulative impact of grant activities. The plan includes a multi-layered approach for improving program quality, with the focus on school readiness efforts, using Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (B1, B2, B3, and B5), Comprehensive Assessment System (C2), and efforts to develop a Great Workforce (D1 and D2). Table A2-1 identifies state plan activities. A concern is that the needs of all the special populations as identified in Table A1-2 are not clearly articulated. C State plan has 2 focal points 1) build quality and increase access to quality and 2) establish governance and accountability. The proposal identifies the focused investment areas of High Quality Accountable programs, workforce and comprehensive assessment systems. The proposal has indicated that the identified strategies will be supported by the strengthened governance structure and informed by an expanded statewide infrastructure for learning from our system and for using evidence to make decisions at a variety of levels. The proposal indicated that because Minnesota has strong existing infrastructure and programs in the areas of C3 (Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs) or C4 (Engaging and supporting families), as described throughout the State Plan, they do not propose investment of Early Learning Challenge resources in these areas. Rather they indicate that the challenge and opportunity of this State Plan is to use the resources from the Early Learning Challenge to make sustainable improvements to Minnesota's state system that coordinate with, support, and accelerate work on the existing framework. There is little indication that the needs of homeless children and children in foster care have been addressed.

	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)

A3a1-3 The state has clearly identified the governance structure and identified the Department of Education as the lead agency, with the Office of Early Learning as the key coordinating point. The structure includes an advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (aligned with HS Act of 2007, Minnesota legislation and an executive order, 2011), along with private sector and state. All participating agencies have signed MOU's and the additional supporting material in found in the appendices. A3a3 The Minnesota Children's Cabinet is designated as the cross-agency leadership team, and they have meets regularly to coordinate goals, make strategic decisions, and direct state services, programs, and funds in an efficient manner for children of all ages. The Cabinet has the authority for dispute resolution, however no method is identified. It is not clear how often and where meetings will be occurring and how the decisions are made. A3a4 The submitted proposal includes early and frequent involvement and feedback of Participating Programs; Early Childhood Educators; parents and families, including those of Children with High Needs, key stakeholders and the general public in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant. The seven sites identified in the proposal did not identify the range of places or target groups involved. Procedures for providing state level information is identified including coordinating strategies to push information to interested stakeholders, with a focus on inclusion and transparency; a biannual statewide webcast to include stakeholders throughout the state, and use of the Office of

Early Learning website as a one-stop resource for information, with links to other relevant resources. It is not clear how input from parents and public will be accepted for decision making or if parents will have easy access to the webcasts. Table A3a4-1 does not include parents/families/public at professional conferences/meetings or collaborative planning meeting. A3b1 There are clearly articulated MOU's between Education and Human Services and Education and Health. All three agencies have developed scopes of work. A3B3 There are signature from all agencies. A3C1 Table A3-2 identifies 11 organizations and councils supporting this application. A3C2 The Letters of Support are found from a wide range of stakeholders as identified above. This is partially implemented high quality response.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

A4a Table A4-1 identifies federal, state, private and local funds to be used. The State plans on leveraging existing public and private investments to accomplish the Plan. Monies are also identified specific to the Targeted Communities strategy in this proposal. The proposal identifies a strong use of multiple funding sources. A4b1 The proposal had clearly identified budgets for each identified project in the States Plan. The budget information includes sources of funding dedicated to the project, including existing public funds, private funds, and Early Learning Challenge grant fund. This is a strength. They appear to have developed budgets appropriate for their project needs. While the proposal identifies funding sources and has commented on not cutting education funds, it is not clear how they will continue the work done with the additional RTT funds after the grant has concluded, with regards to sustainability, for example, assessment and training. Ab2 The proposal has included costs for each of the 9 projects in the state plan. It is not clear when comparing the historical funding, with this steady funding, how this change in funding came about. These costs include public, private and ELC funds identified for the 4 years of the grant. It is not clear when comparing the variability of the historical funding presented, with this steady funding, how this change came about. Ab3 The proposal has identified that all leadership, including the Governor, the Children's Cabinet, and the Office of Early Learning are supported throughout the grant period and beyond through state General Fund dollars. The activities identified to support and govern the 9 projects in the State Plan have clearly identified funding sources and amounts. These sources include public, private and ELC funds identified for the 4 years of the grant. The proposal clearly identifies the 9 projects in the Minnesota State Plan. Each project identifies the amount of funds budgeted public funds used and amount, the private funds and the ELC funds. Table A 4-1 identifies the federal, state, private and local funds to be used by source and fiscal years of the grant. A4c Each of the 9 projects has identified how it will be positioned to continue funding. Some of the projects like Comprehensive Assessments, indicate that 'Grant investments will result in the implementation of a public system-wide School Readiness Report Card. Minnesota is committed to data collection and reporting through 2021.' Others like the Early Learning and Development standards, indicate that 'The Department of Education is committed to partnering with providers of professional development to ensure that training based on the developed materials continues beyond the period of the grant.' It is not clear how this commitment will be implemented. There is no evidence of funding which focuses on the specific populations identified as Children with High Needs. This is a medium high quality implemented response.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

10

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)

B1 Pilot data on Parent Aware (TQRIS) presents information connecting high rated programs with child scores on language, literacy and early numeracy. B1a The proposal identifies how the TQRIS currently in use includes all of the 6 identified components (B1a1,B1a2,B1a3,B1a4,B1a5 and B1a6) and how the tier approach is incorporated in each of these components. The proposal indicates that the pilot data enables the next step of beginning the scale up to a statewide system, showing use of data to support actions. B1a1 Standards are built using Early Childhood Indicators of Progress as the core. B1a2 Proposal indicates that comprehensive assessment system, defined as one that uses valid assessments to gather information on both the process and the context of children's learning and development, as well as program self assessments of environment and the CLASS, B1a3 The Standards have incorporated ensuring and promoting appropriate professional development and education for Early Childhood Educators. B1a4 The Standards have identified an number of strategies to support family engagement. B1a5 The Standards have identified Health promotion practices within other program standards. B1a6 The proposal has given detailed information on the plan for effective data practices in other parts of the proposal. The proposal indicates that in the pilot, the program standards were tested and validated. However, it is not clear to what extent linguistically and culturally diverse populations are included or the other high need groups of children. Evidence was not provided. Information in appendices 10-14 on Parent Aware clearly identifies indicators and scoring. Appendix 14 clearly identifies the use of evaluation, cross agency work and public input to create changes. B1b The proposal indicates that Parent Aware was developed with measurable and differentiated program quality levels in alignment with national standards and linked to positive child outcomes by research. B1c The proposal has identified 2 goals with activities showing next step actions. It also includes timeline, responsible parties and budget allocation. Of particular note is the attention of crosswalks among the various program standards that exist. On the timeline visiting the crosswalk standards are identified only for year 1, The crosswalk standards work is identified only for the first year, with refinement in half of the second year. This is a concern with regards to the use of continuous quality improvement approach which requires more than a half year process. This is a partially implemented high quality response.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

B2a The proposal has included programs in the 5 identified categories as part of the Plan. Previous state work has enabled relationships and partnerships to be developed which will be used for continued implementation of policies and practices during the grant years. B2b The proposal has identified ways to help families afford high quality. Three programs were evaluated to address this need. They are: the Scholarship Program, the Pre-Kindergarten Allowances, and the School Readiness Connections program. They have provided strategies designed to assist families with children with high needs access and participate in high quality ELD programs. These programs were in addition to policies and practices that are in place including, the Child Care Assistance Program. These goals support the effective policies and practices. B2c the proposal has identified four goals for this component. Goal 1: Offer the Accelerated Pathway to Rating statewide, 2: Increase market penetration of Parent Aware statewide, 3: Increase the number and percentage of children with disabilities served in highly rated programs and 4: Increase access to highly rated programs for children participating in the Child Care Assistance Program. Table B2c clearly identifies for each of the 4 years of this grant the increasing target number of programs by category type. It is not clear how these numbers have been determined. The category of Other which includes FFN has the lowest percentage increase, 20%, yet children in this type of care often identify as in highest need for quality improvement. This is a partially implemented response.

