



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # NJ-5024

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

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 15. Includes detailed text description of the core area and sub-points (a) through (d).

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

Combined funding for the State Preschool Program and other DOE-funded preschool programs increased steadily from \$521.7 million in FY 2007 to \$613.3 million in FY 2011. New Jersey also increased its contribution to Head Start programs each year from \$25.9 million in FY 2007 to \$35.7 million in FY 2011, an overall increase of 38 percent. Increased contributions to IDEA Part C went from \$106 million to \$112.4 million and for young children with disabilities \$32.7 million to \$45.7 million. However, state contributions to CCDF was shifted to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for which funding fluctuated between 2007 and 2011. The State has experienced a 13 percent increase of enrollment in all state-funded preschool programs from 45,506 to 51,333, a six percent increase in the number of children in Head Start and Early Head Start from 13,962 to 14,789, a 14 percent increase enrollment in programs of children receiving subsidies 18,381 to 21,022 and Title I participation expanded from 2,040 in 2007 to 11,349 children in 2010. The State has 68,637 preschool children in families with incomes below 200 percent of poverty. An estimated 50 percent of these children are participating in the State Preschool Program. New Jersey has 171,791 young children birth to five and four percent have Individualized Education Plans (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP). The Applicant states that four thousand families of infants and toddlers are reached through evidence-based home visiting programs, and as many as 45,000 families are involved in Family Success Centers and other family programs. However, they do not state what home visiting programs are utilized. CCDF programs are serving 5,079 infants and toddlers. IDEA Part C (10,580) and Early Head Start are serving 10,580 and 1,686 infants and toddlers respectively. New Jersey is one of the only states to include three-year-old children as well as four-year-old children in its preschool program, earning its second place rating, out of 40 states, from the National Institute of Early Education Research in providing preschool access to three-year-olds (NIEER 2010). New Jersey statute and administrative code ensure that children in foster care, immigrant status and are homeless can continue attending their preschool program with transportation provided to help minimize disruption to their education. The state has regulations guiding Early Intervention for children from birth to three years with a diagnosis of high-risk, child care centers and family child care programs. The state also requires mandatory Newborn Screening at birth, Lead screening for children under six and immunization requirements for all children attending any public or private school, child care center,

nursery school, preschool or kindergarten. One of New Jersey's (NJ) Administrative Codes, require the use of evidence-based curricula and assessments, learning standards, supports for English learners, inclusion of children with disabilities, family engagement strategies, health supports, staffing to address potential challenging behavior, small group size, preschool teacher certification, appropriate compensation, and a program evaluation and improvement system. New Jersey Administrative Special Education Code requires for identification, evaluation, and provision of services in the least restrictive environment to preschoolers with disabilities, in addition to rules for class size, student-teacher ratio, handling transitions between programs, teacher certification, ongoing professional development, measuring preschool outcomes, and parent engagement. However, the details of the requirements were not included. State rules for Early Intervention systems require services in neighborhood settings and to provide financial support for families up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level. New Jersey has four programs that provide assistance to families encouraging participation in the state's early learning and development programs. These assistance programs serve over 43,511 families and more than 67,640 young children. New Jersey Cares for Kids –NJCK, is targeted for low to moderate-income working parents. They can receive state subsidies for child care and after-school programs. The voucher certificates subsidized child care program allow parents to choose a child care program. Work First NJ program allow families who receive cash assistance under the state welfare program, to obtain free child care for up to two years after moving from welfare to work. Under the Child Care Assistance program, non-welfare families earning up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level qualify for subsidies. After one year, a family remains eligible with an income up to 250 percent of the federal poverty level. The NJ Council for Young Children established January, 2010 focused on the creation and adoption of common birth to three learning and development standards. The Council eventually recommended adopting Minnesota's Early Learning Guidelines for Birth to 3, with modifications. The Standards will be implemented starting in April of 2012. New Jersey's Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards are comprehensive and specifically incorporate a focus on young children with disabilities and English learners, and all the Essential Domains. Although the state requires programs to use valid and reliable developmental screenings and formative assessments that correspond with the comprehensive curricula and learning standards, it is not clear which instruments or the guidelines for selection. The applicant also states that teachers have received training in observation, documentation, procedures for handling reliability and validity, and maximizing the use of data to inform instruction. Again, it is not clear in which instrument. Evaluation of teacher-child interaction and environment are also required in Head Start and the State Preschool Program – with instruments such as the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), Early Childhood Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R), Supports for Early Literacy Assessment (SELA), Preschool Classroom Mathematics Inventory (PCMI), and curriculum fidelity instruments being used. Other instruments specific to inclusion, English learner supports, and optimizing settings to reduce challenging behavior are also used. It is not clear who perform these evaluations and which tool is used. IDEA and Title I programs are already using developmental screenings and formative assessments and preschoolers with disabilities are assessed using the Battelle Developmental Inventory upon entry into and departure from the preschool special education system. Each of these programs will add measures of teacher-child interaction and environment with the implementation of Grow NJ. Once the Grow NJ Quality Rating Improvement System is fully implemented, all participating sites across settings will administer an appropriate Comprehensive Assessment System for all high needs children along the birth to five continuum. Beginning at Step 2 of Grow NJ, sites will use Environmental Rating Scales and developmental, behavioral, and health screenings. At Step 3 they will add formative assessments that are aligned to the chosen curriculum, and starting at Step 4, will add an evaluation of teacher-child interaction. With the critical information provided by these instruments, educators will be better able to inform instruction, create concrete improvement targets, and ultimately provide a higher quality early experience for each child that results in optimal learning and development. Both Head Start and the State Preschool Program provide staffing to meet the elements of high-quality health promotion practices. New Jersey's child care licensing standards address two of the four elements of high-quality health promotion practices, health and safety and health promotion. Both the State Preschool Program and Head Start have family supports-related staffing in place, such as Community and Parent Involvement Specialists (CPIS), Parent Liaisons, and Family Workers to help families connect with community resources and provide a channel of communication. IDEA Part C provides Regional Family Support Coordinators to ensure that families of children from birth to three with disabilities have access to information and services. New Jersey's current early learning and development workforce credentials available are Child Development Associate (CDA), Certified Child Care Professional (CCCP), Infant Toddler credential, a six-hour preparation program designed for caregivers and teachers working with infants and toddlers who have already earned another credential at a minimum CDA, P-3 credential, NJ Administrator credential. Training is offered by county-level Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies that contract with Department of Human Services to assist early childhood educators in attaining credentials and other early learning and development information. New Jersey does not currently have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA). New Jersey has conducted two studies designed to understand the characteristics of its early learning and development programs. First, the quality of the State Preschool Program has been tracked since 2003 on a random sample of classrooms each year using the ECERS-R, SELA, and PCMI. The program's quality steadily increased over eight years, and has maintained a level of quality associated with learning benefits for children since 2006. Second, to measure the baseline quality characteristics of programs outside of the State Preschool Program, New Jersey conducted an onsite needs assessment of 568 child care, preschool and Head Start sites in 150 communities with high proportions of low-income families using the Basic Classroom Climate and Materials Checklist. The applicant states that the study provided valuable information, however it was not provided in the application. New Jersey's Department of Education data system, NJ SMART, assigns unique identifiers to preschool children, including those with disabilities and English learners, upon entry to a school district program, with unique school codes. The NJ Workforce Registry can be accessed to manage scholarships, incentives, and credentials. Also, the early intervention system has a unique child identifier, site identifier, as well as, collects information about infants and toddlers, and each service provider. The State's Licensing Information System has unique site and educator identifiers with both historical and current licensing information.

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

New Jersey's stated goals for improving program quality is based on their previous model for the State Preschool plan. It appears that their strategy is to use ECERS-R as the rating scale for environment and adult-interaction to measure improvement. Along with ECERS-R, the State will provide support aids during the improvement process. The support will come in the form of County-level teams of Learning Coaches, Family Engagement Coordinators, Health Service Coordinators and Birth to Five Disabilities Coordinators to help get the appropriate training and message out about Grow NJ, their TQRIS system. For programs starting at lower levels of quality; this progress may occur over two or even three quality improvement and rating cycles. By the end of the four-year grant period, it is expected that 44 percent of the sites will rate at the highest Steps of 4 and 5. After six years, it is expected that 53 percent will be at Step 4 or 5. However, the method of attaining the goals primarily will be through train the trainer. The goals in numbers are ambitious however, they may not be achievable because the plan does not have a timeline for training or technical assistance which is important in measuring progress. New Jersey has based their estimated program quality improvement, child outcomes and Kindergarten readiness by the Work Sampling System studies completed by other states. "Grow NJ, New Jersey's Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System, is the embodiment of inter-department cooperation. Each collaborating department has committed itself to expanding Grow NJ and its associated supports, with the goal of transforming the state's early care and education settings into consistently high-quality programs that share the evidence-based practices and most importantly, the success, of the State Preschool Program". However, Grow NJ gets lost in the State Plan. It is not clear how Grow NJ is going to be expanded, used or impacted by the hosts of RTT-ELC activity directors, leaders, coordinators, etc., who will be responsible for the implementing the State Plan. Neither the State Plan nor the reform agenda is clearly articulated. Rationale: (C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality early learning and development standards. The applicant states that the grant will assist the state in the expansion of the implementation of the current preschool standards to all programs serving children with high needs, and will expedite the implementation of the recently created infant toddler standards to sites serving infants and toddlers. (C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems. New Jersey has implemented comprehensive assessment systems in the State Preschool and Head Start programs, and has provided training and protocols to support reliable use of each type of instrument, and appropriate follow-up. The grant will help the state bring these modules, materials, and protocols for implementation to all early learning and development programs serving children with high needs. (C)(4) Engaging and supporting families. The state has evidence-based home visiting programs, Family Success Centers, and family resources through the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, and uses Strengthening Families in many of the state programs. Although the applicant states that they have evidence-based home visiting programs, it is not clear what they are. The grant will help to expand the use of the Strengthening Families program (through Grow NJ) and will support the creation of Family Engagement Coordinators to help providers maximize family engagement and connect families to programs that support their children's learning and development. However, it is not clear how this will be accomplished. (D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials. The workforce registry aligns with the NJ Core Knowledge and Competency Framework for each type of position, tracks scholarships, tracks and verifies progress through the career lattice, and can easily be used by individuals, sites, and counties, or at the state level to address questions about the workforce. The state's career lattice and competency framework are aligned with higher education. The applicant states that the grant will provide a means of helping to ensure that the common competencies and progression are delivered with fidelity. (D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities. New Jersey has a system of certification and credentials specific to birth to five, with opportunities to attain the Infant Toddler Credential, the Child Development Associate, and a specific Preschool to Third Grade certification. The state also has experience advancing core early childhood knowledge and competencies of early childhood educators in the State Preschool Program through curriculum and assessment training, and coaching and coordinating staff using a Training of Trainers series. In addition to providing support for advancing credentials, the state will apply the same model to assist early learning and development programs in improving quality and outcomes. Sets of modules that match the contents of Grow NJ are largely ready for implementation. There are 29 early childhood professional development coaches in county-level Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, available to provide support as sites implement the common standards. (E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry. Based on a pilot of the Work Sampling System as a measure of kindergarten skills in two school districts, New Jersey will begin to expand the use of a criterion-reference kindergarten assessment to statewide implementation starting in 2013. (E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services and policies. New Jersey has many of the essential data systems - NJ SMART (statewide Longitudinal Data System), NJ Workforce Registry, and state Licensing, but these are not connected. The grant will allow the state to develop Grow NJ and connect data systems. This will allow the applicant to then examine the central questions around how participation in Grow NJ impacts program quality and how quality improvements tie to children's development and learning at kindergarten. It will also allow New Jersey to understand the critical factors impacting program success, including early childhood educator qualifications, and

specific program and classroom characteristics.

	Available	Score
(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State	10	10
<p>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--</p>		
<p>(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--</p>		
<p>(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;</p>		
<p>(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;</p>		
<p>(3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and</p>		
<p>(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;</p>		
<p>(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--</p>		
<p>(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;</p>		
<p>(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</p>		
<p>(3) A signature from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency; and</p>		
<p>(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--</p>		
<p>(1) Detailed and persuasive letters of intent or support from Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, and, if applicable, local early learning councils; and</p>		
<p>(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.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

The State governance and structure include the Commission on Early Learning and Development, Early Learning Improvement Consortium (University Consortium), County Councils for Young Children, the Governor's Council, Coordinating Council for Part C, Head Start Collaboration Office, Depts. of Education, Children & Families, Human Services, and Health & Senior Services Data Governance Council. DOE is the lead agency and each of the Office Departments will have designated leadership representing the partnership for RTT-ELC activities. By Executive Order, the Early Learning Commission, led by the Commissioner of Education has been appointed to: (1) review existing programs and budgets a cross the Departments of Education, Children and Families, Health and Senior Services, and Human Services to consider ways to optimize coordination of those services and funding; (2) identify ways to promote New Jersey's Quality Rating Improvement System, Grow NJ, in order to provide parents with meaningful information on the quality of early learning and development programs throughout the State; (3) enhance supports across all domains of learning and development for early childhood educators by developing and disseminating best practices and training modules; (4) coordinate social, health, and family supports for children with high needs enrolled in early learning and development programs including, to the extent permitted by Federal and State law, integrating data systems maintained by the Departments of Education, Children and

Families, Health and Senior Services, and Human Services; and (5) regularly consult with the New Jersey Council for Young Children and the Coordinating Council for Part C of IDEA as each task is carried out. The Early Learning Commission will be supported by the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Leadership Team. The Leadership Team will be led by an Executive Director within the Department of Education who will report to the Commissioner of Education. The Executive Director will coordinate seven Agency Leaders (four DOE Leaders and one Leader each from DHS, DCF, and DHSS) who will report to their respective agencies, but work together in one location as a team. The NJ-EASEL initiative, led by the Department of Education with the support of the Office of Information Technology, will integrate data from multiple sources and agencies to provide analysis and tools to improve early learning and development programs statewide to the maximum extent allowable under federal and state law. The leader of the University Consortium will report to the RTT-ELC Executive Director. The County Technical Assistance Teams, comprised of Learning Coaches, a Health Service Coordinator, a birth-five Disabilities Coordinator, and a Family Engagement Coordinator, will provide direct coaching and assistance to programs participating in Grow NJ. Professional Development and Preparation Network that will take the form of shared online resources and regular regional meetings with all professional development and preparation providers. County-level Councils for Young Children will serve the critical role of engaging the community. Coordinating Council for Part C of IDEA will continue to advise both the Governor's Council and the Early Learning Commission on systems designed to improve access to high-quality early care and education settings for infants and toddlers with disabilities. The Head Start Collaboration Office will continue to work with Head Start agencies and the Governor's Council to ensure that Grow NJ meets Head Start's needs. The Early Learning Commission will follow the clear directives contained in the Executive Order pursuant to which it was created. The Executive Order requires monthly meetings that focus on progress of the grant activities, reports from the NJ Council for Young Children, and program and funding alignment. Decisions will be made by consensus. The Commission will adopt a protocol for handling any disputes that may arise. Operational plan decisions will be made by the RTT-ELC Executive Director in consultation with Agency Leaders. Working with direct reports from the NJ-EASEL Development Team, the Early Learning Improvement Consortium, the County Technical Assistance Teams, and the County Councils, the RTT-ELC Executive Director will make decisions about allocation of grant resources based on a comprehensive review and analysis of data and progress toward meeting State Plan goals. Recommendations from the Governor's Council, the Head Start Collaboration Office, and the Coordinating Council for Part C will also inform decision-making as applicable. The signed MOUs with each participating state agency establish the terms and conditions of a coordinated and comprehensive early learning system in New Jersey. Each participating state agency has earmarked existing funds toward the RTT-ELC grant. Each participating state agency has submitted detailed Scope of Work agreements that describe roles and responsibilities in implementing the State Plan. There is a broad spectrum of stakeholders statewide, to include committed to the State Plan as evidenced by the 80 letters of support or intent submitted.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	2

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)

After carefully reviewing the State Plan and the budget it appears that the majority of the funds are going towards personnel. The grant will fund an Executive Director, one program specialist to oversee the coordination of the RTT-ELC funds, and Learning Coaches. According to the applicant the hiring of Learning Coaches will be "ranging from six additional Coaches in Year 2 to 41 in Year 4", totaling \$7,380,978. Also, contractual cost will be \$4,876,442. This does not provide an accurate account of personnel. Also, the development of training and research which has not been clearly described. It does not appear that these funds will be utilized in the most efficient manner to support Children with High Needs. The distribution of funds does not seem reasonable when the link between the State Plan, the budget and the number of Children with High Needs has not been clearly communicated. Based on everything that is significant to this design, which would be new staff, the ability to sustain at the level in which the plan has demonstrated seems highly unlikely. The plan to encourage participation will include scholarships, but it is not clear how the incentives will be distributed and how often. Although the state plans to offer a ten dollar waiver for using the Grow NJ system, this is only one of "all other incentives" the state specified in their application. Therefore, it is not clear what "all other incentives" are. Also, funds will be used to provide stipends to individual programs for teacher and teacher assistant substitutes in order to lessen the burden of these staff being absent from their classrooms. Although the Participating Partners have clearly committed to supporting this plan, overall, this plan has gaps that does not have supportive information.

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)

New Jersey has adopted a High-Quality Plan that incorporates Program Standards. Each of the following areas (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 is part of the progression in their TQRIS system from Step 2 – 5. Participants cannot progress to the next Step without meeting all requirements within the initial Step. Therefore, Grow NJ ensures that all Early Childhood Educators in the system are equipped with the common information that supports a seamless workforce. New Jersey has established a plan that will differentiate program quality levels by recognized ERS and Interaction Scales, National Accreditation and classroom-based curriculum fidelity instruments. The TQRIS Steps are based on knowledge, skills and abilities, and they progress from familiarity to experiential knowledge. Using nationally recognized standards and this rating system will lead to improved learning outcomes for children. Grow NJ step one is based on the State licensing system and participants are licensed for one year at a time.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

Department of Education (DOE), the lead agency for the RTT-ELC application, has developed Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with all state departments providing services under contract to children with high needs. The DOE will ensure participation of: (1) preschool age children receiving services through state funded preschool located in school district facilities or community based programs, (2) children participating in Head Start and Early Head Start programs, (3) children classified as Preschool Disabled (funded under 619 Part B of IDEA) and receiving services through self-contained classrooms or community based programs and (4) children participating in programs funded by Title I. MOU's with Department of Human Services, Department of Children and Families and Department of Health and Senior Services will ensure the participation of programs providing services to: (1) children receiving subsidized tuition support in child care (funded in part through the Child Care and Development Fund), (2) children involved in child protective services participating in child care settings, (3) children with an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) participating in Early Intervention Services (funded under Part C of IDEA), and (4) children with medical issues. New Jersey's plan to help families afford high-quality child care is to (1) Maintain subsidy rates to assist families in affording high-quality care and maintaining high-quality programs in areas with high concentrations of high needs children, (2) Provide significant county-wide training and technical assistance to Grow NJ programs that promote program retention and professionalization of early childhood educators, (3) Creating agreements with the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Children and Families to serve specific populations of children in neighborhood settings, including children with medical conditions and children with disabilities. New Jersey has selected 2,695 sites to participate in their TQRIS implementation and evaluation process. Grow NJ will realize 65 percent participation, or 1,750 sites, serving children with high needs by the end of the grant period and will extend participation through 2018 for the remaining 35 percent of programs, totaling 2,695 sites serving children with high needs. Given the details of the plan the goals are ambitious, however, achieving 70 percent within the grant period does not seem realistic when family child care providers will not be receiving technical assistance during the implementation period and training will be rolled out during the entire grant period and beyond.