	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)

B3a The proposal identifies use of the CLASS tool for on-site observations in center based programs. The home based observations are planned when the CLASS tool has research to back that setting. The state has already begun to use the tool, but will 'strengthen the process' by 'rigorous training for rating staff and establishing an upgraded Parent Aware data system'. The proposal indicates that trained quality coaches will provide assistance in completing portfolios. The proposal indicates that planning includes documentation of all raters inter-rater reliability with training on periodic reliability checks. B3b. The proposal indicates that Parent Aware is useful for parents and is the information on the website 4 languages. -It is not clear how parents who do not have access to computers, are illiterate or with low reading skills can access the information. Homeless, migrant populations are identified as special populations. The proposal indicates that licensing history information including health and safety violations are made available, however there is no indication of the frequency of the updates. It is not clear if the safety information includes criminal background checks in the different kinds of care - center or home based. No evaluation information is presented regarding use of the information dissemination and/or parent satisfaction. The 2 goals and activities, timelines, responsible parties, and financial resources appear to be addressed. This was a substantially implemented response.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	13

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

B4a The proposal indicates that their key efforts to support and provide incentives for quality improvement in ELD Programs include Parent Aware, TQRIS, and the related aligned continuum of quality improvement supports described. The proposal indicates that the strategy is aggressive and provides for increases in the market penetration of Parent Aware. It provides programs with quality coaches upon entry to Parent Aware, and providing quality improvement grants to programs with ratings lower than the top tier of 4 stars. The Proposal indicates that they have 3 years of evaluation on Parent Aware TQRIS for programs and indicates that it will continue to build on the continuous improvement process with the State. b The proposal has indicated that different incentive based approaches have been tested which remove barriers from families with children with high needs to access high quality care. These findings have been incorporated in the states high quality plan for this grant proposal. The high quality plan identifies 6 goals with appropriate activities aimed at improving ELD Program quality and promoting access to high-quality ELD Programs for Children with High Needs. The goals are 1: Improve the quality of Early Learning and Development programs across the state; 2: Connect Children with High Needs to 3- and 4-star Parent Aware rated ELD Programs; 3: Engage school districts to provide high-quality ELD Programs; 4: Recruit families of Children with High Needs; 5: Remove policy barriers to increasing quality and supporting access; 6: Evaluate impact of Plan in Target Communities. On Goal 4, Recruit families of children with high needs, it is not clear why recruitment will be done only in the first funded year The 6th goal is evaluation. The proposal has demonstrated its use of evaluation data to make changes and in this case it has identified on the timeline reporting and dissemination activities. -It is not clear if the scholarships and subsidies are sufficient to allow all eligible families to participate, if they cover the total cost or what percentage of the cost for families. It is not clear if there been parent input with regards to the appropriateness of these supports to meeting parent needs. The use of the identified Target Communities and 'start-up' districts to apply approaches and strategies and then take the findings to apply to greater numbers an approach that is found throughout this proposal. B4c1 Table B4c1 identifies the baseline and increasing numbers of programs in the 4 tiers. B4c2 Performance measure table for increasing the number of programs in each of the 4 quality tiers over the 4 years of the grant is clear. - The Table B4c2 identifies the number of children and percentage who are expected to be impacted by the quality changes. It has not been made clear how and by what rationale these percentages been established. For example, by target year 4 of the grant the programs receiving funding from CCDF are the lowest at 40%. This was a partially implemented response.

	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)

B5a The proposal has clearly identified work that has been done in validating the effectiveness of Parent Aware over a number of years. For example in the third year of the evaluation, the validation analyses conducted at this later stage of the pilot was to test how scores in each of the quality domains related to the observational measures, which included the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised; the Classroom Assessment System™ and the literacy, mathematics, and diversity subscales of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Extended. Table 1 identifies how the different measures differentiate the tiers, which demonstrates that further refinement is needed to better differentiate the quality rating levels. It is not clear from the goals and activities that this refinement has been clarified and the steps needed to implement change are included. B5b The State did an evaluation of child assessments of 4-year-old children who were recruited from rated programs and assessed in the fall and spring on a variety of assessment tools, selected to align with the domains of school readiness assessed in Minnesota's Kindergarten Entrance Assessment. The proposal indicates that while rating could not be associated with child functioning due to the limited programs, the data indicated that children made significant gains from the fall to the spring on measures of expressive and receptive vocabulary, print knowledge, phonological awareness, reduced anxiety withdrawal, and persistence, but no gains on math skills and reduced anger/aggression. It is not clear what tools are being used, their quality and how they will all be aligned in a validated tiered system.

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

Each State must address in its application—

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	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)
C1a Evidence is presented with regards to developing Early Learning and Development Standards in alignment with national standards. Evidence of input regarding developmentally appropriate is presented, but there is no explicit evidence regarding cultural and linguistic appropriateness nor any emphasis on Children with High Needs. C1b Evidence is presented on the work done and work to be done and with whom on the alignment concern, all of which appear appropriate. The proposal indicates that alignment will occur within a continuous quality plan. No explicit comments on early literacy and mathematics, rather comment is that Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIP) are aligned with Minnesota's K-12 Academic Standards in 2005 (Minnesota Department of Education) and acknowledged that the review uncovered gaps, but it is not clear what they are that will be addressed as part of the High-Quality Plan to ensure continuous improvement of the ECIPs. C1c Proposal identifies that ELS are incorporated in Program standards, that the evaluation will occur with ECIPs and environment rating assessments. The proposal will increase the number of Early Childhood Educators participating in training that includes the ECIPs. Crosswalk alignment considerations are demonstrated with Part C and B of

IDEA and with Head Start Child Outcomes. C1d Proposal includes two goals to address promoting early learning and development: 1: Improve usage of the ECIPs by Early Childhood Educators in all ELD Programs and 2: Establish a review cycle to continually improve the ECIPs. A reasonable timeline is presented in table format and goals have been established for increasing the number of trainers and coaches, but no information regarding cultural or linguistic needs for these trainers. There is no indication of what will occur after that initial year.

	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)

C2a The proposal indicates that the Plan is to establish an Assessment and Data System Task Force to select instruments. They will then make evidence-based recommendations for design, implementation, and ongoing refinement of a comprehensive system of child program and state-level assessment of developmental achievement that reflect state and professional practice standards for school readiness and its development, and for high-quality assessment of all associated components. The proposal has indicated that a number of instruments can be used by districts. However, this brings into question the alignment of data outcomes for the children. This is especially concerning with regards to children who are homeless and can have frequent moves to different sites within 1 year. A concern is the timing of screenings as identified in the section on universal child assessment. The proposal indicates that there will be three universal time points: screening, (it is not clear what this means in the preschool period) kindergarten entry, and kindergarten exit. The screening time in the preschool period is not clearly indicated. For children with High Needs doing 1 screening and not tracking over time is a big concern when the goal is school readiness. Another concern is the composition of the task force. Teachers are not included in the identified roles. The proposal also does not indicate if the task force will include people with expertise in linguistic and/or cultural appropriateness or with special population of Children with High Needs who were identified in Table A1-2. C2b Comments on this component are integrated with C2d. C2c The Proposal has identified that a variation in assessment practices and instruments is currently in use. Minnesota Office of Early Learning and the proposed Plan have identified the need to strategically to expand and improve the assessment parameters for practices and instrument review, while encouraging early childhood programs to move toward use of a smaller set of child and program assessment practices. There is no indication that assessments have been identified specifically to assess the needs of Children with High Needs, particularly those in Table A1-2. C2d The proposal is aware of the need to address the needs and abilities of ELD Programs and Early Childhood Educators to choose, use, and interpret assessment data. Minnesota proposes appropriate activities to address the goal. However, how the data will be used to inform practice is not clear. The proposal comments on meeting the needs of children with High needs, but the specific population needs are not identified, nor are cultural or linguistic appropriateness addressed.

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)

D1a The core competencies identified in this proposal support children's learning. Children with High Needs can benefit from these competencies. The proposal would have been stronger if it addressed more explicitly the unique challenges of Children with High Needs. D1b Minnesota has a Career Lattice (Appendix 33) that recognizes the hours of informal training, formal education, and credentials of early childhood practitioners, composed of 12 steps. The plan a process for aligning the Board of Teaching Standards and the Core Competencies to create a common, statewide progression of degrees and credentials. D1c Table A-11 Post secondary institutions and professional development providers have identified that need exists for greater alignment in professional development. The State has identified a goal of 'Establish the Core Competencies as the shared framework for professional development in Minnesota and create a process for continuous improvement' and the associated activities in this section identify work done to date and the next steps. The Early Learning Council has identified the need for information on cultural proficiency; working with dual language learners and special education, but the unique needs of the State's other special populations of Children with High Needs are not addressed. From the information in the Proposal it is not clear how engagement with four year colleges will be established.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