	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)

New Jersey's Early Learning Improvement Consortium will make rating recommendations to the RTT-ELC Leadership Team. By February 2012, the Department of Education will distribute a Request for Proposals to the universities with early childhood education programs to solicit raters. Subsequently, a Memorandum of Understanding will be created by March 2012 and an agreed upon inter-rater reliability protocol will be used to train raters to reliability in administration of the Environment Rating Scales, ECERS, ITERS and FCCERS as well as, CLASS and a validation checklist for Grow NJ. Through this Consortium, participating sites serving children with high needs will receive a rating visit to determine their scores both on their classroom environments and in each of the indicators included on Grow NJ. A Site-level Self Assessment and Validation checklist based on the DOE's successful Self Assessment and Validation System model, as well as a protocol for reviewing submissions and conducting validation visits to review documentation and conduct observations, will be finalized by July 2012. The rating team will also administer a review of the site's documentation utilizing a validation checklist to be developed by the ELIC. This checklist will validate, through documentation, observation, and interview, which indicators on the QRIS instrument have been met. The resulting data will be submitted to the Early Learning Commission for review and determination of a Grow NJ step. Eligible programs entering each Grow NJ participation cohort beginning in August 2012 and continuing through 2017 will have up to two years to prepare for their initial rating. The rating assessment will be offered free of charge, however, the frequency of assessments will be limited to one free assessment request per year. New Jersey intends to provide "Consumer Reports", which are updates about Grow NJ. Parents will eventually be able to access this information online through a family portal. New Jersey's protocol for rating programs participating in Grow NJ is ethical in design and will provide programs with objective monitoring, using valid and reliable tools. Based on the estimation that 70 percent of programs will initially rate at Step 1 or 2, the preparation time frame for programs prior to their initial visit is adequate.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

The state has numerous policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve. 1. An orientation to Grow NJ will be available to all early learning and development programs participating in the QRIS. 2. Standardized training and companion guidance materials will be offered through online and in-person training. 3. county-level system of training and technical assistance will be offered. 4. The teams will be comprised of Learning Coaches, Birth to Five Disabilities Coordinators, Family Engagement Coordinators, and Health Service Coordinators. 5. Professional development, tiered reimbursement and quality enhancement funds will be available to eligible sites. Funding will be available for assistants, teachers, and directors/administrators to encourage the attainment of degrees, nationally recognized certificates, and advanced coursework tied to college credit. 6. Tiered reimbursements will be provided to programs serving children eligible for subsidy beginning at attainment of Step 3. 7. A differential reimbursement of 5 percent will be given for subsidized children for a Step 3 rating, 10 percent for a Step 4 rating, and 20 percent for a Step 5 rating. Eligible family child care providers will receive \$750, and other sites will receive \$2,000. Sites may use funding to purchase items such as classroom materials and equipment, fees for NAEYC accreditation, substitutes or other items that do not supplant existing contracts with state entities. Enhancements will be available for a one year period, and may be renewable. 1. Family Engagement Coordinators will assist families in locating high-quality early learning and development programs. 2. resources to sites including how to engage families in their children's care and education, how to connect with essential resources, and how to access special education and early intervention services, when needed. 3. county maps of all family programs and resources in their county. 4. publicity campaign will target all three audiences with relevant information, such as how to enroll in Grow NJ, how families can get involved, and what workforce incentives will be available. By the end of the grant period, New Jersey expects that 44 percent of the sites will rate at Steps 3, 4 and 5, and 77, 311 Children with High Needs will be enrolled. This target was set by estimating the number of sites that are already achieving a high level of quality (combined Head Start/State Preschool Program and State Preschool Program) and assuming that they would reach a Step 3, 4 or 5 with their first rating. The support and incentives of training and technical assistance tied to funding for supplies and equipment is always a good way to generate interest. Programs need to have this kind of support especially when their rating is tied to the quality of their environment. Using Environmental Rating

Scales is going to require additional equipment for many programs. Without financial support programs would not be able to reach Step 5 which is tied to ERS point system of at least a rating of 5. Providing support for education will also help move teachers and programs. Support for families include a map of locations for resources and county-level councils support system. The county council does not specify how it will support families. The goals are ambitious and even with such an aggressive approach, almost 50% of the Early Learning and Development Programs attaining the top tier steps, 3, 4 and 5 within four years. Family Child Care (FCC) programs will not be receiving technical assistance (TA) during the implementation phase. Without TA this would have an adverse effect toward meeting the state's goal to provide high-quality programs for children with high needs in all settings.

	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)

With the approval of the Commission for Early Learning and Development and in collaboration with the NJ Council for Young Children, the Department of Education will develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) from independent contractors to design and implement the multi-faceted evaluation. DOE will be the lead agency on the evaluation. The successful application will address the following requirements to design a multi-year evaluation; 1. Delineates a cross-sequential, longitudinal randomized control trial (RCT) design to determine effectiveness of Grow NJ. 2. Ensures that the sampling is representative and has sufficient power to detect differences across and among subgroups in quality practices and in child learning as a result of Grow NJ. 3. Uses child assessment measures of learning across domains that are relevant to New Jersey's Early Learning Standards, psychometrically valid, proven to discriminate program effects in similar studies, and appropriate for the age range of birth to five. 4. Uses measures of classroom and family child care quality that are relevant to the Grow NJ indicators, psychometrically valid, proven to predict child learning, and appropriate for the settings and age-ranges of Grow NJ (birth to five, child care centers, preschools, Head Start, Early Head Start and family child care homes). 5. Ensures implementation of effective procedures for tracking children and families longitudinally. 6. Produces timely reports and uses cost-effective procedures using the state's Request for Proposals process. The Efficacy Study is designed to answer the questions regarding outcomes of the Grow NJ initiative. The cross-sequential longitudinal design allows for the comparison of effects among cohorts as well as aggregation of data across cohorts where appropriate. Most importantly, the random selection for cohort designation provides a much more rigorous design and provides more confidence than any associations found between cohorts are causal. The treatment groups which will be eligible for the QRIS within the grant period are cohorts I (2012 - 2015), II (2013 - 2015), and III (2014 - 2015) with each successive cohort serving as a control for previous ones for initial effects and with cohort IV (2015-2016) serving as the overall control since cohort IV providers will not receive any services under the grant until the last four months. Within each cohort group, sites will be stratified by auspice and randomly selected for participation in the study. According to the state, "it may be necessary to over sample in the sites that choose to be rated in any given year to ensure power to detect differences". The implementation study will also provide evidence of the reliability of the assessments of quality administered by New Jersey's Early Learning Improvement Consortium and the relationship between independently administered assessments and the Step rating. Data will also be collected on family participation and satisfaction, as well as provider satisfaction with the process. Final selection of instruments will be determined in consultation with the successful independent contractor and the RTT-ELC Leadership Team. The Request for Proposals will require the following: 1. A survey of child and family characteristics; 2. Direct assessments and early childhood educator interviews will be administered to determine child growth and development. 3. Domains assessed will mirror those included in the existing New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards and in the New Jersey Birth to Three Standards. 4. At the center level, early learning and development program administrative practices and site characteristics will be documented via interviews with the site administrators using instruments based on those used in the New Jersey Preschool Expansion Assessment. 5. The quality of the participating programs will be assessed using the same instruments as those used for Grow NJ. The purpose for this is to establish reliability of New Jersey's Early Learning Improvement Consortium and to capture the overall impact of participation in the system.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)

New Jersey adopted Minnesota's Early Learning Guidelines for Birth to 3, with adaptations, including adding approaches to learning as a domain and dividing the age span into four groupings as opposed to Minnesota's three groups. The modified instrument covers all essential domains, and both cultural diversity and children's home language are specifically addressed throughout the items. New Jersey's Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards also encompass all Essential Domains of School Readiness, presenting fundamental information on the learning environment (including approaches to learning), assessment processes, and home, school and community partnerships. The standards also emphasize ensuring the successful inclusion of preschoolers with disabilities in general education programs by focusing on identifying individual student needs, linking instruction to the preschool curriculum, providing appropriate supports and program modifications, and regularly evaluating student progress. The 2009 revision of the Core Curriculum Content Standards marked the first year that the New Jersey Department of Education aligned standards for preschool learning with the standards for grades K-12. The New Jersey's Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards were readopted within New Jersey's new K-12 Core Curriculum Content Standards, and provided an extensive alignment across all domains. New Jersey's Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards are embedded in program standards, curricula, formative assessments, the Workforce Framework and professional development. They are specifically included in the program standards set forth by Administrative Code (N.J.A.C. 6A:13A), and provide the underpinnings for the State's Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines, the basis for the state's Quality Improvement Rating System, Grow NJ. The Preschool Standards are also incorporated in the state's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Currently, there are five primary ways the standards are incorporated into Professional Development and higher education activities. 1. Coursework in the preschool through third grade teaching endorsement. 2. Regional and onsite training in high needs public school districts and their contracting Head Start agencies and community providers, including professional development for use with English learners and preschool children with disabilities, and for early childhood supervisors, coaches and other administrative positions in high needs public school districts. 3. Onsite, individualized technical assistance in high needs school districts. 4. Training for public school district administrators to facilitate preschool through third grade systems. 5. Training for early childhood and family child care professionals, including Directors Academy, New Jersey Administrators Credential and Infant Toddler credential. This criteria was scored as a high-quality and partially implemented plan.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

New Jersey will develop an assessment steering committee, made up of representatives from state agencies, center-based providers including Head Start and Early Head Start, family child care providers, higher education and local education agencies. This a strong plan was a diverse group of stakeholders. The committee will convene within the first two months of the grant period and will resolve assessment issues and decisions during four to five half-day sessions from February to April, 2012. In addition to focusing on assessment decisions within the birth through five continuums, the committee will provide feedback on the kindergarten entry assessment. During the first few months of the grant the steering committee will meet to: Align current requirements to avoid duplication; Check that the system covers essential domains and can accommodate the curricula being supported during Grow NJ implementation. This process is strong. To support early learning and development sites as they implement assessments, regional professional development from the assessment developers will occur throughout the state for all programs. Training of Trainers will also take place for County Technical Assistance Teams. While this is a good feature it is not enough to provide a strong professional development plan. The County Technical Assistance Teams are comprised of the following: 1. Learning and Development Coaches; 2. Health Service Coordinator; 3. Birth to Five Disabilities Coordinator; and 4. Family Engagement Coordinator. The grant will support alignment and sharing of assessment results using four Steps. First, to ensure that assessment types are not duplicated or conflicting across programs, the assessment steering will conduct a crosswalk of assessment types used by Head Start, the State Preschool Program, Title I programs, and IDEA Part B and Part C. Second, once the overlapping areas are identified, the steering committee will develop and distribute guidance around handling duplicate or overlapping assessments, and will provide guidance focused on sharing assessment information among multiple programs serving an individual child, subject to state and federal law concerning privacy and confidentiality. Third, with the help of the County Technical Assistance Teams, the child and classroom assessment data from the comprehensive assessment system used by sites participating in Grow NJ will be entered by program leaders/directors in a Data Summary Tool. This tool provides a way for programs to summarize the results of their classroom and child assessment results, facilitates the interpretation of data, and use of reliability procedures, and guides programs in the use of data to inform professional development choices. Fourth, the Data Summary Tool will be reviewed by the County Technical Assistance Teams to ensure that assessments occurring across auspices are not duplicative, and to understand where programs may need additional support. The steering committee will revise the Data Summary Tool, as necessary. The training for each type of assessment, which will occur regionally, will be broken out into a six-year rollout beginning in the 2012-2013 school year and delivered in cohorts of 50. The formative assessment choices and training used will depend on the comprehensive curriculum chosen by the provider has a corresponding formative assessment (e.g. Child Observation Record for High Scope; GOLD for Creative Curriculum) for each age group. Professional development on appropriate use will be provided, as will reliability procedures. The Learning Coaches support the use of the instruments with onsite follow up. The Learning Coaches will be trained in the reliable use and interpretation of each instrument, through a Training of Trainer's model, and will in turn provide the information to site leaders/directors and teachers/caregivers. Appropriate uses and interpretation of these instruments will be emphasized, along with resources for children who are flagged during the screening process. By the end of the grant, almost 12,000 school and center-based and 422 family child care educators will have received targeted training in Comprehensive Assessment System components. An additional 5,337 educators will be added to this total by 2018.

	Available	Score
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	20	14

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

- (a) Establishing a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement across the levels of its Program Standards, including activities that enhance the capacity of families to support their children's education and development;
- (b) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported on an on-going basis to implement the family engagement strategies included in the Program Standards; and

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)

These are the Family Standards that New Jersey has adopted: 1. Relate effectively to diverse families regarding the children in their care 2. Facilitate family understanding of children's development 3. Support family rights and link families with services and resources 4. Support parent-to-parent connections to build protective factors and strengthen families 5. Involve families in program improvement, decision-making and leadership. Each of these common family engagement standards is built into Grow NJ to uniformly promote each program's ability to optimize interactions with families. While standards from all of the crosswalk documents were considered, the family engagement standards from Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education Standards, the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework and New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards formed most of the content for the family engagement standards found in Grow NJ. To date, the following numbers of early childhood staff have received training consistent with these standards to work effectively with families: 750 child care staff have been trained in Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education; 664 child care family workers and Head Start staff have gone through the Family Development Credential training; 4,408 service coordinators and service providers have demonstrated competencies in working with families in the Early Intervention System; and 939 home visitors, Family Success Center staff, and other primary prevention staff have receiving training in the Standards for Prevention Programs. New Jersey has set a target of 70 percent of all early childhood educators serving children with high needs to receive professional development in the progression of the standards for family engagement over the grant period, with the remaining 30 percent receiving training by 2018. This will be accomplished through creation of a series of professional development modules tied to the five Steps of Grow NJ. The family standards are broad enough that they can be individualized to programs and families. The number of Early Childhood Educators trained in the standards of family involvement is impressive. New Jersey will establish 21 county-level Councils for Young Children as a part of the State Plan. The Councils, comprised of 51 percent families, will be charged with publicizing Grow NJ and engaging local stakeholders to ensure a mechanism for feedback to the Governor's Council and agencies on the extent to which Grow NJ works for families. Getting families involved to promote high-quality care is a great plan. Parents are the best advocates for their children. Sharing childcare information with other parents and the community is powerful. However, the major aspect of family support, the Council depends greatly on parent participation. The State has not provided an interim plan or parallel plan in case parent involvement is slow. The score reflects a medium quality plan that has been partially implemented.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

New Jersey Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework is a work in progress. However, it does have the essential elements that Early Childhood Educators need to know. The Framework spans services birth through age 8 and addresses core knowledge and competencies in seven areas - child growth and development, curriculum, family and community relationships, assessment and evaluation, professionalism and leadership, program organization and management, and health, safety, nutrition and physical activities. A crosswalk of all available sets of core knowledge and competencies revealed that the chosen framework requires further explication with regard to the use of data to inform decision making, curriculum content in math and science, and guiding children with behavioral issues (Alignment of Core Knowledge and Competencies). The workforce subcommittee of the Governor's Council is now working on incorporating this knowledge into the Framework. It is

anticipated that the updated NJ Core Knowledge and Competencies Framework will be complete and reflected in the Workforce Registry by December 2011. Therefore, by the end of the year the comprehensive Framework will be ready for use by all professional preparation providers to guide professional development and coursework offerings. New Jersey's multilevel Career Lattice addresses education and professional development needs along with the baseline of work experience expected of entry level teaching assistants with a High School Diploma or GED through to those who have a doctoral degree and may be teacher educators or program administrators. The Career Lattice reflects state and national standards and the existing courses of study in New Jersey institutions of higher education. The Career Lattice changes as these standards and programs evolve. The Career Lattice is aligned with the NJ Core Knowledge and Competency Framework. Six credentials specifically focused on early care and education is offered through a range of institutions. These credentials are as follows: Child Development Associate (CDA), a national credential administered by the Council for Professional Recognition in Washington, D.C.; Certified Child Care Professional (CCP), a national credential administered by the National Child Care Association in Washington, D.C.; New Jersey Infant/Toddler Credential administered by the Coalition for Infant/Toddler Educators (CITE) and Professional Impact New Jersey (PINJ); Child Development Specialist (CDS), a credential to enhance the skills of teachers and assistants working in child care and preschool centers. Preschool to third grade standard teaching license (P-3), administered by the New Jersey Department of Education; and New Jersey Administrators' Credential, a statewide credential administered by Professional Impact New Jersey and recognized by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). New Jersey through their Career Lattice has shown an understanding and appreciation for the Early Care Education field. There are many entries into this field, and remembering the importance of experience is essential to keeping a mature and qualified workforce, while encouraging continuing education. Based on prior work with New Jersey's postsecondary work, a survey of New Jersey's two- and four-year institutions indicates that early childhood preparation curriculum in 28 institutions is currently aligned with the State's Framework. The next phase will involve engaging with professional development providers and those in higher education to ensure that their professional development and coursework fully incorporate the NJ Core Knowledge and Competencies Framework. To facilitate further incorporation of the Framework, a Professional Development and Preparation Network will be created that will consist of a virtual repository of Framework related resources located on the NJ Workforce Registry and regular regional meetings that bring early childhood teacher educators together in a learning community. This Network will be convened in February 2013 and will be led by the Governor's Council workforce subcommittee.

	Available	Score
(D){2} Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	20	13
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to improve the effectiveness and retention of Early Childhood Educators who work with Children with High Needs, with the goal of improving child outcomes by--</p> <p>(a) Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities that are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;</p> <p>(b) Implementing policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) that promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that is aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and that are designed to increase retention;</p> <p>(c) Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention; and</p> <p>(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--</p> <p>(1) Increasing the number of postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and the number of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(2) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D){2}

Three types of training aligned with the NJ Core Knowledge and Competency Framework will be provided for educators participating in Grow NJ. 1. Regional curriculum and assessment training from curriculum developers for comprehensive early childhood curricula and corresponding assessments, such as High Scope/Child Observation Record, Creative Curriculum/GOLD, and Tools of the Mind/Work Sampling System. 2. Professional development by County Technical Assistance Teams in common standards in early learning, comprehensive assessment, health, special education, and family engagement and services that align with the Core Knowledge and Competency Framework. 3. Targeted on-site assistance provided by Learning Coaches and other County Technical Assistance Team members. To help advance the credentials of all early childhood workers within the system, financial support will be available to eligible family child care providers, teachers, teacher assistants, and leaders/directors outside of the state preschool program (10,720 educators) to obtain early childhood degrees tied to specific program improvement plans, ranging from the Infant Toddler Credential to the Preschool to Third Grade Certificate. Financial support will take the form of scholarships in the amount of \$3,000 for site directors, family child care providers, and teachers and \$1,000 for teaching assistants. To be eligible for a scholarship, practitioners must commit to advancing through the Career Lattice according to professional development plans

developed with County TA Teams. Based on the site's step, the program will receive a 5 percent (Step 3), 10 percent (Step 4), or 20 percent (Step 5) increase in the rate of funding for subsidized children. To address this challenge and improve the state's ability to aggregate, analyze, and report data, the RTT-ELC grant will be used to promote awareness of the Registry and the benefits of participation, including recognition for Career Lattice advancement and resources to implement the NJ Core Knowledge and Competency Framework. The RTT-ELC grant will also be used to enroll all Grow NJ educators in the Workforce Registry. The Grow NJ publicity campaign starting in April 2012 will incorporate information for educators about the Registry, and Registry drives will be held throughout the state. By the end of the grant period, over 12,000 educators will be registered, and by the end of the Grow NJ rollout, close to 18,000 educators will be registered. The state has set an ambitious goal to dramatically expand the number of credentialed educators from 4,317 today – mostly in the State Preschool Program – to 10,928 credentialed educators by the end of 2015 (from aligned institutions). This target reaches 62 percent of the Grow NJ workforce of 17,694 early childhood educators at full implementation, serving over 70 percent of children with high needs birth to five. Progression through the Career Lattice will occur at family child care and center-based sites (3,573 credentials) as educators advance their credentials using Grow NJ scholarships, and in the State Preschool Program and other Department of Education Preschool Program sites (3,038 credentials) as educators take advantage of expanded and improved offerings across the state. The additional support created through Grow NJ will dramatically increase the number of qualified early childhood educators and leaders in the state. By the end of 2015, an estimated 1,584 additional educators will attain the P-3 credential, 743 more leaders will be prepared to support teachers through the NJ Administrator credential, an additional 784 educators will take advantage of the CDS credential, 655 will attain the Infant-Toddler credential (a significant area of need for New Jersey), 2,073 will attain the Child Development Associate, and 772 more providers will attain the Child Care Professional credential. By the end of 2017, 10,720 educators will have accomplished credit hours toward the completion of a credential through Grow NJ training, with 5,360 of these educators taking advantage of scholarships to advance their credentials along the NJ Career Lattice and NJ Core Knowledge and Competency Framework. The score reflects a medium quality response. The state has given great numbers, however, they have not provided information that would support how they intend to move practitioners through the lattice. For example, scholarships will be given to practitioners, but it doesn't state whether it will cover the course of their credential, or supplement.

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	14
<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)		

New Jersey began a pilot of the Work Sampling System, as a measure of kindergarten entry skills starting this school year (2011-2012). This pilot is taking place in two school districts, Red Bank and Orange, with 538 kindergarten students. This criterion-referenced assessment is standards-based and curriculum-embedded and can be used to measure children's skills on all indicators within the Essential Domains. These indicators are aligned with the State's Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards and with the Common Core English Language Arts and Mathematics standards. Each of these domains aligns with the required domains of readiness. Studies of reliability and validity of criterion-reference tests like Work Sampling System show that teacher ratings of children's performance in the areas of language and literacy and mathematical thinking sections are correlated with children's performance on the math, language, and literacy subscales of the Woodcock-Johnson Revised Tests of Achievement. Several New Jersey school districts already piloting criterion-referenced assessments like Work Sampling System in kindergarten. In 2013-2014, the state will begin to implement training in a criterion-reference assessment. Upon completion of the fall kindergarten checklist of the criterion-reference assessment, each school district will assign readiness scores for all children. Once the scores are assigned, they will be entered in the NJ SMART database, the state's student tracking system. The Department of Education has committed to funding the kindergarten entry assessment. This is a quality plan that has only been partially implemented.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

The State of New Jersey will build upon initiatives it already has in place in the areas of early childhood and K-12 education to develop NJ-EASEL, the New Jersey Enterprise Analysis System for Early Learning. NJ-EASEL will pull together the data from multiple sources and agencies to answer critical questions about program and workforce characteristics and how they impact outcomes for children. To ensure their plan has all essential data elements their approach is to create a crosswalk between data systems and linkages. By using tools and techniques already employed in NJ SMART, wherever possible, NJ-EASEL will leverage the State of New Jersey's existing data integration environment and tools to automatically extract, transform, integrate, and load data from source systems into NJ-EASEL's data warehouse, within the parameters of State and Federal privacy laws. The Logical Data Model (LDM) for this work will allow the alignment and integration of data from multiple sources regardless of how it may be defined in the source system, as well as draw from previous early childhood system development efforts. In conjunction with the New Jersey Office of Information Technology, the DGC will establish policies governing the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of the data managed by NJEASEL. This will include who has access to what, when, and where. These policies will be guided by a data dictionary that is approved by the DGC and which defines the data element, how it can be used, and the appropriate level of protection it requires. This is a quality plan that has only been partially implemented.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	203

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
--	-----------	--------

Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry

0 or 10

Yes

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

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

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

Comments on (P)3

The State addressed E1 and received at least 70%.

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

New Jersey designed a plan that has all the components to build a system that can increase the quality of Early Learning and Development for children with high needs so they can enter kindergarten ready to succeed. The plan meets the minimum threshold. It demonstrates that it has integrated and aligned resources, a plan for TQRIS which will improve program quality to prepare early learners to succeed in NJ.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # NJ-5024

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 1:01 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 15. Includes detailed text for each criterion (a-d).

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

--New Jersey has increased funding to early learning and development programs by 14 percent, while the number of children with high needs has increased by 12.5 percent since 2007, according to Kids Count Data Center. New Jersey's commitment to increase its funding is indicated in NIEER 2010 as one of the few states that increased funding during the recession when most states cut back or remained unchanged. New Jersey also increased funding levels for 2012 by \$621 million according to SFY 2012 Appropriations Act. --The applicant provides evidence that from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs has increased. There was a 13 percent increase of children in all state-funded preschool programs (from 45,506 to 51,333), a six percent increase in the number of children in Head Start and Early Head Start (13,962 to 14,789), and a 14 percent increase in the number of children receiving subsidies (18,381 to 21,022). Title I participation expanded to 11,349 children in 2010, a dramatic 450 percent increase from FY 2007 enrollment. The state has four thousand families of infants and toddlers that are served through evidence-based home visiting programs. In addition, approximately 45,000 families are served in Family Success Centers and other family programs. Infants and toddlers are also being served in programs receiving Child Care Development Funds (5,079 children), IDEA Part C (10,580) and Early Head Start (1,686 infants and toddlers). The Tables that are provided in this sections serve as excellent evidence with a detailed summary. --One of the strengths of this proposal is the long history and commitment of Department of Education (DOE) the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Department of Human Services (DHS), and the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) to provide all children ages birth to five a high quality early learning and development. --The applicant's commitment to the early learning and development of children is evident in the existing statutes, legislation, policies and practices centered on creating high quality programs. The State cites many policies to support specific high needs populations. There are appropriate laws and regulations in place to provide oversight to promote quality. --The New Jersey State Board of Education adopted the Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards in 2004 and revised and readopted it in 2009. The Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards are included in New Jersey's K-12 Core Curriculum Content Standards but presently only have an initial alignment for English language arts and mathematics. A weakness in this section is the absence of an

approved birth to age three set of standards that align with the Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards. The Head Start Performance Standards for Health and Safety, Screening, Health Promotion, and Health Literacy is a strong feature of New Jersey's Head Start and Early Head Start programs. The applicant is unclear as to whether these Head Start Performance Standards will be available to State preschool and family care providers. In addition, the applicant does not specifically clarify the quality of the health promotion practices. The applicant states that national standards will be met but does not clarify that national standards are as high quality as the Head Start Performance Standards for Health and Safety, Screening, Health Promotion, and Health. The applicant has a strong comprehensive assessment including valid and reliable developmental screenings and formative assessments for State Preschool Program and Head Start programs. The applicant will use a combination of teacher-child interactions and environments for assessments. The applicant uses the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), Early Childhood Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R), Supports for Early Literacy Assessment (SELA), Preschool Classroom Mathematics Inventory (PCMI), and curriculum fidelity instruments. Additional instruments specific to inclusion, English learner supports, and optimizing settings to reduce challenging behavior are also used. The applicant will continue to build on the strong evidence-based home visiting programs, community-based family empowerment initiatives including Family Success Centers and the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN), and use of evidence-based prevention programs like Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education will also add to the comprehensive system. Most programs provide opportunities for families to become more involved, and support their child's early education. New Jersey maintains strong state regulations for licensing child care providers and family child care providers. Since all group teachers must have at least a CDA or equivalent, a sequence of workforce credentials are available to increase their education. Teachers, caregivers and other professionals in early care and education settings can participate in training in early childhood education from the New Jersey Family Development Credential to a New Jersey Administrator's Certificate. The applicant includes an extensive summary of current post-secondary institutions and other professional development providers available statewide. This demonstrates a strong foundation for continuous professional development. --One weakness of the New Jersey application is that the state does not have a statewide Kindergarten Readiness assessment. They will be piloting the use of the Work Sampling System as a measure of Kindergarten skills in two school districts. New Jersey will expand the use of a formative, criterion-referenced assessment to statewide implementation starting in 2013 but the applicant is unclear on exactly what tool will be adopted and if Work Sampling will be approved. Based on past commitment it is a huge jump to go from piloting Work Sampling in two counties to confirming a common assessment for more than 600 school districts. --The applicant provides information about the current data systems used in the State. NJ SMART, already assigns unique identifiers to preschool children, including those with disabilities and English learners, upon entry to a school district program and this will lay the foundation for gathering the missing quality information and will link essential data from each separate system into one strong data collection system.

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

a) Grow NJ, New Jersey's Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System, is a result of an inter-department cooperation. The applicant's strength is the ability to set goals based on the successful process and experience used in their State preschool program. This is evidenced by the steady rate of improvement on measures such as the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised. b) The applicant expects to provide supports during the program quality improvement process including County-level teams of Learning Coaches, Family Engagement Coordinators, Health Service Coordinators and Birth to Five Disabilities Coordinators to assist the sites in the implementation of the learning and program standards in Grow NJ. It is expected that access to these supports will gradually result in improved quality, just as it did for the State Preschool Program. --The applicant will use two ways to measure child outcomes: Grow NJ validation study that will include a battery of child measures to determine whether the learning and development of children is enhanced; and, tracking children's scores on a criterion-referenced assessment as they enter kindergarten. A major concern with the second measure is that the State has not yet confirmed a statewide Kindergarten Readiness assessment. Valuable data may be lost if this is not in place when child outcomes are collected. --The New Jersey state plan brings together many agencies and programs that have been operating in siloed approaches. The new State Plan focuses on creating a system in which each of these settings uses the state's agreed-upon comprehensive, evidence-based program and learning standards, strong family engagement and health programs, robust workforce registry, system of certification and credentials specific to birth to five, and successful program improvement efforts to improve outcomes for children. By streamlining the State agencies and coordinating services the State will close the achievement gap by addressing issues, which in the past, were in different agencies. Other benefits include better consistency in

standards across domains and departments, a connected data system, and consistent quality across programs, age groups, and settings, including preschool, self-contained preschool, center-based child care, family child care, Head Start, Early Head Start, and school district programs. --A strength of the State plan is the applicant's ability, by Executive Order 77, to create an Early Learning Commission. The Commission is comprised of the Departments of Education, Health and Senior Services, Children and Families, Human Services and the Governor's Council Chair, and will steer the work together. Each participating state agency will fund the plan; will commit substantial resources, totaling approximately \$12.5 million annually. This is a strong method of ensuring "ownership" by each agency. --By providing County Technical Assistance (TA) Teams based at County Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies the applicant will be able to assist all early learning and development programs as they implement each component of Grow NJ. This will bring best practices in early learning, health, special education, and family engagement and services to the staff at each early care and education setting for birth to five children. Plans to provide teachers and leaders with opportunities for professional development, County-level Councils for Young Children that communicate with the Governor's Council will be established and run by families to provide feedback and promote the use of Grow NJ. --New Jersey's plan to achieve the goals in the State Plan is by carrying out eleven projects. These projects provide path toward improving school readiness for children with high needs. A concern is the number of projects projected are ambitious but do not appear to be achievable in the amount of time and staff allocated to the project. --The State offered a strong rationale on the choosing areas in which it has the most experience and capacity, using strategies that build on the state's strengths while considering the needs of its children.

	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)

--The applicant has established a strong participation and commitment by State Agencies and other early learning and development stakeholders. The State Plan contains clearly defined governance and implementation. Senior leaders from each participating agency have committed a clear mandate for the alignment of early learning and development programs statewide, and strong systems are in place to provide timely, relevant information for decision making. Early learning and development stakeholders from across New Jersey will be engaged in State Plan implementation and ongoing decision-making and policy setting. --New Jersey's Commission for Early Learning and Development (Early Learning Commission) was established by Executive Order 77. The Commission is comprised of the Departments of Education, Health and Senior Services, Children and Families, Human Services and the Governor's Council Chair, and will steer the work together. --The applicant provides evidence that the inter-agency governance structure is prepared to implement the RTT-ELC grant. According to the plan, the Early Learning Commission and RTT-ELC Leadership Team will oversee implementation of the State Plan and align and coordinate early learning and development within the state. The Commissioner of Education will appoint the RTT-ELC Executive Director who will oversee daily administration of the State Plan and grant funds. The Executive Director will be supported by seven Agency Leaders who will manage the State Plan projects and the work groups. As evidence, the applicant included a carefully planned Table with Governance-related roles and responsibilities for each agency. --The applicant provides evidence of an effective organizational chart that shows how the grant will be governed and managed, a completed table that lists governance-related roles and responsibilities, MOUs or other binding agreements and a list of every Early Learning Intermediary Organization and local early learning council. --According to the Executive Order 77, the Early Learning Commission will be required to hold monthly meeting that focus on progress of the grant activities, reports from the NJ Council for Young Children, and program and funding alignment. Decisions will be made by consensus. ---This plan allows for continuous communication but the applicant does not specify if commission members will assign someone, other than themselves, to represent them at these meetings. A concern is that the "decision maker" may not be required to attend all meetings creating a holdup if the decision needs to be made at that meeting. --Operational plan decisions will be made by the RTT-ELC Executive Director, who will oversee daily administration of the State Plan and grant funds, in consultation with Agency Leaders. This may be a challenge to the Executive Director since there are seven Agency Leaders. --The Executive Director may encounter a hold up when trying to consult with these leaders. There is no contingency plan to resolve this issue. --The applicant provides evidence of extensive commitments in the MOUs from each participating state agency. The terms and conditions are designed to align and leverage funds toward the RTT-ELC grant. Each participating agency has a comprehensive scope of work with roles and responsibilities for implementing the State Plan. --The applicant included 80 letters of support or intent from a broad group of stakeholders that are committed to the State Plan. New Jersey has strong collaboration between school districts, Head Start and child care centers in the State Preschool Program, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, Statewide Parent Advocacy Network and other organizations committed to reaching the goals in the State Plan. The State Plan contains a clearly defined governance and implementation. The State has ambitious plan and it is partially implemented.

	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)

--In deciding how to use existing funds that support early learning and development from Federal, State, private, and local sources, New Jersey examined their existing funding and began to eliminate duplication and overlap of services. State agencies have identified several opportunities to realign resources to improve access to high quality early learning experiences. --One of the applicant's well-planned allocation of funds is \$500,000 of existing CCDF funds for incentives in the form of higher education scholarships for teaching assistants. This is a good motivator to increase participation and expand Grow NJ. Although there is a plan, it is not clear how the teaching assistants will acquire the scholarship funds. --An innovative plan includes using RTT-ELC funds with existing funds during the first year of implementation. This provides over \$12.5 million in state and federal funds which will be used to support the State Plan. This total amount includes repurposed funding, redirected staff and in-kind contributions of existing staff time and resources. Participating State agencies identified appropriate resources that could be redirected to meet the goals addressed in the Plan; the number of new state dollars required to sustain the plan is relatively low. By assuming the on-going costs during the grant and correctly predicting costs that will increase, the State Plan demonstrates an ability to sustain the work of the State Plan after the grant ends. The investment in personnel is exorbitant and it is questionable whether it will be sustainable. One of the activities is to contract with a large number of higher education faculty to administer the ITERS and ECKERS. It is not clear how the applicant will secure these faculty members and how they will meet their pay scale. The applicant was unable to effectively explain how they would use RTT-ELC funds to support the activities. --During the grant period, the number of people needing new training is explained by the applicant but this cost will decrease once initial training is complete. --One of the most significant strengths of this proposal is the Executive Order signed by the Governor establishing a New Jersey Commission for Early Learning and Development with cabinet-level leaders from each participating state agency and setting a clear mandate for the alignment of early learning and development programs throughout the state. --Through activities and a comprehensive budget, New Jersey expects to increase the number and percentage of children with high needs served in high-quality early learning and development programs after 2015.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

--The Grow NJ tiered QRIS is based on the successful model of quality improvement carried out by the State Preschool Program, the QRIS pilot through BUILD and existing cross-program standards and practices. A weakness of the QRIS is that it does not include infants and toddlers. --The applicant effectively includes the six required items for a successful tiered model. Early Learning and Development Standards requirements increase as participants move from Step 2-Step 5. Early Childhood Educator qualifications, Family engagement strategies and Health promotion practices are evident in Steps 2, 3, 4. Effective data practices are woven throughout the Grow NJ scale. Comprehensive Assessment System includes all four components of a comprehensive assessment system in its Steps. --The applicant provides evidence that The Grow NJ tiered QRIS is easy to understand and has standards that are measurable, coaches who are trained to reliability on the instruments and include ECERS-R, ITERS-R, and FCCERS-R, CLASS. Grow NJ meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards such as NAEYC Accreditation, Head Start Performance Standards, and NAFCC Accreditation that lead to improved learning outcomes for children. --Grow NJ is strongly linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs since the New Jersey Licensing Regulations serve as the foundation/first level of the System. Early learning programs, center or family child care must be licensed or registered to participate in Grow NJ. --It is not clear why Grow NJ identifies the qualifications of an improved workforce competency model for early childhood by using an after school program model. The applicant states that they will meet national standards but does not clarify if these standards will be comparable to Head Start Performance Standards for health and safety.

health screening and health promotion. The applicant has a medium quality that is partially implemented.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

--The applicant has sound effective policies and practices to reach the goal of having all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs (center-based, family child care settings, Early Head Start, Head Start, and programs in school districts) participate Grow NJ system. --MOUs with each Department will ensure participation across the age groups birth to five and across settings from center and school-based programs to family child care. The DOE will ensure participation of children receiving services through state funded preschool located in school district facilities or community based programs and children participating in programs funded by Title I. --Department of Human Services, Department of Children and Families and Department of Health and Senior Services will ensure the participation of programs providing services to: children receiving subsidized tuition support in child care (CCDF), children involved in child protective services participating in child care settings, and children with an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) participating in Early Intervention Services (Part C of IDEA), and children with medical issues. --The applicant has a sound plan to encourage consistent growth of Grow NJ. Some motivating incentives include: early learning and development programs will be eligible to receive enhancement funds tied to a program implementation plan. Family Engagement Coordinators will provide technical assistance to ensure that families in the community are aware of available services. --New Jersey has appropriately planned an effective timeline to improve the policies and procedures, improve comprehensive training for technical assistance team members and rating team members, and provide orientation to families, providers, and schools. Although timelines, budgets and activities are defined there is no training or technical assistance for family care providers during the implementation process. The applicant does not identify polices or procedures to help families afford quality child care. --The applicant's targets for the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System is reasonable and attainable considering the time and staff allotted to the program. It is not clear how many counties will participate during the implementation process. In summary, the applicant has a medium quality plan that is partially implemented.