D2a The proposal has identified the need to build the central infrastructure of the state's professional development system that is aligned with the tiered quality rating and improvement system to develop their high quality plan. Minnesota has established a Professional Development Registry that allows Early Childhood Educators to develop and monitor personal professional development goals as they progress through Minnesota's Career Lattice. D2b The proposal has identified a number of ways in which different systems have been connected to support educator development and data collection. For example, educators who use the Minnesota Professional Development Registry access the Career Lattice, which provides career advice and self-assessment opportunities. A number of links with other systems have been made, and the proposal indicates that more will continue to be developed. D2c To facilitate data reporting, the Early Learning Challenge grant funding will be a linkage between the Registry and the Department of Education's STAR system. Early Learning Challenge grant funds will support hiring a consultant to create a plan for the linkage and for making the needed technical changes to link data from these two systems. This linkage will allow Minnesota to capture and track data about the entire Early Childhood Workforce over time. D2d1 The proposal sets ambitious yet achievable goals, all of which appear

to be appropriate. The proposal indicates that Minnesota's intent to engage all 51 professional development providers in aligning training and education programs with the Minnesota Core Competencies by the end of 2015. D2d2 Table D2D1 shows the increasing target numbers of Early Childhood Educators receiving credentials, but does not indicate how the target numbers were identified. The proposal identifies meeting the needs of Early Childhood Educators serving Children with High Needs via two Goals. Goal 1: Increase the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who advance on Minnesota's Career Lattice by achieving higher competencies and/or degree status and Goal 2: Increase the number of professional development providers aligning training, course, and program content with the Core Competencies. (D1c and D2d) It is not clear how the identification and support and engagement of family day care providers and for Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) caregivers will be achieved. The partially implemented scoring rubric was used.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	20	16
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (E)(1)		
<p>E1a The proposal has indicated that they define "kindergarten readiness" is as the skills, knowledge, behaviors, and accomplishments that children know and can do as they enter kindergarten, in the following areas of child development: social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language and literacy development, creativity and the arts, cognition and general knowledge, and physical well-being and motor development. This definition is consistent with school readiness definitions used by other states and Minnesota's ELD Standards. The components of KEA cover the Essential Domains of school readiness. E1b The proposal indicates that Human Capital Research Collaborative (HCRC), a local research partnership that is a collaboration of the University of Minnesota and the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis conducted a validity study to analyze the relationship between the Minnesota kindergarten entry results and Grade 3 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment. The HCRC study indicates that the Minnesota WSS®, significantly and consistently predicted third-grade MCA reading and math tests scores and the need for school remedial services above and beyond the influence of child and family background characteristics. E1c The plan for statewide implementation is clearly identified in the Goals 1, 2 and 3 includes phased implementation leading to a statewide launch in 2014-2015. E1d The State identifies plans for linking the past years of the School Readiness Study to the Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System initially developed in 2010. It is not clear how data from the studies will be used to inform practice. E1e The proposal identifies funding supports from the Public funds and specifically identifies funding from state legislation "Reading Well by Third Grade". The proposal does not indicate if this funding will continue, which is a concern.</p>		
	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	19

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)
<p>E2a The State's plan has included all of the Essential Data Elements, table E-3. Of particular note is the awareness 'these Standards will be used to increase comparability of data elements across disparate sources.'</p> <p>E2b The goals and the timeline link and build an early learning data system have been identified in the proposal. The timeline appears to be logical and appropriate with the following concerning exceptions: Activity 3.4 only 1 quarter is devoted to developing a system - this is an extremely short time span; Activity 4.2 Issue Request For Proposal (RFP) is identified for 6 quarters in years 2 and 3 - this is a long time frame for issuing a RFP. E2c The proposal acknowledges the need for data exchange among agencies and that 'linking and sharing data is gaining and maintaining stakeholder agreements'; it is not just the data sharing but the sharing of the interagency responsibilities. E2d The proposal indicates that their plan is to use a 'a multi-step process to link these various data sets'. This will enable the 'Plan to focus on filling the need for an interoperable solution to turn disparate data elements into useable information on ELD Programs, participants, and others interested in outcomes.' The goal and format will create a 'Minnesota Early Learning Information Portal to analyze ELD data.' This system will be user-friendly and have web-based dashboards and reports that are applicable to to educators, administrators, and parents. It will use specific data sets. For example, teachers linked to students or assessments linked to attendance. E2e 'Minnesota will build an Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System (ECLDS) governance structure to systematically create and enforce policies, roles, and responsibilities, including procedures for collecting, sharing, and publishing data in a manner that meets Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with requirements of federal, state and local privacy laws.' and specifically mentioning FERPA and HIPAA.</p>

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	222

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

P2a The proposal identifies 3 goals to address the competitive preference priority. Goal 1: Create a network for new American immigrants to learn about becoming a licensed child care provider and for existing providers to learn how to gain access to quality improvement supports through Parent Aware, thus enhancing their ability to promote school readiness. The State does not indicate how this is going to be done. Goal 2: Assist FFN caregivers who receive Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) subsidy in meeting statutorily established training requirements and Goal 3: Using ECFE licensed parent educators and early childhood teachers to provide parenting education and family opportunities for FNN caregivers to improve the school readiness for Children with High Needs. The three goals and accompanying activities fit the needs identified by the State. P2b The Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System that was presented in earlier parts of the proposal will be used for all licensed programs and will be implemented no later than June 30, 2015. In addition Training will be refined so it is culturally and linguistically appropriate for those providers. Trainings offered through the CCR&R system are offered in English, Hmong, Spanish, and Somali.'

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application—</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
Comments on (P)(3)		
<p>The proposal has identified that all elements in Table A-1-12 are met except for results included in Statewide Longitudinal Data System. (E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry, the score was above 70 percent.</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
Comments on Absolute Priority	
<p>This proposal has clearly identified that the State of Minnesota has been in the process of developing statewide best practices and research/evaluation based quality Early Learning and Development programs for the children. This includes promoting early learning and development outcomes for children, developing a great early childhood education workforce and measuring outcomes and process. The proposal has repeatedly indicated how the criteria are integrated and how the state will work on addressing them. The Children with High Needs aspect was not as prominent as it could have been.</p>	



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # MN-5019

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/15/2011 - 1:57 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 16. Includes detailed text description of the core area requirements.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

The state has an excellent history of commitment to and investment in programs for young children, driven in large part by concern for the future of the state based on data on disparities in learning for children who are at risk due to family income, as demonstrated, these are also often associated with cultural or linguistic minority status. Data are presented indicating that the state is home to a number of new immigrant groups as well as to Native Americans. Disparities are demonstrated for different areas of the state and population areas. Previous investment in early childhood programs of various kinds has been substantial, based on private investment and on increasing state funds as well as through federal programs, indicating wide support for early childhood. The business community and state governance structure have been integrally involved in this process. Since 2007, the number of children in each type of early childhood program has increased. Existing legislation and policies to support programs for young children are substantial and of long standing; among these are recent legislation and policies directed toward the key elements of the RTT-ELC, including coordination among state programs through a centralized state office of early learning. State matches to CCDF (Child Care Development Fund) have consistently exceeded the required amount. Current status in all key areas is described, and a solid framework appears to be in place particularly in the areas of early learning standards, family engagement, development of early childhood educators, and kindergarten entry assessments. This section of the proposal identifies key gaps in the system; these directly lead to key goals for the grant. For example, some of the building blocks remain to be brought to scale across the state and/or coordinated across types of programs, for all children. Coordination among programs will be strengthened by expanding some elements to include all early childhood teachers irrespective of program (e.g., the career lattice) and by building a unified data system. Service challenges created by variations in population density and poverty are described in relation to different types of communities; four areas selected based on high poverty and lack of services will become target communities, where gaps will be addressed directly through more intensive work. Previously the state also has conducted or contracted for many studies of various aspects of its early childhood delivery system; these studies have contributed directly to an overall understanding of needs across the state. In summary, the legislative, policy, and budgetary frameworks for this grant appear to be solidly in place, as are more agency-specific components (quality rating system).

credentialing framework) that will become the framework for program and staff quality improvement across all early childhood providers. The three emphases of this grant are continuing to build statewide infrastructure, increasing cross-program participation in infrastructure activities, and building the quality of early childhood care and education in four targeted, high poverty communities that will serve as models for other similar communities. Overall, this section of the proposal demonstrates a broad picture of past commitment to early childhood. However, some current building blocks within the system are not as clearly described, and some gaps not as directly acknowledged, as others. For example, activities related to health promotion presumably provided by the Department of Health are not noted here as strengths. Formative assessment at the individual child level does not appear to be a strong focus of the project, although it is built into program standards and the career lattice. This will be a particularly important area for addressing the needs of children with many, varied needs. Thus, while data systems are addressed from a broad perspective, there may be unacknowledged gaps at the provider/classroom level with respect to gathering and using appropriate types of instructional data.