	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)(4)

--New Jersey is building on the foundation of their Grow NJ Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement system and is using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring programs. --New Jersey DOE will take the lead in establishing an Early Learning Improvement Consortium (ELIC), comprised of early childhood education faculty from public New Jersey State colleges and universities that will be conducting a rating visit to determine participating provider's scores both on their classroom environments and in each of the indicators included on Grow NJ. The applicant plans to effectively use inter-rater reliability between and among providers to be able to examine rating nuances due to type of programs. The applicant planned for an effective rater reliability to be checked through the Grow NJ Validity Study. For example, the applicant will continue to use the ECERS-R, and Supports for Early Literacy Assessment (SELA) and the Preschool Classroom Mathematics Inventory (PCMI). The applicant plans to use the results gathered by the universities to appropriately plan future professional development to address areas of need identified by the evaluations. --The applicant planned a thoughtfully timed rating assessment schedule to provide a rating assessment free of charge, and limit providers to one free assessment request per year. This plan is well timed, since it will take a provider at least that much time to adjust, change, improve, make quality improvements and build on their rating. The applicant included a comprehensive flow chart to illustrate the process. --The applicant presents an innovative plan to create a "Consumer Reports" component that publicizes the Step of each provider that goes through the rating process; it will be ready in 1212. This will help parents to become informed decision makers when selecting appropriate and affordable programs for their children. The public component of the electronic system will be online so families will have access from home or at a CCR&R. Prior to the launch, CCR&Rs will be trained in how to access site ratings as well as how to share ratings information with families. In summary, the applicant has a high quality planned that is partially implemented.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

--The applicant designed very effective policies and practices that include a continuous cycle of improvement. All programs receiving state funding will be required to participate in Grow NJ. MOUs between each participating state agency that administers public funds for early learning and development is committed to support this requirement. --The applicant has a comprehensive plan to provide training and technical assistance. An orientation to Grow NJ will be available to all early learning and development programs participating in the QRIS. A county-level system of training and technical assistance will be established at Child Care Resource and Referral agencies and other selected locations that are community based, such as Family Success Centers or county education offices. To efficiently provide training in all aspects of Grow NJ, the teams will be comprised of Learning Coaches, Birth to Five Disabilities Coordinators, Family Engagement Coordinators, and Health Service Coordinators. County TA Team members will participate in professional development sessions with a structured format to maintain continuity. --The applicant's incentive program is designed to motivate and assist sites improve their quality. Professional development, tiered reimbursement and quality enhancement funds will be available to eligible sites. --Incentives will include funding for assistants, teachers, and directors/administrators to encourage the attainment of degrees, nationally recognized certificates, and advanced coursework tied to college credit. --Higher subsidy reimbursements rates will be provided to programs serving children eligible for subsidy beginning at Step 3. 2012, funding enhancements will be available to help programs participate and move-up the Grow NJ Steps. --Eligible family child care providers will receive \$750, and other sites will receive \$2,000 to use to purchase items such as classroom materials and equipment, fees for NAEYC accreditation, substitutes or other items that do not supplant existing contracts with state entities. --A differential reimbursement of 5 percent will be

given for subsidized children for a Step 3 rating, 10 percent for a Step 4 rating, and 20 percent for a Step 5 rating. Reimbursements will be administered by DHS through an existing contract with the county Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. This is an adequate progression since it is more expensive to maintain high quality center (lower teacher student ratios, more educated, higher paid teachers etc.). --The applicant plans to provide supports to working families to access high-quality early learning and development programs: -Family Engagement Coordinators will assist families in locating high-quality programs and inform families and programs about evidence based home visiting services, access special education and early intervention service etc. -A unique support that the Family Engagement Coordinators and County-level Councils for Young Children, working together, will develop county maps of all family programs and resources in their county. -In the Communications Overview diagram, with communication strategy and timeline, the applicant evidenced the State Plan including an outreach strategy for reaching three key audiences: families, early learning and development programs, and early childhood educators. A statewide publicity campaign will target all three audiences with comprehensive information about how to enroll in Grow NJ, how families can get involved, and what workforce incentives will be available. --The applicant provided evidence that targets for increasing quality and the number of programs estimated at top Steps were ambitious yet achievable. By the end of the grant period, the applicant expects that 44 percent of the sites will rate at Steps 3, 4 and 5. After six years in the system, it is expected that 53 percent of participating sites will be at the top two Steps. This target was appropriately set by estimating the number of sites that are already achieving a high level of quality (combined Head Start/State Preschool Program and State Preschool Program) and assuming that they would reach a Step 3, 4 or 5 with their first rating. In the roll-out plan, these sites were distributed across the first four years of implementation, as it was predicted that they would require minimal assistance to attain Steps 3, 4, and 5 on the Grow NJ levels, enabling the County TA Teams to focus more on other programs. The applicant provided ample evidence for the plan in the graphs with baseline and annual targets. In summary, the applicant has a high quality plan that is partially implemented.

	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)

New Jersey plans a Request for Proposals (RFP) from independent contractors to design and implement the multi-faceted evaluation. DOE will be the lead agency on the evaluation. The overall design of the evaluation plan has been established; many of the details will be determined by the contractor in consultation with stakeholders. --An Efficacy Study, designed to answer the questions regarding outcomes of the Grow NJ initiative will systematically compare the progress of sites within cohorts and the children within sites over time. The following will be investigated: Does the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality. --The applicant effectively plans a cross-sequential longitudinal design applied in a randomized control trial. This is ideal for this kind research since both developmental and cohort effects could be relevant. Four cohort groups will be studied in the evaluation funded in this grant period. --Although the RTT-ELC grant will end in 2015 the State plans to continue the study for six years until 2018 and then on a biannual basis going forward. This longer term will allow effects into the early grades of school to be investigated. --The applicant's implementation study will provide evidence of the reliability of the assessments of quality administered by ERIC and the relationship between independently administered assessments and the Step rating.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

worth up to 15 points. If the applicant chooses to address two selection criteria, each criterion will be worth up to 30 points.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	20	18
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--</p> <p>(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;</p> <p>(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and</p> <p>(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)
<p>--The applicant 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 cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness. --The standards for infants and toddlers, "New Jersey Birth to Three Standards" were developed by a subcommittee of the New Jersey Council for Young Children, in consultation with Zero-to-Three. After a comprehensive review using evidence-based resources such as "The Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework" and "Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers" recommendations were created. New Jersey modified Minnesota's Early Learning Guidelines for Birth to 3, with adaptations, including adding "approaches to learning" as a domain. In addition, the age span was divided into four groupings so all essential domains are covered. Both cultural diversity and children's home language are specifically addressed consistently throughout the items. --The standards for Preschool, "Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards" encompass all Essential Domains of School Readiness, presenting fundamental information on the learning environment assessment processes, and home, school and community partnerships. Specific strands cover social/emotional development, language arts literacy, social studies, family and life skills, visual and performing arts, mathematics, world languages, health, safety and physical education, science, and technology. --Bodies of research and professional organizations representing each domain were consulted and are referenced in the document's bibliography. In addition, the standards were favorably reviewed by national experts. --The "Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards" were readopted the K-12 Core Curriculum Content Standards, and provided an extensive alignment across all domains, for the areas of math, language arts, visual and performing arts, comprehensive health and physical education, science, social studies and technology, with clear articulation of what children should know and be able to do for each age group. The standards subcommittee of the NJ Council for Young Children is currently reviewing the results of the alignment to determine whether changes to the preschool standards are necessary, and the potential impact of associated changes in areas such as curriculum and formative assessment. --New Jersey's Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards are embedded in program standards, curricula, formative assessments, the Workforce Framework and professional development. They are specifically included in the program standards set forth by Administrative Code (N.J.A.C. 6A:13A), and provide the underpinnings for the State's Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines, the basis for the state's Quality Improvement Rating System, Grow NJ. --New Jersey's Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards specifically address documentation and assessment as seen on the applicant's Attachment 35. Documentation/Assessment. In addition, each of the evidence based curricula currently supported by the New Jersey Department of Education (High/Scope, The Creative Curriculum, Curiosity Corner and Tools of the Mind) includes a comprehensive assessment system that is aligned with New Jersey's preschool standards as evidenced by Attachment 12, NJ GOLD Alignment. --New Jersey's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, is evidence that the following activities are currently being carried out by the Governor's Council: 1. Crosswalk the New Jersey Birth to Three Standards with the relevant components of the Comprehensive Assessment System. 2. Work with the curriculum developers to demonstrate the alignment of New Jersey Birth to Three Standards with the comprehensive curricula. 3. Incorporate the standards into the Infant Toddler credential, and in the modules for professional development. --The applicant has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs using five primary ways the standards are incorporated into professional development and higher education activities. Each of the training activities will include the Birth to Three Standards and the Preschool Standards. Both sets of standards will be delivered through training modules used by the County Technical Assistance Teams housed at the Child Care Resource Referral Agencies, as part of Grow NJ's implementation. In summary, the applicant has a high quality plan that is partially implemented.</p>

	Available	Score
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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 select assessment instruments and approaches that are developmentally appropriate, that address the comprehensive needs of children birth to five, for the target populations and purposes and to ensure that the assessments chosen do not conflict with or duplicate program-specific requirements (e.g., Head Start), the Department of Education will include representatives from each type of early learning and development program in the review and selection of screening measures, formative assessments, measures of environmental quality and measures of adult-child interaction. --New Jersey has an assessment steering committee, made up of representatives from state agencies, center-based providers including Head Start and Early Head Start, family child care providers, higher education and local education agencies, will assemble during the first two months of the grant period and will resolve assessment issues and decisions during four to five half-day sessions. --Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen the Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purposes and uses of each type of assessment included in the Comprehensive Assessment Systems was beneficial. --To support early learning and development sites and strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purpose and uses of each type of assessment professional development from the assessment developers will occur throughout the state. The applicant will use the County Technical Assistance Teams to bring their expertise to their area and will assist sites as they use instruments with children with disabilities and English learners and ensure articulation with other agencies around assessment requirements. --During implementation the coaches and coordinators will provide training and on-site support, alongside of the director/leader, using the principles of reflective practice to improve the retention of the information presented. --Via, training modules and on-site assistance from the technical assistance team, each cohort will receive professional development in all Comprehensive Assessment System components. --Learning Coaches will meet with teachers and leaders regularly to ensure the reliable collection of child information through portfolio review meetings to understand the growth and development of children over time while using formative assessments. --In addition, the Health and Birth to Five Disabilities Coordinators will provide resources to help early learning and development programs acquire appropriate health and behavioral screenings for children, and will provide training on screenings that can be administered by educators. --The applicant aligns and integrates assessments and sharing assessment results 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. The applicant will perform a well thought-out crosswalk of assessment types including Head Start, the State Preschool Program, Title I programs, and IDEA Part B and Part C, to avoid assessment duplication or conflicting across programs overlapping areas will be identified. The steering committee will develop and distribute guidance around handling duplicate or overlapping assessments. --County Technical Assistance Teams will use the Data Summary Tool to provide an effective way for programs to summarize the results of their classroom and child assessment results. --The training for each type of assessment, which will occur regionally, will appropriately be broken out into a six-year roll-out beginning in the 2012-2013 school year and delivered in cohorts of 50. --Professional development on appropriate use of the tools will be provided, as will reliability procedures for formative assessments. --Learning Coaches will provide the information to site leaders/directors and teachers/caregivers in measures of environmental quality and adult-child interaction. --The applicant's plan to use the Training of Trainer's model to bring health, behavioral and developmental screening instruments to programs is reasonable given the strength and expertise of the Learning Coaches. However, it is not clear how 35 coaches will be able to serve those centers that may have different assessments and curricular. --In summary, the applicant's plan uses a Comprehensive Assessment System in all early learning and development programs to improve early experiences and outcomes for children with high needs. Their Comprehensive Assessment Systems help early childhood educators understand and support children's emerging skills, to maximize effectiveness through interactions, activities and practices. The plan is very detailed and provides guidance, training and support statewide. The planned is partially implemented.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)

--A cross-walk was carried out in order to determine a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement. The cross-walk was conducted by the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network that compares family engagement standards across the state's early childhood systems including education, child care, health, prevention, and family support. The crosswalk was then used to determine common themes, and to develop a set of family standards that accommodates the diverse needs of young children and their families. --The applicant organized the crosswalk documents adding the family engagement standards from Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education Standards, the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework and New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards. This led to a formation of most of the content for the complete family engagement standards found in Grow NJ. --Although the applicant planned to increase the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported to implement the family engagement strategies, the process lacked addressing English language learners and their families. --The applicant has already provided early childhood staff training consistent with the standards to work effectively with families to an impressive number of child care staff, child care family workers and Head Start staff, service coordinators and service providers, home visitors, Family Success Center staff, and other primary prevention staff. --New Jersey has set a productive target of having 70 percent of all early childhood educators, serving children with high needs, to receive professional development in the progression of the standards for family engagement over the grant period, with the remaining 30 percent receiving training by 2018. --A Training of Trainers series will equip 21 Family Engagement Coordinators with information to assist early learning and development settings as they present the family-related standards. --Promoting family support and engagement statewide, including by leveraging other existing resources such as through home visiting programs, other family-serving agencies, and through outreach to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers. --The Department of Children and Families, Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships, will serve as the lead to establish 21 county-level Councils for Young Children as a part of the State Plan. The Councils, comprised of 51 percent families, will be charged with publicizing Grow NJ and engaging local stakeholders to ensure a mechanism for feedback to the Governor's Council and agencies on the extent to which Grow NJ works for families. A concern is that the ability for the applicant to engage families in the councils may be more of a challenge than the applicant perceives. --DCF's role will be to hire a Project Director to oversee the 21 county-level Councils and an administrative staff person to provide support to the Project Director. 21 Family Engagement Coordinators will establish, oversee and ensure the fidelity of the parent-led Councils. The Family Engagement Coordinators will also recruit county-level Council members and ensure the composition consists of 51 percent families. --A concern is the number of staff that the applicant is requiring. It is not clear if that will be appropriate to the huge oversight and responsibilities the county-based Family Engagement Coordinators are required to accomplish. In summary, the plan is of medium quality and is partially implemented.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

	Available	Score
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	20	16
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes; (b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and 		

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

--The applicant has a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes. The subcommittee NJ Council for Young Children in consultation with two- and four-year institutions, NJAEYC, CCRR, infant-toddler specialists and Head Start, has already begun to create one set of core knowledge and competencies for the early care and education workforce. --The State's professional development institute, the Workforce Registry, will oversee the official Core Knowledge and Competency Framework for all members of the workforce in New Jersey's early care and education system. The applicant provided attachment 16 that indicates the rigorous New Jersey Core Knowledge and Competencies including a seamless system for professional development and career lattice. --The applicant continues to refine and improve core knowledge and competencies. A crosswalk of the core knowledge and competencies framework indicates that the use of data to inform decision making, curriculum content in math and science, and guiding children with behavioral issues needed further clarification. The workforce subcommittee of the Governor's Council is working to improve Framework. This demonstrates the commitment of the applicant to continuously improve core knowledge and competencies to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes. --The applicant continues to build on the multilevel Career Lattice to develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees with multiple entry points aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The Career Lattice focuses on six credible credentials for early care and education and is offered through many institutions. --New Jersey recognizes their challenges and attempts to address the need to reexamine the quality of the professional development and the preparation system that leads to credentials. This plan includes developing and providing new programs that lead to particular credentials and developing resources to support providers in improving the quality of their professional development and coursework. --Two and four-year post-secondary institutions worked with the State Department of Education to develop the P-3 credential linked to New Jersey's early learning standards. 28 institutions are currently aligned with the State's Framework. New Jersey's next step is to align professional development opportunities by engaging professional development providers and those in higher education to ensure that their professional development and coursework fully incorporate the NJ Core Knowledge and Competencies Framework. --The applicant has an ambitious plan to address the alignment of professional development opportunities by engaging professional development providers in the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. --The Governor's Council will make the final revisions of the framework and conduct the mapping and evaluation of professional development and higher education early childhood educator content. In summary, the plan is of high quality and partially implemented.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

--New Jersey is implementing policies and incentives that 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. Financial support will be available to eligible family child care providers, teachers, teacher assistants, and leaders/directors outside of the state preschool program to help advance the credentials of all early childhood workers within the system. They will be able to obtain early childhood degrees tied to specific program improvement plans, ranging from the Infant Toddler Credential to the Preschool to Third Grade Certificate. It is not clear about how much funding will be available for financial assistance. --Scholarships for site directors, family child care providers, teachers and teaching assistants will be available. The scholarship program will be managed through a DHS contract or MOU. To be eligible for a scholarship, practitioners must commit to advancing through the Career Lattice according to professional development plans developed with County TA Teams. It is not clear how practitioners will "commit". It provides participants with an easy to understand plan to increase their education; and, as staff advance through the Career Lattice, programs will be able to reach higher Steps in the Grow NJ tiered system. It is not clear how applicants will be chosen to receive scholarships. ---One weakness in the incentives portion of the New Jersey plan is the lack of acknowledging two of the most important factors that impact high-quality child care: low wages and high turnover among child care providers. Research links high turnover in the child care workforce to lower-quality services and to negative effects on children. The applicant did not include any plan to increase wages as the early care provider improves their education. Improving wages, benefits and working conditions is extremely important to recruiting and retaining an educated workforce. --New Jersey's existing Workforce Registry is well-equipped to aggregate and share data on the development, advancement, and retention of the Early Childhood Educator workforce. --The applicant will be able to build on this management system that already is customized to collect and maintain data, bring recognition and professionalism to the field, and inform policymakers about the early childhood workforce. The Workforce Registry is voluntary and currently only a small number of users participate. Therefore, the registry cannot provide accurate information to identify patterns in New Jersey's early care and education workforce, track improvement of credentials, and identify shortages of early childhood workers by sector. --New Jersey has a solid plan to improve the state's ability to aggregate, analyze, and report data. The RTT-ELC grant will be used to promote awareness of the Registry and the benefits of participation, including recognition for Career Lattice advancement and resources to implement the NJ Core Knowledge and Competency Framework. --The RTT-ELC grant will also be used to enroll all Grow NJ educators in the Workforce Registry. The Grow NJ publicity campaign starting in April 2012 will incorporate information for educators about the Registry, and Registry drives will be held throughout the state. The applicant estimates that by the end of the grant period, the number of users will double. --A strong foundation for this section is that of all the state's 28 professional development and preparation providers offer early childhood educator credentials that are aligned with the NJ Core Knowledge and Competency Framework. But, the content of the Framework, the quality of coursework and professional development varies dramatically. An evaluation of the quality of these professional development and preparation offerings is being conducted by the Governor's Council to ensure that all of the participating two-year, four-year and other professional development providers are providing comparable information and coursework. --The state has set an ambitious goal to dramatically expand the number of credentialed educators. The target is to reach 62 percent of the Grow NJ early childhood educators at full implementation serving over 70 percent of children with high needs birth to five. --Progression through the Career Lattice will occur at family child care and center-based sites as educators advance their credentials using Grow NJ scholarships, and in the State Preschool Program and other Department of Education Preschool Program sites as educators take advantage of expanded and improved offerings across the state. --The goals set by the applicant are challenging but realistic. Performance measures will help participants see where their efforts are paying off and where they need adjustment. The applicants plan is of high quality and it is partially implemented.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	20	12
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate</p>		

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)

--To ensure readiness for kindergarten, New Jersey has built comprehensive preschool standards and has adopted the Common Core Standards for kindergarten. New Jersey introduced Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines to provide administrators and teachers guidance and resources to effectively implement the components of a high-quality kindergarten program. --New Jersey will use a criterion-referenced assessment as its measure of kindergarten readiness. It covers all domains of school readiness, is administered within the first few months of school entry, conforms to the recommendations of the National Research Council, and is valid and reliable in its ability to inform efforts to close the achievement gap and to inform instruction. Criterion-referenced assessments like the Work Sampling System are standards-based and curriculum-embedded and can be used effectively to measure children's skills on all indicators within the seven domains. --New Jersey has chosen to model its system around other states' efforts to use criterion-referenced assessments to assess readiness. Research studies have shown that criterion-reference tests like Work Sampling System have reliability and validity. Teacher ratings of children's performance in the areas of language and literacy and mathematical thinking sections are correlated with children's performance on the math, language, and literacy sub-scales of the Woodcock-Johnson Revised Tests of Achievement and that the system can be used reliably with English learners and children with disabilities. --New Jersey provides evidence that a Kindergarten Entry Assessment will be administered beginning at the start of school year 2014-2015. Several New Jersey school districts already piloting criterion-referenced assessments like Work Sampling System in kindergarten. In 2013-2014, the state will begin to implement training in a criterion-reference assessment. It is not clear if the teachers would be responsible to enter the criterion-referenced assessments. It is also not clear how teachers will be trained to enter the criterion-referenced assessments. --Training in the assessment will be delivered each year in cohorts of 30 over a four-week period from late August and through mid September each year, starting in September 2013. This approach allows each cohort to have a minimum of six weeks to use the system prior to analyzing and reporting data from the first collection period. The first set of children's scores will be entered at the end of October 2013. The applicant did not provide any information on how each agency would combine data in a statewide system. --The applicant will use an established Statewide Longitudinal Data System to enter the early learning data. The applicant plans to have each school district assign readiness scores for all children entering kindergarten. Once the scores are assigned, they will be entered in the NJ SMART database, the state's student tracking system. --To ensure that the assessment is assessing children's readiness skills reliably, the kindergarten entry assessments used by the Grow NJ validity study will check whether the proficiency levels generated by the system correlate with other, standardized measures, on a battery of assessments. --New Jersey's approach will conform to criteria of appropriate assessment established by the National Research Council, 2008; National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force Report, 2007; and the Council of Chief State School Officers, State Early Childhood Assessment Consortium, 2011 is well-grounded. DOE committed the funds for the entire data-base. -- The applicant has a medium quality plan, partially implemented.

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	16
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to enhance the State's existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System or to build or enhance a separate, coordinated, early learning data system that aligns and is interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and that either data system--</p> <p>(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;</p> <p>(b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;</p> <p>(c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data;</p> <p>(d) Generates information that is timely, relevant, accessible, and easy for Early Learning and Development Programs and Early Childhood Educators to use for continuous improvement and decision making; and</p> <p>(e) Meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

--A strength of the New Jersey proposed data system plan, "NJ-EASEL", is that it will meet the goals and builds upon initiatives that State of New Jersey already has in place in areas of early childhood development and education. --Through a comprehensive NJ-EASEL, the state will link New Jersey's Statewide Longitudinal Data System, NJ SMART, Department of Children and Families Licensing System, Department of Human Services Workforce Registry (New Jersey Registry for Childhood Professionals), and the Grow NJ Data System, within the parameters of State and Federal privacy laws. --Linking these data systems allows the identification of gaps in data collection, the analysis of longitudinal data starting at birth, and an understanding of the impact of participation in Grow NJ and other programs as children progress through school. --NJ-EASEL will be able to support a research-based, data-driven culture of analysis, decision-making, and policy formulation based upon valid information. The system supports professional educators, program managers, and service delivery partners providing them with the tools to effectively meet the needs of all children. --The applicant provides evidence that they will be able to provide uniform data collection and easy entry of Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs. By using tools and techniques already in use in NJ SMART, NJ-EASEL will leverage the State of New Jersey's existing data integration environment and tools to automatically extract, transform and load data from source systems into NJ-EASEL's data warehouse, within the parameters of State and Federal privacy laws. --When data collections systems must be created, NJ-EASEL will utilize easy-to-use, secure web-based applications that require minimal training. --New Jersey uses a Logical Data Model that identifies the data elements, mapping the model to existing source systems, and working with the Data Governance Council to prioritize the creation of data collection systems to close any gaps in available data. --The applicant will use the Logical Data Model (LDM) for this work. It will allow the alignment and integration of data from multiple sources regardless of how it may be defined in the source system, as well as draw from previous early childhood system development efforts. The data elements in the LDM will be based upon the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) handbook for data elements. The NCES provides guidance on consistency in data definitions and maintenance for education data, so that such data can be accurately aggregated and analyzed. --New Jersey's data plan, as described above, will generate information in a timely, relevant, accessible, and easy way for Early Learning and Development Programs and Early Childhood Educators to use for continuous improvement and decision-making. All participating state agencies will have a representative on the Data Governance Council overseeing information generated by NJ-EASEL. Data Governance Council will host sessions to discuss reporting and analytical needs, and will hold a data summit annually to ensure that the system is meeting the needs of stakeholders across all levels, including higher education, providers, school districts, and state agencies. --The Data Governance Council will provide easy to understand, structured data reports and output. The NJ-EASEL Data Governance Council will provide primary Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws oversight. --Data Governance Council (DGC) and the New Jersey Office of Information Technology will establish policies governing the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of the data managed by NJEASEL. The DGC will publish an overarching description of NJ-EASEL. The DGC will also verify that the aspects of NJ-EASEL that require anonymity or summarized data will do so in a way that protects privacy.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	213

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

Priorities

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

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

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

Comments on (P)(3)

The applicant has not implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met. The applicant did not sufficiently meet the criteria of E1 because the applicant provided a minimum response.

Absolute Priority

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

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

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

Comments on Absolute Priority

—New Jersey has minimally meet the requirements to 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 applicant's application demonstrated that 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 "Grow NJ" Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. —New Jersey is building, making improvements to and creating strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # NJ-5024

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 12:07 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, 20. Includes detailed description of the core area, scoring rubric (Quality), and comments on (A)(1) regarding New Jersey's commitment to early childhood.

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)

New Jersey will build on a successful model used previously in a few communities, under the auspices of the education agency; data are presented to demonstrate the effectiveness of the model, which lowered the achievement gap between children with high needs and their peers. A logical approach to program improvement is presented, based on use of the state's TQRIS, including initial self-assessment by the program, follow-up support from local coaches, and verification of step attainment by outside observers. The summary of the state plan shows a clear path to achieving the goals of the project, beginning with identifying what exists across participating agencies, coordinating and integrating resources, and building on what is there. Eight "projects" are described that clearly address gaps identified earlier, and benchmarks for accomplishment are shown. The number of programs at higher levels of the TQRIS will increase, as will children with high needs participating in different types of programs. Throughout this section (and the proposal in general), specific attention is given to different types of programs and to children with different types of needs, with information provided about how the particular project or criterion will benefit these groups. Another strong aspect of this project is that not only are assets identified and combined across agencies (including monetary assets), but agencies take joint responsibility for grant tasks and actively participate in the work of the project. Another is that all programs receiving state funds will be required to participate in the TQRIS rating system; since virtually all of the programs do receive some state funding related to young children and their families, very few programs serving children with high needs will not be included. The TQRIS will be revised to better address the characteristics of different types of programs (e.g., family child care). Counties participating in the project will be selected based on indicators of high need, ensuring that the project will address the needs of the population for whom the grant is intended. A county-level structure put in place in each of these counties will utilize existing staff as well as add new staff to support professional development, family engagement, and services to children with disabilities, indicating efficient use of resources. County councils will be developed to mirror the state-level council, and will include 51% families as members. All of these aspects of the plan indicate close attention to detail at the state, county, and program level as well as integration of resources. Overall, this is a very solid plan, and reflects both lessons learned in a previous (evaluated) model and commitment across agencies. Rationales for priorities to be addressed later in the proposal are clearly outlined and relate directly to the overall plan. The proposal is lacking information on how the needs of the substantial number of English language learners will be addressed within the project.

	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)

As noted above, there is a high level of commitment by agencies with respect to their contributions to and roles on this grant. The organizational structure for the grant builds on an existing Early Learning Commission, on which agency heads involved in this project already serve. An organizational chart shows a clear relationship between the tasks to be accomplished by the interagency working team and the county councils and teams. The Early Learning Commission, initiated by the Governor, will steer the work of the grant. As demonstrated in the MOU and in tables throughout the grant, working members of the interagency team of 7 agency leaders (4 from DOE, including special education and services for English language learners), will take on responsibilities for specific parts of the cross-agency plan. University personnel will also serve on working committees and will take an active role in implementing some aspects of the grant (e.g., serve as external observers for TQRIS). The process for making decisions and resolving disputes are built into the MOUs and is described as part of the structure and working process of the project, as is leadership for the project (DOE), although information on the flow of information from the county level to the state level teams is lacking. Letters from stakeholders demonstrate support and commitment from a wide array of individuals and groups and many of the grant activities demonstrate high levels of stakeholder involvement. Full points were not awarded because many aspects of the plan have been only partially implemented. Because a new leadership team is still being formed and county teams have not yet been put in place, most of the plan has not yet been implemented.

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

The extent to which the State Plan--

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

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

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

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

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

funding will be devoted to the local implementation of the State Plan; and

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(4)

The budget plan demonstrates effective and efficient use of available and projected dollars. In the overall and separate agency budgets, expenditures are clearly aligned to proposed activities. Further, re-alignment of existing funds and contributions of other existing funds to support the projects of the grant, have resulted in a proposal that will be able to reach a significant number of high needs children and families. Overall, the history of the state demonstrates a previous mixed delivery system including public school, Head Start, and community-based programs, all using common learning standards and program standards. The state has committed substantial resources to this model in the past, and the RTT-ELC will expand the model to significantly more programs serving children with high needs. Because the plan builds on and incorporates many current resources and previous experiences it is likely that many aspects of the plan will be maintained in the future. Nevertheless, a large portion of the budget goes toward personnel at the leadership level and at the county level, neither of which may be sustainable at the end of the grant but which are vital to continuation of the proposed system. The proposal demonstrates a lack of substantial planning for sustainability.

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)

A TQRIS is already in place statewide and is currently used in common across early childhood programs. Plans for the current project are based on a previously evaluated pilot that contained all of the elements listed in the proposal, and resulted in differences among children who participated and those who did not. Strengths within each type of program are identified and built into action plans for each of several "projects" that show reasonable timelines and designate responsibility. The plan directly addresses gaps noted across program elements in each of the program types, Early Learning Standards for Pre-K are aligned with approved curricula and assessments, and with Kindergarten expectations; the new Infant-Toddler standards are currently being aligned and integrated into other system components. The assessment system is described across agencies, with many of the required components already in place. It is also built into the TQRIS, with gradually increasing requirements across steps. Particular assessment instruments are proposed and approved instruments will be selected at the state level to support professional development and to ensure use of valid assessment tools. Successive steps of the TQRIS include increasing requirements for staff qualifications, family engagement, health promotion, and use of data. Many aspects of each of these are already present within one or more of the participating agencies, and all programs will participate in the TQRIS. Standards are clear and measurable, and external observers are used for advancing up a step in the system. All use of "alternative pathways" are also confirmed by external observers using specific instruments, ensuring quality control across different pathways. There is a direct link to state licensing, with child care licensing comprising part of the requirements at the lower steps. Under the grant, movement to next higher steps will be recommended based on external observers, then reviewed by the state leadership team for approval. The proposal did not achieve the maximum points because while the plan covers all required elements, much of it is still being developed and has not yet been implemented.

	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)

It is expected that all programs receiving state funding will participate in the TQRIS, a goal that will make high quality programs increasingly available to high needs children across the state. Participation will be facilitated and supported by local teams as well as by statewide promotion campaigns. New counties will be selected each year to eventually cover 65% of children with high needs by the end of the grant period. The commitment to entering programs into the TQRIS system and to building quality in those programs will result in increases in access by families with high needs to the types of programs that best meet their individual needs. Program subsidies for serving families with many needs will help to ensure that these services are affordable. Further, programs will be asked to sign agreements to serve children with disabilities or medical conditions within neighborhood settings, increasing the range of options available to these children and families. One aspect of the proposal that is not clear is whether the 100% for program participation applies only within the counties selected for participation or to other counties as well. Goals for different programs are also not separated out; for example, percentages are not clear for Title I, Parts B and C, and Head Start/Early Head Start within the larger category of projections. Further, no rationale is provided for not providing technical assistance to family child care providers. A discussion of how English language learners are addressed within the TQRIS is also lacking; this is particularly important because of the large percentage of these children in the state. Many aspects of this plan are in place, and some have been implemented in selected sites, indicating a partial level of previous implementation.

	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)

Participating programs will be rated for step and for maintaining step within the TQRIS using a tool designed for that purpose, based on on-site visits by raters from the university consortium (ELIC), demonstrating good use of available resources and expertise as well as ensuring that faculty are familiar with the variety of early childhood programs in the community. A specific criterion for the percentages of classrooms to be observed each year and for selection of classrooms within programs is used, ensuring random representation. These outside observers will use specific observation instruments such as the ECERS and CLASS, depending on the target population and step of the TQRIS. Observers will be trained to reliability on the instruments. All programs will be monitored on a regular basis, with the frequency of observation related to the step. A statewide data system will be easily accessible to parents and other stakeholders in user-friendly formats and will include TQRIS ratings and well as licensing information. With respect to progressing to higher steps, a well-thought-out process is described for improvement based on internal self-assessment and coaching, and finally by rating for purposes of advancing in step. The TQRIS process has been substantially implemented in pilot sites, and has included most of the elements, but has not yet been implemented state-wide.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

Access to high quality programs for children and families with many needs will be addressed by increasing the number of programs participating in the TQRIS system as well as by moving more programs toward higher levels of quality. All state-funded programs (most of the programs in the state) will be required to participate in the TQRIS system, and others encouraged to participate. Local teams will be in place to assist programs with modularized training and on-site support. Incentives will be provided in the form of money for program improvement (e.g., materials) as well as scholarships for staff to receive further education. Program subsidies for serving children with high needs will increase substantially across steps of the TQRIS as an incentive to programs to work toward higher levels of quality. County-level Family Engagement Coordinators, part of the county-level support teams, will link families to resources such as family programs or full-day care, help them obtain subsidies, establish the county council, and do general outreach to families. By the end of the grant, it is anticipated that 44% of programs will be in the top tiers of the TQRIS, with numbers increasing across years in accord with the planned roll-out across counties. The intent is to continue this roll-out beyond the grant, ending with significantly more programs in the top tiers. Realistic projections for children are included, as projected from the number of programs. Overall, goals are ambitious while projections based on previous, similar work indicate that they will be accomplishable. One aspect of the program development process that needs additional description is how cohorts will be selected, or whether they represent all programs within selected counties. Describing the proportion of eligible counties within the total number of counties in the state would assist in evaluating potential statewide impact of the grant in terms of broad state coverage. Access to high quality programs by children with disabilities will be addressed via agreements established with programs. Information is lacking on access by English language learners. The proposal reflects substantial implementation within pilot sites but not across the state, whereas the plan is generally solid but lacking some specific information needed for evaluating access by children with high needs.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

A Request for Proposals (RFP) process will be used to select an external evaluator to validate the TQRIS. Validation of the TQRIS was addressed in pilot projects (currently underway), and will continue to be addressed using a larger number of programs. As the TQRIS is revised to cover increasingly diverse types of programs, there are plans to disaggregate data by type of program. Kindergarten data comparing children in the pilots with other high-needs children demonstrate the effects of the pilots, all of which were operating under the TQRIS. The cohort design to be used in the proposed RTT-ELC project will enable comparison based on participation and non-participation as well as in relation to lower and higher TQRIS tiers. Overall, the research design will enable the state to answer important questions about the validity of the TQRIS. However, information is lacking on possible external, research-based measures, such as the ECERS or the CLASS, that will be used as the standard against which results of the TQRIS will be compared.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)

Preschool early learning standards have been in use statewide for some years, and new standards have been developed for birth-3. Both cover all essential domains. Also included in each are indicators that can be used for assessment purposes, and examples of what behaviors might look like, enabling a close linkage between standards and formative assessment. Pre-K standards have been reviewed for their support for literacy, social-emotional development, math and science, as well as for their usefulness for assessment, using national experts. These standards also have been aligned with K-3 standards and with the Common Core for Kindergarten; examples are included in the Appendix for math, literacy, and science, providing a continuum from pre-K through Kindergarten. The standards also emphasize inclusion of children with disabilities. The Infant/toddler standards are more recent, with three age groupings within the birth-3 period. These have been reviewed by Zero-to-Three, a national organization supporting infant/toddler services, indicating attention to validity. All essential domains are covered, and the standards also include an emphasis on cultural diversity and the home language. The state is currently working with curriculum developers to select appropriate curricula around which to develop training modules to support the infant-toddler standards, building on the approach used at the pre-K level. The early learning standards provide the framework for the TQRIS, and are implemented in stepped fashion at different steps, for different purposes; they also provide the framework for a set of Program Implementation Guidelines, which give specific guidance to the TQRIS and thus relate directly to the curriculum. They are incorporated directly into the Competency Framework and into professional development that addresses the Framework. Further, county-level and regional-level modularized training will be provided directly on different components of the TQRIS, and then be followed with on-site support and coaching related to the particular step the program is working toward. College and university programs, previously aligned with the TQRIS, are now working to incorporate birth-3 as well. Knowledge of the Early Learning Standards is required within steps and related training. Overall, the Early Learning Standards will be interwoven throughout the elements of the system. The overall plan is sound, and the Early Learning Standards at the pre-kindergarten level have been fully implemented in the pilot sites but only partially implemented in other parts of the state. The new Infant-Toddler Standards have not yet been implemented.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

The proposal provides a list of anticipated, approved instruments; programs will be able to select from among these. Formative assessment tools will be related to the approved curricula on which the project will focus its training. The proposal states that the Environmental and Adult-Child Interaction assessments will also be selected by the project, whereas earlier in the proposal it was stated that the ECERS and TQRIS would both be used to verify TQRIS advancement. All child assessments will be approved at the state level. This has many advantages in terms of simplification of training and common data. At the state level, the agencies also will align requirements in order to avoid duplication for programs working under more than one agency. Overall, the plan seems to cover all requirements and domains. Assessment is built into the TQRIS, with increasing requirements across steps. Educators will be trained to implement the selected assessments and to use data for different purposes as the programs progress through the steps. Trainers in the county teams will be trained to use the state-wide training modules, and will then follow-up with individual visits and on-site coaching. All of these components will thus become part of the technical assistance system available at a local level, although the training of trainers to provide training and consultation on a variety of assessment instruments that may be used in the different programs should be described. Another aspect of this process that needs further description is the role of curriculum developers, including what criteria are used to select developers and in particular what assurances will be built in for high quality assessments associated with the curricula. Further description is also needed of how the curriculum-linked assessments relate to the assessment based on the Early Learning Standards and how they are combined at the classroom and program levels. Some aspects of the plan have been implemented in some parts of the state and in some types of programs, and overall, the plan directly addresses the criteria.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)

Family engagement is included among the requirements for the TQRIS, and advances in amount and type with each step. Family engagement in the TQRIS has been crosswalked with standards from across early childhood programs involved in this grant by the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, providing an excellent example of the involvement of family stakeholders throughout this project. Elements identified that are not currently in the TQRIS, including those from projects as Strengthening Families, will be used to modify the TQRIS. These specifically address cultural and linguistic appropriateness. Professional development on family engagement also will be provided using modularized materials, and followed with step-related coaching. Family engagement is also evident through the county level teams that will include a family engagement coordinator and through the county level councils that will include 51% parents. County maps of resources for families will be developed, and families will be connected with needed services across programs and other resources. This array of family engagement initiatives shows recognition and responsiveness to culturally and linguistically different families with many needs and places responsibility for family engagement within their communities and programs. Overall, the plan is comprehensive and supports many ways of engaging families. Many aspects of the plan have also been implemented previously, but not yet statewide. However, this section lacks a description of specific plans to address the needs of children who are English language learners and their families.

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(1)

A framework of professional knowledge and skills is in place and linked to a progression of credentials and degrees from entry level to post-graduate. The state credential for P-3 in state funded programs is a part of the framework as well. Many colleges and universities have aligned their coursework with the framework, and a committee of trainers is engaged on working on this alignment. Currently a workforce subcommittee of the Governor's Council is reviewing the framework for coverage of all types of programs as well as coverage of birth-3. Gaps in math, science, and behavior support have been identified and these will be incorporated into the framework. A map is also being developed of who prepares and credentials whom within the workforce; further, the quality of professional development is and will continue to be reviewed as part of the RTT-ELC project. These activities indicate a recognition that compliance and alignment alone may not be enough to achieve integration and quality. The workforce subcommittee will work with a new Professional Development Network, building the

network itself and then providing teaching resources and ongoing support. As noted above, early childhood faculty will also participate in the project as external raters for programs moving up in the TQRIS. Establishing the network will also assist the state in obtaining improved information on coursework and other professional development and the extent to which they incorporate the standards in the framework. A workforce registry already exists but will be expanded to include all participants across programs; the system will be improved by aligning with the competency framework and tracking progression through the career lattice. Overall, much has already been done and much is underway; the work of the RTT-ELC project will build on a strong foundation and the planned activities are logical extensions toward important goals. Two important points that are not addressed sufficiently within the overall plan are whether the training toward credentials through coursework are related to degree work (e.g., Associate) in any way and whether there is alignment across 2 and 4-year colleges. It also is not clear how the state is defining other professional development providers and how the training provided by these providers will be linked into the total system (e.g., approved for providing specific content, etc.). Elements of this plan have been implemented previously but not across agencies and throughout the workforce. The foundation is strong, and activities described are logical in relation to the proposed outcomes.