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

Building quality and building access to quality are overarching goals. Needs identified in the first section lead directly to goals of the project. One need identified in (A)(1) addressed persistent gaps in achievement among High Needs children, despite significant recent investment and activity in the state. Another need identified was to take what has been learned through many development and demonstration activities and apply it more broadly across more children (e.g., kindergarten screening). A third was to extend the benefits of activities specific to separate agencies across all agencies (e.g., career lattice). The ELC grant will also allow re-examination of several of the projects already underway in order to support new policy development and new practices. The proposal demonstrates a clear understanding of directions that build on and are responsive to previous work. Goals include changing the quality of programs, providing access to high quality programs (defined as in the top tiers of the quality rating system) by children with high needs, coordinating and improving data systems, and changing children's outcomes. Performance goals identified later (section B) outline gradually increasing performance targets for these areas, indicating that careful thought was given to efficient use of grant funds. New data systems will support greater program accountability as well as allow linkages between child and family variables, program variables, and child outcomes. Grant activities will be directed toward children whose families are most in need by investing in four target communities (two Promise Neighborhoods, White Earth Reservation, and Itasca County [a rural area]), as well as in statewide infrastructure. Full implementation in the target areas is planned, supported by the need to test the parts of the plan in the hardest-to-reach areas. Specific approaches will vary depending on what exists in each community, in order to build on current infrastructures and strengths. The plan is thus responsive to individual community characteristics that call for different solutions. Focused investment areas are described and rationales provided for addressing the gaps noted. In Area C, the goal will be to apply early learning standards across the state and to support effective use of comprehensive assessment systems. As already noted, some portions of the comprehensive assessment system need to be further developed. While there is a solid rationale for assessing standards related to personnel and programs, the rationale is less convincing with respect to standards related to assessing children. Focus areas in D and E relate directly to the goal of extending and/or developing coordinated statewide systems, and activities are appropriate for this purpose. In summary, the overall plan is solid and addresses both infrastructure needs and the more extensive needs of particular communities. What is missing is clear evidence that each of the three state agencies intends not only to make the different aspects of the system available to their programs and providers, but to expect their respective programs to become part of the system. Discussion also is limited of the extent to which, and how, activities will address the needs of children with different types of needs in addition to or instead of those associated with poverty. Also lacking are description of the service configurations already present within the 4 targeted communities, including those available through each of the 3 participating agencies, to provide a more complete picture of how this grant will build on existing infrastructure. The role of formative assessment within the Comprehensive Assessment System needs to be further described in relation to the characteristics of different children and types of programs targeted by RTT-ELC. Also missing are plans for disseminating what is learned within these 4 areas to other, similar areas.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

Early childhood services are housed in three state agencies, those responsible for child care, education, and health. There are also tribal reservations and councils. Many elements of the early childhood system and governance structure are already in place in this state, but will be reviewed and revised through this grant, as well as expanded throughout the state and across different kinds of programs that target children with many needs. Additional systems will also be put in place, including a statewide data system that incorporates early childhood data across different agencies. The state already has a state advisory group for early childhood, a children's cabinet, and an office of early learning, each implemented under the consent of the Governor. The State Advisory Council was in response to the Head Start Act of 2007, whereas the Children's Cabinet provides a cross-agency leadership team from each of the agencies involved in this grant and led by the Education Commissioner. The office of early learning (OEL) provides the day to day coordination for these entities. Key functions for the OEL align directly to the elements of the RTT-ELC project. This high level of coordination of all agencies and entities providing services to young children will support careful attention to children and families with many needs. High-level staff from the agencies will comprise the Leadership Team for the RTT-ELC project. Signed Memorandums of Understanding clearly delineate the roles that each agency will fill in accomplishing the goals and activities described in the grant. Activities to ensure broad participation of constituencies are well laid out in tables, including strategies to reach families, funders, and legislators as well as leadership. Letters of support have been provided by a wide range of intermediate organizations and councils including professional organizations, tribal networks, and other associations. Letters are also provided from colleges and universities

and from representatives of the business community. Overall, there appears to be very broad support for this project, as well as a strong, existing organizational framework for accomplishing its planned activities. Activities are also not described in specific detail in terms of how they apply to specific groups of children with High Needs, or as they apply across different types of programs.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	13
<p>The extent to which the State Plan--</p> <p>(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;</p> <p>(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--</p> <p>(1) Is adequate to support the activities described in the State Plan;</p> <p>(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</p> <p>(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</p> <p>(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.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)		
<p>The proposal demonstrates a strong past history of using available state funds to strengthen early childhood programs. For example, the state already has begun to use Title I funds for this purpose, and exceeds its required contribution to CCDF. Grant funding will be used primarily to evaluate and revise, to expand, to coordinate, and to target, as well as to develop a data system that is not yet in place. The business community and the legislature have both supported a variety of types of early childhood efforts, including providing funding. Accomplishing the goals of this grant will put in place new or strengthened frameworks and ways of using available funds that are likely to continue, given the historical level of commitment to early childhood demonstrated in the proposal. The variety of types of funding unique to particular projects or areas are described and demonstrate leveraging from different sources. Budgets are provided and supported for each of the participating state agencies and for important projects that they oversee. Quality and access across the state will be directly affected by the projects managed by each of these agencies. In addition, funding will go directly to the target communities as incentives to upgrade services across all types of early childhood programs. A central office will coordinate all budgets. Funds are broken down with respect to specific goals of the grant, showing the amount of funding from other sources as well as from ELC grant funds. Some projects under these goals will be implemented specifically in the targeted, high need communities. All sections describe what will be in place at the end of the grant and how gains will be sustained. Funds also are described for achieving Priority 2, in which a stated goal of the project is to build quality within the family, friend and neighbor (FFN) child care providers in areas with many children and families with high needs. Tables show many sources of federal, state, local and private funding that will be brought to bear to support the activities of this grant. One concern about the budget is whether ELC dollars will be used for important, high-impact activities. For example, several goals will be addressed through the use of task forces and work groups, marketing via the web, and creation of on-line training resources. In some cases, outcomes of the task forces are not known, but will guide the nature of the activities that will support quality of providers, programs, and systems. Thus it was difficult in some cases to evaluate the effect that funding will have on these outcomes or to make judgments about whether they represent the best use of the ELC funds.</p>		

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 state has a well-developed TQRIS system that is available statewide and to all early childhood educators. It also encompasses all of the 6 areas listed in the criteria. Four levels are used to differentiate program quality, and an in-state study has shown that children attending programs in the top two levels achieve at higher levels in Kindergarten than other children. Currently the system, which is voluntary, is used primarily by child care settings. A new, alternative rating procedure has been developed to entice already accredited child care programs, school-based programs, and Head Start programs into the system, and is being tested. Testing the validity of this alternative approach will be an appropriate focus of this project. The system is directly linked to licensing for child care in that providers must be licensed before they can enter the TQRIS system; unlicensed providers are given training support to achieve licensing. Incentives and intensive support will be provided through the grant for FFN providers in the targeted investment communities to become licensed so that they can enter the TQRIS. Each tier of the system demonstrates increasing criteria, with use of valid and reliable measures (e.g., ECERS, CLASS) being used at the three top tiers. Grant funds will be used primarily for one-time investments in quality improvement, including incentives to enter the system. Funds will also be used for continuous improvement of standards and the rating process; specific, appropriate activities are outlined for these purposes. Goals are established to continuously improve the standards and to refine and study the accelerated pathway. Reasonable activities are outlined for each goal, responsible parties are identified within the participating agencies, and financial resources are noted. In summary, the TQRIS builds on an existing, well-articulated system, and all programs will be encouraged to become a part of the system. However, while it makes sense to streamline entry of programs operating under other standards (e.g., Head Start, public school programs) into the TQRIS system, the rationale behind choosing specific components within the TQRIS to streamline is not well described. It also is not clear how the needs of children with different kinds of needs will be addressed within the TQRIS system; activities related to this requirement need to be described.

	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 TQRIS system already includes programs of different types, and is available to all programs. One of the major goals of this project is to increase the number and percent of programs participating in the TQRIS, particularly in areas where there are concentrations of children with high needs. To accomplish this, the project will use a variety of incentives. In addition, it will specifically target programs that currently serve children with high needs (i.e., those receiving CCDF subsidy dollars) and increase the number of those programs achieving higher levels in the TQRIS. Ambitious performance targets are set for participation by several different types of programs. Activities are already in place for recruiting providers into the system. For example, in child care, programs are given coaching and training to help them enter into the TQRIS system. Many of these receive CCDF funds, indicating that they serve children with high needs. These activities will be continued for the current project. Currently, payment rates to centers and family care providers are higher when centers are accredited or when staff have specific credentials; this covers more of the family's costs when they access higher quality programs. Reimbursement rates are also higher when programs offer full-day care, layering different kinds of funds. Several additional approaches including scholarships and allowances are also provided. Analyses by the Dept. of Human Services were used to determine where intensive recruitment and quality improvement supports were most needed. These form the basis for goals for this project, which address (a) providing additional Tiers 3 and 4 programs, particularly in the target communities, by enticing additional programs into the tiered system, (b) increasing access for children with disabilities by recruiting more programs serving them into the tiered system, and (c) increasing access to programs by children in the child care assistance program, with activities designed to bring about reimbursement changes through legislative policy. Goals thus reflect responsiveness to identified needs. Services to children with disabilities would be improved as well through incorporation of new standards into the rating system. The proposal offers a good discussion of sources for the numbers provided for performance measures, and ambitious goals have been set for increasing participation in the TQRIS system by different types of early childhood programs. However, there is no discussion of the rationale behind targets set across the 4 years, making it difficult to determine whether targets are realistic. Also, with the exception of Goal 3, family income appears to be the primary definition of High Needs; discussion of needs that might be encountered based on immigrant status, language, culture, and access to resources are lacking. It also is not always clear how ELC funds will be used over and above the other funds mentioned to address each of the criteria. Finally, while activities and incentives will be put in place to encourage participation by all types of programs, evidence is lacking that there is a clear expectation from the state that they will become part of the system.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

Minnesota already implements a system for rating and monitoring program entry as well as for maintaining the status of programs within the tiered system. Entry and progress through the system are based on a portfolio that responds to specific criteria; at the top three tiers, this includes use of reliable observation tools (ECERS; CLASS). A coach provides assistance to programs in developing their portfolio. Programs are re-evaluated every other year. Through this grant, additional raters will be hired for the CLASS and trained to fidelity, in order to incorporate more programs into the TQRIS system, thereby addressing one key goal of the project. Further, new applications of the CLASS will be used in different types of programs as they become available (e.g., family child care). An ambitious goal for reliability is set for the CLASS, and observers must maintain high reliability through regular checks, ensuring that quality ratings will be based on solid data. Goals also include a data system to maintain data and make it useful for different purposes. What is missing from this section is a description of how training and reliability for both the portfolio review and the CLASS are currently conducted, making it difficult to judge whether activities included under Goal 1 are appropriate for support. The current system for managing these data is not described; gaps need to be clearly delineated so that activities can be evaluated. The state is strong on marketing information to families, and in fact their TQRIS system was developed primarily for the purpose of providing information to families to assist them in accessing high quality child care. A variety of avenues are used to disseminate information in a variety of languages, and marketing kits are available for programs that participate

In the rating system. Through this grant, other avenues will be explored for marketing, with stronger ties to other programs with contacts with parents of young children (e.g., Pre-K Allowance and Scholarship programs), as well as Head Start and state pre-K programs. Family Education programs, available in every public school district, will also help to increase access to the information. ELC grant funds will be used to develop a tool-kit that child care providers can use to inform parents about program quality and how to find it in their community. As in other sections of the grant, the use of ELC funding will be combined with other funds (a strength), but there is not a clear indication of specific activities for ELC dollars. Information relating to addressing different types of ELC programs and specific types of children with a variety of needs also is incomplete and planned activities are not discussed from these perspectives. As noted above, current use of the CLASS needs further description in order to evaluate the contributions that will be made through this project.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

Most of the goals and activities in this section are focused on the four target communities, each of which has high numbers of children defined as High Need. Goals and activities are designed to increase the available of programs in the top two tiers of the rating framework as well as to provide incentives for families to use programs in these tiers. Current policies and prior experience through pilot programs are used to inform many of these activities. The state will use the period of the ELC grant to create a "surge" toward quality in these target areas, using marketing, coaching, and improvement grants to programs. School districts will be rewarded with matching funds for use of Title I funds for early childhood services. Families will be helped to access high quality programs through a variety of means that include scholarships and allowances, as well as program incentives related to serving high numbers of children who receive subsidies. In the rural target community, incentives will be provided for a collaborative model among different types of programs. Families also will have access to home visitors who will help them connect with programs and make use of available scholarships for child care. A real strength of the proposal is that each of the four communities will develop its own plan, based on community needs and characteristics, within the context of specific parameters. Family care providers, who may better represent the linguistic and cultural diversity of the community, will be encouraged to enter the licensing and tiered systems (priority 2). Grant activities will also include removing policy barriers to providing higher reimbursement rates for more highly rated providers, and for rewarding programs based on the number of children served who have many needs. All of these activities are appropriate ones for increasing the number of providers in higher tiers. Finally, studies will be conducted (contracted) to evaluate the outcomes of children in the target communities when given this increase in resources and coordination. The activities outlined in this section are likely to impact a large number of children and families who meet the definition of "High Need," and to result in increased collaboration within communities. The plan brings together information based on a variety of previous projects, many of which were evaluated. There is a commitment to study barriers and supports to accomplishing these activities and their outcomes, and to take on the task of changing policy to maximize the impacts of future efforts that will build on these activities. The performance tables project an increasing number of programs that will be in the top tiers in these communities as well as in the number of children who will participate in these programs. Similar information specific to the targeted high-needs areas are lacking, and would greatly strengthen the need for this targeted intervention. The rationales behind the projected targets in the tables also are not provided. Different populations of children with High Needs are also not addressed in terms of number to be served or unique ways in which the goals and activities of the project may apply to them.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(6)

This proposal demonstrates previous attention to evaluation for many of the existing frameworks for this project as well as in pilot projects that undergird proposed plans, indicating that what is in place is of high quality. Many planned activities are expressly for the purpose of continual improvement. The TQRIS system in particular has been evaluated in various ways since its inception. Aspects of using the TQRIS system in the target communities, where different approaches will be tried (e.g., use of health consultants) will also be evaluated. External evaluators have been and will continue to be used. Results are included that demonstrate that the TQRIS framework accurately distinguishes between different levels of quality as evidenced by differences in child outcomes. Performance on the portfolio assessment were also compared to observations on the ECERS and the CLASS, both of which are considered to be reliable and valid quality ratings when used by qualified raters. Assessments of a sample of children in programs at various tiers indicated that children made significant gains in a variety of areas aligned to domains of school readiness, although no information was given on the specific tools used to assess children's outcomes. Current evaluations underway repeat the above with a larger number of programs, and will again examine the differences in outcome for children in programs representing different tiers. The validation plan undertaken for the ELC grant therefore builds on the above, adds new elements, and will be aligned with parts of the comprehensive assessment system. The accelerated path to validation will be compared with the more traditional, full validation, ensuring that the two pathways are actually comparable. Two qualified external evaluation entities are identified. Overall, the validation approach appears sound, but is lacking information on tools used in the previous validation project and how it informed the proposed validation study. Within the plan, it also is not clear exactly who will be completing specific activities and what tools will be used to collect objective data. Further, activities to examine patterns of improvement lack information with respect to what, when, and how, making it difficult to determine whether information yielded will be reliable, valid, and useful. Plans are also not provided for separating out evaluation results for different sub-groups of children with high needs either across or within tiers.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	30	27

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)

Evidence in the proposal clearly demonstrates that early learning and development standards (ECIPs) have been developed and are in use in this state. Essential domains are addressed at two levels, birth-3 and 3-5, and are based on child outcome standards from NAEYC. Standards have been evaluated by WestEd to ensure applicability across linguistic, economic, and cultural backgrounds, as well as across variations in needs and abilities. The standards appear to be in use in all three agencies, although this is not totally clear; for example, they are aligned with the Head Start framework, but it is not clear whether they are used within Head Start. The standards also were initially aligned, and are continually re-aligned, to K-12 standards. These standards are incorporated within TQRIS via a requirement that providers use instruction and assessment consistent with the ECIPs; in addition, increased usage of the standards is apparent at higher tiers. Knowledge of the ECIPs is included in the workforce competency framework, and as content in professional development. Licensed child care providers develop plans for how they will use the ECIPs. All of these indicate close alignment between the early learning standards and other elements of the overall plan. Goals for this grant include addressing gaps found in alignment with K-12 and in promoting use of the standards on a broader basis. Given the many activities already in use to disseminate the standards, clear need is not established to indicate that ELC funds will be best spent on further promotional activities. Further, the proposed evaluation study linking new types of professional development to child outcomes does not seem to be an efficient use of ELC funds, since many other, undescribed factors may influence child learning and development; this level of analysis is not described in the proposal. Potential partners (e.g., public television) are mentioned but activities within the grant are not described.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	23

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)

While using criteria to guide selection of instruments for child assessment, the state allows programs to select their own assessments. As a result, a range of child assessments are used across the state. The proposal clearly identifies various problems with this approach, including the varied quality of the assessments used and difficulty in connecting data among programs and integrating it for reporting purposes. Although the project will limit the number of approved assessments, this may not address the latter issue; if multiple assessments are to be allowed, an approach to aggregating data for state-level use is needed. Another gap identified in the proposal relates to providers' ability to choose, use and interpret assessments, including for formative evaluation. This approach will make training and coaching related to assessment, provided through this project, more difficult as well; plans for addressing this diversity within training should be described. The use of multiple acceptable assessments also needs to be supported with respect to different types of purposes for which data will be used, e.g. (a) sharing among multiple providers serving the same child/family and (b) combining data into a state system (as proposed in section E) for purposes of tracking children, evaluating state initiatives, etc. Use of the ASQ (Ages & Stages Questionnaire) and ASQ-SE (Ages & Stages Questionnaire Social Emotional) are proposed as a way to achieve some commonality at the level of universal developmental screening, particularly since it is available in multiple languages. Training in use of this instrument will be provided. However, no description is given of what is currently used or of how the ASQ/ASQ-SE address the different areas of a comprehensive screening. Without this background as a context, it is not possible to evaluate the usefulness or appropriateness of the training that will be directed toward using this particular instrument. Goals 2 and 3 in general are lacking information on what currently is in place. Activity 3.2 provides a list of unrelated activities that do not logically fit

within a goal that deals primarily with child assessments. Goal 4, coordination among data sources, proposes the use of an individual learning plan as a central organizer of data. If shared across programs, this could provide a user-friendly mechanism for sharing information among multiple providers. Goal 5, creation of a School Readiness Report Card, needs further rationale and description with respect to the focus of this section of the proposal. Overall, the goals and activities related to child assessment do not appear to address the fundamental problem of multiple assessments and related coordination of assessment and data across systems and programs. Even with improvement in the quality of the assessments, activities proposed do not provide assurance that it will be possible to share, coordinate, and report across multiple programs and levels. Further description of how the ASQ and ASQ-SE will be supplemented to address all essential domains is also needed. The ways in which linguistic and cultural differences influence and are addressed in assessment also have not been described in relation to the selection and interpretation of instruments or of the results.