	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)
<p>Access to training aligned with the framework and with the TQRIS will be ensured by regional training on approved curricula and assessments for succeeding cohorts. Technical Assistance (TA) teams also will be available within targeted counties to provide further training, use modularized training, and provide follow-up coaching. TA teams will work with individuals and programs to develop professional development plans directed toward specific needs. TA teams also will provide training toward the leadership credential for program administrators. Higher education faculty will be encouraged to provide credits or hours toward certificates for training related to curriculum, assessment, or other modularized training. Scholarships for advanced credentials will be provided to those outside of the state preschool system to make best use of existing funds, and location in the lattice will be linked to different amounts of financial support. Data on status, advancement and retention will be entered into a Workforce Registry that is currently available but will be expanded to include all credentials on the lattice, across programs. Public reporting of information in the Registry is not addressed. Goals are set for increasing the number of post-secondary institutions and professional development providers who are aligned to the Framework as well as number of educators receiving credentials from these providers. In addition to quantity, the quality of professional development offerings will be reviewed as well. Some points of clarification include some differences among sections in the number of colleges and universities who are currently aligned to the framework, making it difficult to evaluate the actual status of higher education within the state and whether the goals are reasonable. The proposed quality review by the Governor's Council of higher education programs indicates a broad interest in and concern for what is being taught; however, the criteria being used by the Governor's Council to review higher education programs for quality are not provided. Overall, New Jersey has begun the process of building its professional development opportunities in relation to the workforce knowledge and skills framework, and some parts of the plan have been partially implemented. The plan is generally solid but is lacking some information needed to fully evaluate its potential impact.</p>

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	20	15

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)

Assessment of status of children at Kindergarten entry has been piloted in two districts using a work sampling system, based on the goal that this assessment will not only provide information on status at entry but also will be useful for instructional practice and for linking proficiency rates to other variables. The assessment is aligned with the ELS as well as with the language arts and math areas of the Common Core in Kindergarten. Data from the pilot successfully predicted kindergarten achievement. Whereas data in the pilots were collected by an external evaluator, data going forward will be collected by Kindergarten teachers. Use of the assessment will be phased in over time (beginning in 2013) as teachers are trained; this plan makes it more likely that they will be able to use the results of the assessment for instruction. Funding for Kindergarten assessment will use primarily state sources, with grant funds being used primarily for validation of the approach. Data will be entered into the Longitudinal Data System. Overall, there is attention to detail and to the multiple uses for which data may be used. Nevertheless data from the pilot were reported only for the overall score; it can not be ascertained from the proposal whether sub-scores for different areas did not predict achievement or were not analyzed. To further support validity of the overall approach, the results will be correlated with standardized measures; further information about this process and the tools used is needed since it will be important in establishing validity of a work sampling approach as a predictive tool. More detail is also needed on how reliability of teachers as data collectors will be established, since their data will be used not only for instruction but as part of the statewide data base. The plan was partially implemented within the pilot project upon which this proposal is based. Further information is needed on various aspects of the plan in order to ensure that the process and the measures will be re-validated under these different conditions.

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	12

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)

An early learning data system will be developed that will be usable by different stakeholders for different purposes. All agencies and programs will collect uniform data, with protocols being developed for types and entry of data as part of the RTT-ELC grant, based on an analysis of current data systems extant in different agencies. All will be combined into one system by the Office of IT, which has demonstrated expertise in achieving this type of system. The new system will build on the unique strengths of each of the current systems, and unique identifiers will be designated for children, providers, and sites, along with accompanying information for each of these. Using the system, it will be possible to pull out particular sub-groups of programs or children. State and local staff will receive training on how to put data into the system. A variety of techniques for ensuring confidentiality and privacy of data will be included within the system, using recommended criteria. RTT-ELC funds as well as a substantial first-year grant from the Council for Young Children will be used to develop the new data warehouse and system. After the grant, the system will be maintained by the IT office. Overall, the new system will build on and incorporate strengths and current data sets, and make them part of a unified whole that will be invaluable for asking and answering important questions that cross layers of the current systems. Full points were not given because previous implementation has been demonstrated only at the level of the individual agency, not as a state system. Thus far, integration of systems is in the planning stages only. The plan is quite comprehensive and integrates all elements.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	220

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

Priorities

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

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

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

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

Comments on (P)(3)

This was addressed above in (E)(1) and received more than 70% of the maximum points. In addition, the state has implemented a pilot of Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets the selection criteria.

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

New Jersey has submitted a very strong plan for integrating and aligning resources and policies to support early childhood programs and child outcomes. A governance structure is already in place to support the project, and participating agencies cover many types of early childhood programs. The project builds on a previous project that combined different types of programs and utilized many of the same elements contained in RTT-ELC. Significant benefits were demonstrated for children who were a part of this project. The state already has in place many of the elements of an RTT-ELC project, including Early Learning Standards, a TQRIS, and a Framework for professional growth and development. It already is working closely with colleges and universities. Through this grant, the state would both evaluate and improve on these elements, and would also expand the number of programs, educators, and children impacted. A very solid county structure is proposed, integrated across agencies and types of programs. Families are integrally involved at many levels. Targets set, which seem reasonable given the plan, will result in large increases in programs serving children with High Needs as well as in the number of children served in higher quality programs. Colleges and Universities will be linked into the system not only as providers of professional development but also as external reviewers for the tiered system, which will inevitably feed back into their work with educators. The plan builds on previous pilot work as well as on clearly identified gaps. It also demonstrates integration of funding and commitment to the work by each of the participating agencies.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # NJ-5024

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

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 20. Includes detailed text about the applicant's financial investment and program expansion in New Jersey.

implemented in April 2012. Preschool standards were originally adopted in 2004 and were revised and readopted in 2009. The preschool standards are aligned with the Common Core Standards for Kindergarten in English/Language Arts and Mathematics. The four components of a Comprehensive Assessment System are currently implemented in the State Preschool Program and Head Start. The state's current licensing standards address only 2 of the 4 elements of high-quality health promotion practices. Family engagement strategies are evident in the State Preschool Program and Head Start. Other resources are the State's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) project and Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN). The state currently has 13 higher education institutions offering programs that lead to P-3 certification. The Infant-Toddler Credential is currently offered by three programs in the state. A criterion-referenced assessment has only been piloted in 2 districts (Work Sampling System by Meisels) but the applicant proposes a statewide implementation in 2013. Lastly, the DOE has a data system which assigns unique identifiers to preschool children upon entry to a school district programs. The New Jersey Workforce Registry has a database related to early childhood educators and the New Jersey Early Intervention System has a unique child identifier for infants and toddlers served, as well as service providers. These main data systems are not currently connected, but the applicant proposes linking essential data from each separate system into one robust data collection system. The state has demonstrated its past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development programs. All required elements were addressed by the applicant, though some of the building blocks in item (d) are not fully implemented.

	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)

The state proposes a joint effort across state agencies to expand the state's TQRIS and provide supports to improve program quality, improve outcomes, and close the readiness gap with Grow NJ, the state's TQRIS, as the centerpiece. The state's goals are ambitious, but whether or not they are achievable is questionable. The applicant anticipates 65% program participation in Grow NJ by 2015 and 100% participation by 2017, with 44% of programs rated at Steps 4 and 5 by 2015 and 53% expected by 2017. Comprehensive curricula and assessments currently implemented in 65% of participating programs should be implemented by 2015, and 62% of early childhood educators should have an improved early childhood credential. Connecting data systems during the grant and implementing a statewide criterion-referenced assessment in the first two months of kindergarten by 2013 are ambitious goals. The concern arises in the lack of specificity offered by the state concerning how each of the ambitious goals could be accomplished in the time frame proposed. The state fails to make a case that the proposed actions will close the readiness gap. The applicant proposes that, by 2015, children in Step 4 or 5 programs in Grow NJ should perform twice as well on math and language measures at kindergarten entry, with an expectation of statewide 75% proficiency based on program quality improvement rates in the TQRIS. While this is VERY ambitious, the applicant provides no explanation nor "clear and credible path" to document this as achievable. The State's Plan does not clearly articulate the details of how the plan constitutes an effective reform agenda that establishes a clear and credible path. The overall summary of the State Plan is heavily reliant on personnel and implementation from the DOE with what appears to be somewhat limited engagement by other state agencies in new initiatives. The applicant proposes that each agency will use the learning standards and will improve outcomes for children, but the plan seems more focused on governance and responsibilities rather than meaningful reforms. Another concern is the fact that the birth to age 3 standards have not yet been implemented, the TQRIS has only been piloted, and a statewide assessment system has not been established. The applicant focuses more on identifying 11 projects to be spread across four existing state agencies. Some elements of the State Plan are not clearly presented in terms of implementation details, thus making it difficult to determine if the plans and goals can be achieved. Many of the proposed projects seem to be more of a conceptual idea with limited actions currently taken or broad actions proposed in a very compressed time frame. For example, the state proposes development of modules that would be used for monthly trainings offered by County Technical Assistance Teams. A summary of module content is provided, but these modules have not yet been developed. The state plan proposes "opportunities for professional development" but fails to clearly articulate the types of professional development, the frequency, the delivery format, etc. The applicant proposes to focus on areas in which it has the most experience and capacity, but these don't necessarily create a clear and credible path toward an effective reform agenda. The State Plan seems to be more a collection of related, but separate, projects, that fail to fit together to form one cohesive plan. The state chose to address all but one of the criteria in the Focused Investment Areas, but a very brief rationale was provided for choosing each one. Using the Quality Rubric, points were awarded for a Medium/high-quality response given the limited information provided to substantiate the State Plan's ability to achieve stated goals, close the readiness gap, and establish a clear and credible path.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

The state has established a governance structure for working together, but communication channels for inter-agency coordination are often not specified. An elaborate schematic was provided in (A)(3)(a) that displayed levels of management, including the Early Learning Commission (ELC) established by Executive Order in October 2011, the proposed Early Learning Challenge Leadership Team with 4 Department of Education (DOE) Leaders, 1 Department of Children and Families (DCF) Leader, 1 Department of Human Services (DHS) Leader, and 1 Department of Health and Senior Services (DHHS) Leader (positions funded by grant), and then a variety of work groups and stakeholder groups, along with existing entities, such as the Governor's Council and the Head Start Collaboration Office. Determining how exchanges of information and feedback/communication loops would be established was challenging. Some of the challenge is reflective of the fact that the ELC and ELC Leadership Team are proposed entities, but are not currently functioning. The governance structure suggests that most of the grant would be the responsibility of personnel in the DOE. The applicant failed to explain how the County Councils for Young Children, the Governor's Council, Coordinating Council for Part C and Head Start Collaboration Office would provide regular feedback to the Early Learning Challenge Leadership Team that is proposed. It was not clear why the Professional Development and Preparation Network is proposed as a newly created entity since the activities seemed aligned with the Early Learning Improvement Consortium (higher education entities). The

structure has many independent but related groups. Team leaders, directors, Leadership Team members, Agency Leaders, County Council Project Directors and the Executive Director would all be positions that are not yet identified in terms of personnel. It is not clear how the Governor's Council membership is determined. Statements are made, such as "The Coordinating Council for Part C of IDEA will continue to advise both the Governor's Council and the Early Learning System" but no further elaboration is provided concerning how this advisement would be accomplished or facilitated. The memoranda of understanding provided by the applicant identify the DOE as the lead agency and provide a brief statement about resolving disputes or problems. The applicant states that the Early Learning Commission will adopt a protocol for handling any disputes and decisions will be made by consensus. Strong decision-making authority is placed with the Executive Director in consultation with the Early Learning Leadership Team. The Executive Director would report to the Commissioner of Education. Since many of the proposed groups are not yet functional, many of the policy and operational decision-making methods are not yet determined. The applicant addresses involving stakeholders, but it seems to be more of a "silo" approach. County Councils for Young Children are proposed at the local level with each of 21 county councils appointing a leader who would report to the County Council Project Director (a proposed new position). The mechanism for the County Council to share regular feedback with Governor's Council and County Technical Assistance Teams is not clearly articulated. Another layer in the County Council management is the proposed Family Engagement Coordinator position. It is not clear how the Governor's Council and Early Learning Commission would work collaboratively without duplicating efforts. It is not clear how the Governor's Council would communicate with the County Councils nor how the Head Start Collaboration Office would interface with other entities and state agencies. The state provides MOUs and "Scope of Work" agreements for participating state agencies, including the Department of Education, Department of Human Services, Department of Children and Families, and Department of Health and Senior Services. Each state agency has earmarked existing funds toward the proposed grant. A broad range of stakeholders are documented with 80 letters of support or intent, including Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (CC R&R), the Workforce Registry, school districts, child care providers, community-based organizations and foundations, Head Start, Health Care, Professional Organizations, Parents, the Governor, the Legislature, and public two- and four-year institutions. Using the Quality and Implementation Rubric, points were awarded for a medium quality response with partially implemented elements demonstrated.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	9

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 participating state agencies have committed existing resources to support proposed grant activities. Existing staff, currently funded by DHS (CC R&R and Family Engagement Coordinators) and Disabilities Coordinators funded by IDEA funds, will be trained to serve as Learning Coaches to reduce the number of new staff required. The Governor's Council has committed \$700,000 to support efforts to link existing data systems together with the Grow NJ TQRIS system data initiative to augment grant funds requested for this project. The applicant proposes repurposing \$500,000 of CCDF funds to provide scholarships of \$1,000 for teaching assistants. Approximately \$300,000 in existing state Early Childhood funds currently budgeted to the State Preschool Program will be allocated for the proposed validation study of the TQRIS. DHS has committed \$119,000 in Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) funds to support a director and assistant who will coordinate the 21 Community Councils. The applicant has demonstrated its plan to use existing funds to support the grant, with over \$12.5 million in existing and state funds being proposed to support the proposed activities. This includes \$1.9 million in IDEA funds from DOE, \$298,041 in CBCAP funds from DCF, \$1.6 million in quality set-aside CCDF funds, and almost \$3 million for DHSS to support 21 Case Management Teams throughout the state and \$200,000 for the state's Parent Training Institute. The applicant requests total grant funds of \$59,787,820 and proposes using

\$50,564,640 in funds from other sources to support the proposed State Plan. The DOE requests approximately \$36 million in funds and is the lead agency for the grant (involved in 9 of 11 proposed projects). DCF requests approximately \$1.5 million in funds (involved in 4 of 11 proposed projects). DHS requests approximately \$50 million in funds (involved in 5 of 11 proposed projects) and DHSS requests approximately \$21 million in funds (involved in 3 of 11 proposed projects). Of particular note is the amount of funds budgeted to support staff positions and benefits, including a RTT-ELC Executive Director and program specialist (Project 1), County Council Project Director and administrative staff support (Project 2), Learning Coaches (Project 3), Payment for Environmental Rating Scales Raters (Project 8). Some of the proposed projects are personnel and salary costs with newly created job descriptions to manage and administrate the proposed governance structures. Given the large number of new staffing positions proposed, sustainability of the proposed initiatives after the grant funding period ends is a concern since many of the staff positions would be eliminated. A budget is provided for the entire grant, as well as for each project and each participating state agency. It is not clear why funds are needed to establish County Technical Assistance Teams since these are comprised of existing staff members in state agencies. The proposed salary for Learning Coaches funded by RTT-ELC funds requested by the DOE could not be determined. The cost for paying raters seems rather high (\$900 per center-based rating and \$450 per family-based rating) to pay higher education faculty. No information is provided concerning how requests and assignments for the Early Learning Improvement Consortium (Project 8) will be accomplished. It is difficult to determine if the costs for Project 10 (implementation of statewide K entry assessment) are reasonable and necessary since the assessment has not been identified, though the Work Sampling System has been piloted. Costs are primarily for training of cohorts of early childhood educators and per child costs for assessment. Project 11 is costly (approximately \$8.4 million) to create a system to link existing data systems across agencies. The applicant proposes the budget based on a detailed quote from the Office of Information Technology for hardware and staffing (2 data specialists). Existing DOE staff members are expected to create training modules in 25 hours at a rate of \$5,000 each. This seems rather high in terms of cost. The DCF requests \$178,750 for an outside entity to train the County Project Director in the use of the Family Development Matrix. This is not discussed in the applicant's proposal and it is not explained in the budget narrative. It is unclear if this is training for the County Councils Director or the identified directors for each of the 21 County Councils. No information is provided concerning the length, duration, or intensity of this training. Information is not provided concerning how decisions will be made regarding awards for scholarships for early childhood educators. It is not clear if individuals are eligible to receive scholarships multiple times or how the process for managing the scholarship awards and incentives would be implemented. It is not clear how the Workforce Registry will be sustained after grant funds are exhausted since the registration fee for each early childhood educator will only be paid until grant funding ends. It is not clear what incentive there is for educators to register nor how it is a benefit to them. While the state has demonstrated dedication and commitment in its plan and the Executive Order signed to create the Early Learning Commission (first meeting is scheduled in November 2011), the dedication of new state funds required to sustain the grant activities is subject to appropriation of state monies. The applicant acknowledges the budget challenges currently encountered by the state, but reminds the reader that many of the initial and one-time expenditures will occur during the grant period. Points were awarded for a medium/high-quality response. Concerns about sustainability are evident since many of the proposed projects are new initiatives with limited or no implementation history. Additionally, some of the costs are difficult to assess given the limited information provided. A large percentage of the budget is allocated for creation of staff positions, and the applicant does not demonstrate how the positions would directly increase services to Children with High Needs and their families or positively affect access and affordability of school readiness for this targeted population.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

The state has created a TQRIS that incorporated the standards that was piloted in ten centers across three cities in May 2007. The TQRIS was then further developed and the state proposes to begin its implementation of Grow NJ, the TQRIS, in 2012. Grow NJ is designed for use by child care centers, Family Child Care, Head Start, Early Head Start, and School District Preschool Programs. Programs can begin working on the "steps" of the TQRIS after having a child care license for one year. The TQRIS is based on a set of Tiered Program Standards and contains five "steps" which can be achieved. Grow NJ has a set of preschool standards that were adopted in 2004 and later revised and readopted in 2009 after alignment with Common Core Standards. The Governor's Council has adopted standards for birth to age 3 by modifying those of Minnesota and plans to begin their implementation in April 2012. The standards meaningfully differentiate program quality levels across the five "steps" or tiers. The Comprehensive Assessment System component is NOT met. The state proposes allowing programs to choose assessments with training provided by the TQRIS on selected measures, including Ages & Stages Questionnaires, Early Screening Inventory-Revised, ITERS, FCCRS, ECERS-R, SELA, PCMI, Arnett Caregiver Interaction Scale, and CLASS. The qualifications are identified for each step in Grow NJ and these are aligned with the Workforce Core Knowledge and Competencies Framework, but this framework was designed for afterschool programs. Family engagement strategies and health promotion are addressed. Effective data practices are NOT yet evident, but plans are proposed to integrate existing data systems with grant funds and to develop an online family portal with searchable fields. The TQRIS baseline (Step 1) is aligned with NJ licensing requirements. Step 1 requires programs to obtain licensing or be registered with DCF and meet required regulatory standards. Alternative standards are provided for school settings and Family Child Care since licensing regulations are not required for all settings. It appears that programs can elect to pursue Step 2 or higher levels or can simply remain at Step 1. Programs assemble documentation required for the selected Step and then develop an Improvement Plan to help them meet unmet criteria. Many of the criteria were derived from the State Preschool Program and Head Start Performance Standards. Minimum scores required on the ECERS, ITERS or FCCRS are identified for each step of the TQRIS. Programs that meet all Head Start Performance Standards or State Preschool Program Standards and have high quality Environmental Ratings scores will be able to automatically rate higher as will those programs accredited by NAEYC. Points were awarded for a medium-quality/partially implemented response. All components are not adequately addressed in the proposed TQRIS. It has only been minimally implemented at 10 child care centers in a pilot program. It is not clear if all of these were preschool programs since the birth-age 3 standards are proposed for implementation in April 2012. A review of the TQRIS steps prompted questions regarding how some of the criteria will be documented or assessed as well as how the TQRIS would be implemented on a statewide scale. Licensed programs meet Step 1 requirements, but it is not clear if programs are required to be assessed and expected to move forward to maintain a continuing license.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	15	8