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	17
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--</p> <p>(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;</p> <p>(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)
<p>Improving the quality of the varied workforce in early childhood programs is appropriately cited as a key strategy for improving program quality. The state has in place an extensive framework of core competencies, as well as an extensive professional development infrastructure. A career lattice is built on the framework of competencies and is also linked to a Registry. The plan provided in this proposal will institute a process of continuous improvement of the core competency framework, and will seek to increase the number of providers (including universities) who align their training and content to the competencies. The plan also seeks to bring additional providers into the Framework and to include a wider array of early childhood providers. All of these are appropriate activities for a coordinated system and the Framework is designed to be able to include providers in a range of programs and with a variety of backgrounds. The current framework was developed by the state association of the NAEYC, reflecting the structure of professional standards in that organization. Eight content areas are included that are highly compatible with areas emphasized in the program standards. Currently, public school pre-K teachers follow a different set of mandated teaching standards, not aligned with the core competencies. Head Start, however, has begun to align its training and its staff learning record with this framework. Through the ELC grant, the framework will become a shared framework for professional development and for continuous improvement for all early childhood staff. Core competencies will be revised to address identified gaps in content (including information on children with various kinds of special needs) and to bring preservice and inservice providers into alignment with the system. The activities described should lead to closer cooperation and collaboration within the early childhood system. Overall, much work has been accomplished and the plan appears solid. What is lacking from the description are activities to strengthen knowledge and competencies to support implementation of Part B (preschool) and Part C (infant-toddler) of IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). The current level of participation by 4-year colleges with respect to the framework and progression of credentials is also not clear. A description is needed of their current status and of plans to involve them within the framework.</p>

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

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

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

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

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

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

This section of the proposal describes the current structures used to support a wide variety of early childhood personnel in furthering their professional competence and also presents a plan for further promoting access, moving early educators through the career lattice, building the capacity of the state to better track the work force, and expanding the number of preservice and inservice providers into alignment with the framework. The workforce is described very broadly, across all early childhood settings. Family child care providers will be supported in completing continuing education for college credit, and practitioners who are themselves culturally and linguistically diverse will be targeted as well. The activities described provide a clear path toward important goals in the project. The state has devoted substantial resources to developing the competencies and the career lattice, as well as to a professional development registry that tracks progress through the framework. Regional councils have been formed to include all early childhood sectors; these ultimately will provide a range of types of training and professional development to support progression through the Career Lattice. Training will be focused on areas that will support program progress through the TQRIS as well as the individual's progress through the career framework. Linking these two systems will strengthen both. Some training will be free of charge. Collaboration with the state's Reading Corp will provide tutoring as well as coaching in literacy instruction. Coaching also will be provided through other sources such as the university and various training centers. Training toward the CDA Credential will be provided in different languages. Scholarship funds will be available from several sources, some prioritizing recipients who work in programs that are enrolled in the TQRIS system. Programs serving large numbers of children with high needs will be targeted, ensuring higher impact. Overall there are multiple linkages among resources available in the state, the various parts of the early childhood quality rating system, and the professional development and credentialing system. Funds from this grant will be used to develop a career guidance web-site as well as to hire a consultant to develop a linkage between the quality program system and the registry. The project also will actively pursue preservice and inservice providers who will align their training with the career lattice framework. Increasing targets are set across 4 years for the number of providers receiving training from aligned professional development providers and universities, as well as for the number of educators progressing toward credentials within the framework. The applicant did not receive full points in this section because both tables would benefit from a description of the reasoning behind the numbers provided since without this information it is difficult to evaluate whether the targets are both ambitious and achievable. Further description of responsibilities of various parties is also needed with respect to how the logistics of completing these activities will be carried out. Qualifications of different entities providing coaching and training are needed, as are plans for ensuring that multiple providers meet specific criteria for content and process of delivery.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

The state has conducted a Kindergarten screening for the past 10 years, using a representative sample of children from across the state. The instrument used is a modified version of the Work Sampling System, which is aligned with the early learning standards. Reliability and validity have been established for the full version; however, it does not appear that similar studies have been conducted with this modified version. While this instrument is appropriate for young children in that it is based on observation over time, it may be more difficult to achieve reliability across multiple observers. Training of teachers for collecting these data is not well described. Results of the Kindergarten assessment have been consistent over time, with income being the strongest predictor of scores. Sampling included children with disabilities, English language learners, and children from different ethnicities and SES levels. A follow-up study also linked a composite score on this instrument to Grade 3 reading, whereas more specific scores were not predictive. Results have been used to inform policy and programming in early childhood. Support also has been provided to districts to link results to practices, and districts are able to use this data to inform funding streams. It is not clear, however, whether the sampling occurs across all districts, or whether districts are also part of the sampling procedure. A new focus on reading achievement at grade 3 means that the state is reexamining the instrument used as well as their sampling. The instrument used does not appear to allow any implications for potential changes in instruction in pre-K, i.e., it is not useful for informing instruction even at a district level based on continued use of a sampling procedure as well as on use of an overall score rather than sub-score related to specific areas of learning. In addition to reexamining the system, funds from this grant will be used to add additional data from previous years into the Longitudinal Data System, as was done for the year in which the study was conducted. Funds will be used to inform professional development and curriculum. However, additional information on planned activities is needed. There is some inconsistency in what is measured on the kindergarten assessment with respect to alignment with the early learning outcomes, with K-12 standards, and with the Essential Domains. For example, different lists shown within the section are inconsistent, and alignment with K-12 standards is not described. In summary, the modified instrument to be used at Kindergarten entry has not been validated as a stand-alone instrument. Further, continued use of a sampling procedure will address only global purposes (e.g., statewide report card, broad training needs) and will not be useful for informing instruction at the level of the individual school or classroom. As noted above, while use of a total score may predict to 3rd grade, it does not appear to address any formative assessment needs of Kindergarten teachers.

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	17

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)

Currently some early childhood information from a representative sample is included within the Longitudinal data system. Based on information presented earlier, this includes some demographics on children as well as Kindergarten entry data. Thus, this data system has limited utility for early childhood decision-making. ELC funding will be appropriately used to create a new early childhood system that will (a) cross agencies and early childhood programs, and (b) provide data that is available and useful to stakeholders ranging from parents to legislators. This new system will include a cross-agency data warehouse as well as software for entering data into the system. What is not clear is whether data from the new early childhood system will be entered into the Longitudinal data system, and/or how data from the new system will inform what is entered into the Longitudinal system. A solid plan is outlined for an interagency governance and working structure in which each agency will examine its own data base, specific data elements will be targeted, and a process for ensuring confidentiality followed with respect to assigning data to individual children. Agencies will evaluate their data sets for reliability and validity and their relation to questions to be answered. Essential Data Elements are included in a table that indicates how they will be included, although description is lacking on how demographics on educators and on children/families will be used to evaluate data related to children with High Needs. Examples of the types of data available from each source is also lacking, particularly with respect to the types of outcome data on children. A process is described for attaching unique identifiers to children prior to attaching demographic information, which will enable coordination across data sets. It is possible that new data elements also will be created for newly identified variables, indicating responsiveness to emerging needs. Parts of the system will be evaluated in the four High Needs target areas, and will be linked to the TQRIS program data base as well. However, a rationale for targeting these four areas first is not provided. Some discussion also is needed of how this information will be useful to teachers and for instruction. To ensure that the process will be useful at all levels and for multiple purposes in the future, a description of timeliness and processes for data entry is needed.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	232

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

A primary goal of the proposal is to bring additional early childhood programs into the TQRIS system, including family/friend/neighbor providers who are currently not part of the system, with a focus on supporting them to become licensed and then enter the TQRIS system; all other providers appear to be licensed or legally unlicensed. Connections with these FFN providers will be leveraged through statutory training requirements linked to the CCAP subsidy. Activities also are planned to link these providers with the Family Educators in the school districts. Many of these FFN providers are representative of new immigrant groups and others with High Needs, indicating that they are appropriate targets for this project. However, benchmarks are bringing these providers into the system are not provided. Ambitious targets, supporting activities and incentives are described for achieving this. The TQRIS is available to all types of programs. Nevertheless, strong incentives are joining the system are not described for those who are accredited or approved in some other way. Thus, because the system will remain voluntary, it will be difficult to bring all providers under the same umbrella. Therefore it also will be difficult to develop an integrated picture of programs and providers across early childhood sectors and to make this information universally available to families.

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
Comments on (P)(3)		
<p>A Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) has been in place for 10 years, based on a representative sample of 10% of the children. Results are partially included in the Longitudinal Data System in that a study was conducted with one year of KEA results to examine its relationship to Grade 3 reading. The state plans to enter existing data for all 10 years into the system; however, that currently hasn't been done. There are no plans to extend the Kindergarten entry assessment to all children. Further, as it is now, the assessment does not provide information that is specific enough to guide curriculum in Kindergarten. Overall, the system does not appear to meet all of the elements in the Status Table. Nevertheless the plan provided in E1 was strong enough to meet this criterion.</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
Comments on Absolute Priority	
<p>Many integrative structures and policies are already in place in this state, including coordination at the level of the Governor. A statewide TQRIS system, designed primarily for child care providers, is in place and is available to all early childhood programs. The grant puts in place activities and incentives to bring others into the system. Children with High Needs are addressed within each of the Focused Investment Areas primarily by targeting four High Needs areas for additional funds and activities. Less thought has been given to populations of children within the overall category of High Needs. These sections of the proposal tend not to be described in the detail needed to determine specific attention to children with different kinds of High Needs. Because the state is already implementing activities in many of these areas, ELC funds are often targeted toward reviewing and recommending changes in what is already there; given the level of need, some of these activities may not be the best use of the grant dollars available. Overall, previous work and planned activities demonstrate a commitment building a state system that will address the needs of young children and families with multiple needs, and proposed activities will build on this foundation.</p>	



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # MN-5019

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/16/2011 - 12:39 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 16. Includes detailed text description and a 'Comments on (A)(1)' section.

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

20

17

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

(A)(2)(a) The applicant proposes to increase the amount of early childhood professionals that hold a National Child Development Associate Credential by 31% by the year 2015. However, there is not baseline, or current, percentage provided as a comparison. This makes the proposed goal difficult to assess in terms of ability to be achieved. (A)(2)(b) The applicant provides an overall summary that includes three strategies to support the goals of the application. The applicant proposes to increase the quality of the workforce, engage and empower parents, and provide adequate funding to access quality. These three approaches, when taken together, establish a clear path to engage the major stakeholders in addressing the needs of Children with High Needs. (A)(2)(c) The applicant selects two Focused Investment Areas that are already established to a certain degree within the state and proposes a plan to enhance and grow their early childhood Workforce and Comprehensive Assessment Systems. The applicant has a state-wide early childhood career lattice in place that includes progression toward credentials and degrees. The Comprehensive Assessment System will be supported through financial resources in the development and piloting of the second version of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

(A)(3)(a)(1) The applicant acknowledges a state-wide fragmentation among delivery services and proposes to establish key government structures to address this gap. For example, the state has created an Office of Early Learning and the Children's Cabinet both created from the recommendations of a public-private partnership consisting of 1/3 community leaders, 1/3 bipartisan legislators, and 1/3 state agency staff. However, parents and families are not mentioned as participants in the partnership. (A)(3)(a)(2)& (3) The applicant clearly articulates the organization structure, governance, and decision-making authority proposed in their state plan. Figure A-2 details the organization structure including public input councils and leadership teams. Table (A)(3)-1 details the roles and responsibilities of partners such as the Departments of Health and Human Services. (A)(3)(a)(4) The applicant proposes a plan to involve parents and families in the planning and implementation of grant-related activities. However, this plan is based on web-based delivery which does not seem appropriate based on the demographics presented by the applicant. For example, the applicant details the level of poverty in the state and the high number of Children with High Needs who live in rural areas. The applicant does not describe if the families in the targeted areas will actually have access to web-based information. (A)(3)(b)(1-3) The applicant presents numerous MOU's and letters of support that clearly delineate the 'scope-of-work' expected from each agency, including the Department of Education and the Department of Health. (A)(3)(c) The applicant has included letters of support in reaching the goals outlined in the application. Parent organizations, the state university, and community education organizations are a few of the letters from a wide diversity of supporters.

	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)

(A)(4)(b)(1-3) The applicant proposes a budget that seems adequate to support the State Plan. Funding for Early Learning and Development Standards is identified at \$500,330 for the total 4 year project. This amount seems appropriate since the state has already developed Standards and will use this funding to continually improve the Standards and the utilization of the Standards by Early Childhood Educators serving Children with High Needs. Just over half of this requested amount (55.87%, \$279,530) will be from public funds, with the remainder from additional sources. (A)(4)(c) The applicant has initiated certain aspects included in the grant application over the past several years, such as the Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Activities that are currently in existence will be expanded and enhanced through this award. The history that is presented by the applicant in terms of supporting grant activities prior to this application is strong. However, the applicant proposes sustainability to occur through trained educators passing their training experiences on to other educators. There is no mention of funding support or incentive to substantiate the sustainability of this activity.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	10	8
<p>The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and adopted, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and adopt, a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System that--</p> <p>(a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Early Learning and Development Standards; (2) A Comprehensive Assessment System; (3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications; (4) Family engagement strategies; (5) Health promotion practices; and (6) Effective data practices; <p>(b) Is clear and has standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children; and</p> <p>(c) Is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (B)(1)		
<p>(B)(1)(a)(1-6) The applicant presents data on the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) that has been in place since 2009. The TQRIS is based on Early Childhood Indicators of Progress and all staff members at child care centers must be familiar with the standards in order to achieve a 1-star rating in the TQRIS. The state has also established Professional Development Registry with participation in the Registry being required for centers to attain the highest levels in the TQRIS. The state makes data available to parents and encourages educators to use assessment data to guide program improvement. However, the applicant does not provide evidence that this plan has strong implementation support. For example, the applicant presents a narrative that the Standards will be reviewed and revised on an on-going basis but the timeline presented, in table format, does not support this task. (B)(1)(b) The applicant describes the existing plan to differentiate program quality levels. The state has implemented both a block- and point-based system that is based on nationally recognized standards such as Head Start and the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Programs participating in the TQRIS can earn 1 or 2 stars through a block system and can increase their star level based on the number of points accumulated through training, family involvement, and other mechanisms. (B)(1)(c) The applicant describes that their Program Standards are linked to the State licensing system. One example of this is the requirement that participants in the TQRIS must be in good standing and not have any licensing sanctions.</p>		

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	15	10
<p>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--</p> <p>(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--</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) State-funded preschool programs; 		

- (2) Early Head Start and Head Start programs;
 - (3) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA;
 - (4) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of the ESEA; and
 - (5) Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program;
- (b) Implementing effective policies and practices designed to help more families afford high-quality child care and maintain the supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs (e.g., maintaining or increasing subsidy reimbursement rates, taking actions to ensure affordable co-payments, providing incentives to high-quality providers to participate in the subsidy program); and
- (c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by type of Early Learning and Development Program (as listed in (B)(2)(a)(1) through (5) above).

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

(B)(2)(a) It is unclear if an increase from 10% to 78% of children attending Early Head Start and Head Start is achievable, especially since the applicant states that the enrollment in these two programs has decreased and does not present a plan to address the hypothesized cause of the problem (increased cost per child). (B)(2)(a) (1-5) The applicant does not clearly present information to address this criteria. The reviewer was unable to locate information targeting this criterion (i.e., Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA). (B)(2)(b) The applicant proposes a plan to ensure affordable co-payments and to provide incentives for high-quality providers. The applicant establishes co-payments based on income and family size, not on the cost of care. In addition, the applicant increases the maximum payment rate by 15% for centers that are accredited or hold certain educational credentials. (B)(2)(c) The applicant proposes a recruitment plan for target programs that appears achievable. The applicant proposes to expand the programs, by county, by 8 in year one, 22 in year two, 38 in year three, and by year 4, will have all counties engaged in the TQRIS.