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

The state has developed MOUs with all state departments providing services under contract to children with high needs. The applicant states it will ensure participation of state-funded preschool programs, Early Head Start and Head Start programs, children served by section 619 of Part B and Part C, children participating in Title I funded programs, and children in programs receiving CCDF funds. The state's first tiered level of the TQRIS reflects minimum licensing standards. The state proposes maintaining subsidy rates, providing Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA) to promote retention and professionalization of early childhood educators, and creating agreements with DHHS and DCF to serve specific populations. Enhancement funding will be available for programs to address identified Program Improvement areas to improve quality. The state proposes tiered subsidy

reimbursements, with programs earning a "3" on the TORIS getting 5% reimbursement, those earning a "4" getting a 10% reimbursement, and those earning a "5" getting a 20% reimbursement. The applicant does not identify what policies or practices would be implemented to help more families afford high-quality child care. The state proposes targeting programs in school districts with low socioeconomic status where at least 50% of the population is eligible for free or reduced lunch. No participation targets are established for those serving English learners, though these children comprise the highest percentage of Children with High Needs from birth to age 5 in the state. Family care sites and child care centers serving subsidized children will also be "selected" to participate along with 71 private schools for children with disabilities from birth to age 5. It is not clear how participating programs will be identified or "selected" to participate in the TORIS each year. The applicant's targets are not clearly presented. Though the applicant proposes to implement the TORIS in 2,695 sites beginning in August 2012, this only reflects 27% of family child cares, 23% of state preschool programs, and 50% of licensed child care centers. The state proposes using a 4-year rollout with 795 classrooms enrolled per year in the State Preschool Program with all other sites participating in a 6-year roll-out. Family child care will not receive Technical Assistance Team site visits, but a rationale for this decision is not provided. The applicant does not anticipate full participation of programs until 2018. It is not clear what the roll-out entails, whether in a 4-year or 6-year implementation plan. Of concern is the applicant's proposal that programs earning a 3 or higher would not be rated again for 3 years. Programs earning a 1 (minimal licensing regulations met) or 2 will be rated again within 2 years. The trajectory and proposed plan for improvements for individual programs earning a 1 or 2 based on TORIS ratings are not clear. The targets listed in Performance Measures for (B)(2)(c) are ambitious, but given the information provided in the state plan, the state does not make a case or provide evidence that they are achievable. For example, the state identifies 10 programs currently using the TORIS from the pilot program, and then projects that 479 programs will be participating by December 2012. Sufficient information is not provided in terms of implementation timelines and plans to document the state's ability to meet this performance measure. Using the Quality and Implementation Rubric, this criterion was rated as medium-quality response/partial implementation and 8 points were awarded. The state's plan cannot be characterized as High Quality. All programs would not be participating in the TORIS until 2018 and the state does not make the case that state appropriations will sustain the activities beyond the grant funding cycle. It is not clear how the policies and practices identified would help more families afford high-quality child care or increase or maintain the supply of high quality child care. The applicant does not address how the needs of children throughout the state are addressed since no information regarding the location of participating programs is provided.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

The state proposes paying early childhood education faculty from public NJ State colleges and universities to conduct Environmental Ratings observations, as well as two additional content learning assessments, though these are not mentioned in reliability or assessment trainings. The CLASS is mentioned in trainings, but it is not clear when it would be implemented or how it would be used. Historically, they have only observed 12% of the State Preschool Program classrooms each year. The applicant proposes using this Consortium of faculty and issuing an RFP to solicit raters, after which MOUs will be created by March 2012 and an inter-rater protocol used to train raters to reliability on the ECERS, ITERS, FCCRS, CLASS, and a validation checklist for the TORIS. Protocols for conducting visits and observations are proposed for development by July 2012. It is not clear if an adequate number of raters are available through the university faculty to accommodate demand or if DOE anticipates observations and assessments beyond the State Funded Preschools to ALL state funded early learning and development programs. A procedure for managing requests and assigning raters is not defined. While a program entering the TORIS will have up to two years to prepare for their initial rating, it is not clear how much time will lapse between a provider's request for the rating assessment and the actual visit to conduct the observations in at least 50% of the learning groups or classrooms, with at least one group for each age of children served represented. A list of current members of the Consortium or active raters/observers among early childhood education higher education faculty is not provided. The applicant proposes a rating team but does not identify how many members would be on the team or how they would be identified. The validation checklist would also be developed by the Early Learning Improvement Consortium (higher education faculty) and would be completed by the rating team, but no further information is provided concerning how the validation checklist would be developed or how information would be shared with providers. The timeline is a concern since the Consortium would be formed in April 2012 and protocols, validation instruments, and training for reliability on assessments are proposed to be completed in only four months. Training higher education faculty members in August at the beginning of an academic year for colleges and universities could be problematic. No information is given detailing the length, duration, or training of raters proposed. The budget indicates this would be contracted with an outside

agency. The TQRIS raters would be trained to reliability on the Environmental Rating Scales and increasing levels on these are required for steps 2 through 5 on the TQRIS; these scales, however, do not capture the teacher-child interaction component of quality. It is not clear where or how the CLASS would be integrated or used in the TQRIS. The state proposes creation of an online Family portal that will allow families to search programs, but it is not clear what programs will be included in the database. It is also not clear if parents will be able to search by criteria such as subsidized care options or programs serving children with disabilities or English learners. The applicant proposes that DCF will provide licensing information and make it available, but does not explain how this will be accomplished. CC R&R will provide information about registered or approved Family Child Care providers, but the mechanism for accomplishing this is not explained. The applicant proposes that families will be able to use the online Family Portal in December 2012, but a timeline for accomplishing this task is not provided. It is not clear why raters (presumably from higher education faculty consortium) would require training on use of the electronic portal or how they would be involved in sharing information with families. The applicant suggests that the portal will match families with programs that align with their needs and values, but it is not clear how this would be accomplished. A public relations campaign lead by DHS is proposed in the grant. The applicant does not address how quality rating and licensing information would be provided to parents of enrolled children other than through development of the Family Portal and the proposed public relations campaign spearheaded by DHS. The types of data, information, and licensing history that would be provided are not identified. It is not clear if the general public would also have access to these data. This criterion was scored using the Quality and Implementation Rubric. Points were awarded for medium-quality response with no/minimal implementation currently evidenced.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

The state proposes that early learning and development programs receiving state funding will be required to participate in the TQRIS (Grow NJ). Head Start programs that do not receive state funds would not be required to participate. The applicant proposes an orientation to all programs as well as information that could be given to directors/administrators through online and in-person training. Resources and materials would be developed by the RTT-ELC Leadership Team, and a Training of Trainers would then be provided to County Technical Assistance Teams which should be established by August 2012. The timelines are of concern since the Teams would only be established in 2012, training of trainers would be needed, orientation is scheduled for delivery to programs in July 2012 before the teams are established with the TQRIS implementation scheduled for August 2012. The proposed 40 learning modules are described, but it is not clear how the Learning Coaches would effectively work with 35 classrooms each and also interface with the County Technical Assistance Teams to support programs toward continuous improvement. The roles of the TA Team members in assisting programs as they strive to achieve a step on the TQRIS are not clearly presented. The applicant proposes a Family Engagement Coordinator in each of the state's 21 counties to assist working families who have Children with High Needs gain access to needed services and programs. Each Coordinator will create a county map identifying family programs and resources in the county. The Coordinator will recruit families to serve on the County Council. No specific supports to meet needs are proposed or identified by the applicant in the grant proposal other than the development of an Online Family Portal. Incentives for programs to continuously improve include funding for college coursework or rationally recognized certificates, tiered subsidy reimbursements that increase with increased levels of attainment on the TQRIS, and program enhancement funds to assist participating programs in moving up the Grow NJ steps. A public awareness and publicity campaign for families, programs, and early childhood educators will be initiated in April 2012. The state projects that 44% of sites will rate at Steps 3, 4 or 5 by the end of the grant. It is not clear if this refers to 44% of all state-funded sites serving Children with High Needs and receiving state funds, or 44% of sites that have participated in the TQRIS during the grant's duration. Given the lack of clarity regarding what the percentage represents, it is difficult to assess if the target is ambitious yet achievable. The state proposes that 25% of centers and family child care providers serving subsidized children will be in the top two steps by the end of the grant period, representing an increase of 18% increase in the overall number of sites in the top two steps during the grant's 4-year funding cycle. Performance Measure (B)(4)(c)(1) proposes moving from 10 programs currently participating in the pilot of the TQRIS to 1,752 programs participating by 2015 with numbers of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in top tier programs increasing

from 1.6% (current) to 64.3%. While these targets are ambitious, the number of questions unanswered or information not provided in the details of the State Plan make the achievement of these targets questionable.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

The state proposes development of a Request for Proposals (RFP) to identify an independent contractor to design and implement a multi-year evaluation. The applicant proposes an efficacy study to determine if higher steps on the TQRS results in greater child growth and readiness for all participating children in four cohort groups in the grant period. Additionally, the state proposes to study the relationship between the identified steps and program quality, as well as investigation of reliability of assessments, the effectiveness of technical assistance, and analysis of monitoring and reporting data. The applicant's RFP will require gathering of child and family characteristics with survey data, direct assessments of children to determine child growth and development, early childhood educator interviews, use of a kindergarten readiness assessment as an outcome measure, interviews with site administrators, and assessments of program quality. It is not clear what is meant by entrusting the contractor with the responsibility to administer child outcome evaluations. The state will rely on the outside contracted agency to design and implement evaluations. The state does not propose to function as part of a cross-State evaluation consortium. The State does not have a High-Quality Plan to design and implement evaluations of the relationship between the TQRIS steps and learning outcomes for children served by the State's Early Learning and Development Programs.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

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

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

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

(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3

academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)

The applicant states that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate across each group and that they cover all Essential Domains of Readiness. The preschool standards were favorably reviewed by national experts in content domains, assessment, and social-emotional development. Specific examples of linguistic and cultural responsiveness in the state's preschool standards are provided by the applicant. Specific examples of standards that emphasize inclusion of preschoolers with disabilities are also provided. The Preschool Standards are aligned with the state's K-12 curriculum standards across all domains. In June 2010, New Jersey adopted the Common Core Standards for English/language arts and mathematics and an initial alignment of the preschool standards with the Common Core standards has been completed. The preschool standards are imbedded in the state's guidelines for the TQRIS as well as the state's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. TQRIS participating programs are expected to choose from state-approved curricula aligned with the standards, each of which includes an assessment component as well. Since the birth to three standards were recently adopted, they are now being aligned with the selected state-approved curricula and incorporated into Assessments and the Infant Toddler credential and related professional development with the goal of these tasks being completed by March 2012. The state proposes that both sets of standards will be delivered through training modules used by the County Technical Assistance Teams at the CC R&R agencies. A description of the modules is provided, but they are not yet developed. No information is provided concerning the structure or duration of the trainings though there is mention of monthly trainings by the County Leadership Teams. While only partial implementation has occurred, the state has presented a high-quality plan to address statewide implementation of the standards.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.	20	14

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

The state proposes to review and select screening measures, formative assessments, and measures of environmental quality and adult-child interaction through a panel of representatives from each type of early learning and development program, higher education representatives, Head Start/Early Head Start representatives, family child care providers, and LEAs, would form an Assessment Steering Committee. The Assessment Steering Committee would meet within the first two months of the grant period and DOE would lead the process of identifying the menu of approved assessments and would provide feedback on the kindergarten entry assessment to be identified as well. It is not clear how DOE proposes to work directly with participating programs to select appropriate assessments and instruments. The applicant proposes training in each of the 21 counties provided by the County Technical Assistance Teams along with feedback from Learning Coaches regarding assessment data. No other specific information is given concerning strategies proposed to equip Early Childhood Educators with knowledge about assessment instruments' purposes and uses in the Assessment System. The state proposes that the Assessment Steering Committee will create a crosswalk between assessments already implemented in Head Start, the State Preschool Program, Title I programs, and IDEA Part B and Part C programs, as well as develop guidelines about duplicate or overlapping assessments and sharing of assessment data. The state proposes that program leaders or directors will be required to enter child and classroom data on a Data Summary Tool to be reviewed by the County Technical Assistance Teams. It is not clear why the applicant did not propose development of a data entry system that would allow data to be entered into a shared database system. The state does not propose use of the data but rather only that the Data Summary

Tool (a worksheet or document) be reviewed by the County Teams. It does not appear that the data would be aggregated or collected to inform policies or decisions. No data reporting or coordination of assessment data across services or agencies to the state level is addressed in this section. The applicant proposes a 6-year roll out for trainings related to assessments. Formative assessment instruments will be determined by the curriculum selected by the provider. While the state proposes professional development on formative assessments by the curriculum developers for program cohorts of 50, information is not provided concerning when, where, how often or by whom the trainings will be conducted. Learning Coaches are given the responsibility of training leaders/directors and teachers/caregivers in their county, but it is not clear if this will be achievable since each Learning Coach is responsible for up to 35 programs. The approach or method for implementing a Training of Trainers model for screening instruments is not clear. No specific screening instruments are identified. Further information is needed to demonstrate a High-Quality Plan to support implementation of a developmentally appropriate Comprehensive Assessment System. While the DOE has identified specific instruments that might be considered for state approval, much of the particular design and implementation of HOW the assessment plan might be enacted seem to be lacking.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)

The program standards include a set of five family standards which are built into the TQRIS step levels. The family engagement standards in the state's TQRIS were heavily influenced by the Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education Standards, the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Framework, and the New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards. The degree of family engagement required for each step level increases at each tiered level of the TQRIS. The state proposes creation of a series of professional development modules that will address the progression of the standards for family engagement tied to the five steps of Grow NJ. These will be delivered by Family Engagement Coordinators in each county beginning in September 2012. Five module topics are identified by the applicant, but they have not yet been developed. No information is provided concerning delivery format or structure/duration of the proposed training. These modules would be designed to train and support Early Childhood Educators on an ongoing basis to implement the family engagement strategies included in the program standards and TQRIS step levels. The state proposes establishing 21 County Councils for Young Children. These Councils would be overseen by a Project Director and administrative staff person. At least 51% of the Council membership would be comprised of families. A Family Engagement Coordinator would also be available in each county to help connect families with supports and resources in each particular county. It is not clear how each county or the state would leverage other existing resources available through programs, agencies, and family, friend and neighbor caregivers, to promote family support and engagement. DCF would manage the County Councils while DHS would redirect existing positions to create the Family Engagement Coordinators. The plans for engaging and supporting families of Children with High Needs seems to be heavily reliant on County Councils and Family Engagement Coordinators at the county level. A wider regional or state agenda is not evident in the State Plan. The state acknowledges that approximately 28% of Children With High Needs are English learners, but the specific needs and approaches or strategies to engage and support these families, their children, and their needs is not 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 (b)(1)

The Governor's Council is currently working to incorporate knowledge about use of data to inform decision making, curriculum content in math and science, and guiding children with behavioral issues into the NJ Core Knowledge and Competencies Framework by December 2011. The state has developed a Career Lattice that aligns with the NJ Core Knowledge and Competency Framework. Six credentials are displayed, including the CDA Credential, the CCP, the NJ Infant/Toddler Credential, the Child Development Specialist Credential, a P-3 teaching license, and the New Jersey Administrators' Credential recognized by NAEYC. The Governor's Council is currently determining the various credentialing programs and agencies providing training for credentials. This task should be completed by May 2012. An audit of professional development and preparation offerings should be completed by December 2012. The state proposes creation of a Professional Development and Preparation Network but further information is not provided. The only engagement of postsecondary institutions seems to be with hiring of early childhood faculty to conduct assessment visits for the Environmental Rating Scales.

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (D)(2)

The state proposes to improve the effectiveness of early childhood educators by providing professional development and training by County Technical Assistance Teams and Curriculum Developers for state-approved curricula. It is not clear how the state proposes to expand access through the existing state higher education system and existing credentialing programs. The applicant proposes provision of scholarships of \$3,000 for site directors, family child care providers, and teachers and \$1,000 for teaching assistants. It is not clear if these are available only one time or if these are available each year of the grant period. It is also not clear how it will be determined which participants will receive the scholarships. The applicant does not specify how scholarship recipients will be expected to commit to advancing through the Career Lattice. Tiered subsidy reimbursements are also proposed. Policies and incentives to increase retention are not directly addressed. The state currently has a Workforce Registry management system, but participation is voluntary and only 6,076 users are entered. All Grow NJ educators will be entered in the Workforce Registry and the \$10 registration fee will be waived during the grant period. It is not clear what incentive there is for providers to register nor is the registration process explained. The state proposes linking the Workforce Registry data management system to other statewide data systems. The state does not address whether the data would be available in aggregate form to the general public. The state reports that the Governor's Council is currently conducting an audit of professional development and preparation offerings that is expected to be completed by December 2012. It is not clear how the next phase of aligned with

the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework will be accomplished or how the projected number of educators with credentials listed on Performance Measures (D)(2)(d)(1) will be accomplished. The state does not address how higher education institutions will be involved or if they will be able to absorb the increased demand for courses and credentials with existing faculty and resources when scholarships are available. Other than provision of scholarships, it is not clear how the state proposes to increase the number of Early Childhood Educators earning higher credentials.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

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

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	20	12
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)		
<p>The state proposes use of a formative criterion-referenced observational assessment as a measure of kindergarten readiness that addresses all domains of readiness and is administered within the first two months of school entry by the kindergarten teachers. A pilot of the Work Sampling System by Meisels is currently implemented in two school districts with 538 kindergarten students. No further information is provided regarding the pilot, but the state proposed statewide training on the assessment and implementation by 2013. The manner in which the training and implementation would occur, along with suggested professional development and supports, is not specifically detailed, though cohorts of 30 teachers are mentioned in the budget narrative. Timelines could be challenging since training is not proposed until late August through mid September 2013, the same time implementation would begin. Full statewide implementation would not be accomplished until September 2018 though it is not clear how the rollout of additional cohorts would be planned and implemented from 2013 through 2018. The anticipated cost for the project is \$1.2 million to be fully funded by DOE with new state funds both during and after the grant period. The state has developed a plan to build on existing databases already housed in individual departments, but it is not evident that a Statewide Longitudinal Data system exists. It is not clear how readiness scores would be derived, the persons responsible for entering kindergarten assessment data into the database, or how the data would be linked to other data management systems. The state demonstrated the alignment of the Work Sampling System domains with the domains of readiness in the state's Preschool Standards Domains of Readiness. The applicant reports reliability data indicating correlations between teacher ratings on the Work Sampling System in language/literacy and math and children's performance in math, language/literacy subscales of the Woodcock-Johnson Revised Tests of Achievement. The Work Sampling System has been used reliability with English learners and children with disabilities as reported by Meisels.</p>		

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

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

(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

The state proposes to link data from multiple sources and agencies, including the NJ Statewide Longitudinal Data System, NJ SMART, DCF Licensing System, DHS Workforce Registry, and the Grow NJ Data System with technical leadership and support from the NJ Office of Information Technology. The state proposes creation of a linked system of data sources to capture existing Essential Data Elements with the intent of identifying gaps where data is needed over a four-year period. The applicant proposes that integration of NJ SMART will begin by the end of 2012 and continue until completion in 2015. The state proposes that single unique identifier by every source system will not be necessary for children or early childhood educators since tunable, probabilistic matching is used to create crosswalks between discrete state systems to aggregate data. The state proposes creation of a Data Governance Council that will hold an annual data summit to review data, provide feedback, and review quality of outputs and reports. The applicant proposes two staff members to devote to the project with efforts sustained post-grant by state agencies and the Office of Information Technology is appropriations are made. It is not clear if two positions are adequate given the expansive nature of the proposed project and its complexity. The state proposes a plan to build a Statewide Longitudinal Data System with all the Essential Data Elements, which it refers to as NJ-EASEL (New Jersey Enterprise Analysis System for Early Learning), which is described as a collection of related systems. Though the applicant clearly presents the plan with all required elements, points were awarded based on minimal implementation at this point.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	189

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

Priorities

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

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

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

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

Comments on (P)(3)

The applicant addressed criterion(E)(1) but at least 70 percent of the maximum points available were not earned.