	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)

(B)(3)(a) The applicant proposes a plan to utilize valid and reliable assessment measures, and trained monitors, in their TQRIS programs. Assessment measures include the CLASS and Environment Rating Scales. Monitors will be trained to 90% exact agreement and will be re-examined every 10 visits or three months whichever comes first. Training will be provided if the monitors fall below 90% agreement. (B)(3)(b) The applicant proposes to provide information on program quality and licensing information. The applicant proposes to create a website in multiple languages based on the community needs (Hmong, Somali, Spanish, and English) but it is unclear if the parents will have access to web-based information given the level of rural living and poverty of the target population.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs	20	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 improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

(B)(4)(a) The applicant provides a plan to provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to improve their quality. The applicant has a history of quality improvement grants that have assisted programs in increasing funds for training and in purchasing supplies and materials. (B)(4)(c)(1) The applicant does not provide evidence that they are setting ambitious and achievable goals. In Table (B)(4)(c)(1), the applicant supplies information on the number of programs that participate in the TQRIS program. However, the total number of 'covered by the TQRIS' does not agree with the actual numbers of programs in the individual Tiers. This disconnect of numbers makes it difficult to evaluate the ability of the applicant to meet the stated goals. (B)(4)(c)(2) The applicant does not provide evidence that they are setting ambitious and achievable goals. The applicant states that children participating in Early Head Start and Head Start programs have been decreasing due to the cost per child. However, in Table (B)(4)(c)(2) the applicant anticipates the numbers of children in these programs will increase. The applicant does not provide a rationale to explain this growth.

	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)

(B)(5)(a) The applicant proposes to use, and describes, two research-based measures that inform the TQRIS. The measures, Environment Rating Scales and CLASS, are used in the TQRIS and are standard measures used in the field of early childhood. The applicant also developed an automatic level in their top tier which is available only to programs accredited by other national organizations. The applicant does not mention the assessment measures that will be used to assess child outcomes or how the child outcome measures will be used to differentiate between the top two tiers of their TQRIS program. (B)(5)(b) The applicant reports data from a three year evaluation that discusses increases in child outcomes for expressive and receptive vocabulary but no significant changes in early math skills or reduction of anger/aggression. The applicants plan to track child outcome in a longitudinal manner appears to be appropriate.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

The total available points for each Focused Investment Area will be divided by the number of selection

criteria that the applicant chooses to address in that area, so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points.

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	30	28
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--</p> <p>(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;</p> <p>(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and</p> <p>(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (C)(1)		
<p>(C)(1)(a) The applicant includes Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate, and age-appropriate. The applicant based their standards on child outcome standards identified in well-accepted guidelines from organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children. (C)(1)(b)The applicant provides evidence of a history of utilizing the state K-12 Academic Standards in order to establish a continuum of learning for the children in the state. The applicant intends to consistently review for gaps in the Early Childhood Standards and plans to address any gaps as they arise. This is problematic since the applicant does not propose an explicit plan to deal with any challenges. (C)(1)(d) The applicant proposes a train-the-trainer model to promote the understanding of and commitment to Standards across programs. The applicant proposes to have 24 trainers and 48 coaches by the end of 2013. These numbers seem ambitious yet attainable based on the estimated number of early childhood educators in the state.</p>		

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	30	25
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to support the effective implementation of developmentally appropriate Comprehensive Assessment Systems by--</p> <p>(a) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to select assessment instruments and approaches that are appropriate for the target populations and purposes;</p> <p>(b) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purposes and uses of each type of assessment included in the Comprehensive Assessment Systems;</p> <p>(c) Articulating an approach for aligning and integrating assessments and sharing assessment results, as appropriate, in order to avoid duplication of assessments and to coordinate services for Children with High Needs who are served by multiple Early Learning and Development Programs; and</p> <p>(d) Training Early Childhood Educators to appropriately administer assessments and interpret and use assessment data in order to inform and improve instruction, programs, and services.</p> <p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		

Comments on (C)(2)

(C)(2)(b) The applicant describes the need for Early Childhood Educators to improve their understanding of assessment measures and how to utilize the data to improve child outcome and family engagement. The applicant proposes to establish an Assessment & Data System Task Force to identify appropriate measures and improve fidelity to the assessments from educators. However, the applicant does not discuss including teachers or educators as members of this Task Force. (C)(2)(c) The applicant intends to establish an Assessment and Data Systems Task Force to ensure that assessments are better aligned and integrated into existing systems. (C)(2)(d) The applicant has identified a need for educators to participate in additional training on assessment and the use of assessment data to improve child outcomes. The applicant plans to build upon the existing opportunities and extend training in assessment by expanding delivery methods (online methods).

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	17

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)

(D)(1)(a) The applicant presents evidence of developing a common set of Core Competencies, developed by the state Association for the Education of Young Children. The Core Competencies have 8 content areas and access the knowledge of educators on five levels per Competency. As educators progress in their knowledge of the Competencies, child outcomes are expected to improve. (D)(1)(b) The applicant describes a career lattice that serves as progression of credentials and degrees over 12 steps. This plan includes a process to align the Core Competencies with the Board of Teaching Standards to ensure a state-wide progression. (D)(1)(c) The applicant describes their plan to engage local community and technical colleges in supporting professional development opportunities for educators. The applicant has not provided evidence that they will collaborate with 4 year postsecondary institutions to create professional development with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

	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)

(D)(2)(a) The applicant proposes a high quality plan to increase access to effective professional development opportunities. The plan includes developing consultants, coaches, and mentors to support identification of and appropriate use of assessments. (D)(2)(b) The applicant proposes a plan to expand the use of a Professional Development Registry for early childhood educators to track their progress along a career lattice. However, the applicant does not describe any financial incentives, or tiered reimbursement rates to ensure participation in professional development opportunities or to increase retention of early childhood providers. (D)(2)(c) The applicant proposes a plan to expand the Professional Development Registry which will be tied to the TQRIS and available to the public through that program. (D)(2)(d)(1) The applicant presents evidence to increase the number of postsecondary institutions that offer professional development opportunities and credit-bearing courses and to ensure that this offerings are aligned with the Framework. The applicant plans to conduct outreach activities to the sites not currently offering aligned professional development, but they also state that there is already a significant number of sites that are offering aligned professional development opportunities. (D)(2)(d)(2) The applicant does not provide evidence that they are setting ambitious and attainable goals. The applicant does not provide data on the percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are attaining credentials from postsecondary institutions. Without this information, it is difficult to determine the level of ambition or achievability.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	20	17
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)

(E)(1)(a) The applicant presents a Kindergarten Entry Assessment plan that is aligned with the state Standards and has been in effect for nearly 10 years. The Assessment covers 6 areas of child development including social emotional development, creativity and the arts, and cognition and general knowledge. (E)(1)(b) The applicant states the use of an adapted Work Sampling System. This adapted version measures a narrower set of items than the full System. The applicant does not provide a rationale for this decision. The applicant proposes a plan to increase the number of predictive studies to support their future directions and High-Quality Plan for improving child outcomes. (E)(1)(c) The applicant proposes a plan to implement their revised Kindergarten Entry Assessment by Quarter 3 in 2014. This is the latest date possible as indicated by the funding agent, however, the applicant currently has an existing program in place and that will be in use until the revised version is ready.

(E)(1)(e) The applicant proposes a plan that is funded with resources outside of the amount requested in this application. For example, the applicant proposes a total budget of \$1,429,200 from the State General Funds. Over the four years of the grant cycle, this will amount to over 75% of funding to come from sources not available under this grant.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

(E)(2)(a) The applicant describes the implementation of each of the Essential Data Elements. This information is contained in Table E-3. (E)(2)(c) The applicant presents a plan to exchange data among Participating State Agencies by utilizing the Research and Data Committee to develop data-sharing agreements with the Departments of Education, Health, and Human Services. (E)(2)(d) The applicant proposes a plan to generate timely and relevant information accessible for programs and educators. The applicant intends to establish a portal to provide reports to educators, administrators, and parents.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	226

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)

(a) The applicant proposes a plan to expand the licensing and inspection system to ELD programs that have not other-wise been regulated by the State. The applicant intends to engage in outreach to identify new American immigrants who express an interest in becoming licensed child care providers. The applicant does not discuss the number of providers this will include, either as a baseline number or as a target number to reach over the life of the grant. (b) The applicant will engage interested American immigrants in training and professional development activities that will move them forward toward participation in the TQRIS program.

Priorities

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

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
Comments on Absolute Priority	
<p>The applicant has a clear plan to expand on existing programs to increase the quality of the early childhood workforce. The applicant intends to develop partnerships with institutes of higher education to ensure a higher number of educators are being trained in critical areas such as assessment and data use to improve child outcomes and instruction. These collaborations will also ensure an alignment of the professional development trainings with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The applicant provides an overall summary that includes three main strategies to support their specific goals. The applicant proposes to increase the quality of the workforce, engage and empower parents, and provide adequate funding to access quality. These three approaches, when taken together, establish a clear path to engage the major stakeholders in addressing the needs of Children with High Needs and to ensure the needs of children and families in the state are being addressed.</p>	