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No

Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.

Yes

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

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

Comments on Absolute Priority

The state plan was comprehensive and addressed all required elements with ambitious targets. The state proposes a common statewide TQRIS that would be implemented in programs serving Children with High Needs that are funded with state dollars. The state proposes initiatives to strengthen the skills, knowledge, and abilities of its early childhood education workforce, and proposes implementation of a statewide kindergarten criterion-referenced assessment and creation of a comprehensive integrated database system.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # NJ-5024

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 4:50 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

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

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Question, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 20. Includes detailed text and a 'Comments on (A)(1)' section. Row 2: (A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals, 20, 20.

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (A)(2)

The response was scored at 20 of 20 points; the response is rated as a high quality response. The applicant has articulated ambitious achievable goals in the three areas essential to a successful reform agenda in ELD. The applicant presents a useful schematic and tables that conceptually integrate the principle goals of improving program quality, improving outcomes for children with high needs and closing the readiness gap. The proposed goals and performance targets are referenced against experience in New Jersey's successful preschool program as well as professional literature and experience of other states. Rationales for specific targets are articulated in the narrative. In addition to clearly articulating goals, the narrative describes eleven primary projects each referenced against selection criteria and focus areas. The details provided in the narrative establish a "clear and credible path." The applicant has provided specific detailed rationales for selection of each focused investment area. Rationales are referenced to current status of ELD in New Jersey. New Jersey has elected to respond to four areas C1, 2 and 4; D1 and D2 and E1 and E2. For each of the selected focus areas the applicant provided a brief description of the current status of ELD programs in NJ and then gave a brief forecast of how the efforts under RTT-ELC will improve, modify or expand the status of that focus area, which served to orient the reader to subsequent sections of the application.

	Available	Score
(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State	10	8
<p>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--</p> <p>(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--</p> <p>(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;</p> <p>(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;</p> <p>(3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and</p> <p>(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;</p> <p>(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--</p> <p>(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;</p> <p>(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</p> <p>(3) A signature from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency; and</p>		

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (A)(3)

The response was scored at 8 of 10 points; the response is rated as a high quality partially implemented response. The applicant has explicitly addressed each of the criteria requested in the Notice Inviting Applications. The narrative and supporting attachments including MOU's and required signatures and the Governors cover letter make a convincing case regarding New Jersey's strong commitment to the articulated plan from the many stakeholders. A convincing case was made that New Jersey has a strong history of broad stakeholder involvement in ELD. The applicant has described a clear and believable organized structure. The New Jersey Commission for Early Learning and Development will oversee implementation of the plan. Commissioner of Education will appoint the RTT-ELC Executive Director who will lead the seven member state team and oversee day-to-day administration. The narrative describes each of the participating entities and the attachments contain detailed MOU's for the Departments of Children and Families, Department of Human Services, New Jersey Council for Young Children and the New Jersey Head Start collaboration office. There is a detailed scope of work for the Department of Education which houses the Commission and has the overall lead. The narrative also details the responsibilities of each of the four work groups; County Technical Assistance Teams, NJ EASEL (the Data Governance and Development Team); the Early Learning Improvement Consortium; and the Professional Development and Preparation Network will work together. The narrative, tables in the narrative, letters of support and other attachments provide a convincing statement supporting the breadth and depth of New Jersey's commitment to the state plan.

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

The response was scored at 15 of 15 points; this response is rated as a high quality response. The applicant provides details regarding use of not only existing dollars, but also of personnel and initiatives across agencies. This information provides a compelling case that New Jersey is serious about creating a well integrated system. The budget tables and narrative are clear and well justified. Budgets are presented by projects and then by agencies. Use of existing resources in coordination with RTT-ELC funds are well documented. The applicant describes a process whereby all of the participating agencies came together and examined existing use of resources and areas overlap as a basis for developing the RTT-ELC budget. Such a step is viewed as evidence that NJ takes the charge of developing a system seriously. Through this process the applicant identified opportunities for realigning existing funds including: coordinating personnel at the county level to create interagency technical assistance teams; an opportunity to leverage resources with the office of Information Technology for an integrated data system, and a re-purposing of CCDF funds to encourage participation in the TQRIS. In each of these cases RTT-ELC funds will fill in and enhance these projects and strategies. County-based teams cross agency boundaries and are well described. Personnel to be employed appear to be at senior levels as is appropriate for the expectations. Funds and strategies for sustainability are described in projects where work will continue after RTT-ELC funding. The applicant specifically addresses the issue of sustainability by referencing the reevaluation of use of funds engaged in the development the proposal and the fact that the MOU's developed speak to the re-purposing of existing funds and the identification of new funds (albeit subject to appropriation). The applicant also speaks to the point that RTT-ELC funds will be used strategically to support development of infrastructure and the point that once, these investments are made, maintenance is less costly. The budget is high quality and comprehensive. The applicant points out that by Executive Order the Commission will exist and go forward regardless of the outcome of the RTT-ELC competition for New Jersey, showing strong commitment to early learning and development.

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(1)

The response was scored at 8 of 10 points; this response is rated as high quality partially implemented plan. While the existing system is well developed, it has yet to be expanded to all programs. The applicant describes a TQRIS with five levels, the use of which began in 2005. The system meets the required criteria of (B)(1)(a)(1-6) and has been fully implemented in New Jersey preschool programs. Proposed plans for "Grow NJ" call for expanding enrollment across all programs including family child care homes. Strategies for children with disabilities and English learners are specifically addressed in the standards. The Grow NJ materials are in the process of being translated into Spanish. Indicators at each level require adaptations and modifications to meet the needs of children with developmental delays as well as those with medical issues. The applicant has documented in the narrative and through tables the existing Grow NJ tiered standards. The system was based upon well accepted national standards including NAEYC standards. Use of the resulting standards have been piloted and refined through an iterative process. Rating in tiers 2 through 5 are based on attainment of quality indicators and scores on structured classroom observation instruments. Plans include making information available through a publicly accessible portal. The TQRIS system requires licensure in order to enter the system (tier 1), thus meeting the requirement of (B)(1)(c) linkage between the state licensing system and TQRIS.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(2)

The response was scored at 12 of 15 points; the response is rated as a high quality partially implemented plan. The applicant has provided detailed plans for enrollment of all publicly funded programs, allowing six years to insure that highest levels of the TQRIS are met. Plans are sufficiently detailed, and include a quality plan to improve an iterative process to be informed by data and experience. In this continuous quality improvement process the applicant plans to refine recruitment materials and strategies for enrolling programs and refine incentives based upon enrollment data and quality tiers attained. Through use of these data points the applicant will refine their technical assistance at the state and county levels. The strategy of well-trained county-based-teams support these targets as ambitious yet achievable. Plans are described to provide incentives to programs and families to encourage enrollment. Examples of incentives that the applicant plans to use include: subsidy rates to families who enroll children in high quality settings; providing training and Technical Assistance to programs that promote professionalization of Early Childhood Educators (ECE's); and creating agreements with Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS and Department of Children and Youth (DCY) to support children with special needs in neighborhood settings. The applicant has set ambitious yet achievable targets for the number and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the TQRIS. The applicant has differentiated the target by program type. The range in enrollment by 2015 presented in Performance Measures (D)(2)(c) varies from 66.7% for birth to five settings in districts identified as high needs to a low of 20.9% for programs receiving CCDF funds. In the narrative the applicant provides a plausible rationale for this variability across program types, and forecasts enrollment for programs serving children with high needs to be at 65% by 2015 and 100% by 2018. The targets appear to reflect careful analyses of needs and resources, and for this reason are judged to be ambitious and achievable.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs	15	12
<p>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--</p> <p>(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</p> <p>(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.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(3)

The response was scored at 12 of 15 points; this plan is rated as a high quality partially implemented plan. The applicant describes an existing process for training raters to an appropriate level of inter-rater reliability for the state preschool program classrooms. This system of rating to inform a continuous improvement cycle will be expanded to Grow New Jersey (the RTT-ELC program name). A detailed plan for expansion of the process is described, and a helpful schematic illustrating this process is included. Programs are reviewed on a 2 or 3 year cycle. The applicant describes plans for making a "consumer report" online system that families will be able to search on many fields including quality level of the program, zip code, type of program and age group served. The description of the system appears very functional and of high quality, but is only partially implemented.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (B)(4)

The response was scored at 16 of 20 points; this plan is rated as a high quality partially implemented plan. In regards to (B)(4)(a) the applicant plans to expand on existing policies and practices that provide supports and incentives through the interagency county-based Technical Assistance (TA) teams. The applicant describes several strategies for providing incentives to programs and for personnel. Differential reimbursement amounts are tied to quality levels beginning at tier 3. The applicant's plan in this regard is sufficiently detailed and judged to be high quality. In regards to (B)(4)(b) the applicant describes a system where the county TA systems will have Family Engagement Coordinators who will assist families in learning about and identifying quality programs. Plans also include county level Councils with 51% parents. The applicant's plan in this regard is comprehensive and sufficiently detailed and judged to be high quality. The applicant describes a plan for a comprehensive communications strategy with information targeted to families, ELD programs and early childhood educators. The Grow NJ portal will be available in several languages. Resource information is also planned in multiple formats. The county-based TA teams all include a disability specialist and linkage with SPAN the DOE Parent Training Initiative. This presence of a disability specialist on each county team indicates that disability issues are a serious and well supported consideration for New Jersey. The applicant has described a multifaceted plan to address the goals of high quality programs being available to high needs families. Performance measures contain ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing the number of ELD programs at top tiers, and the number and percentages of high needs children participating in top tiers that are well justified in the text.

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

Comments on (B)(5)

The response was scored at 15 of 15 points and is rated as high quality. The applicant plans to issue an RFP for independent contractors to design and implement a multi-faceted evaluation. In the application the RFP requirements are provided in excellent detail. The application specifies the type of design (a cross-sequential, longitudinal Randomized Controlled Trial(RCT). Requirements for sampling, power analysis, types of measures, subgroup analyses, ensuring inter-rater reliability are all detailed. The applicant details a high quality design that will answer the questions as to whether the : 1) tiers on the States TQRIS accurately reflects differentiated levels of program quality (validity of the TQRIS) and 2) the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning development, and school readiness. Additionally this design will permit New Jersey to answer questions about aspects of program implementation across program types. These analyses may permit assistance that is more targeted to program characteristics. New Jersey has proposed a very high quality design which fully addresses the required questions and holds promise for providing even more information around program type by program quality interactions. The RFP process is expected to be completed by March 2012 and sampling for cohorts for the Randomized Control Trial completed by August 2012 so pretesting may begin in the fall of 2012. This plan is ambitious, but the detail provided in the action plan which will be required in the RFP for the study indicated that what is proposed is doable.

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

Each State must address in its application--

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

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

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(1)

The response was scored at 16 of 20 points; this response is rated as a high quality substantially implemented plan. The applicant provides a comprehensive and coherent description of the current status of New Jersey's Early Learning and Development standards. The current standards are high quality and cover all Essential Domains. The applicant documents the sources and process through which the standards were developed, including expert reviewers who were engaged for the preschool standards. The standards specifically and appropriately address children with disabilities and are linguistically and culturally responsive to New Jersey's population. The applicant describes an essentially completed process of alignment of ELD standards with the states K-12 core curriculum standards. This alignment occurred with the 2009 revision. The applicant describes five strategies for providing existing personnel and personnel in preparation with training and technical assistance regarding the standards. These ambitious but achievable strategies taken together are comprehensive across agencies and types of providers. Strategies include 1) coursework at the preservice level; 2) onsite training in high needs districts to

include Head Start and community providers; 3) regional meetings for EC supervisors; 4) onsite TA to high needs school districts; 5) training targeted to school and early childhood administrators. The applicant expects to have trained 13,640 school and center-based educators and 482 family childcare educators by the end of 2015. The applicant forecasts training an additional 5337 educators by the end of 2017. The applicant provides specific, ambitious and articulate expectations for the number of school and center based educators and family child care educators who will be prepared in this content. The applicant has detailed excellent plans documenting the development of high quality ELD standards and strategies for implementing the plans statewide.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(2)

The response was scored at 16 of 20 points; this response is rated as a high quality partially implemented plan. The applicant has detailed specific plans that are responsive to criteria of selecting appropriate instruments, supporting the use of these instruments, aligning integrating and sharing assessment results and training ECE's in use of the assessments in order to inform practice. Specifically the applicant details high quality plans as follows. The applicant has convened and will continue to convene a broad stakeholder group who will select assessments and review and align requirements by April 2012. The county based technical assistance teams will receive training in the assessments and in turn will provide training and technical assistance to support programs in understanding and use of the assessment tools. The applicant proposes to ensure alignment and integration of assessments and sharing results by having county teams as well as the broad stakeholders group address these issues. In order to minimize duplication of assessment of individual children across agencies a data summary tool will be developed. The applicant plans to replicate training strategies used in the state preschool program to support implementation and interpretation of each assessment type. Trainings will be delivered regionally, beginning in the 2012-2013 school year. The applicant has forecasted ambitious but achievable targets of the numbers of Early Childhood Educators to be trained each grant year. Taken together New Jersey has responded with a well-developed high quality comprehensive plan in regards to supporting effective use of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (C)(4)

This response was scored at 16 points out of a possible 20 points. This response is rated as a high quality partially implemented plan. The applicant describes a process undertaken by the statewide Parent Advocacy Network in which family engagement standards from 6 early learning programs were reviewed to determine common themes. Five themes were identified. These themes were crafted into standards that have been adopted and aligned with steps in the quality rating system. The process detailed by the applicant appeared to be thorough and inclusive in general regarding family engagement and specific with respect to cultural and linguistic appropriateness. Attention to the issue of cultural and linguistic appropriateness was evident in the earlier descriptions of the TQRIS statements thus the rating of a high quality plan. New Jersey has already trained over 6000 staff across various programs in these standards and has set a target that 70% of all ECE's serving children with high needs will be prepared in these standards over the grant period. The remaining 30% will be prepared by 2018. County based Family Engagement coordinators will provide these trainings. Staff from all program types including the Early Intervention system, Head Start staff and home visiting program staff are targeted to receive this training thus reflecting attention to all types of ELD programs. The applicant proposes establishing county level councils for young children. These councils will serve as a primary vehicle for promoting family support and engagement. This council will follow a standard protocol for resource mapping across programs using funds from the Department of Children and Families and Human Services. The applicant has proposed a detailed comprehensive high quality plan regarding Family Engagement strategies which is viewed as having a high probability of successful implementation.

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
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--</p> <p>(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;</p> <p>(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p>		
<p>Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation</p>		
Comments on (D)(1)		
<p>The response to developing a workforce knowledge workforce and competency credentials was scored at 16 points out of a possible 20 points, and is rated as a high quality partially implemented plan. The NJ Council for Young Children has developed a framework and set of core knowledge and competencies. The framework covers birth to 8 years and core knowledge and competencies in seven areas. The NJ core knowledge and competencies framework once revised and completed will be incorporated into the Workforce Registry. The applicant describes the development of a multilevel career lattice to accommodate the varied backgrounds and multiple degrees and credentials. The already developed career lattice is aligned with the relevant higher education degrees, various credentials and knowledge and competency framework. The applicant acknowledges a need to update the lattice and has undertaken this work to be completed in 2012. The applicant describes existing linkage with the twenty eight 2 and 4 year institutions of Higher Education (IHE) in New Jersey. Department of Education P-3 credential is linked to NJ Early Learning standards. Building upon this existing work the applicant proposes forming a Professional Development and Preparation Network which will provide a forum for key stakeholders to consider workforce issues. The applicant has proposed a plan that is comprehensive and fully responsive to the requirements of a common state knowledge and competency framework, a common statewide and appropriately aligned framework and full engagement of post secondary education in New Jersey.</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)

The response was scored at 16 points out of a possible 20 points and is rated as a high quality partially implemented plan. The applicant has detailed excellent plans to address the issue of expanding opportunities for professional development aligned with the core knowledge and competency framework with three types of training: Regional trainings on assessment and curriculum; selected trainings by county TA teams; and targeted on site assistance. Targeted trainings will be based upon a program self assessment using a specific template. The applicant describes specific plans to offer scholarships to the full range of personnel within the workforce, contingent upon individual commitment to advancing in the career lattice. A contract is already in place through the Department of Human Services whereby these incentives are supported. The applicant already has a voluntary Workforce Registry in place. This Registry was recently updated (March 2011) and is linked to the NJ career lattice. RTT-ELC funds will permit linkage to other statewide data systems. Plans are described to use data elements from the "Registry" to enhance policies and planning once more users are registered. These plans seem sound and doable. The applicant points out that all 28 IHE offer appropriately aligned credentials. However because credential coursework is of variable quality, plans are described to evaluate the quality of offerings by Dec 2012. Meanwhile the applicant has set ambitious but achievable targets for expanding the number of credentialed educators from the current number of 4317 to 10,928 by 2015. Specific targets for expansion in numbers and percent of the workforce are described in the narrative and in the required performance measures (D)(2) 1 and 2. An excellent step-by-step action plan with timelines and responsible parties is provided.

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 response was scored at 16 points out of a possible 20 points and is rated as a high quality partially implemented plan. The applicant is pilot testing a Work Sampling System during the 2011-2012 school year in two districts with 538 kindergarten students. On this basis the plan is only partially implemented. The plan is to implement a statewide criterion-referenced assessment in 2013. This instrument contains 7 domains and is aligned with the ELD standards and Essential Readiness Domains. The applicant has modeled the proposed system on experience of Maryland and Minnesota who have demonstrated validity of this criterion referenced assessment. The applicant has forecasted program participation with number of students and students with high needs and proficiency rates for 2013 through 2018. These targets seem ambitious and achievable. The applicant describes a process whereby implementation of use of the criterion referenced assessment will begin in the school year 2014-2015. Plans call for an eventual roll out over a 6 year period. The applicant describes credible training plans and monitoring of implementation. The applicant proposes that the kindergarten assessment data will be entered into the state's student tracking system. The data system will permit NJ to link scores with prior experience and also with 3rd grade testing. This proposed data system is excellent. The applicant has identified critical questions that will be tracked including relationships between early experience and kindergarten readiness, and going forward 3rd grade tests. The applicant will also look at performance of high needs children compared with children without high needs. The applicant indicates that the Department of Education funds will be used for kindergarten entry assessment thus meeting the criterion of significant funding other than RTT-ELC.

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.	20	12

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

(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;

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

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

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

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

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(2)

The response was scored at 12 points out of a possible 20 points and is rated as a high quality minimally implemented plan. The applicant describes a plan that has all the Essential Data Elements. The plan calls for combining data from all sources over a four year period. This system NJ-EASEL will allow the alignment and integration of data from multiple sources. Probabilistic matching will create crosswalks to parent data to be aggregated across systems for both children and early childhood educators. The applicant will convene a data governance council which will oversee reports to be generated from NJ-EASEL data. The applicant provides examples of the type of data reports they anticipate making available on a regular basis. This information will be used to plan program improvements and to decide on program priorities. The applicant indicates the intent to comply with all Federal, State and Local privacy laws. The applicant already has the foundation for the data base and will use RTT-ELC funds for initial phases and then sustain the system with funds from participating state agencies.

	Available	Score
Total Points Available for Selection Criteria	280	234

Priorities

Competitive Preference Priorities

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry	0 or 10	Yes
To meet this priority, the State must, in its application-- (a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or (b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.		
Comments on (P)(3)		
The applicant responded to selection criterion (E)(1) and received a score of 80 percent on that criterion and consequently receives the competitive priority 10 points.		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.	Yes
To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed. The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.	
Comments on Absolute Priority	
The applicant has presented a comprehensive and coherent plan to build a quality Early Learning and Development program for children with high needs and their families. The applicant provided a clear picture of the current status of the system in New Jersey and made a compelling case with high quality plans for each of the required criteria and focused investment areas. The applicant comprehensively and coherently addressed how the state will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so they will enter kindergarten ready to succeed.	